IMMERSION AND EMOTION: ENGAGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR EMPATHY-BASED CIVIC LEARNING

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Educational research historically calls for civic education experiences that equip students to tackle the social and political imperatives of the time. Presently, current levels of political polarization, deeply entangled with issues of technology use, demand a population of graduates who are capable of navigating the complicated terrain of civic engagement both in person and online. This study is situated within policies and pedagogies regarding civic education, empathy, social justice, and cultural responsiveness. Drawing on research around digital and immersive technologies, it seeks to examine the potential of virtual environments to engage students' capacities for empathy through perspective taking, particularly for perspectives of oppression and marginalization. The research described here involves an exploratory qualitative study of a secondary Spanish classroom in which students participated in a unit focused on storytelling. Through examining participation in a variety of activities designed around multiple formats for interaction with various technologies, the study sought to answer the following questions: 1) *How do students think about empathy and civic engagement?*; 2) *How do different formats for reflection and interaction influence student participation in discourse around empathy and civic engagement?*; and 3) *Can technology aid in empathetic engagement with perspectives of marginalization and oppression and, if so, how?*.

Data from student work and their own feedback on their learning in the unit suggest that immersive technology can influence civic learning in positive ways. Through teacher guidance and interaction with their peers, students' thoughts on storytelling shifted from inward, self-centered reflections toward other-focused, empathetic responses to perspectives of oppression and marginalization. While immersive technologies were instrumental in engaging their capacities for perspective-taking, data revealed that empathy-building also required feedback and

interaction in order to guide students' thoughts and responses. Considering the broader educational and structural conditions that support the learning that occurred, this study is also situated within a larger body of scholarship addressing areas of policy, curriculum development, media studies, pedagogy, and teacher training and support. Combining these fields allows this study to move beyond a learning intervention tied to particular technologies that will undoubtedly change at the rapid rate of technological advancement, and instead positions it within the body of literature that calls for a shift in the culture around technology use in schools. While this study does contribute to promising results regarding the use of immersive learning environments, it ultimately suggests that engaging these empowering and transformational uses requires policy-makers, administrators, teachers and students to embrace particular dispositions of empathy-based technology use. Furthermore, the implications of immersive perspective-taking reach far beyond this study, suggesting the transformative potential for these technologies to change the way their users see themselves, others, and the world around them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Despite continuing trends in the careful regulation of learning through Common Core and standardized assessments, it is not difficult to argue that public education has always been about more than the cognitive mastery of content knowledge - when Plato wrote about education in "The Republic," he proposed a holistic curriculum that included not only math and science, but also physical education, art, character, and moral judgment (Briggs, 2015). John Dewey, often hailed as the father of progressive education, wrote that "education is the regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction" (Dewey, 1897, p. 16). In other words, education provides a means of regulating not only what students should know, but also how they should behave through participation in a democratic society. For Dewey, the notion of participation was aimed toward social change and reform, and this idea continues to reverberate throughout our conception of public education, particularly in regards to civic learning (Fink, Cohen, & Slade, 2015).

Dewey's idea of education as the "adjustment of individual activity on the basis of [...] social consciousness" suggests that our educational goals toward civic learning and democratic participation might also shift as the tides of social consciousness change. Education is a reflection of the society in which it exists, and it is therefore essential to understand both the problems we optimistically hope to equip our students to solve, as well as the skills needed to do so. With this ultimate goal in mind, the objectives of this work are three-fold: first, to demonstrate the ways in which calls to civic education mirror the social issues of the time, beginning with Sputnik and the 1960s emphasis on math, science, and foreign language, and

moving through 2016 and the focus on solving issues of racial tension and police brutality; second, to more thoroughly examine these current social issues of racial tension in a larger trend of social and political polarization; and, third, to suggest the ways in which uncritical media consumption and technology use heavily influence this trend of polarization. In exploring these components of current social issues, the goal is to more thoroughly understand the ways in which schools might draw on the ideals of civic education in order to equip students to approach the growing rift of polarization as they navigate civic engagement and democratic participation both online and in person.

Current social and political tensions provide no shortage of issues around which contention and polarization are rising, as one need not look far to find examples of heated debate playing out in multiple arenas - from police brutality and racism, as suggested above, to immigration, women's rights and workplace assault and harassment, concerns around oil drilling and environmental protections, and even conflicts about vaccinations and climate change and the very nature of scientific research. The goal of this work is not to address all of these issues, due to limits in time and space and, more importantly, the ways in which multiple areas of focus would restrict the clarity of discussion around educational strategies for addressing these issues both in the classroom and beyond. The intention is, then, that in focusing on a few particular areas suggested in recent calls for civic education, we may begin to understand more about the ways in which students can become equipped to address issues of contention and polarization across multiple debates.

Objective 1: A Brief History of Civic Education.

In a 1999 presentation on behalf of the Center for Civic Education at the American Bar Association Symposium, Charles Quigley traced the history of "modern" civic education to the

early 1900s as a means of ensuring the assimilation of immigrants into the Northern European Judeo-Christian culture of the United States. The 60s, however, with Vietnam and Watergate, brought about a sense of disenchantment that broke up some of the "patriotic euphoria" of two world wars, and Quigley argues that the advent of heterogeneity and multiculturalism brought about a diverse society that was out of sync with the ethnocentric core values that initially underwrote civic education. This societal change, according to Quigley, created the need to redefine civic education for a polyglot world. At the same time, Quigley points to forces outside the educational system as the initial boost for this kind of civic education, suggesting that the National Defense Education Act and, later, the Education Professions Development Act of the 60s both prompted new support for teacher training, the development of improved curricular materials, and a new focus on not only math and science in response to Sputnik, but also on pre-collegiate programs in political science, history, civics, government, and law. Unfortunately, the level of federal support provided to spark growth in these programs no longer exists, despite a continued emphasis on their necessity, even at a federal level (Lolly, 2009).

At the time of his presentation in the late 90s, Quigley characterized the state of civic education as a "desert with oases," suggesting that inadequate supportive policy and curricular requirements, inadequate teacher preparation, and inadequate outcomes led to a situation in which only approximately 15% of high school graduates had the opportunity to participate in high quality civic education programs. He suggested, therefore, that policy establishing requirements for civic education and the ways in which it might also be furthered in other related courses, like history, language, science, and math, is an imperative, concluding by arguing that our task is not only to encourage civic participation, but the "enlightened" sort of participation

that prioritizes a competent, responsible, and reasoned commitment to "work together to preserve our democratic heritage and narrow the gap between our ideals and reality."

Ten years later, in 2009, Bole and Gordon recounted a similar call, suggesting that active citizenship is essential in the midst of "profound national challenge and change." Like Quigley's notion of an increasingly polyglot world, this call points to the effects of economic, political, and social globalization and the ways in which they underscore the need for fostering democratic minds among the rich potentials of diversity and pluralism (Bole & Gordon, 2009). They also suggest, however, that many schools in the early 2000s were retreating from basic civics lessons and were not teaching the skills needed for students to "sift through political bucksterism, opinion masquerading as news and political spin." The call here is the same - for educational reformation and initiatives in civics and civic education to increase opportunities for meaningful public engagement. Like Quigley, Bole and Gordon also continue their call by defining the sort of action they would desire as a result of civic education, suggesting that civic engagement is the means by which citizens are "empowered as agents of social change for a more democratic world" (276). While both these descriptions of public action are relatively vague, we can see an emphasis not only on action as the end result of civic education, but on a particular sort of action - one that involves working together, working for change, and working for democracy.

Current civic education. It is clear that public education that prepares students for some kind of democratic participation has been a priority more or less since its inception. It is also logical that the kind of participation that civic education would seek to inspire would likely mimic the societal norms and pressures of the time, as Quigley suggests in the shifting emphasis from assimilation to multiculturalism. And it is here, within the same notions of globalization, diversity, pluralism, and, as Bole and Gordon describe it, "opinion masquerading as news and

political spin," that we see our most recent call for civic education. On October 19, 2016, John King, U.S. Secretary of Education during the final two years of Barack Obama's presidency, gave a speech to the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. in which, once again, he called for more civic education (Waldman, 2016). He argued that students must be equipped to solve problems of homelessness, water pollution, and police tension, among other issues facing the nation, suggesting that solving these issues starts in schools with civic education. In addition to problems mentioned above, King's speech went on to describe that many of the biggest issues, including tension between police and communities of color, will not be solved by legislative action, but rather by citizens who will work together to demand change. For this to happen, according to King, people need the knowledge, skills, and inclination to get involved, starting with an understanding of American history. He urges that we should help students to "acknowledge and wrestle with the ways that ugly legacy [of slavery] continues to shape our country and helps explain the treatment of people of color in America to this day," referencing protests by athletes who seek to call attention to police brutality and racial inequality. As suggested earlier, civic engagement is particularly critical in times of "profound national challenge and change" (Bole & Gordon, 2009) - with a plethora of recent examples of rising racial tension and concerns around police brutality, it is difficult to deny that America is facing such a time.

Objective 2: Current Social Issues

Throughout the recent history of these calls for civic education, what has remained consistent is the notion that education must not only continue to push forward the cutting edge of knowledge, but also to respond to the problems that arise as a result of new knowledge, technologies, and societal change. Our modern history is replete with calls toward this kind of

education, as suggested above. What also persists, however, is the rate at which society changes - new environmental and social problems appear (or rise up again), political tensions rise, and so we see a cycle of new attempts to re-shape education in order to equip the next generation of students with the skills to address the issues at hand. If nothing else, democratic education of this nature has always been a hopeful endeavor.

And so, to embrace the hope that we might produce a generation of students who is equipped to solve the problems suggested by King, it is important to understand more about the required knowledge and skills upon which King has called to solve these issues. To arrive at an understanding of the skills our students need, it is illuminating to work backward, first digging deeper into the issues within our current time of challenge and change. What follows is an exploration of several social movements, as well as shifting societal trends, that have contributed to and resulted from rising racial tension and political division.

Black Lives Matter. On February 26th, 2012, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old black male was fatally shot by George Zimmerman in Florida. Nearly a year and a half later, on July 13th of 2013, Zimmerman was acquitted. According to several sources, this day in July marks the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement, and is the first time the hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter) appeared on Twitter (Anderson and Hitlin, 2016). On July 17th, 2014, Eric Garner - another young black man - died following detainment by a police officer in New York. A bystander filmed Garner gasping for air and repeatedly saying "I can't breathe." Despite conflicting stories around the cause of his death, Julie Bolcer, spokeswoman on behalf of the office of the mayor of New York, revealed that a medical examiner determined that neck and chest compressions during his physical restraint by police were, in fact, the cause of Garner's death (Calabresi, 2014). As the footage was released online the Black Lives Matter hashtag

appeared again, and “I can’t breathe” became a key part of the Black Lives Matter movement. Protests erupted in New York and continued around the country as LeBron James, Derrick Rose, and other NBA players wore black t-shirts with the phrase “I can’t breathe” printed in white to warm up before games. Over a year later, on December 4th, 2014, when a New York grand jury decided not to indict police officers involved in Garner’s death, the Black Lives Matter hashtag was posted 189,210 times in one day (Anderson & Hitlin, 2016).

At 12:01am on August 9th, 2014, Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, was confronted by Officer Darren Wilson outside his apartment complex in Ferguson, Missouri. While details surrounding the next three minutes before other officers arrived are relatively unclear, Brown’s autopsy revealed that he had been shot six times and ultimately killed by a bullet that struck the side of his head and entered his skull (BBC, 2014). According to Anderson and Hitlin (2016), the Black Lives Matter hashtag appeared an average of 58,747 times per day in the roughly three weeks following Brown’s death. On November 25th, 2014, when a Ferguson grand jury decided not to indict the officer involved in Brown’s death, the hashtag appeared 172,772 times. In the following three weeks, it was used nearly 1.7 million times, and nine months later, on the first anniversary of Brown’s death, the hashtag would appear 120,067 times.

On October 20th, 2014, Laquan McDonald, 17, was shot 16 times in 13 seconds by a police officer in Chicago, Illinois. After the officer’s dash-cam footage was released on November 24th, 2015, hundreds of people protested in Chicago and Mayor Rahm Emanuel eventually fired the city’s police superintendent. On April 19th, 2015, Freddie Gray died in police custody in Baltimore and the hashtag was used nearly 100,000 times. On October 13th, 2015, then-presidential candidate Bernie Sanders acknowledged the Black Lives Matter movement in a debate and the hashtag was used roughly 127,000 times. On November 16th,

2015, Jamar Clark was shot by the head of police in Minneapolis, and people representing the Black Lives Matter movement protested outside the police station for 18 days. On July 5th, 2016, Alton Sterling was pinned to the ground and shot five times in the chest at close range by police in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Bystanders filmed and posted videos online, kicking off major protests across the country. On July 6th, 2016, Diamond Reynolds used Facebook Live to stream video of the aftermath of her boyfriend, Philando Castile, being shot by police while allegedly reaching for his wallet in his car. Castile later died in the hospital. The video has been viewed more than 5.6 million times (Cohen, 2016).

All told, from its initial appearance in mid-2013 through March 2016 when the Pew Research Center published its report, the Black Lives Matter hashtag appeared on Twitter almost 11.8 million times (Anderson & Hitlin, 2016). While usually posted in response to specific events of race-based police brutality, their report suggests that the hashtag is most often used for marking or calling to action a broader social movement that flags general racial issues in the United States. The movement, however, is not only one-sided. With the rise of the Black Lives matter hashtag, Pew also reports on the advent of the All Lives Matter movement in direct response. All Lives Matter has particularly gained momentum in response to the shooting of two police officers in their patrol car in New York City on December 19, 2014, and five other officers shot by a sniper at a Black Lives Matter protest in Dallas in July of 2016. While only approximately one-eighth as prevalent as Black Lives Matter, the counter-movement of All Lives Matter has generally moved in parallel, reaching a total of 1.5 million posts by the time Pew published their report in 2016.

The Black Lives Matter movement, along with the responding All Lives Matter, bring to light several of the issues that Secretary of Education John King raised in his call for civic

education. He pointed specifically to occurrences of police brutality and the treatment of people of color as an issue that educators hope to solve through equipping our students to work together to create change. What we can begin to see, though, through a more in-depth analysis of the Black Lives Matter movement, is the development of a few particular traits that will continue throughout the rest of the movements explored here. First, while police brutality and racial inequality may seem, on the surface, like issues upon which the whole of the American culture might agree to solve, they are, instead, quite complex, and not one-sided. As these occasions of police brutality have continued to occur, it seems as though the rift between opposing movements has grown, as has the racial tension that continues cyclically to contribute to and result from this growing divide. It seems, then, that if we are to follow King's call to work together to solve the issue of police brutality, we must take steps toward approaching an understanding of the differing perspectives on each side in order to form a more solid middle ground upon which to stand. Second, with the advent of the Black Lives matter hashtag and the response of All Lives Matter, we see a complicated intertwining of technology - particularly in the form of social media use - and political action. In many ways, the expanding use of these hashtags seemed both to precipitate and respond to the growing social movement on each side of the debate, such that social media platforms helped to spread the word into real-life action, which, in turn, continued to expand the use of the hashtags as well. The influence of technology and social media in growing issues of social and political tension, along with the complex nature of their multiple perspectives, will continue to inform the other movements described below.

National anthem protests. On August 26, 2016, the third pre-season game for the San Francisco 49ers, quarterback Colin Kaepernick gained national attention in response to a photo that showed him sitting during the national anthem. The photo was originally tweeted by Jennifer

Lee Chan, writer for an online community of San Francisco 49ers fans, but it gained more traction later that night when the 49ers released an official statement confirming that Kaepernick sat during the song. Later, Mike Garafolo of the NFL Network tweeted that Kaepernick also sat during the first two pre-season games, but hadn't gotten much attention because he didn't play and wasn't in uniform (Sandritter, 2017). Following the game that night, Kaepernick told the media that he sat because of the oppression of people of color and ongoing issues with police brutality. Two days later, on August 28th, he met with the media for the first time since his silent protest gained national attention, reiterating that he was acting to give a voice to people who didn't have one. He says:

> I'm going to continue to stand with the people that are being oppressed. To me, this is something that has to change. When there's significant change and I feel that flag represents what it's supposed to represent, and this country is representing people the way that it's supposed to, I'll stand. [...] I have great great respect for the men and women that have fought for this country. I have family, I have friends that have gone and fought for this country. And they fight for freedom, they fight for the people, they fight for liberty and justice, for everyone. That's not happening. People are dying in vain because this country isn't holding their end of the bargain up, as far as giving freedom and justice, liberty to everybody. (Sandritter, 2017)

After explaining his position, Kaepernick continued to sit during the anthem and faced intense public scrutiny. On August 30th, 2016, Nate Boyer, former Green Beret and brief NFL player wrote an open letter to Kaepernick in which he shared his admiration for him and for the 49ers, his goal to join the Army Special Forces to fight for freedom, and his own emotional experiences standing on the sidelines while the national anthem played. He concluded by saying:

> I'm not judging you for standing up for what you believe in. It's your inalienable right. What you are doing takes a lot of courage, and I'd be lying if I said I knew what it was like to walk around in your shoes [...] Even though my initial reaction to your protest was one of anger, I'm trying to listen to what you're saying and why you're doing it. [...] There are plenty of people fighting fire with fire, and it's

> just not helping anyone or anything. So I'm just going to keep listening, with an open mind. (Boyer, 2016)

In response to Boyer's letter, Kaepernick invited him to come to San Diego to talk before a game on September 1st, which he did. In reflecting on his conversation with Boyer, Kaepernick reiterated that he wanted to "not take away from fighting for our country, but keep the focus on what the issues really are" (Sandritter, 2017). Together, Boyer and Kaepernick decided that kneeling would be a way to show that issues still need to be addressed while also showing respect for the men and women who fight for this country. At the game that day, with Boyer on the sidelines, 49ers safety Eric Reid joined Kaepernick in kneeling during the anthem. At the same time, Jeremy Lane of the Seattle Seahawks sat on the bench during the anthem before a game in Oakland, just minutes after Kaepernick and Reid took a knee (Sandritter, 2017).

As attention and debate around Kaepernick's actions continued to grow, the movement expanded even beyond the NFL. Just a few days later, on September 4th, 2016, Megan Rapinoe knelt before a Seattle Reign soccer match against the Chicago Red Stars. She expressed solidarity with Kaepernick, saying that, as a gay American, she knows "what it means to look at the flag and not have it protect all your liberties" (Sandritter, 2017). Rapinoe, however, quickly found out that much of the soccer world was not happy with her actions, as the Washington Spirit, in a match against the Seattle Reign on September 7th, changed the time of the national anthem so that it would play while both teams were still in their locker rooms (Diaz, 2016). U.S. Soccer also expressed disappointment in Rapinoe's protest, releasing a statement calling for players and coaches to use the national anthem as a moment "to remember the liberties and freedom we all appreciate in this country" (McCauley, 2016). While U.S. Soccer's statement suggests that the anthem is a time to reflect on freedom, Rapinoe points, like Kaepernick, to the notion that not all Americans, when reflecting on their freedom, feel it equally. What becomes

increasingly clear, here, as with the Black Lives Matter movement, is that there are voices on each side of the issue that, particularly in this case, seem to be responding over one another without much middle ground.

On September 9th, 2016, the regular season opener for the Denver Broncos, linebacker Brandon Marshall took a knee during the anthem, and on the 11th of September, several players from the Seahawks, Dolphins, Chiefs, and Patriots all knelt during the anthem after standing for a spoken acknowledgment of the fifteenth anniversary of the terror attacks on 9/11 (Sandritter, 2017). As protests continued to ripple across the NFL, they took on other forms, with some teams locking arms before kickoff, and other players raising a fist during the anthem. Later in September, 2016, high school football teams in Seattle and in Sacramento joined the protest, with the Elk Grove School District in Sacramento releasing a statement that it "respects and supports [its] students' individual experiences and their right to exercise their freedom of speech and expression protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution" (Sandritter, 2017). The silent protests continued, including cheerleaders from Howard University, the Oakland Unified School District's Honor Band at an Oakland A's baseball game, and several WNBA and NBA players. Less than a month after he began his protest, on September 22, 2016, Time Magazine premiered the cover for its October 3 issue with Kaepernick kneeling in his full 49ers uniform. According to Sandritter (2017), the issue included a cover story from Sean Gregory, where Kaepernick's protest was featured as a central figure in a larger conversation among athletes about sports activism and patriotism.

As suggested above regarding Megan Rapinoe's statement and the response from U.S. Soccer, the previous list depicting all those who joined Kaepernick in protest or, at least, in conversation, is decidedly one-sided and does not give due diligence to the multifaceted debate

that has since arisen. The differing perspectives in this debate are clearly illuminated by a Yahoo Sports poll conducted on September 13th and 14th, 2016. The results from 1,128 respondents, published on September 19th, indicated that Americans remained deeply divided around the NFL protests, with 32% supporting Kaepernick's stance, 47% opposing it, 15% remaining neutral, and six percent who didn't know how to respond. Respondents under the age of 34 were split, with 39% supporting and 30% opposing, while those over the age of 55 opposed the protest by 65%. Of the 32% of respondents expressing their support, 24% were white, 39% were Hispanic, and 63% were Black. In total, 44% of respondents who identified as NFL fans said they would stop watching NFL games if more players followed Kaepernick's lead and decided to protest (Busbee, 2016). According to internal research conducted by CBS Sports, average television viewership for the 2016 NFL season did drop roughly eight percent from the previous 2015 season. CBS Sports chairman Sean McManus says that, though "relatively proprietary," their research reported that a "fair amount of viewers" mentioned finding the protests unattractive or uncompelling in coverage of a football game, leading to declining viewers (Deitsch, 2017). Not everyone who reported being frustrated with Kaepernick's protest necessarily disagreed with his stance, as suggested above in McManus' report on viewers finding the coverage uncompelling. Results from the Yahoo Sports survey also indicate that three out of five respondents believed that Kaepernick should have chosen a different method for his protest. In other words, while some Americans have spoken out definitively in support or against Kaepernick's stance, some have also expressed the desire to watch football without being confronted with issues of police brutality and racism. Regardless, we see that the varied responses prompted by Kaepernick's protests, much like Black Lives Matter, represent many differing perspectives around the same debate.

A brief detour to Charlottesville. While the debate over kneeling during the national anthem has continued and has reappeared in full force in the 2017 NFL season, it is first worthwhile to briefly examine another issue of heightened racial tension that has likely served to intensify the national anthem debate. On the night of August 11th, a group of about 250 mostly young, white males carried torches and marched through the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville, chanting "Blood and soil!", "You will not replace us," and "Jews will not replace us" (Heim, 2017). As the group approached a statue of Thomas Jefferson, they came upon another group of about 30 University of Virginia students who had locked arms in counter-protest. As the group of young men circled the statue they began to chant "White lives matter" and, within moments, chaos and violence erupted, continuing for several minutes until police arrived (Heim, 2017).

The following day, in the event for which the group of protesters had actually come to Charlottesville, both rally-goers and counter-protesters began to funnel into Emancipation Park around a statue of Robert E. Lee around 8:00 am, nearly nine hours before the rally was scheduled to begin. In his report for The Washington Post, Heim describes the scene, saying that many people on both sides carried shields, clubs, pistols, or long guns, including the semi-automatic rifles and pistols carried by about three dozen members of a self-styled militia who spread themselves out along the sidewalk bordering the park. For the first two hours as people continued to file into the park, Heim describes the rising tension that finally broke approximately around 11:00 am, as a swelling group of white nationalists attempted to enter the park. Like the night before, chaos erupted. Amidst explosions of violence, police declared the event an unlawful gathering at 11:22 am and quickly "quelled the disturbance," according to Virginia Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran (Heim, 2017). As protesters

from both sides began to follow orders to leave the park, taunts and small skirmishes continued until, nearly two hours later, rally-goer James Alex Fields Jr. allegedly drove his car into a crowd of pedestrians, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring 19 others.

Amidst public outcry around the march and heated debate around who was to blame for the violence, Donald Trump issued a statement in response to the event, saying "We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence, on many sides. On many sides" (Cillizza, 2017). Immediately following his statement, Trump faced bipartisan criticism for failing to condemn the role of white supremacists in the violence that erupted, prompting further debate in the public forum as well. In the days following his initial statement he was questioned several times about his failure to condemn white supremacy, but he maintained the original notion that there was blame on both sides (Shear & Haberman, 2017).

In an interview on NPR from the week following the rally, George Hawley, author of *Making Sense Of the Alt-Right*, explained that the goal of the original Unite the Right rally had been to demonstrate that the alt-right movement, which had previously existed relatively anonymously online, could move from the virtual world to the real one with a show of force. Hawley doesn't think these rally-goers succeeded in mainstreaming their movement, pointing to the mixed messages brought about by the use of the most marginalized elements of the radical right, like the swastika flag. The presence of the swastika flag at the rally, however, prompted a very strong public response, with Twitter users leading a campaign to identify the demonstrators who marched on Friday night or attended the rally on Saturday and to "out" them as Nazis. As many of the members were identified, news began to circulate that some of them had been fired, some were receiving death threats and attempted to distance themselves from the alt-right

agenda, and others sought to defend their stance or even willingly identified themselves as having attended the rally (Selk, 2017).

In the midst of this online campaign, others were mistakenly identified as white supremacists, including Kyle Quinn, professor of Engineering at the University of Arkansas. In an interview with NPR, Quinn described the way in which his email and Twitter account were inundated with people cursing and threatening him and his family after his photo was posted online - despite the fact that he had not attended the rally. When his home address was publicly posted on Twitter, he and his wife informed police and spent time at a friend's house to protect themselves from any potential response. He explained that they were very frightened and felt as if they were being chased by a mob - "and they're emboldened because they're online and there's no or little consequences for their actions" he says. "That was definitely the most disturbing part - not knowing what poor decisions this group of people on the Internet could make next" (Sydell, 2017). It is clear, as also suggested with the Black Lives Matter movement, that the role of technology in the playing out of these social issues is complex, when even seemingly good intentions lead to misuse that could threaten the very livelihood of others.

In the days following the rally in Charlottesville, many citizens continued their technology and social media use, taking to Twitter to share their disdain and disappointment at the hatred and bigotry on display in Charlottesville, using both #Charlottesville and #ThisIsNotUs to mark their posts, which began trending on Twitter the day after the rally was put to an early end. In response, however, many social media users began to criticize the "This Is Not Us" hashtag as a form of denialism - of both America's history and the bigotry that was so recently displayed in the events at Charlottesville (Mosbergen, 2017).

While the timeline of events described above resulting in eruptions of violence and the death of Heather Heyer is relatively clear, many details surrounding the events in Charlottesville still seem less so. Aided by Trump's response, attempts to place the blame squarely on one side or the other have been met with much debate and continued protest on both sides. A poll of registered voters in Virginia conducted by TheMassINC Polling Group from August 15 to August 19, 2017 found that 40% of respondents believed that white nationalist rally-goers were to blame, while 41% agreed with Trump in placing blame equally on both sides. As few as six percent of respondents blamed only the counter-protesters (Savransky, 2017). Regardless of blame, though, the debate here is clearly a messy one. Much like in Kaepernick's protest, questions have arisen regarding the First Amendment rights of protesters and the protection of speech, particularly when it leads to hatred and violence. As the discussion plays out online through social media, even those who might agree with one another to blame the alt-right and to shame the president for his lack of condemnation have struck up debate with one another about whether their hashtags express support for the cause or denial of the racial tensions that have continued to rise. It is undeniable that these tensions are clashing in public spheres in increasingly violent ways, through Twitter debates and in real-life protests. What began as an alt-right group of online "anonymous trolls" (NPR, 2017) took human form in Charlottesville and our society responded, both in person and online, showing us again the intricately connected way in which these social issues are playing out in both spaces.

What is also clear, as in each of these scenarios, is that many people hold many unique perspectives and opinions on each side of this issue. And while Trump, along with 41% of Virginia voters, might seek to placate both sides by condemning only the violence and not the bigotry that prompted it, we can also see that there are many citizens who will not stand for this

sort of denial. In approaching multiple perspectives, in asking what counts as free speech, and in seeking to understand who is to blame for this violence, it is also becoming clear that we must more carefully examine whose rights are being protected. In the name of civic engagement and working toward a democratic notion of social justice, it seems as though it is essential, in this case, to not only understand differing perspectives, but also to understand how to change the perspectives that would lead to such hatred and violence. As King suggested in his call to civic education, understanding this violence in light of the "ugly legacy of slavery" in the U.S. and a larger trend in the treatment of people of color is particularly enlightening toward understanding which voices should guide our response.

Take a Knee. And so, with these events in mind and the heightened levels of racial tension they demonstrate, Kaepernick's protests of police brutality and racial inequality continued into the 2017 season. After renegotiating his contract with the 49ers in 2016, cutting off the last four years and giving him the choice to opt out prior to the 2017 season, he chose to become a free agent in March of 2017, likely expecting to be signed with a new team. This, however, has not happened. While many commentators have spent the summer rationalizing Kaepernick's extended joblessness with claims of his shortcomings as a backup quarterback, others quite certainly claim that less-skilled quarterbacks have been signed while Kaepernick remains unemployed because he decided to kneel during the national anthem (Dickey, 2017). Much of this happened relatively quietly, until, speaking in Huntsville, Alabama at a campaign rally for Attorney General candidate Luther Strange, Donald Trump drew attention to Kaepernick once again. Unprompted by any question or other discussion on the topic, he asked the crowd "Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects the flag, to say 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now, out. He's fired!'", prompting cheers

from his crowd of supporters. (Serwer, 2017). Despite the vulgarity, it is worth noting Trump's language here, particularly as we consider the tone of civic discourse around race and inequality. The work of educators in fostering growth in civic and democratic engagement toward social change through understanding the perspectives of others seems more difficult, but also perhaps more dire, in light of the tone with which the leader of our country addresses these issues.

As news of Trump's words spread, so did the number of responses both in support of and in outrage toward his statement. Within two days after his speech, the president was facing off with hundreds of NFL players who had either taken a knee, like Kaepernick, or who had stayed in the locker room during the national anthem. He had been scolded by multiple NFL team owners, and, as in earlier protests, by professional athletes in other sports (Graham, 2017). Furthermore, by Saturday afternoon, the day following Trump's speech, the #TakeAKnee hashtag was a top trend on Twitter in the United States, primarily being used to show solidarity with players who have decided to kneel (Jhaveri, 2017). In the days following his controversial words, however, others joined Trump in expressing their disdain for athletes who would kneel during the anthem by burning NFL jerseys or season tickets and posting videos on social media. NFL players who knelt were uninvited from public events, employees of NFL teams who issued public statements supporting kneeling players quit their jobs, and a fire chief in Pennsylvania made news by posting a racial slur about Pittsburgh Steelers' coach Mike Tomlin on Facebook (Seraaj & Zdanowicz, 2017). While some argued that Trump's comments seem to have spurred Kaepernick's protests into a growing social movement, continued kneeling in support has also been heavily counterbalanced by negative responses. What is clear is that, as demonstrated with responses to Black Lives Matter and the events in Charlottesville, the debate around kneeling during the anthem rages on. Furthermore, it seems that input from Trump has likely served to

more fully entrench American citizens into their polarized opinions, rather than creating opportunities to find middle ground.

A growing divide. As demonstrated in each of these incidents above - the many examples of police brutality, heightened racial tensions, silent protests during the national anthem, and rallies resulting in violent clashes - people on each side of the debate have different ideas about what is right, who has rights, and whose rights have more value. Though we might logically deduce it from these examples of growing tension, the Pew Research Center published a report in October 2017 saying that the divide between political opinions on key issues - including race - has reached record levels during the first year of Donald Trump's presidency. Whether the divide has grown in response to his election or whether he was elected in response to an already growing divide may be difficult to know. But evidence clearly demonstrates that the divide is growing, regardless of whether Trump's presidency is a cause or an effect, or, perhaps, both.

According to the results published by Pew in 2017, when questions were first asked in the same survey in 1994 concerning either discrimination or personal responsibility as the cause of a lack in Black advancement, the partisan difference was 13 points. By 2009 it was around 19 points, but today, the gap in opinions between Republicans and Democrats regarding racial discrimination and Black advancement in the United States has increased to 50 points. That the rift between these multiple perspectives is growing is simply undeniable. Equally undeniable is the fact that this divide constitutes, as Bole and Gordon describe it, a time of "profound national challenge and change," particularly when, as demonstrated through his comments in response to Charlottesville and to Kaepernick's national anthem protest, the words of the president of the United States seem to encourage this division more than any sort of unification. If we are to

respond, then, by creating the sort of civic education that equips students with the skills to work toward closing this divide, we must understand why it has continued to grow so exponentially. What follows is an exploration of the third objective described at the outset of this work - an attempt to understand the ways in which technology and social media use is both a contributing factor and a result of increased polarization across the United States.

Objective 3: Technology Use and Political Polarization

As suggested in the exploration of current social issues, each of the movements described above has seemingly both been aided by and cyclically contributed to movements that exist solely in cyberspace through various social media platforms. It seems, then, that attempting to develop skills to improve the ways in which we currently address multiple differing perspectives would require us to also understand more about how these perspectives have become so different from one another. So, in approaching the third objective of this introduction to civic education, we can turn toward technology use and its role in aiding trends in political polarization through social media use, uncritical media consumption, and personalization of content.

Social media and fake news. According to the Pew Research Center (2016), social media and internet use continues to increase for adults, and so does their reliance on social media as their main news source. In comparing data from 2012 to 2016, the number of U.S. adults who get news from social media has increased from 49% to 62% (Pew, 2016). The 2016 presidential campaign and election has hailed a new era - undoubtedly, populist political candidates from the right and the left, including Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, changed the tone of the election with their social media use (Groshek and Koc-Michalska, 2017). Much like Barack Obama's electoral successes that were credited at least in part to his savvy social media campaigning in 2008 and 2012, since Trump's victory, the notion that social media "helped him win" has been

revitalized, even by Trump himself (McCormick, 2016). Along with this increased social media presence, we've also seen a rise in concern around media and "fake news," which has both politicized the notion of validity and trustworthiness of media sources and also problematized the uncritical media circulation among adult users of Facebook and Twitter. Research from Craig Silverman, founding editor of Buzzfeed News, demonstrates that, during the 2016 campaign season, the most popular fake news stories were more widely shared on Facebook than the most popular mainstream news stories and that many people who see fake news stories report that they believe them, suggesting that the consumption of information via social media sites is problematic, at best.

As a clear example of this phenomenon, a photo posted in September 2017 by a Facebook user on a page called "Vets for Trump" depicts Seattle Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett dancing in the locker room, gleefully holding a tattered, burning American flag. The caption read "#Seattleseahawks - no more NFL." While the photo of Bennett dancing in the locker room was real, the addition of the burning flag was entirely fake. Despite this fact, within a day the photo had received more than 10,000 shares, likes, and comments from furious people all over the country (Mallonee, 2017). Some commenters sought to point out the ways in which it was easy to tell that the photo was "Photoshopped", like the pixelated flames that make it appear as though Bennett is actually burning his leg, or that his right hand appears oddly small and misshapen. Regardless, others still insisted that the photo was fundamentally true. Other commenters admitted that the photo was fake, but didn't seem to care - one man said "Fake or not, when they take the knee it's the same difference," invoking memories of Kaepernick's protests. The power of this photo is not necessarily tied to the content itself or the debate it sparked, but rather in the fact that it is becoming harder to know what is real (Mallonee, 2017).

And, perhaps more frighteningly, it's really no longer just about fake photos. It's the fact that people seem to care less and less about what is real.

If photo editing is enough to convince us of an alternate reality, then technological advances will soon open a whole new realm of fake news. A new program, described at the Adobe Max 2016 conference, is being hailed as the "Photoshop of audio." In a video of the conference (Adobe, 2016), developer Zeyu Jin demonstrates how the program, called Voco, can facilitate the seamless editing of audio clips. In his demonstration, Jin begins with a clip in which comedian Keegan-Michael Key discusses his feelings in response to being nominated for an Emmy with Jordan Peele, fellow comedian who is on stage at the Adobe Max conference. In the short clip, Key says "I jumped out of the bed...I kissed my dogs and my wife in that order." With Voco, Jin converts Key's words from the audio clip to written text, and, after editing the text a few times, Jin changes the audio so that Key now says "I jumped out of the bed...I kissed Jordan three times." Despite the fact that Key never used the words Jordan, three, or times in the original clip, with at least twenty minutes of pre-recorded audio, Voco can recreate the speaker's voice with entirely new words in a way that sounds completely natural. This tool, then, makes editing the audio track of a pre-recorded video as simple as re-typing the words you want that person to say.

Another similar technology, an application called Face2Face, allows users to edit the images in the video itself. The program is designed to map facial movements onto a pre-recorded person instead of onto a digital avatar, as is often done in animation processes. In other words, this app allows users to download a video clip and, by using a web-enabled camera to record themselves, make the face in the pre-recorded video match their own facial expressions and movements. The software can change what the face of the person in the pre-recorded video does

by making it mirror the user's face (Thies, et. al, 2016). Taken together, these new tools for audio and video editing make it rather easy for even casual users to quite literally edit history. If social media users are already struggling to identify what is real and what isn't when it comes to photos and text, imagining the realm of possibilities of videos and audio that can be edited to make anyone say whatever the editor desires has frightening and potentially dangerous implications.

Given data on both social media use and the increasing number of adults who are relying on it for their consumption of news, the information concerning fake stories and the ease with which we might soon edit both audio and video brings to light one potential factor in the increasing division of perspectives across the United States. It seems that, in the realm of social media, at least, adults are not always critical consumers of information. With the ease of sharing a story at the simple click of the button, one can imagine the speed at which information spreads - as also demonstrated in the rapid spreading of hashtags marking the social movements described in the previous section. It is not simply uncritical consumption that is worrisome, though. What seems clear here, particularly from the Michael Bennett photo, is that this uncritical news consumption from social media sources has led to the notion that its users have the right to choose to believe what is real and what is not, despite what is actually real. The prospect of attempting to close the gap of political polarization by working together to understand the perspectives of others seems much more difficult in a scenario in which we can no longer agree on what is actually real. In a recent interview with David Letterman, Barack Obama pointed to this phenomenon, stating that

> One of the biggest challenges we have to our democracy is the degree to which we don't share a common baseline of facts. If you watch Fox News, you are living on a different planet that you are if you are listening to NPR. (Flood, 2018)

As these examples might suggest, continued emphasis on critical and ethical media use must be a key component of the kind of civic education that would attempt to address issues of political polarization.

Personalization. In addition to issues of critical consumption, critics of online news media have long pointed to the role of both intentional and sometimes unwanted personalization of news stories and even Google results toward creating "filter bubbles" or echo chambers that may lead to more extreme views and less central overlap of ideas (Sunstein, 2009; Pariser, 2011). It's easy to understand the ways in which we intentionally craft our social media worlds - we "like", "share", and "re-tweet" only the things we agree with, and, when coming across something with which we don't agree, our most common responses are likely to ignore it, to hide or "un-follow" the post or the person, or to try to engage in conversation about why we disagree. In an opinion piece on Big Think, a progressive online knowledge forum, Robert Montenegro warns that this kind of social media use has dangerous political implications, including the echo chamber, in which we only reinforce our own political sentiments. On the other hand, when we do engage with different opinions, Montenegro raises concerns around tactics and tone, in which people are more likely to engage in public shaming and demeaning behavior that divides rather than unites. Even posts and comments online that begin as civil discussion often devolve into name-calling and hatred - it is far too easy to demean and defile behind the safety of the screen. If our options are to engage in this sort of discussion or to simply hide or unfollow the stories and posts with which we disagree, we're traveling into the dangerous territory of completely losing touch with what the real voices of our country represent. Or, we're coming dangerously close, as Montenegro argues, to forcing more extreme views and less central overlap as we do buy in to these social media posts as a true representation of our country's beliefs.

Aside from our own intentional curating of the opinions and viewpoints with which we engage on social media, many digital media giants are also doing this for us, often in ways we may not understand or of which we may not be aware. According to information from Google's official blog, Google's personalized search results has been the default search mode for all Google search engine users since December 4, 2009. This means that anyone who uses the Google search engine - even if not logged into a personal Google account - will receive results based not only on the words they search, but also on information available through web browser cookies (bits of information stored about previous websites visited).

According to a TED talk from Eli Pariser, author of the book titled "Filter Bubbles," the Google search engine uses a combination of 57 signals, including information they can collect not only about previous web traffic, but also the user's location, the computer, and the browser. Pariser goes on to demonstrate that two people who type identical search terms could receive completely different lists of results based on what the search engine thinks they might mean. As an example, he compares screen-shots of two friends' search results using only the word Egypt. One friend's results list contained primarily news results about current events in Egypt with a few results about travel and general information about the country, while the other contained primarily travel and general info without any results for news or current events.

While on the surface this seems potentially useful - if browsers and search engines can learn our interests and habits in order to predict what we're trying to find, our work in searching and finding these particular results becomes much easier. On the other hand, though, Pariser demonstrates that this socialization is rapidly spreading across the internet - beyond Google and Facebook and into Yahoo News and the New York Times. Because of this, Pariser warns that so much personalization controls both what we take in and what we send out in such a way that may

be leading to a misunderstanding of the internet itself. Rather than fulfilling its role as a place of connection and the free flowing of information, he argues that many of these companies have simply replaced the role of the editors in broadcast media. He describes this as the "passing of the torch" from human gatekeepers of information to algorithmic ones, warning even further that these algorithms have no sense of ethics to which the human editors in broadcast media are supposed to be held. Pariser suggests, therefore, that we must carefully craft algorithms for search personalization that return results based not only on relevance, but also on what is important, even uncomfortable and challenging, and that might present other points of view. The notion of exposure to uncomfortable and challenging ideas is similarly central in a consideration of approaching civic education as a means of addressing political polarization.

Taken together, then, these trends toward social media use that lead to uncritical consumption, willful ignorance of reality, and personalization are likely contributors to the increased levels of political polarization described by the Pew Research Center (2016). It is not hard to imagine, or, perhaps, to see on our own social media feeds, the ways in which these issues with consumption and personalization lead to a real breakdown in the ability to communicate, particularly across varying perspectives. It is no surprise, then, that the social movements described above - which, on the surface, seem to be working toward meeting the aims of civic engagement and democratic participation - are met with contention and debate. What has been described so far, though, largely centers on adult users of social media. If we are to take up King's call for creating educational opportunities for current and future students to be equipped to solve these issues, it is also essential to understand how this social media use plays out in their world.

The next generation. Though likely unsurprising to most, adults aren't the only ones using digital devices and social media at increasing rates. The Pew Research Center indicated that, in 2015, 92% of teens (aged 13-17) reported going online daily, while 24% of those say they are online "almost constantly." Much of this access can be linked to mobile device use - Pew also reports that three-quarters of teens possess or at least have access to a smartphone, while 30% have a basic phone and only 12% of these teens say they have no cell phone of any type. 71% of teens also reported using these devices to access more than one social media site, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Google+, or the now defunct video site Vine. Along with these social media outlets, 90% of the teens who reported access to a cell phone or smartphone also claim to exchange text messages - on average about 30 texts per day - while others report using similar messaging applications like WhatsApp. Regardless of the social media platform or messaging app, it's not hard to imagine that these trends in use are changing the way American teenagers are accessing and communicating with the world around them. It's also hard to deny that, in all of this social media use, they are likely exposed to some form of these social movements around current political tensions as they play out in myriad ways online, as well as potentially involved in similar scenarios with uncritical consumption and polarization.

We might also consider here the rise in dual career parenthood, as the U.S. Bureau of Labor reported that both parents were employed in nearly half of all married-couple families in 2016. As early as 1969, Rapaport and Rapaport suggested that dual career couples are more likely to suffer from "overload dilemmas," in which they have less time and fewer resources for non-career matters. With both parents in a household dedicated to full-time work, it also follows that teenagers have more time to use digital devices and social media platforms outside the supervision or awareness of their parents or guardians (Livingstone & Helsper, 2010).

Furthermore, as teenagers have often been using technology as digital natives since early childhood and parents may sometimes seem to be struggling to adapt as digital immigrants, research is growing around strategies to help parents overcome their lack of comfort or unawareness of technology use in order to more successfully monitor their children through modeling (Radesky et al., 2014; Vaala & Bleakley, 2015) or mediating their use (Jiow, Lim, & Lin, 2016). And even if parents are aware and comfortable with monitoring or mediating their children's social media and technology use, we can see, as described above, that they may not be fully equipped to help their children navigate the complicated terrain of social media interaction and critical media consumption.

This is not, however, to place the blame for potentially troubling social media interaction or the responsibility for solving these complex issues squarely on the shoulders of parents. The aim here, instead, is to suggest that both technology and family structures are rapidly changing in a way that may leave young people in a precarious situation. If we are to instill our hope in this generation as the problem-solvers of the social issues described here, untutored access to a wealth of information and tools for communication - to be created, consumed, and shared however they wish - is not the best place to begin. As adults themselves continue to struggle with navigating the complexities of civic engagement and discourse both online and in person, it is imperative that we consider the ways in which we are preparing and equipping young Americans to engage with these issues. Given constraints of time and understanding on behalf of parents and other adult influences, it would seem that much of the responsibility for this preparation falls to schools.

Conclusion: Civic Education, Revisited

And so it seems that we've come full circle - to a place in which we must begin (or continue, as always) to re-examine the role of educational institutions in helping students to navigate their democratic participation and civic engagement. What is also clear through examining the current issues that will demand engagement from future generations of students is that disentangling democratic participation from its ties to technology and social media use would be a disservice. When so much of what currently constitutes civic discourse plays out online, it is essential to consider how we might implement civic education programs that not only encourage students to work together toward a more democratic society, but also help them learn how to do so while navigating an increasingly complicated digital terrain. Given that students are already fully inhabiting this digital world, and in considering the potential lack of adult influence - or, at the least, the influence of adults who are critical users themselves - much of the responsibility for learning about critical media consumption and ethical and responsible digital citizenship as a central component of democratic participation is falling on classrooms and schools. What we've seen here demonstrates that young people, and even adults, are, in fact, constantly connected. We know that technology can be used to impact real-life decisions - we regularly allow it to shape the very way in which we read and interact with the world around us - to the extent that we may completely fail to encounter or understand the worldviews of our fellow citizens. What we may not know, and must seek to understand, is whether we can exploit these technologies, in the name of civic education, to work toward a particular set of real-life decisions - toward an increased understanding of the complex nature of multiple perspectives, multiple voices, and multiple ideas, and, perhaps more importantly, toward a willingness to respectfully and productively engage with this multiplicity.

We have no shortage of examples of what happens when students and adults engage with differences in perspective online in unsupervised and untutored ways. With the prevalence of stories and debates around inequality, as evidenced in the growth of the Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter hashtags, it is difficult to imagine that many people in our country are exposed to different perspectives and issues of inequality at increasing rates. On the other hand, we can see that unintentional and uncritical online media consumption can also result in an unwillingness to address or even admit the presence of challenging ideas or different perspectives, and, instead, leads to the kind of personalization and "filter bubble" that encourages more extreme and polarized views. With the prevalence of technology both inside and outside our classrooms, we must begin to more intensely examine the ways in which teachers and schools can coopt technology to carefully craft and guide exposure to multiple perspectives in such a way that increases critical thinking, understanding of complexity, and care. If students can be introduced to new ways of thinking and can encounter and interact with difference and with multiple perspectives in ways that grow their ability to think critically and manage complex ideas in a balanced way, the hope would be that they can also more fully engage in civic participation that is committed to the work of ensuring a more democratic society for all. The goal is not to provide so many perspectives that students remain ambivalent, but that they engage with these perspectives in such a way that encourages them to take an informed stand, with an understanding of the complexity of multiple viewpoints, such that they might be able to engage - both online and offline - in work that will help to unify rather than divide. This is the kind of effort and commitment to democracy that is called upon in our most current conceptions of civic learning, and, as always, carries on the optimistic view of transferring our hope for change to the next generation of educated students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Civic education, as suggested in the introduction to this work, takes the form of society's optimistic approach toward equipping students with skills to meet the challenge of solving current social issues. John King, in his 2016 speech as U.S. Secretary of Education, pointed to racial inequality and police tensions as key issues of current social concern, which is clearly mirrored in the social movements described above. Furthermore, tension around racial inequality and police brutality is reflected in record levels of political polarization (Pew, 2017) and is greatly aided by uncritical and problematic social media use (Pew, 2016). Having set the stage by exploring these issues of social concern, it is essential to examine the ways in which civic education is currently attempting to address them and the possibilities for exploring new means of equipping students with skills to close the gap of polarization.

Literature around civic education, learning, and engagement demonstrates three themes: current civic education seeks outcomes that focus on empathy and social justice; empathy and social justice-based education require critical interaction with multiple perspectives; and educational technologies are uniquely poised to meet these desired outcomes of civic education. Each of these themes is explored below, ultimately suggesting that engaging this sort of civic education can be achieved through a critical and social justice-based approach to using technology to teach with and about empathy. In designing this sort of technology-based intervention, this study provides a demonstration of the ways in which teachers might contribute to the development of students' capacities for empathy. Considering the broader educational and structural conditions that support this kind of teaching, it is also situated within a larger body of scholarship addressing areas of policy, curriculum development, media studies, pedagogy, and

teacher training and support. Combining these fields allows this study to move beyond a learning intervention tied to particular technologies that will undoubtedly change at the rapid rate of technological advancement, and instead positions it within the body of literature that calls for a shift in the culture around technology use in schools. While this study does contribute to promising results regarding the use of immersive learning environments for perspective-taking, it ultimately suggests that engaging these empowering and transformational uses requires policy-makers, administrators, teachers and students to embrace particular dispositions of empathy-based technology use.

Theme 1: Current Civic Education

As demonstrated in the introduction, one need not look too far to find examples of the ways in which civic discourse is playing out in newly challenging and complicated ways in the United States. While not new, the continued call for civic education has become perhaps more intense in light of some of the more explicit challenges to civic and social cohesion, particularly in response to heightened racial tension and political polarization. This section, therefore, includes an exploration of the current state of civic education and the outcomes it hopes to produce.

Civic education policies and practices. In a joint effort, the Education Commission of the United States and the National Center for Learning and Civic Engagement periodically review the state statutes, administrative code, standards, and curricula of civic learning across the United States. In December 2016, the most recent publication, their key findings demonstrated that all 50 states include civics or social studies in standards or curriculum and require students to complete coursework in these areas in order to graduate. The amount of coursework varies by state, however, and only 47 states directly address civic education in state statutes. Of those, 37

require students to demonstrate proficiency in civic education, and 17 include civic learning in their accountability frameworks. Only 20 states provide curriculum support to schools in areas of civic learning. If nothing else, it's clear that policy still varies greatly depending on the state. Locally, the Illinois General Assembly updated the state statutes to include a civics mandate beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, stating that each student must take at least one semester of civics, which, through a focus on government institutions, the discussion of current and controversial issues, service learning, and simulations of the democratic process, shall "help young people acquire and learn to use the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens throughout their lives" (HB4025, 2015).

In response to the relatively new Illinois mandate, IllinoisCivics.org, a civics education resource site, has compiled indicators of best practices in civic learning. These practices include direct instruction on the connection between formal learning and concrete actions, simulations of democratic processes, service learning opportunities, and a focus on current and controversial issues. The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools also adds to this list with a focus on extracurricular activities that offer opportunities for young people to get involved in their schools or communities outside the classroom, and on school governance opportunities in which schools encourage meaningful student participation in the management of the classroom and the school. Research from Lenzi et. al (2014) suggests that a democratic school climate itself is also associated with higher levels of adolescent civic responsibility, arguing that democratic practices, mediated with civic discussion and perceptions of fairness at school, lead not only to civic engagement at school, but also to intentions of future engagement as well.

These policies and practices suggest that civic education should include a combination of direct instruction and participation. In other words, students should directly engage with learning

about democratic processes and how they play out in relation to current social issues. Research from the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools indicates that this direct instruction on democratic processes must also be accompanied with opportunities to practice democratic and civic engagement, such as through student government or other classroom and extra-curricular simulations or opportunities. This combination of explicit instruction and simulated participation as a means of achieving desired outcomes is one that unites several of the other areas of education explored in the literature below.

Civic education outcomes. In addition to policies and practices, knowing desired outcomes of civic education is a key component of evaluating and developing successful educational experiences. Levine (2007) suggests three interconnected themes in civic engagement, including community participation, political engagement, and political voice, ultimately defining this sort of engagement as "any action that legitimately influences public matters in ways that benefit the underlying political structure" (p. 7-8). While vague in and of itself, Levine's definition is left intentionally open in order to challenge the tendency to equate civic action merely with voting behavior.

Similarly pushing the notion of democratic participation beyond the simple act of voting, the Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership (Jacoby, 2009) has outlined key actions in civic engagement, which include the following: learning from others, oneself and the environment to develop informed perspectives on social issues; recognizing and appreciating human diversity and commonality; behaving and approaching conflict or controversy with civility; taking an active role in the political process; participating actively in public life, problem-solving, and service; assuming leadership and membership roles in organizations;

developing empathy, ethics, values, and a sense of social responsibility; and promoting social justice locally and globally.

Drawing on this list from the Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership, there is a set of actions - actively participating in the political process and public life - supported by a particular disposition or perspective - toward creating empathetic connections across diverse perspectives - that, ultimately, leads to social justice. Returning, then, to King's call for the kind of civic education that equips students with skills to address issues of racial inequality and police brutality, it is useful to draw on literature around empathy and social justice education in order to achieve the desired outcomes of civic education.

Theme 2: A Critical Approach to Empathy and Social Justice in Civic Education

Empathetic perspectives leading to action toward social justice are the desired outcomes of the sort of civic education that will equip students to respond to issues of political polarization around racial inequality (Jacoby, 2009). Promoting these outcomes, therefore, requires a nuanced understanding of the ways in which trends in empathy and social justice education may inform our implementation of civic education. Each of these areas is explored below in order to support the argument that a critical approach to social justice education will help students develop both the dispositions and skills needed to participate in civic engagement to solve the issues toward which King points as the goal of civic education.

Empathy education. Education that reaches beyond academic achievement is not a new concept - even Plato included character and moral judgment in his concept of a holistic curriculum. Other early theorists point to the centrality of social and emotional needs and their influence in education, as in Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Vygotsky's social development theory. Social and emotional learning is a recurring buzzword in education and in teacher

preparation programs, and the push toward explicit instruction in empathy is gaining momentum in recent years (Freelander, 2017). Given its explicit connection to the outcomes of civic education, this section explores literature on empathy education, including definitions of empathy, calls for empathy education, and best practices for teaching empathy.

Defining empathy. Amy Coplan, scholar of philosophical and psychological perspectives on empathy, defines empathy as "a complex imaginative process in which an observer simulates another person's situated psychological states while maintaining a clear self-other differentiation" (2011, p. 5). Empathy here is the means by which one can not only understand, but also personally perceive or experience the psychological state of another person within the understanding that they are separate people with unique experiences. Developmental psychologist Martin Hoffman, leading theorist on empathy, characterizes this sort of process as one of perspective-taking, in which a person imagines how they might feel in another's experiences or situation (2000). Leake (2016), in expanding upon the notion of perspective-taking, points to the necessity of both cognitive and affective ways of understanding, requiring both factual and emotional knowledge that results in an awareness of "how the world looks and feels to somebody else with a different personal history and in a particular situation" (p. 2).

The idea of empathy as perspective-taking has a particular set of prerequisites. In order to have empathy for another person, one must be able to cognitively understand the situation in which that person exists. While this information may fall within the realm of traditional notions of academic education in the form of basic knowledge about people, cultures, histories, geographies, etc., the skills for achieving a level of affective understanding may not. The theorists cited above suggest that empathy only occurs when the cognitive understanding of another's situation moves into the ability to apply that understanding to one's own life, or,

conversely, to put oneself within the situation that is cognitively understood. As it's impossible to fully embody another's unique perspective on their own situation, this part of the process returns us to Coplan's suggestion of complex imagination. The skills or ability to attempt to take on the perspective of another in response to a particular situation requires a delicate balance of understanding others, both factually and imaginatively, while also understanding that we are not the same as others. Here, Coplan's notion of maintaining self-other differentiation is essential, in that assuming we can fully understand or know the perspective of another might be equally as troubling as not attempting to do so at all. Empathy exists in, as Leake says, "a *move* to perspective-taking so that one might be more *aware*" (p. 2, emphasis added). Empathy, then, is not achieving an ultimate understanding of another's experiences, but rather a process, a move, or perhaps even a disposition toward *trying to know*. The focus here should remain on achieving awareness of others through both our connection and our separation - our likeness and our difference. This idea is also echoed in the Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership's focus on recognizing both human diversity and commonality - in acknowledging both our sameness and our difference.

Attributes of empathy. Using Walker and Avant's (1983) concept analysis framework, Theresa Wiseman (1996) conducted a wide scale review of literature around empathy. As Walker and Avant suggest, Wiseman identifies defining attributes of empathy, or things that have to be present in order for the concept to occur. In other words, these defining attributes of empathy can be seen as the characteristics, upheld by a wide variety of literature around the concept, that indicate that a person has empathy. According to Wiseman, literature suggests four defining attributes. First, much like the ideas of perspective-taking described above, Wiseman posits that empathetic people see the world as others see it. It is important to note here that, like

above, this concept does not indicate that empathy requires taking on another person's perspective as your own, and does not require even having shared the same experience or agreeing with a person's response to those experiences. The concept of seeing the world as others see it described here refers instead to the ability to understand another person's point of view based on a cognitive recognition of their context and experiences. Second, in addition to understanding other viewpoints, empathetic capacities also require people to understand another's current feelings. Taken together, these reiterate the combination of cognitive and affective ways of understanding others, through understanding both another's situational context or worldview, as well as their emotional response to that perspective. Third, Wiseman suggests that empathy cannot occur without objectivity, or a focus on non-judgmental responses. This work occurs within the perspective that true objectivity is impossible, as moving toward understanding another's perspectives and emotions can only be accomplished through the lens of our own experiences. Wiseman still posits that approaching objectivity through a non-judgmental response is a key component of empathy. While some might argue that the first two attributes might automatically indicate the third, Wiseman also points out the essential difference between *understanding* the perspectives and emotions of others and *accepting* them. She argues, therefore, that though this non-judgmental response is perhaps a more tentative piece, it is still an essential attribute of empathy. The final key attribute, following from the first three, is the ability to communicate one's non-judgmental understanding of others' perspectives and emotions. As Wiseman suggests, the only means of identifying empathy is through the communication of understanding. While we might argue that one could feel empathy without communicating it, Wiseman argues that the communication of understanding is vital if empathy is to be practiced.

Drawing on these defining attributes allows us not only to approach a more useful definition and understanding of empathy, but also a more concrete means of identifying empathy in others.

Empathy education. Within this concept of empathy through perspective-taking - as both cognitive and affective awareness of the perspectives of others within a particular situation - we can begin to examine the current trends around empathy education and its connection to civic learning and engagement. At the postsecondary level, the Core Commitments Initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) outlines the ways in which college education might encourage a more pluralistic, tolerant, and cohesive society, citing both empathy and perspective-taking as a "crucial catalyst for intellectual and moral growth" (Dey et. al., p. ix). The AAC&U has also developed a National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, which has outlined key values in their Framework for Twenty-First-Century Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. One of these values is described as follows:

> The kind of graduates we need at this moment in history need to possess a strong propensity for wading into an intensely interdependent, pluralist world. They need to be agile, creative problem solvers who draw their knowledge from multiple perspectives both domestic and global, who approach the world with empathy, and who are ready to act with others to improve the quality of life for all. (p. 23)

Martha Nussbaum, American philosopher and professor of law, continues a similar call for empathy that has informed parts of the AAC&U's reports mentioned above. She writes that "A graduate of a U.S. university or college ought to be the sort of citizen who can become an intelligent participant in debates involving these [cross-cultural] differences, whether professionally or simply as a voter, a juror, a friend" (p. 8). Like Coplan's definition of empathy, Nussbaum links this kind of university or college education to the cultivation of humanity in three capabilities: to think critically; to see oneself as bound to others as a citizen of the world;

and to think beyond factual knowledge and engage in the narrative imagination. Nussbaum ties the ability for the narrative imagination to empathy, describing it as:

> the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. (p. 10-11)

We see again the conceptualization of empathy as a means of seeking to take on the perspectives of others, as Nussbaum directly connects these capacities to the kind of educational outcomes described by the AAC&U.

It is clear that calls for civic education and for empathy education are rather intimately intertwined. In discussing the kind of civic engagement that we hope to engender as a result of civic education programs in secondary education and beyond, we see an emphasis on recognizing and appreciating both diversity and similarity, much like in the attempt to understand the perspectives of others while also maintaining self-other differentiation. Civic engagement calls for public action and service to others, as in Nussbaum's notion of the binding force of global citizenship. And finally, civic engagement calls for students to be able to develop a complex approach to multiple perspectives and to address those perspectives with civility. In many ways, we might even say that civic engagement and empathy, as defined above, are two parts of the same concept. If we are, therefore, to achieve a greater understanding of the ways in which we might encourage civic engagement as a result of educational experiences, we can inform our thinking about civic education programs by also drawing on literature around teaching with and about empathy.

Best practices for teaching empathy. Nadine Dolby, a central scholar in the field of empathy education, suggests strategies for teaching empathy that are particularly relevant to the

discussion here. In her book *Rethinking Multicultural Education for the Next Generation: The New Empathy and Social Justice* (2012), she describes a pedagogy that focuses on teaching both *with* and *about* empathy. As with the best practices for teaching civic education outlined above, Dolby's pedagogy claims the need to both explicitly teach the importance of empathy while also using an empathetic approach in the process of teaching.

In taking an empathetic approach to teaching, she states that these educators must understand "who they are, who the children in their classroom are, the fundamentals about the world they live in, why the world is in peril, and the possibilities for contributing in positive ways that exist for all of us every day" (p. 4). Through approaching their own students with empathy, Dolby suggests that educators can guide students on their own journeys from sympathy, to empathy, to informed empathy, or empathy plus knowledge. She argues that this journey is a slow one, particularly when taking into account research that suggests that current students have less empathy or capacity for empathy than previous generations. Dolby points to a meta-analysis of seventy-two studies on empathy in college-age students from 1972 to 2009 that indicates a decline in empathy of 40 percent during that time period (Konrath, O'Brien, and Hsing, 2011). The authors attribute this drop to the distancing effect of social networking technologies and the rise of violence displayed in video games and other electronic media. Amy Baugher (2007) also points to the decline of empathy and social action among her generation, citing students' fear of deviating from a traditional path that seems most likely to secure a financially stable future. Baugher's reflections suggest that the declining economic security of the middle class has contributed to the creation of a generation that is focused inward on self, not outward toward connecting with and helping others.

Despite these trends, though, Dolby also posits that current research on the biological roots of empathy and cooperation demonstrate that both of these are innate to humans. She argues, therefore, that the current lack of empathy must be cultural, rather than biological - which is not hard to imagine given the societal clashes and technological trends described in the introduction to this paper. Dolby also states that research demonstrates the ways in which human brains respond differently in cultures that do promote cooperation and empathy. Creating such a culture in our classrooms, then, is an important step toward building students' capacities for empathy.

Drawing on a framework of empathy for humans, animals, and the environment, Dolby contends that the most powerful way for students to build these capacities is to experience immersion in meaningful experiences situated outside the confines of the classroom, such as service-learning or internships. She argues that education that moves outward, from the classroom, to the community, and into the world, allows students to expand their empathic capacities and to stretch the boundaries of empathy to include those who are different from them and that share fewer commonalities.

We can see, then, two main pedagogical components situated within Dolby's (2012) theory of empathy. One involves teaching with our own sense of empathy and creating an empathetic atmosphere within the classroom – viewing students as knowledgeable and capable of learning, and being sensitive to the strengths and needs they bring to their education. The second central component of Dolby's theory involves explicitly teaching about empathy, particularly in ways that provide students with opportunities to interact with others in new settings that create real-life opportunities to grow and practice empathetic interaction. If we continue to draw on the notion of empathy as an attempt to understand and take on the

perspectives of others, then Dolby's pedagogy here suggests that teachers must first practice this kind of empathy with their students in order to understand the cognitive and affective skills they bring into the educational space and how these skills relate to and play out within their lives both in and out of school. If teachers can begin to understand their students in this way, then the work of encouraging student growth in this kind of empathic approach toward others and their unique perspectives becomes a logical outcome of the educational experience, particularly when combined with opportunities for students to encounter differing perspectives and to practice an empathetic response. We can also see a direct connection between these two tenets of empathy-based education and the civic education described above, which include both explicit instruction and participation with democratic processes within the school, but also, and perhaps more importantly, an emphasis on moving toward action outside the school as well.

Empathy in pre-service teacher preparation. Dolby's concept of practicing empathy toward students – particularly within the social justice-oriented aims of this work – can be further illustrated through an understanding of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). In conceiving of this sort of praxis, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) focuses on a particular sort of knowledge about students that is rooted in understanding culture and the ways it functions in education. In moving beyond vague notions of "good teaching," her research suggests that this approach to effectively engaging students' cultures in the classroom is grounded in a set of beliefs, attitudes, and actions on behalf of teachers. Her study describes these "good teachers" as those who believe all students are capable of academic success, who demonstrate a connectedness with all students through a focus on collaboration, and who understand that knowledge is not static, but rather is shared, recycled, and constructed, and must be viewed critically. Geneva Gay adds to this with the notion of cultural caring which, rather than a gentle

or nurturing concern, requires teachers to "care so much about ethnically diverse students and their achievement that they accept nothing less than high-level success from them and work diligently to accomplish it" (2002, p. 109). Similarly, Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe culturally responsive teachers as those who hold affirming views of racial and cultural difference, who are socioculturally conscious, who understand how knowledge is constructed, and who know the lives of youth. All of these authors call for a focus on this sort of teaching in teacher education and preparation programs so that more teachers can approach this sort of "good teaching."

Others, however, suggest that teacher preparation often struggles to transition these theories into practice, primarily because of the difficulty of prescribing a standardized set of teacher characteristics or behaviors (Fasching-Varner & Seriki, 2012; Warren & Talley, 2017; Young, 2010). They suggest that for CRP to be truly responsive, teachers must be prepared to adapt their pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of their specific learning community – a task which is difficult to accomplish within a pre-service program. To close this gap, as Dolby suggests, teacher preparation of this sort must also include its own focus on empathy. Much like the literature on defining empathy, theories on a pre-service focus on empathy draw heavily on perspective taking. Gehlbach (2004) suggests that this perspective taking may sometimes take the form of person-level knowledge that leads to an understanding of students' aspirations, values, affinities, beliefs, language, and lived racialized experience. He argues that social perspective taking is a professional ability that teachers must have, as it broadens their understanding of how to respond to students' needs as well as making decisions about how to meet them. Broadly, empirical evidence demonstrates that empathy improves how teachers

communicate and respond across racial and cultural difference (Black & Phillips, 1982; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Peck, et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Warren suggests that "the application of empathy expands teacher candidates' knowledge of students, families, and communities such that there are necessary shifts in their beliefs, attitudes, and values determining their teaching dispositions" (2017, p. 173). Drawing on Haberman's (1991) summary of dispositions as the beliefs and attitudes that combine to produce values that teachers act upon, we can see how empathy that expands teachers' understanding of student culture and encourages a set of beliefs, attitudes, and values about those students is in line with the aims of CRP. The application of empathy to the broad notion of teacher disposition - particularly as in Katz and Raths' conception of "trends in behavior" (1985, p. 301) – helps to clarify the role of teacher preparation in meeting these goals. Rather than equipping pre-service teachers with knowledge about all of the possible forms of diversity they might encounter, focusing on empathetic dispositions as a set of actions that seek out knowledge of students and their lived experiences helps to prepare them to take on this task once they are in their learning communities. Korthagen (2004) solidifies this combined role of teacher preparation programs, arguing that there is no single route to becoming a "good teacher." Instead, he argues that teacher preparation programs should continue to help equip pre-service teachers with knowledge of institutional racism, intersectionality and oppression, and issues of power and privilege. He argues that teacher educators must also model perspective-taking so that future teachers develop the capacity to acquire accurate knowledge of students and their local sociocultural context, and to respond based on that knowledge. In other words, pre-service teacher programs must intentionally model and develop students' capacities for perspective-taking and empathy in order for those students to become teachers who can effectively teach

across diverse backgrounds. As Warren (2017) notes, applying these capacities developed in teacher training to specific learning communities must also become the work of continued professional development. It is critical to continue to support teachers' capacities for empathy and cultural responsiveness once they are in the field balancing these needs with the other demands of the classroom.

Balancing empathy with social justice. Leake's (2016) move toward perspective-taking remains central to these pedagogical theories of teaching with and about empathy and its connection to the desired outcomes of civic education. It is clear, therefore, that incorporating opportunities to safely share and engage with multiple perspectives within the classroom and beyond is an effective way of equipping students to take on the work of closing the rift of political division at the heart of civic engagement. What we must also carefully consider, however, is the way in which we equip and encourage students toward a particular response to these multiple perspectives. Drawing upon the conceptualizations of civic education that would engage students as agents of social change to work, with a sense of social responsibility, toward social justice at local, national, and global levels, it seems as though the end goal is not merely an exposure to myriad perspectives. It is, perhaps, not even tolerance or acceptance of multiple perspectives. It is clear from the calls to civic education and engagement cited here that the aim is not to produce a generation of students who is so overwhelmed with the weight of many different worldviews that they remain apathetic, leaving each person to his or her own perspective, unchallenged and untouched.

Instead, if we are to approach solving these issues of extreme polarization, it would seem that empathetically engaging multiple perspectives is the beginning, rather than the end. Mediating this exposure and fostering a response of continued civic engagement - of the sort that

seeks change for social justice - requires a careful approach toward these perspectives and also a particular response - on behalf of educators - to perspectives that might not be in line with the social justice ends of civic engagement. Developing exposure that is balanced with empathy for all perspectives and the careful curation of voices such that, ultimately, students themselves acquire perspectives toward social justice is no easy task. Toward this end, the work of civic education may also be heavily informed by both social justice and critical pedagogies, explored below.

Social justice pedagogies. 21st century definitions of Social Justice Education (SJE) characterize it as both a process and a goal – the process of understanding institutional and individual oppression and the goal of seeking change – with the ultimate aim being "full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs" (Bell, 1997, p. 3) Social justice pedagogy, therefore, provides a means of balancing multiple perspectives in order to ensure that all groups participate equally. Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* informing much of the current implementation of SJE, argues that schools traditionally function through methods of "banking education," where students are seen as empty vessels to be filled by the traditional knowledge canons of the privileged academic elite. Freire argues that this kind of education is far from democratic and actually serves to domesticate, dehumanize, and oppress. He depicts a vision of Dewey's participatory democracy in which only some are invited to participate and schools, as institutions of social reform, actually serve only to recreate and reify the same unjust system that privileges the knowledge and cultures of the already privileged. Instead, Freire suggests the educational goal of conscientization, or the ability to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 17). In order to mold civic learning and the exposure to

multiple perspectives toward acting for social justice, SJE pedagogy suggests the need to include voices that can illuminate the contradictions that prevent equal participation of all groups in society.

Drawing on Freire's foundation of perceiving contradiction and taking action against oppression leads us to two important factors in the current implementation of SJE. First, as Bidell (1994) and Williamson (2007) mention, is the notion of traditional marginalization or legacies of discrimination. In other words, current SJE must account for the history of societal structures that inherently discriminate and marginalize particular groups of people. For Adams and Bell (2016), like Freire, this notion is best captured by the term oppression "rather than discrimination, bias, prejudice, or bigotry," because it emphasizes "the pervasive nature of social inequality that is woven through social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness" (p. 4). They advocate, therefore, that current implementations of social justice education seek to understand how oppression operates both in social systems and in the personal lives of individuals from diverse communities.

The second component of current social justice education is the notion of maintaining individual social and personal identities. As Landreman and MacDonald-Dennis (2013) argue, early perspectives of SJE that limited diversity to issues of race and, increasingly, to gender, are now being challenged:

> to include the multiple and intersecting identities students bring to the educational environment and to members of other historically targeted groups, such as people with disabilities; people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; people who are members of the poor and working classes; and people who don't speak English or identify as Christian. (p. 14)

In other words, current social justice education seeks to combat the sweeping generalities of multicultural education and, instead, to focus on pervasive oppression inherent both in societal

structures and understandings of individual identity. It is this concept of the multiplicity and intersectionality of identities as doubly or multiply marginalizing that particularly characterizes many current implementations of SJE.

Drawing on this characterization of SJE, we see a focus on a particular perspective - of individuals and groups who have been subject to histories and legacies of marginalization. Within the examples of current social tension explored in the introduction, it is clear that many dissonant perspectives exist. There are those who speak out against police brutality toward black males, others whose reply demands that white lives matter, too, and still others who focus primarily on respect for the police officers themselves. Some support kneeling during the anthem as a means of calling attention to the inequalities inherent in this treatment of black males, and others demand that all should stand to show respect for the U.S. flag and military. Others claim they would rather watch football without having to consider these issues at all. A group of white males marches under the demand that their rights, history, and culture be respected, and others respond by calling them Nazis and decrying that these racist perspectives do not truly represent their version of America. What Freire, and these current conceptions of SJE, would have us do is to give voice to the perspectives here that illuminate contradictions, that point to imbalances of power, and, most importantly, that call out the oppressive aspects of society. But in the face of contradictions in which voices on each side demand that they are being oppressed, negotiating the imbalance of power and curating a careful exposure to these perspectives is difficult to carry out. If we are, as Nussbaum suggests, to draw on the kind of empathy that helps students become intelligent readers of others' stories, we must also help them navigate the difficult task of understanding how to interpret the voices in these stories in a way that would help them work toward democratic and social justice ends. To understand more about giving voice to

perspectives that illuminate not only the perception of oppression but also its true histories and legacies, we can turn to critical pedagogy as a means of informing practice of perspective-sharing in educational spaces.

Critical pedagogy. In general, critical pedagogy seeks to provide opportunities to understand power and oppression in society. Specifically, critical pedagogy:

> signals how questions of audience, voice, power, and evaluation actively work to construct particular relations between instructors and students, institutions and society, and classrooms and communities … Pedagogy in the critical sense illuminates the relationship among knowledge, authority, and power. (Giroux, 1994, p. 30)

This ties directly into the history and definition of SJE in its aim to grow an understanding of oppression at the institutional and societal level and also at the individual level, with its concern for audience, voice, and individual power. Furthermore, we can see how such an approach, through its consideration of voice and power, would encourage the sharing of diverse perspectives, as called for through empathy-based civic education.

In seeking to understand how we might apply a critical pedagogical approach, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008**)** return to Freire's (1970) rebuttal of banking education. As in CRP, they argue that we must draw on the social contexts of students' "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 2000) in such a way that allows them to bring their own voice into the classroom. Along these lines, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell also suggest that creating conditions for students to use their voices to address their own oppression, or for "suffering communities to hold structural and material inequities up to the light of inquiry," is an essential means of implementing critical pedagogy. As Freire suggests, naming one's oppression is the first step toward liberation from it. Giving voice to oppression also "utilizes critical pedagogy to critique notions of equal opportunity and access, making education a weapon to name, analyze, deconstruct, and act upon

the unequal conditions … in disenfranchised communities across the nation and the world" (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008, p. 10). This consideration of critical pedagogy takes the important step, directly tied to the conceptions of empathy-based civic education described above, from cognitive knowledge of differing perspectives, of imbalances of power and inequality, toward acting to change these inequalities.

It is clear, then, that a main component of embracing critical pedagogies for meeting the social justice goals of civic education revolves around creating a space in which voices of oppression can be heard, such that oppression can be understood at both individual and institutional levels in new ways. This ties directly to Freire's refutation of "banking" education as well, in its ability to position students as authorities on their own voice in classroom discourse. For this kind of voice-giving to occur, however, we must carefully examine our notions of democratic participation and voice. While democratic participation might seem to suggest that all voices are heard equally, I would argue that equity of expression – the kind described above by Duncan-Andrade and Morrell and Freire – may sometimes function best through the limitation of certain voices. For example, Applebaum (2003) argues that maintaining an equitable classroom environment may sometimes rely on intentional silence. Drawing from MacKinnon (1993) and Matsuda (1993), Applebaum characterizes assaultive speech, or "words that wound," as speech that:

> has the ability to restrict the victim's personal freedom by placing the victim in double binds where the exercise of the right of speech may result in the loss of one's job, one's opportunity for an education, or even one's life. (p. 155)

She also points to the physiological consequences of this speech, including symptoms of emotional distress such as rapid pulse rate, problems breathing, nightmares, hypertension, psychosis, and even suicide. To illustrate this sort of exchange, Applebaum writes about a

religious student in her class who stated that she "loves the sinner but hates the sin." After talking later with a gay student who heard this comment, Applebaum says that this student, who was not "out" at the time, felt that he couldn't respond for fear of "outing" himself or the risk of being suspected as gay. This student, therefore, finds himself in a position where, if he does speak he feels that he must falsely reference his own heterosexuality or, if he remains silent, he forfeits his freedom to be who he is. Either way, the voice of this gay student has been silenced at the expense of expression from another student. She writes that "her freedom of expression constrains his; her freedom to speak silences him and, perhaps, others like him. Her integrity compels him to waive his" (p. 156).

Applebaum argues, therefore, that such assaultive speech perpetuates social subordination through illocutionary speech acts – they actually do what they say the moment they are spoken. In other words, because of the social conventions of power that are inferred through its historical repetition by authoritative speakers, assaultive speech recreates and reinforces the negative recognition of another person at the moment it is spoken. This force in the classroom, therefore, counteracts notions of democratic participation and serves to deconstruct equality. Applebuam argues that achieving true democracy in the classroom inherently involves the risk of making the majority feel mistreated or victimized while the oppressed, or the minority, are elevated to the same level. To this end, certain voices – like that of the religious student mentioned above – may need to be silenced, or, at the least, carefully mediated.

Drawing on this notion of voice in critical pedagogy, it seems that achieving the step toward acting for social justice as the goal of civic education involves not only exposure to multiple perspectives, but also the careful curation of which perspectives are afforded more

power. The democratic processes of discourse and interaction with multiple perspectives in the learning space must include strategies for giving voice with care – for elevating voices of the truly oppressed, even at the expense of those whose voices serve to express and reify oppression feeling unjustly silenced. It is inherent in taking an empathy-based approach to civic education that crafting careful exposure to multiple perspectives and creating spaces for voice-giving and perspective-taking must also include conversations that help students understand which voices must be heard and why. This is a key component of the sort of education that would meet the goals of civic engagement – not simply to understand others' perspectives, but, as Nussbaum suggests, to become *intelligent* readers of their stories. This sort of intelligence, as reiterated through these multiple contributing perspectives on education, requires both cognitive and affective ways of knowing the perspectives of others, as well as the skills and the disposition to work toward giving voice to the stories that can do more than reify structural and individual systems of oppression.

Theme 3: Technology and Exposure to Multiple Perspectives

As demonstrated above, civic education, in building an empathetic approach to multiple perspectives with the goal of working toward social justice, is most effective when it combines participation in classrooms and learning spaces that are both implicitly democratic and empathetic, with opportunities to explicitly learn about and practice democratic participation and empathy beyond the classroom. The need for real-life or immersive opportunities as a means of growing students' abilities in perspective-taking is evident in literature describing best practices in civic education (IllinoisCivics.org) and in building empathy (Dolby, 2012). Creating opportunities for this kind of learning, however, is often difficult and rare, particularly at the secondary level or below. Through the *National Study of the Prevalence of Community services*

and Service-Learning in K-12 Public Schools, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service, nearly 2,000 principals of K-12 public schools were surveyed on the prevalence of community service and service-learning as a component of civic education in their schools. While data demonstrated substantial growth in service-learning from 1979 to 1999, by 2008 the number of schools offering opportunities for service learning declined from 32% to 24%. Furthermore, in 2008, only 19% of all K-12 principals surveyed reported that their district had a policy to encourage the integration of service-learning into the course curriculum. Though relatively out-of-date and published prior to Dolby's research, we might optimistically guess that the current push toward empathy and civic education may have also led to reinstating these kinds of service-learning opportunities. The survey from 2008 is the most recent data collected from the Corporation for National and Community Service and other research around the prevalence of these kinds of educational experiences is scarce, at best. The data from 2008 also demonstrates, however, that principals at the time reported budget constraints and state curriculum requirements as key factors forcing schools to place service activities outside the curriculum. Without more current data to draw upon, it is just as easy to imagine that research calling for a stronger focus on service-learning opportunities is likely still heavily tempered by budget and curricular constraints.

If providing opportunities that allow students to encounter differing perspectives beyond the classroom is limited by these constraints, it would seem we might need to look toward other possibilities within the classroom that might help to simulate these opportunities in order to meet the call for empathy education as a means of encouraging productive civic engagement. Another recently growing field of research points to ways in which technology may create unique opportunities for students to encounter, share, and reflect upon different perspectives in ways

that may have the potential to be more productive than in-person face-to-face encounters. In considering research on the ways in which students can often more intentionally and easily share perspectives in online spaces along with the possibilities for new immersive technologies to create safe opportunities for students to encounter differing perspectives, we can examine the ways in which incorporating technology into the classroom can help not only make up for the lack of service-learning or other non-classroom-based opportunities, but can also expand upon these opportunities to open new potential for growing empathy and, therefore, encouraging civic engagement. Furthermore, as students are already often navigating exposure to multiple perspectives through their own use of technology, it is both logical and imperative to co-opt these technologies for classroom use so that we might foster conversation about empathy-based technology use as well.

Online learning and perspective-sharing. Some critics of technology-based education argue that online interaction cannot possibly approach the same depth of social and communal learning that occurs in face-to-face settings (Seery, 2010). Land (2004) summarizes these concerns as anxiety over cyberspace as a "cold medium" where one doesn't receive the instant feedback they would in face-to-face education, thereby resulting in a sense of loss – loss of contact, of companionship and community, of confidence, and of certainty (p. 530). Similarly, Cunningham (2014) argues that, because online students do not have their physical bodies in the classroom, they are disembodied, which can lead to a limited, fly-on-the-wall kind of educational experience.

Some theorists push this disembodiment into other areas of concern around anonymity and identity issues. Pao and Taplin (2015) argue that anonymity online can be "incredibly toxic and sometimes deadly," allowing the distribution of illegal materials (child pornography,

private images, etc.), and the sharing of "the most vile, racist and hateful comments imaginable" (p. 66). Even as early as 1997, Johnson warned against anonymity online, saying:

> Trust in the information we use in decision making and trust in the individuals with whom we have relationships seems crucial to our way of being. Yet trust is difficult to develop in an environment in which one cannot be sure of the identities of the people with whom one is communicating. It is difficult to develop a reliable history of experiences with specific people. (p. 62)

It seems that the lack of physical presence, or of the surveilling glance, might allow people to take advantage of the lack of, or perhaps misplaced, trust in order to craft an online presence that is false, harmful, or even illegal.

Nakamura (1995) furthers this preoccupation with anonymity in her consideration of the ways in which bodies do exist in cyberspace. She argues that the "bodies" we create serve to reify dominant ideologies and divides in a variety of ways, as through her notion of "identity tourism." She posits that people in online spaces are allowed to try on new racial identities without the risk associated with real life, but she also suggests that these identities often reify racist and sexist views – like that of the Asian male warrior or the Asian female geisha. She warns that identity tourism can be harmful in that it "reduc[es] non-white identity positions to part of a costume or masquerade to be used by curious vacationers in cyberspace" (p. 718). Nakamura also contends that in other online settings where race is not discussed at all, the privilege of omission becomes reinforced; in the absence of racial identification, whiteness is usually assumed.

In a similar discussion of bodily representations in cyberspace, Boler (2007) suggests that marginalizing difference is often altogether erased or, when it is present, likely only exists in superficial measures. She writes, for example:

> Computer-mediated expressions of experience related to oppression are unlikely to engage the reader in the kind of 'bearing witness' necessary to transformative

> dialogue. It is very difficult to demand attentive listening and deep grasp of another's experience within the context of fast-paced, multitasking, impermanent traces of digital interaction. Computer mediated communication encourages, at best, the superficiality of drive-by difference. (p. 146)

In this reductive experience with difference, Boler argues that real-life "otherness" is often replicated rather than providing opportunities to inquire into the ways in which difference is constructed and perceived. Both Nakamura and Boler suggest that the anonymity of online spaces may allow for racist or sexist reproductions of identity or, at the least, a superficial treatment of difference that can lead to the continued essentialization of these identities.

On the other hand, however, Greenhalgh-Spencer (2011) posits that her experiences with online learning have actually included more "intimate and thorough engagement in online spaces" (p. 175) than in face-to-face learning environments. She suggests that "this intimacy may be because some people feel more comfortable expressing themselves in the faceless and controlled environment of the online post" (p. 175). Along these lines, DePalma and Atkinson (2007) suggest the possibility for a different kind of identity performativity in online spaces. They report on an online discussion board about sexuality and equality in schools in which they discuss the discursive strategy they call *strategic (re)embodiment*, signifying that "respondents purposefully re-embodied themselves (e.g. as gay, straight, parents, men, women, members of particular ethnicities) through a sort of performativity" (p. 500). DePalma and Atkinson argue that openly sharing perspectives in this way - through bringing lived realities into the virtual space of the online discussion board - served to lend support to participants' arguments. They state that this intentional re-embodiment ascribes authority and vulnerability to bodies in virtual spaces that invokes a type of insider status and affords more power to arguments. In other words, despite the inherently disembodied nature of online interaction, users also have the choice to

intentionally share particular aspects of their identities in ways that can reveal more intimate details about their unique perspectives. This kind of strategic re-embodiment not only counters the notion of anonymity, but also demonstrates the ways in which affording the choice to carefully reveal these personal components of one's perspective can combat the potential for troublingly marginalizing or reductive representations of different identities.

Similar to DePalma and Atkinson's (2007) discussion, Hess (2014) points to the process of digital storytelling as a powerful means of sharing and engaging with multiple perspectives. Through a process of blending recorded audio narration and images, Hess argues that digital storytelling requires a "slowing down, and a set of processes that draw people into focused attention to the elements of storytelling and its subsequent embedding in digital tools" (Hess, 2014, p. 14). She states that the significant period of time spent both crafting and sharing the work of telling stories digitally is one of "*attending* to meaning-making that is significantly contemplative" (p. 20), that emphasizes the focus on one's own story and on the stories of others within the community. In emphasizing both the creation and sharing of these human stories, Hess explicitly connects digital storytelling to empathy by drawing on neuroscientific research around mirror neurons and their role in the process of empathy development. To illuminate her argument, she refers to Stern's definition of mirror neurons, in which he describes them as neurons that fire while an observer watches another person behave. Despite inaction on behalf of the observer, the same neurons that fire to produce the action being observed also fire in the observer's brain. According to Stern, this "permits us to directly participate in another's actions, without having to imitate them. This 'participation' in another's mental life creates a sense of feeling/sharing with/understanding them, and in particular their intentions and feelings" (Stern, 2007, p. 37). Hess argues, therefore, that the slow and careful process of creating one's own

digital story and then engaging with the stories of others encourages "a visual and aural attending that appears to be similar to the kinds of practices neuroscientists are using to promote the development of mirror neurons" (p. 20). In other words, if we focus first on the creation our own stories and then on the hearing of others' stories, we will be able to more fully participate in the perspectives of others through a sense of connection and understanding. Using digital tools to tell stories encourages the kind of technology-based interaction that avoids anonymity or reductionist expression and encourages the development of empathy. It is a process that quite literally helps us become more skilled at intelligently reading others' stories by participating, through the activation of mirror neurons and empathetic responses, in the process of their retelling.

Teacher-guided technology use. As Greenhalgh-Spencer (2011) suggests, online and technology-based education may provide tools for "intimate and thorough engagement," but it is still the teacher's authority that shapes the environment to allow for this sort of participation. The examples above demonstrate the ways in which online interaction may be troublingly reductive and counterproductive to the goals of civic education, or may allow for more careful and authentic participation in the process of telling one's own story and hearing the stories of others. Given the possibility for either outcome, we might also return to the first component of Dolby's empathy-based education in which teachers are explicit about both their attempts to understand the perspectives of their students and their encouragement for the students to attempt to understand the perspectives of others. If online interactions are constructed with an explicit foundation in empathy, it would seem that we might be able to more easily foster the kind of intimate and thorough engagement in online spaces that would encourage productive perspective-sharing rather than the problematic reductionist results that Nakamura (1995) and Boler (2007) describe. This kind of explicit instruction around engaging empathy in online

interactions would not only provide opportunities for students to practice building their own empathy, but would also help model for them the ways in which we might interact empathetically in online spaces outside the classroom as well.

What is important here, then, is the choice. Avoiding online interaction in education because of the possibility for sharing harmful perspectives seems unnecessary and perhaps even dangerous, given that these sorts of interactions play out outside the classroom regularly. It seems, instead, that monitoring and facilitating online interaction that encourages the potential for students to intentionally embody and reveal unique and personal aspects of their perspectives in ways they might not otherwise feel capable of sharing in face-to-face interactions is an essential component of approaching empathy-based civic engagement. Using these tools productively to engage with multiple perspectives in safe ways in the classroom would serve not only to create a more empathic culture within the physical and online classroom space, but also to provide an example of the ways in which students can continue to engage in productive and empathetic civic discourse even beyond the classroom.

Digital divides and design. This choice for empathetic engagement must also consider the kinds of technologies we employ in our classroom and the ways in which we teach about them. Traditional notions of technology in the classroom have long been focused on closing digital divides in terms of different levels of access or types of use across socioeconomic and racial lines. Watkins (2012) reconceives of this divide, suggesting that we should focus instead on encouraging a particular set of uses for all students that include "more enhanced and more empowered expressions of learning, creative expression, and civic engagement" (p. 9). He suggests that digital equity inherently involves teaching about technology in ways that encourage digital literacy beyond basic skills – moving beyond "tools" literacy and into

"design" literacy that builds capacities for critical thinking, inquiry, discovery, and real-world problem solving. Part of achieving more equitable outcomes in and through technology use also requires us to consider the types of tools we use. Pinkard suggests (2001, 2005) that the technology design process must be made more explicit to ensure that educational software is based on more than just mainstream cultural experiences. Her research on gendered and culturally responsive technology draws on the same tenets of CRP, suggesting that achieving digital literacy for all students must include ways of connecting their lived experiences to their technology-based educational experiences.

Beyond design, approaching the sort of equitable digital literacy that Watkins demands also requires teachers and administrators to reconsider their own perceptions about technology use. In her book *Worried about the Wrong Things: Youth, Risk, and Opportunity in the Digital World* (2017), Jacquelyn Ryan Vickery suggests that this change in perception constitutes a shift from "harm-driven" expectations to "opportunity-driven" expectations. Harm-driven expectations are those that are based on a privileged perception of risk, much like the concerns around anonymity and safety previously described. Preventing digital interaction in educational spaces on behalf of the potential for this sort of harm is privileged in that it precludes students who don't have opportunities for using these technologies outside the classroom from developing the digital literacy that Watkins suggests. Opportunity-driven expectations for educational technology use, on the other hand, not only provide opportunities to teach students about safe technology use, but also acknowledge the practices and agency of young people. Rather than viewing them as passive victims who need protection, Vickery suggests that we should provide them with spaces to creatively explore their potential for interaction and production in digital environments. This notion is supported by the research of those like Justine

Cassell, whose study on early large-scale online communities for young people demonstrated that they constructed new types of leadership identities. Notably, her sociolinguistic analysis revealed that these young peoples' language use didn't adhere to adult expectations for leadership, but rather developed their own communal styles of interaction. She suggests that "the internet may be making possible new kinds of democracy, new visions of community, and new ways for young people to become civically engaged" (p. 447). In considering our own perceptions of technology use, it is critical to consider the powerful ways in which young people can claim these spaces in manners that don't align with our expectations. Toward this end, teachers must be aware of the potential for using digital spaces in ways that encourage civic engagement, must be able to carefully support these uses in their classroom, and must approach these opportunities with flexibility that allows students the full access of their own creative and productive agency to remake democracy.

Finally, if we are to carefully craft opportunities for students to engage with and move toward taking on multiple perspectives, Turkle (2004) suggests that this need for plurality over binary ways of thinking must also inform our approach toward technology. Like Watkins and Pinkard, she suggests a new form of media literacy that questions the built-in assumptions of technology as part of a larger culture of simulation. Turkle argues that simulations are often built around binary notions of challenge and mastery – "There is danger. It is mastered. A still-more-powerful monster appears. It is subdued. Scary. Safe" (p. 28). Yet, she argues, the real world demands an increasing need to reconsider notions of mastery in terms of black and white or good vs. evil and instead in shades of grey. Students, therefore, must be equipped with skills of using technologies ways that critically examine the sort of world they are displaying and creating. She argues that "information technology is identity technology. Embedding it in a

culture that supports democracy, freedom of expression, tolerance, diversity, and complexity of opinion is one of the next decade's greatest challenges. We cannot afford to fail" (p. 28). We're beyond the next decade from when she wrote these words, and though I might change them slightly (as I tend to lean toward acceptance over tolerance), it seems as though her call remains. In terms of the classroom, teachers must be willing and capable of taking up this work – of questioning and challenging the tools we use, of designing careful experiences that safely engage the agency of students, and of developing students' own skills for critical consumption and production.

Immersive learning. It is clear that the online and digital interactions described above may help students and teachers interact with one another in ways that encourage the productive sharing and understanding of others' perspectives. This kind of interaction seems to address the first component of Dolby's call for empathy education, in that it affords teachers and students the opportunity to share with one another within the space of the classroom. It provides opportunities for teachers to more deeply understand the perspectives of their students in their own attempt at practicing empathy, as well as to create explicit opportunities for students to begin taking an empathic approach to the perspectives of their classmates. If curated and facilitated with care, online engagement – away from the pressures of immediate face-to-face interaction – can also encourage the sort of perspective-sharing that meets the goals of a critical social justice approach in its emphasis on elevating voices that can illuminate histories of oppression and structural and societal inequalities. Dolby ultimately argues, however, that students also need real-life, immersive opportunities to empathetically engage with the perspectives of others across multiple areas of difference outside the classroom. Similarly, social justice pedagogies seek opportunities for students to turn the hearing of voices and taking

on of perspectives of the historically oppressed into action toward changing the structures that serve to recreate this oppression.

While we've already seen that the focus on service-learning as a means of practicing empathy is likely difficult to carry out within the current constraints of secondary education, it is also possible that new technologies may provide similar opportunities for immersive learning that equal, or in some ways even improve upon, the service-learning that Dolby describes. We can continue to draw on Hess's notion of the power of digital storytelling to examine the ways in which students can digitally engage with stories of others beyond the classroom to aid in the continued activation of mirror neurons and growth in empathy, also allowing them to practice the skills of a more intelligent reading of the stories of others.

Virtual reality. According to Hoffman and Hu (1997), virtual reality (VR) is a "highly interactive and dynamic form of simulation in which a computer-generated world or environment can be 'entered', and the three-dimensional objects within it 'explored' using visual, aural, and haptic (touching) senses" (p. 1076). Users' mental experiences in VR are often considered in terms of particular theoretical concepts like immersion, presence, and flow (Jannsen, 2016). Much of the power of virtual reality to provide unique educational experiences draws on the concept of immersion. In order to be immersed in a virtual reality environment, the user must be fully surrounded in such a way that eliminates all barriers between the user and the technology. In such a setting, users experience greater levels of attention and focus, as immersion induces a psychological state in which they actually feel present in the virtual environment (Slater & Wilbur, 1997). Tied to this notion, then, is the concept of presence, or the subjective experience of being in one environment, even when physically situated in another. In other words, the greater the level of immersion, the greater the feeling of being present in the virtual reality rather

than the physical one. And, finally, once a sense of presence is established, its maintenance depends on flow, or the smooth merging of activities when requirements and competencies are balanced. If users are unable to progress through the environment because the requirements are greater than their competencies, Jannsen and colleagues suggest that experiences with VR will be interrupted. A lack of flow, therefore, makes the maintenance of presence and immersion much more difficult.

Drawing on this research, Lindgren (2015) suggests that learning in many fields actually involves a very specific process of modeling and refining certain movements. He argues, therefore, that we can use virtual environments, such as those described above, to cue or train specific actions. Expanding on this idea, he defines a cue as "anything that excites to action." In other words, for Lindgren a cue is any kind of input, via any sensory modality, that serves to "pull us into the environment through the simple mechanism of asking us to respond" (p. 41). Lindgren argues that we can use this potential for body-based engagement in virtual environments to expand the possibilities of cueing into the realm of multiple academic fields. Furthermore, research from Vishwanath, Kam, and Kumar (2017) shows that students who experienced highly immersive virtual reality with presence and flow – or representational fidelity, as they describe it – demonstrate a deeper level of engagement with the material. They suggest that virtual environments that provide a closer, vivid look at new forms of curricular material induce a deeper level of curiosity and questioning. Critically, these authors also point to the use of these technologies in approaching more equitable educational experiences, as creating opportunities for immersive encounters with real-world phenomena in the classroom can help offset the difference in opportunities for this sort of engagement outside the classroom across socioeconomic difference.

We can begin to see, then, the potential for immersive technologies to revolutionize the ways in which students learn not only new physical skills, but also new concepts. Designing virtual reality environments that are immersive, that allow students to feel present, and that create a non-disrupted flow of activities, taking advantage of the opportunity to cue particular actions for success or for mastery, can expand learning well beyond the realm of traditional classroom or even laboratory settings. An example of such a learning environment comes from Beach and Wendt (2014), in a study on the development of social interaction skills for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. They report that, by engaging in social interactions in virtual environments, participants showed moderate gains in their abilities to carry on conversations and to interact. In the conversations that participants had with avatars in Second Life, a three-dimensional modeling program that allows users to freely create and interact, each participant improved in their specific area of weakness. For example, after practicing in the immersive environment, one participant was able to maintain a conversation without redirecting it to his own specific interests, while another was able to more consistently maintain eye contact with the avatars while carrying on a conversation. Notably, gains for both of these students also carried over into more successful interactions in real-life scenarios. These authors also report that participants felt less stress when practicing with the simulator, even though it felt like a real environment. The participants were impressed with how life-like the avatars were throughout the conversation and, therefore, they later felt more confident in approaching the same interactions in real-life situations.

In this example, the benefits of practicing particular actions in an immersive online setting are clear. For these participants, conversation in real life was often stressful and confusing. It's easy to imagine that real-life opportunities to practice skills for social interaction

may not be much less stressful and may also be difficult to design or control. In an immersive environment, therefore, students can be cued to complete particular interactions, such as greeting, maintaining eye contact, carrying on a conversation, and saying goodbye, in a safe and less stressful way. Ultimately, the immersiveness of the environment, as indicated by participants' response about the life-like nature of the avatars, led to a sort of presence that also allowed these skills to transfer into real life situations. We can see how practicing these skills online ultimately led to real-life gains.

While Lindgren's idea of cueing learning with immersive environments, along with the example described above, is closely linked to the mastery of physical or social actions, we might also return to Hess's consideration of mirror neurons as a means of developing empathy. She connects mirror neurons - those that fire in our brain when we watch the actions of another as if we were also completing that action - with the ability to create similar connections to others that aren't necessarily tied to external action, but, rather, the internal development of empathy. I would argue therefore, that the process of engaging with the stories or perspectives of others in an immersive virtual reality environment has the potential to cue particular empathetic responses.

Virtual reality and empathy. It does not seem too far a stretch to expand the same notion of cuing particular responses - in this case, even when the response is a social skill rather than a bodily action - toward the development of empathy. If empathy, as we're using it here, is the ability to take on the perspective of another - with a combination of both cognitive and affective ways of understanding - then it would seem that the opportunity to, quite literally, put oneself within the perspective of another would likely encourage empathy. While Coplan described this kind of perspective-taking as an imaginative process, it is easy to see that virtual reality provides opportunities to experience the perspective of another without relying on the capability to

imagine it. If levels of presence and flow are high enough to feel fully immersed within the perspective of another person's experience, then we might, as suggested above, use virtual reality to train users toward a more empathetic response to difference. Though a very new concept, a few examples of the potential for VR to engender empathy are explored below.

First, Gehlbach, et al. (2015) write explicitly about the connection between virtual environments and perspective-taking. In a study on social perspective taking and conflict resolution, they describe types of perspective taking that vary in two ways: the degree of knowledge about the target (the person whose perspective is being taken), and the passive or active nature of learning about the target. Their study demonstrates that the higher degree of knowledge and the more active forms of learning resulted in the most productive type of social perspective taking. In those instances, participants engaging in conflict-resolution who had learned more about the values and priorities of the target and who had experienced their perspective in immersive ways were more open and receptive to negotiating and reported more positive relationships with the target. They also demonstrate that social perspective taking is most effective when tasks are scaffolded – when the target perspectives shift from less challenging, or more similar to the negotiator's, toward more challenging, more different perspectives. This study suggests the powerful ability of immersive virtual environments to increase the potential for perspective-taking, a critical step in engaging capacities for empathy.

In other lab-based settings, Mel Slater, head of the Experimental Virtual Environments Lab for Neuroscience and Technology in Barcelona, describes the wide range of experiments he has conducted regarding how people respond when virtually inhabiting a body that is unlike their own (Greene, 2016). He argues that these opportunities not only change our sense of where we are, but also of who we are, and that the ability to take on this new perspective can lead to

changes in real-life action. Along these lines, Jeremy Bailenson describes similar experiments conducted at Stanford University's Virtual Human Interaction Lab called "Empathy at Scale" (Alsever, n.d.). In a series of separate experiences, they found that viewing themselves in a different situation or being able to view familiar experiences through the perspective of others led to changes in behavior. For example, young people who saw a 65-year-old avatar, or virtual representation of themselves, responded by beginning to save more money for retirement, and people who viewed their environment as if they were colorblind were more willing to help a colorblind person later. In both of these scenarios, participants were more likely to change their actions after experiencing the scenario through virtual reality than they were through imagination alone.

If we are to think of empathy as perspective-taking that often relies on the ability to imagine another's perspective, it's easy to see the implications of removing the imaginative part of the process and replacing it with an immersive experience. In a final example, Chris Milk describes his VR film called *Clouds over Sidra*, in which viewers experience a first-person perspective of life in a Syrian refugee camp. In discussing his film in a TED Talk, Milk says that VR "connects humans to other humans in a profound way I've never seen before in any other form of media, and it can change people's perception of each other...That's why I think virtual reality has the potential to actually change the world" (Mufson, 2015).

Virtual Reality in the classroom. While immersive VR experiences like those described above are still relatively new, it is not hard to imagine the ways in which the same principles of perspective-taking might be extended to other immersive experiences that are more readily available within the classroom. Many students have their own phones or devices with which to view videos, and as the viewers themselves become cheaper and more readily available (with

Google Cardboard VR viewers now only costing $10-$15), more schools are finding ways to incorporate VR experiences into their standard curriculum, leading to similar results as those described above. In an article for the periodical *Internet@Schools*, Carolyn Foote discusses the VR-based focus of the South by Southwest Education and Interactive conferences held in Austin, Texas, in March of 2017. She relates a few first-hand narratives from teachers currently using VR tools, such as Andrea Trudeau, library information specialist at Alan B. Sheppard Middle School in Deerfield, Illinois. Trudeau describes the experience of her 7th grade students using Google Cardboard to watch Syrian refugees come ashore by boat in Greece, saying "it truly helped our 7th graders in social studies understand what it's like to be in someone else's shoes" (Foote, p. 12). Trudeau continues to describe the response of the same group of students as they continued into 8th grade, explaining that their experience with virtual reality prompted them to make videos the following year to help Syrian refugee families in their own community. She says "It's AMAZING to me to see how a short three-minute video in Google Cardboard followed by reading articles and discussion turned into our students making a real difference in this family's life this year" (Foote, p. 12).

In another narrative, Craig Gaslow, AP Human Geography teacher at Westlake High School describes the ways in which he uses Google Expeditions (a free virtual "field trip" application) or Google Street View VR (a virtual reality satellite map) to "take [his] students to a farm in east Africa, a famous cemetery in Buenos Aires, or Mayan ruins in Mexico" (Foote, p. 12). He also describes a French teacher at his school who wanted to teach her students about the Parisian catacombs, so she used a three-minute VR video from YouTube. He says "It brought the students into the catacombs; they were squealing with delight and reaching their hands out as if they hoped they could touch the skeletal walls" (Foote, p. 12). These narratives, again,

demonstrate the immersive quality of the VR experience that has the potential to bring completely new places and perspectives into the classroom. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, Trudeau's description of the students' follow-up project demonstrates the way in which opportunities to experience these new places and perspectives leads to real-life action. VR can be used to "change the self, not just the place" (Greene, 2016).

Moving Forward

A few things remain clear - the time of "profound national challenge and change" in which we find ourselves demands a response from educators to equip students with skills to change the tone of civic discourse through an empathetic approach to multiple perspectives. The demand here on schools and educators involves a careful consideration of how to craft exposure to multiple perspectives by managing voices in the classroom so that exposure leads to action, particularly in the form of civic engagement toward social justice. The levity of this demand - on schools, educators, and students - also would seem to indicate that one semester of civic education, as newly mandated in the state of Illinois, is likely not enough to adequately equip students with the skills needed to take on this essential work.

If we are to embrace the sort of civic education that would prepare students for empathy-based civic engagement beyond the classroom, then we might also examine the ways in which we can focus civic education that expands beyond one semester of learning. Using technology to create opportunities for immersion in new and challenging perspectives may lead to learning and action that continues beyond the scope of the civics classroom, as demonstrated above in the anecdote about students' responses to a video on Syrian refugees. Additionally, we might begin to consider the ways in which we expand these experiences beyond the walls of the civics classroom and into other areas across the curriculum to create a greater breadth and depth of

learning opportunities. Drawing on this literature, the qualitative exploratory study described here examines the ways in which we might use immersive technologies to expand empathy-based and social justice-oriented civic learning into a foreign language classroom.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

Drawing on literature around civic education, empathy, social justice and critical pedagogies, and immersive educational technologies, this chapter describes the methods for research that explores how we might take on the challenge of engaging this sort of learning outside the civic education classroom. Through a qualitative case study on telling stories in a secondary Spanish classroom, this project was designed to facilitate new understanding about the ways in which immersive technology and opportunities for online interaction may facilitate careful perspective-taking that serves to meet the outcomes of civic education.

Exploratory Research

As many of the technologies described above are still relatively new and the need for educational experiences that engender empathetic and social justice-oriented civic engagement is perhaps felt more intensely in response to current levels of polarization, little research has been conducted that seeks to tie the two together in a classroom setting. It is important to note, therefore, that the study described here is exploratory in nature. This sort of research is conducted not in order to provide conclusive evidence, but rather to illuminate a better understanding of the problem (Singh, 2007). While still as rigorous and methodical as possible, the aim of this study was not to make conclusive claims about the direct connection between particular technologies and specific civic learning outcomes. Instead, the goal was to provide opportunities to interact with a variety of technologies across multiple activities intentionally designed to foster growth in empathy-based civic learning in order to approach an understanding of how we might continue to engage and refine this process. The description that follows represents a study designed in order to explore research questions around technology and civic

learning, leaving room for a range of causes and alternative options for possible solutions to be further explored in future research (Sandhusen, 2000).

Qualitative Case Study

A qualitative approach was taken for this study as a means of understanding the phenomenon of navigating exposure to multiple perspectives in a classroom space. The specificity of focus afforded by a case study "makes it an especially good design for practical problems - for questions, situations, or puzzling occurrences arising from everyday practice" (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Given that the context of the study was already specifically bounded by the time and space of the daily practice of classroom interaction, a case study allowed for selecting particular encounters within these limits and studying them more thoroughly. Given the complexity depicted in the introduction to this work of carefully curating exposure to multiple perspectives in a way that gives voice to histories and legacies of oppression - even at the risk of silencing the voice of the majority - the ability to thoroughly examine particular moments of perspective-taking and voice-giving (or quieting) is a key component of understanding broader patterns of interaction in the classroom. In this way, case studies are well suited to illustrate the complexities of a situation and to draw on those complexities to explain, within a particular context, the effect that innovations have on the situation (Olson in Hoaglin, 1982, pp. 138-139).

Ultimately, the descriptive or narrative nature of qualitative case study is particularly useful for this work. As the goal of this study was to understand more about how students share their own perspectives and engage with the perspectives of others - particularly through technology and in online spaces – drawing on the language that was used to tell the stories of these perspectives was a key component in understanding their interactions. Clifford Geertz (1973), in borrowing the social anthropologists' concept of ethnography, focuses not on this sort

of qualitative study as a particular set of methods, but rather as an "intellectual effort." He describes this ethnographic process as an "elaborate venture" in thick description, drawing on the concept proposed by Ryle in his discussion of describing the difference between an eye twitch and a wink (1968). For Ryle, thick description moves us away from a basic retelling of speech and actions toward the notion that the language and actions we observe can help us to understand the thoughts and intentions behind them. Thick description, therefore, permits us to attach meaning to what we see in the world around us. Drawing on this notion of thick description, Olson argues that case studies include vivid material from a variety of sources and allow the researcher to present information in a wide variety of ways and from the viewpoints of different groups (1982, pp. 138-139). The permission within the theoretical approach of qualitative case study best allows for understanding, revealing, and reflecting upon the multiple voices at play in the classroom as they engage with storytelling through diverse perspectives. Providing space for these perspectives in the research itself is a productive way to learn about how they are shared and understood within the limits of the classroom.

Action Research

Whitman and Kelleher contend that teachers, by the nature of their practice, often act as researchers who collect enormous amounts of data every day and rapidly evaluate and make decisions based on this data, much of which, beyond assessments and grades, is qualitative in nature. They also suggest, however, that teachers are relatively poor at "doing anything formal with this data" (2017, p. 104). Teachers who do engage more formally in studying their own classrooms are engaged in what is often considered action research - "a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which

the practices are carried out" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162). Kurt Lewin, who first coined the term "action research," describes it as a cyclical process of planning, fact-finding, and execution in which a general plan is made, information is gathered, and action is taken, returning then to "a circle of planning, executing, and reconnaissance or fact-finding for the purpose of evaluating the results […] and for perhaps modifying again the overall plan" (p. 202-203). Notably, Lewin points to three characteristics of action research that demonstrate its usefulness toward the social justice-oriented civic engagement goals this study: its participatory character, its democratic impulse, and its simultaneous contribution to social science and social change.

What the introduction to this work would seem to indicate is that the problem, or the practice of teaching and learning upon which we might seek to improve, is the way in which we create opportunities for students to develop skills for continued civic engagement. The notion of action research, as suggested by Lewin, encourages a "spiraling cyclical process" of reflection and action (Pine, 2009, p. 30) - of reflecting upon the problem, taking action to address it, reflecting upon the outcomes, and taking further action based on that reflection. What follows, then, is a description of the case - the participants and the context in which they live and learn - and the intended process of action and reflection as an attempt to understand how they might be encouraged toward productive civic engagement.

The Case

What follows here is a broad description of the demographics of the community and school during the 2017-2018 school year in which the study occurred, as well as more specific information about the classroom, the teacher, the general curriculum, and the technology that the students used during that year. This general information provides a background helpful for understanding the context of the study that occurred with 77 Spanish II students across four

separate classes in the spring of 2018. Next, the research questions that guided the development of this study are briefly described, followed by a demographic description of the specific participants of the study and the curricular unit taught throughout the six weeks of the study.

The community and school. The school in which this case exists is situated in a small town in the Midwestern United States. The 2017 School Report Card reveals demographic information about the students and teachers in this school, presented in Tables 1 and 2, and students' academic results presented in Table 3:

Table 1
Student demographics

White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Two or more races	Low-income	Limited English Proficiency	Homeless
92.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.1%	0.2%	3.8%	6.4%	0.4%	0.4%

Table 2

Teacher demographics

White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian	Two or more races	Race unknown
87.6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3.1%	9.3%

Table 3

Academic results

Population	4-year graduation rate	College readiness in grade 11	Enrolled in college within 12 months of graduation
This school	95.5%	62%	72%
State average	87%	50.5%	69.5%

While these numbers cannot fully depict the educational experiences of students enrolled in the school, they do illuminate a few key characteristics - a student and teacher population who is majority white, English-speaking, living above the poverty line, and academically well-performing. It stands to reason that, through typical social interaction at school, students are limited in their exposure to diverse perspectives brought about particularly through histories and

legacies of oppression. This is, of course, not to say that students in this school are unaware of current tensions around political and social issues, but only that their encounters with people who can give voice to these perspectives of oppression through their own firsthand stories within the school setting are likely more limited than students who attend schools with more diverse student and teacher populations.

The teacher-researcher. Though it is difficult to reflect clearly on the experiences that have led me to this study, it is critical to consider the ways in which my own development as a student and teacher have shaped my ideas about teaching and learning with empathy. As a white female growing up in a small, predominantly white town, my experiences through high school were not unlike those of the students who participated in this study. I cannot point to a specific moment through all my years of education in which I was explicitly taught about empathy, though I know that perspective-taking was modeled to me in many ways. This began at home undoubtedly in ways that were so subtle I cannot even call on them today, but what I can recall are the books and stories that endlessly surrounded me. Before I read them on my own, my parents read to me regularly. Together we read classics like *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott and *Anne of Green Gables* by L. M. Montgomery. On my own, I remember reading *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein and *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch over and over again. These two books both still make me cry today – watching the tree that so willingly gives of herself to care for the boy she loves and, in the other story seeing the boy, who is so loved, grow to love and care for his aging mother, formed part of the foundation of the way I viewed the world and the people around me as worthy of love and care. It helped to foment my passion for knowing and participating in other peoples' stories.

Within the classroom, I can recall other ways in which empathy and perspective-taking were modeled to me as a critical part of learning. In junior high, the history teachers at my school collaborated to organize powerful school-wide projects. One of these was an Ellis Island reenactment in which each student was given a passport and spent the day navigating the school gymnasium set up as a port of entry to the United States. Though this project would undoubtedly be drastically different were it to take up today's conflicting ideas on the topic, at the time it was a powerful example of perspective-taking in understanding the process of immigrating to the United States. These same teachers also collaborated with a class of students to help understand the impact of the Holocaust. In what became a school and community-wide project, we collected 11 million pop tabs to represent the six million Jews and five million other victims of the Holocaust. We had a ceremony in which all of the pop tabs were poured onto a tarp on the gym floor – the magnitude and gravity of this experience still resonates with me today. The project also included the opportunity to listen to presentations and conversations with Eva Mozes Kor, a survivor of human experimentation under Josef Mengele at the Auschwitz concentration camp, and to visit her Candles Holocaust Museum and Education Center she funded in Terre Haute, Indiana. Finding tangible ways to visualize this history and, more importantly, humanizing these horrors through firsthand perspectives was one of the most impactful experiences of my early education.

In high school, the teachers that most powerfully impacted my empathetic educational experience made these moves in more subtle ways. Part of this move included their explicit attempts to know me as a student through opportunities for reflective journal writing in English classes. The English class I took my senior year culminated with a project in which we were required to answer what it means to be human in our own personal, creative way. I made a series

of nesting boxes representing layers of identity, while others in my class composed music, wrote plays, and one classmate even brought in his pet rabbit as a component of his presentation. The opportunity for creative, personal self-expression was meaningful enough that I can still picture many of these presentations more than fifteen years later. In addition to these opportunities, this teacher also engaged my love of reading and the power of voice in stories by including literature like *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, *Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison, and *Bless Me Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya. These books gave me windows into perspectives I'd never encountered or considered, and the structure of whole-class discussion around what we'd read gave me the opportunity to participate in a unique kind of democratic community of learning. Both the content of this class and, more particularly, the relaxed, flexible, and creative way in which this teacher engaged so much of my own passion and curiosity for learning about others, were instrumental in shaping the foundation of the kind of teacher I hoped to become.

Through a different approach, my high school Spanish teacher created a culture of perspective-taking in her classroom through an insistence on open-mindedness. We moved beyond language learning and delved deeply into the cultural perspectives of Spanish speakers, recreating Day of the Dead celebrations, creating art in the style of famous artists, delivering first-person speeches as famous historical or popular culture Spanish-speaking figures, and conducting a debate about the cultural importance of bullfighting. This class did not run on the flexibility of time and space for personal reflection and creativity, but rather on the demands of high achievement for all as we were expected to communicate only in Spanish from the very first moment we entered the classroom. Including a move toward understanding others' perspectives as a component of high expectations for achievement was part of what led me to teaching

Spanish. Though I loved language and the process of learning it, it was the connection to learning about others and the insistence on doing so in open-minded, perspective-taking ways that shaped my goals of teaching the language to others.

While much of the literature on CRP and empathetic perspective-taking focuses on incorporating these as components of teacher training, my undergraduate experiences as a pre-service teacher from 2003 to 2007 reflected little of this focus. In my first semester of undergraduate study I took a 100-level sociology course called Race and Ethnic Relations– it was my first introduction to issues of power and privilege across structural and institutional racism. I remember one foundations of education course that met once a week concurrent with an early field placement that also focused on some of these issues. We wrote a reflective journal about our experiences in our field placement, and this provided the space for me to begin exploring my role as a white teacher of diverse students. Though these courses were undoubtedly critical components of my pre-service training, they were a very small part of my educational experience. More foundational to my teaching was the continued cultural exposure I experienced through Spanish courses and the opportunity to spend a semester abroad in Madrid. The focus on other perspectives in my high school Spanish classes undoubtedly led to my interest in studying abroad, but the first-hand immersion in this culture and its perspectives represented an entirely different kind of learning. Recreating this cultural immersion and perspective-taking also became a goal of my classroom and curricular design. Balancing this immersion with the flexible space for creativity and self-expression amidst high expectations for target language use is a tension that has defined my teaching experience. Combining these elements has not been an end goal I've reached as a teacher, but rather a continuous act of reflecting, re-examining, and re-balancing.

Understanding this balance has perhaps most drastically been shaped by my experience in graduate education through pursuing a Master's degree in Diversity and Equity. In many ways this program built the foundation for this research, as it combined the critical content material of institutional racism, intersectionality and oppression, and power and privilege with learning in digital spaces. Part of the power of this program was that it functioned more as professional development than pre-service training, such that I could apply the concepts from my coursework directly to the classroom space I had already been working in for several years. Though an emphasis on teaching diverse learners in empathetic ways was lacking from my pre-service teacher education program, it became a core focus of my graduate study.

It is impossible to point to one event or even a series of experiences that shaped my learning or my teaching toward empathy and perspective-taking. The influences were there, but they were also undoubtedly imbued with choices I was able to make as a result of privilege. I grew up playing outside, visiting museums, reading, and loving to learn. I grew up with the compounding privilege of whiteness, financial security, and educated parents who prioritized my own learning and growth. I finished high school because I was able to work part-time for "spending money" and not to make ends meet. I went to a private liberal arts university and studied abroad. I continued my graduate education while teaching full-time regardless of external funding opportunities. I also remember regularly using "gay" and "retarded" as joking insults in junior high, because the oppression attached to these words was so far removed from my own experience. So it is partially because of this privilege that my disposition for empathetic perspective-taking developed through its roots in reading and learning and experiencing the world around me. On the other hand, pointing to specific educational experiences that grew these roots, that taught me to stop using oppressive that speech, that continued to expose me to new

stories and perspectives of marginalization, makes me believe that education is key. It is my wholehearted belief that empathy and perspective-taking are not only teachable, but that they must be a critical component of educational experience, that has led me to this research and instrumentally shaped the study described here.

The classroom. Journalist Flora Lewis is credited with saying that "learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things." Much like my own educational experience reflects, navigating the challenging work of creating opportunities to engage with understanding diverse perspectives - particularly within a population of students who might not naturally encounter them through their typical interaction at school - is a task well-suited for the foreign language classroom. The classroom in which this case exists is a secondary Spanish classroom. Students here learn Spanish at the first and second levels in classes of 22 students on average, with the smallest having 16 and the largest at 25. Students in these classes range in age from freshmen to seniors who are 14 to 18 years old, with the majority in grade 10 at 15 to 16 years. Students attend class here five days a week for 46 minutes each day.

Topics covered in the class prior to the study in the spring of 2018 included thematic units built around school life, family life, free time activities, and travel, with students at the second level also engaging with more complex material around childhood memories, healthy lifestyles, and media and technology. Each of these units included at least one authentic resource (designed for native Spanish-speakers, rather than second language learners) that was chosen to create opportunities to move beyond basic vocabulary and grammar instruction and into reflection on cultural differences and similarities. Some examples of these materials include infographics about typical family structures in Mexico, YouTube videos in which native

Spanish-speaking bloggers share their reflections on cultural celebrations and traditions like Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) or their typical daily routines at school and work, restaurant menus, and movies and articles on various cultural topics. While there was already a focus on exposure to new cultural perspectives, and I frequently searched for new materials and new strategies for encouraging encounters with different worldviews, experiences, and perspectives, as Whitman and Kelleher suggested above, little formal action was taken regarding the outcomes of the implementation of this material. The research described here was designed to provide both an opportunity for more intentional action toward including and engaging with diverse perspectives in the classroom and for reflecting on the successes and shortcomings of this engagement.

It is also worth considering the unique combination of events that contextualized the classroom space during the time of this study. First, I knew from the beginning of the school year that it would be my last year in this teaching position. As so often happens, knowing it was my last chance encouraged me to take explicit action toward becoming the kind of teacher I'd always wanted to be. Second, it was the first year I used Google Classroom (described more fully below) as a way of regularly communicating with my students. Having this digital space allowed me to interact with students in ways that traditional classroom spaces may not, like sending them a message on Thanksgiving about feeling thankful for them and encouraging them to pass it on. I also used this space to share other parts of my life with them, like a blog post I wrote about how my husband and I made the difficult decision to move to London. This digital space allowed me to model the kind of personal sharing I hoped they would do and to express my care for their personhood and wellbeing beyond academic success in ways I had wanted but struggled to do before.

Furthermore, this particular school year began with my principal encouraging my colleagues and I to take time away from curricular content to share our passions with our students in order to build more meaningful connections. In my classroom, I spent a half-day of school sharing a video of my husband and I playing music together and then took each class to the auditorium so I could play the piano for them. I also encouraged students to share their own passion presentations with the class, and many of them played music or shared videos or photos of unique parts of their personal lives. My principal's focus on this sort of educational experience gave me permission to bring more of the personal, outside world into my classroom. In reflecting with a student on my classroom space, he wrote:

> The difference, I think, lies in little things. It's remarkable the impact one sentence can have. Every once in a while in your class everything goes on pause and somebody says one sentence, about any topic, that's more aimed at morality or a bigger picture or some kind of big topic, and that sticks with people. That just doesn't happen in other classes, at least not ones I've been to. Even if it's not a full discussion, just the ability to take a joke or a Spanish lesson or whatever it may be, and turn it into a ten second mini lesson on ethics is a big difference. […] As for wasting time I couldn't disagree more. To be candid I think there's more students than we recognize that want to have a platform to discuss something important. That being said I understand the limitations of school, the fact that traditionally it's a place for facts and not much more. But does it have to be that way? […] I could be completely biased as a student wanting to get out of schoolwork, but I think providing a platform for those that do want to contribute could be amazing. It's definitely helped me overall, and that's just with the relatively small stage that is one Spanish classroom.

Because of this sense of permission and of urgency in my final year of teaching, the classroom in which this study took place was uniquely equipped with pauses – for personal expression, jokes, carefree communication, moral lessons, and the kind of authentic, collaborative, deeply personal sharing that I'd always hoped to create. Understanding this kind of classroom space as the context of this research is critical for the role it played in continuing to foster the same sort of openness and sharing throughout the study.

The technology. Students in these classes regularly used various forms of technology throughout the 2017-2018 school year to interact with the curricular material, with one another, and with the teacher. Students regularly accessed and submitted course material through Google Classroom, a free application that allows teachers to create virtual classrooms in which they can distribute course material, receive assignments, and provide feedback. In the Spanish II classes, students used this application to access material both during class time and outside the classroom, including vocabulary lists, prompts for written assignments, and some of the cultural infographics and videos described above. The classroom was equipped with 27 laptops for students to use, but in most classes only a few students used them to access online materials during class while the rest used their own personal devices they brought to school. In addition to Google Classroom and the laptops, the classroom was also newly equipped in the fall of 2017 with technology for immersive virtual reality experiences. Each of these technologies is described below, along with a description of how they were used in the study in order to build empathy and civic engagement.

Google Classroom discussion questions. Students in these classes used Google Classroom during the fall of 2017 to complete three online discussion assignments relevant to, but separate from, the curricular material being used and discussed in class. For example, in a unit in which students were learning vocabulary to describe the physical appearance and personality of themselves and other people, they were required to respond to a quote that said "La belleza atrae miradas, pero la personalidad atrapa corazones" (beauty attracts glances, but personality traps hearts). Student responses were required to include a translation of the quote, a personal opinion statement on whether they agreed or not, and a reflection on whether they thought this quote represents the sentiment of the larger American culture. Other similar

assignments included a reflection on whether all people have equal opportunities to build their own future (responding to a quote from Abraham Lincoln in which he says that the best way to predict the future is to create it), and a third reflection on trends in cultural tradition and appropriation. In each of these assignments, students were required to post their own response to a Google Classroom page visible only to the teacher and the other students in their section of Spanish II, and then to post comments on the same page to reply to at least three of their classmates' posts. Students were assessed not only on the grammar and the completion of the assignment, but also on whether they provided information from other materials from the Spanish II class in order to adequately support their claims. The rationale for these assignments was three-fold: to provide opportunities for students to reflect on larger cultural and societal issues; to encourage them to interact with one another as they discuss these issues; and to help develop skills for successfully supporting their arguments.

As explored in the literature review above, online spaces like this can likely provide students the opportunity to express themselves with more care and authenticity than they would in the face-to-face classroom setting. Furthermore, the digital space allows for more thoughtful and thorough discussion than that which can occur in the 46 minutes that students are together each day. Providing time for students to reflect on topics related to the course material outside the classroom and requiring them to comment on their peers' posts is intended to continue and advance the dialogue around issues that would otherwise not be able to be addressed within the language classroom. This kind of online discussion was continued as part of the exploratory study in building empathy and civic engagement - in combination with immersive virtual learning experiences - as described more fully below.

Virtual Reality. In addition to interacting online through Google Classroom, in the fall of 2017 students in Spanish II had begun participating in a pilot experience using new virtual reality equipment including 29 refurbished Samsung GalaxyS smart phones and 29 EXTREME VR Cinema Viewer goggles with built in audio. Each pair of goggles holds a phone so that students can view photos and videos through two lenses that create a 3D immersive experience from split-screen footage. Students used these devices to participate in "virtual field trips" via Google Expeditions and to watch other immersive content from the New York Times. Each of these components of the virtual reality experience is described below.

Google Expeditions. Like the experiences described in the literature review above, Google Expeditions allows teachers to take their students on "virtual field trips." Using the free application, teachers can guide students through a fully immersive series of three-dimensional scenes. Using a tablet, teachers can see where each student is looking and can tap on the screen to add an arrow in the students' view to direct their attention to particular parts of the scene. Each scene includes a script of information and questions at various levels of difficulty for teachers to use as they guide students, but teachers can also easily adapt the information provided and the questions or activities that are used to ensure that each expedition meets their own needs. Despite its rather recent release in the summer of 2016, many educators across the country are already collaborating to gather and share information, lesson plans, and a variety of other resources pertaining to each of the expeditions through crowd-sourced communities (Google Expeditions, n.d.).

Furthermore, new content is regularly added to the application, continuously expanding the limits on the ways in which students can interact with the world around them. Current content varies in theme from college and career explorations and visits to museums, historical

sites, and architectural wonders, as well as animated content that allows students to explore anything from particular aspects of human anatomy to the furthest reaches of outer space. Of particular interest for the work at hand were the immersive experiences that take students to ancient Mayan and Aztec ruins and on tours of Spanish-speaking countries, including Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Spain. Other tours also allow students to visit historic Hispanic sites in the United States, a collection of Latino murals, and Latino neighborhoods in the U.S. More on how these tours were used in a specific unit designed to engage students with multiple perspectives is explored below.

New York Times Virtual Reality. While similar to Google Expeditions in its immersive quality, another free application called NYT VR provides virtual reality content in the form of three-dimensional documentary videos. Instead of requiring that the instructor guide and narrate the tour and being adapted to whatever script or content the teacher includes, each of these videos includes immersive views along with narration and first-hand insight into the perspectives of others. Topics range from the unique personal stories of scientists working in a nature preserve and window-washers on a 900-foot building above Midtown Manhattan to police officers in Flint, Michigan, people who remain in the war-torn Nuba Mountains of Sudan, and an exploration of those who make a 21st century journey to Mecca and Medina.

Of particular note, here, in considering the potential of these immersive experiences to build students' capacities for empathy, is that the stories narrated by the New York Times often include first-person perspectives of the people in the videos. While the Google Expeditions described above have the potential to transport students to another time and place, the teacher is responsible for providing the content for these experiences. The New York Times videos, on the other hand, don't just take students to new places; they provide them with new, authentic voices

that can tell their own unique stories about what happens in those places. Videos of interest for this project, therefore, expanded beyond taking students to new places of historical and cultural interest for learning about Spanish and its native speakers and into an exploration of how people across the world tell their stories. More on these videos and the unit in which they were used is described below.

Research Questions

The curricular unit for this study was designed not only to provide opportunities to engage students with multiple perspectives, but also in accompanying conversation about why it matters to listen to and share the stories that help us illuminate perspectives of those who are historically marginalized and oppressed. As literature around empathy education and civic learning suggests, both implicit and explicit instruction on hearing and understanding others' perspectives are a key component of becoming intelligent readers of others' stories (Nussbaum, 1997). Through a variety of formats of receiving and sharing information and reflecting upon their own responses to this process, the goal was that students would complete the unit with a deeper understanding of the value of hearing and embracing the perspectives of the oppressed in working toward addressing the societal structures that have led to their oppression. The unit, therefore, was designed with the intention of answering a particular set of questions in order to understand how stories can illuminate the process of building empathy to encourage participation in civic engagement and work for social justice. These questions and their connection to the unit are described below.

Question 1: How do students think about empathy and civic engagement? Through a slow process of reflecting on telling stories, on making emotional connections to the stories of others, and on being incited toward acting to change the conditions that lead to perspectives of

marginalization and oppression, the unit was designed to provide students with multiple opportunities to express their thoughts on empathy and action. Students participated in several writing assignments in the form of discussion questions and journal reflections, as well as small-group and whole-class discussions in order to engage in multiple opportunities to demonstrate their thinking in a variety of formats. Explicit cues toward empathy served to ensure that students clearly addressed this topic, and, while the term civic engagement was only used briefly at one point within the unit, students were directed multiple times to share their thoughts on actions that help to address societal structures leading to oppression. This question was designed to address the cognitive component of teaching explicitly about empathy – to learn about how students recognize and think about these concepts.

Question 2: How do different formats for reflection and interaction influence student participation in discourse around empathy and civic engagement? If teaching about empathy and civic engagement must move into explicit discussion and participation on these topics, it is essential to understand how we might effectively engage students in this work. As described in the first research question, students had opportunities to participate in this kind of discourse face-to-face in small groups and as a whole class, as well as digitally in public online discussion and one-on-one with the teacher through journal reflections and feedback. The purpose for including a wide variety of formats for participating in this discussion was to understand more about the ways in which students most easily, thoughtfully, and thoroughly engage. Given the sometimes sensitive nature of sharing personal stories and discussing oppression and marginalization, it was important to balance the potential for voice-giving and perspective-taking with concerns around the potential for speech that is disrespectful, hateful, or

even violent. It is essential to know, therefore, how formats for conducting these discussions can provide space that addresses the vulnerability of sharing and understanding perspectives.

Question 3: Can technology aid in empathetic engagement with perspectives of marginalization and oppression and, if so, how? As described in the demographics above, students in these classes were relatively limited in their exposure to diverse perspectives around issues of inequality through their classroom and school-based interactions. While Dolby (2012) and others focus primarily on opportunities for real-life interaction as a means of growing empathy and inspiring civic engagement, not all classrooms have resources to foster this kind of real-life engagement. What this research seeks to understand, then, is the ways in which technology can encourage a near real-life experience with the perspectives of others. Through creating their own digital story to aid in the process of connecting emotionally with the stories of others, interacting with one another in online spaces that may, as Greenhalgh-Spencer suggests, foster more "intimate and thorough engagement," and using virtual reality to, quite literally, try on the perspectives of others, technology was intricately woven through each part of this unit. The goal was to understand more about the ways in which we might co-opt these technologies not only to model appropriate online interaction, but also to expand the walls of the classroom such that students could engage with new ideas and perspectives in very real ways.

It is important to note that this exploratory research did not seek to empirically suggest which technologies were most effective in achieving the outcomes of civic education, but, rather, to understand how students might (or might not) gain a deeper understanding of multiple perspectives through technology use. Given that different technologies were used at different points in the unit, it would be difficult to suggest that particular learning outcomes could be tied directly to one specific technology. This question, therefore, did not intend to evaluate the level

of effectiveness of individual technologies in aiding in empathetic engagement of multiple perspectives, but rather to examine how technologies create opportunities for the expression and taking on of unique or challenging perspectives.

The participants. During the 2017-2018 school year (and the year prior) I was one of two teachers in the school who taught Spanish I, and the only teacher who taught Spanish II. This means that many of the students taking Spanish II in 2017-2018 were also in my Spanish I class during the 2016-2017 school year. Therefore, by the time the study began in the spring of 2018, most students in my Spanish II classes had already engaged in nearly 14 months of interaction with me, making them logical choices as participants for this study. Given that qualitative case study research attempts to understand interaction within a particular context, prolonged exposure to the context - in this case, the students themselves - is beneficial in understanding the meaning that is created and understood within that context. While much of this interaction had already occurred before the study began, it is still useful toward informing the context of the study. As Olson demonstrates, qualitative case studies provide space for hindsight that allows researchers to make connections in relevance between the past and the present (1982, pp. p. 138).

Furthermore, students in the second level of Spanish were already engaged in a curriculum that was designed to address more complex issues - including the effects of media and technology on our lives. It stands to reason, then, that choosing participants in Spanish II - given the prolonged interaction and the complexity of their study –provided a case that more fully illuminated the kind of meaning students make through exposure to diverse perspectives and its effect on their intentions toward future civic engagement.

The participants in the study were selected from the 83 students who were enrolled in four sections of Spanish II at the time of the study. All 83 students were given consent and assent forms to be signed by themselves and a parent or guardian and returned to the researcher, per the requirements of the Institutional Review Board. Of the 83 students enrolled, 77 returned forms indicating their own assent as well as consent on behalf of a parent or guardian to participate in the study. All 83 students engaged in the same activities throughout the unit regardless of their participation in the study, but data collected and described here only includes input from the 77 students who elected to participate. More specific demographic information about the participants is described below in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Demographics

Total Students	**Male**	**Female**	**15 yrs[a]**	**16 yrs**	**17 yrs**	**18 yrs**	**White**	**Black or African American**	**Multi-racial**	**Asian**	**Full pay[b]**	**Reduced**
77	47%	53%	27%	60%	8%	5%	97%	1%	1%	1%	99%	1%

Note. Data developed from school registration information via digital gradebook website
[a] Indicates years of age before or during the study (i.e., a student who turned sixteen before or at any time during the six-week study is listed as sixteen) [b] Lunch rates based on USDA Fiscal Year 2018 Income Eligibility Guidelines

At the onset of the study, I intended to use information-oriented sampling, rather than random sampling, to narrow down the number of participants by identifying key cases or outliers (those which are extreme, deviant, or atypical) (Flyvbjerg, 2006). It seemed likely that, through the process of data collection and reflection, the case that began with all 77 Spanish II students would likely be narrowed to a more limited population that represented the richness of both the potential successes and barriers to engaging with multiple perspectives in a language classroom

as a means of eliciting a disposition toward empathetic civic engagement. While some of these specific examples of successes and barriers are included in the results of this study through transcripts of in-class discussions or samples of student writing, it was also informative for the study to maintain data collection with all 77 students in order to identify overarching patterns in student responses around empathy and civic engagement. The case, therefore, rather than narrowing in and following the progress of a few particular students, remained inclusive of all students across all four Spanish II classes who elected to participate, and the data that are presented here use key quotes from a variety of students within these classes to help illustrate the patterns of thinking and learning throughout the unit.

The Curricular Unit: Telling Stories to Explore New Perspectives

Students in Spanish II began the year reviewing the grammar they learned in Spanish I - primarily focusing on basic vocabulary for describing people and places and their everyday interactions in the present tense. The learning that typically occurs in this class in the second semester, however, focuses more broadly on expanding beyond the present tense and into the past and future, along with other grammatical structures that allow students to begin the more complex work of communicating in ways that span a variety of times. The primary focus of the second semester is an exploration not just of basic descriptions of people and places, but also of how people tell their own stories and how they may be told by others. It is within this focus - on the ways in which we tell our stories and hear and retell the stories of others - that the exploratory study on building an empathetic approach to the perspectives of others took place. This unit was composed of an introduction to storytelling and three separate parts: telling your own story, engaging the stories of others, and telling others' stories. A brief illustration of the

activities in the curricular unit of this study is presented in Table 5, followed by a more detailed description of the introduction to the unit and each of the three parts.

Table 5

Student activities in the curricular unit of the research study

Date	Name of activity	Type of activity	Length of time[a]	Data collected	Research question	Full text of activity
Unit Introduction						
March 16	Storytelling brainstorm	In-class discussion (English)	1 class[b]	Audio recording and transcription plus field notes from observation	1	Appendix A
March 17	Storytelling reflection	Google discussion question (English)	1 day out of class[c]	Written discussion questions online visible to other students and comments on other students' posts	1	Appendix B
March 20	Storytelling video	Independent in-class assignment (English)	1 class	Field notes from observation	2	Appendix C
March 21	Storytelling video reflection	Reflection journal assignment (English)	1 day out of class	Written discussion questions visible to teacher only	1	Appendix D
Part 1: Telling Your Own Story						
March 21	Digital storytelling project introduction	Teacher presentation and in-class discussion (Spanish)	1 class	Field notes from observation	2	Appendix E
March 27-29	Digital storytelling project presentations	Individual student presentations (Spanish)	3 classes	Field notes from observation	2	---
March 30[d]	Digital storytelling project reflection	Reflection journal assignment (English)	3 days out of class	Written discussion questions visible to teacher only	3	Appendix F
Part 2: Engaging Stories of Others						
April 9	Aztec, Mayan, & Toltec introduction	Teacher presentation, in-class discussion (Spanish)	1 class	Field notes from observation	2	Appendix G

Table 5 (cont)

April 10	Aztec, Mayan, & Toltec virtual expedition	Google expeditions VR exploration (English)	1 class	Field notes from observation	2	Appendix H
April 11	Aztec ruins VR reflection	Reflection journal assignment (English)	1 day out of class	Written discussion questions visible to teacher only	3	Appendix I
April 12	Quetzalcoatl discussion questions	Reflection journal assignment (Spanish)	1 day out of class	Written discussion questions visible to teacher only	3	Appendix J
April 17	Cortés v. Aztecs bias reflection	Reflection journal assignment (English)	3 days out of class	Written discussion questions visible to teacher only	1	Appendix K
April 18	The Person Next to You poem	In-class reading and discussion (Spanish)	1 class	Field notes from observation	-	Appendix L
Part 3: Telling Others' Stories						
April 19-20	Empathy discussion	In-class discussion, small group and whole class (English)	1.5 classes[e]	Audio recording and transcription plus field notes from observation	1	Appendix M
April 23	NYT VR video introduction	Independent and small group video watching, reflection writing, and discussion (English)	1 class	Field notes from observation	2	Appendix N
April 25-26	NYT VR video presentations (rubric)	Small group presentations in class (Spanish)	2 classes	Field notes from observation and written text from student presentations	3	Appendix O
Unit Conclusion						
April 27	Technology discussion	In-class discussion, small group and whole class (English)	1.5 classes[f]	Audio recording and transcription plus field notes from observation	3	Appendix P
May 2	Technology survey & unit reflection	Written homework and reflection journal assignment (English)	3 days out of class	Written numerical and text responses plus discussion questions visible to teacher only	2, 3	Appendix Q

Table 5 (cont)

November 5	Follow-up technology question	Written reflection question shared via Google Classroom (English)	3 days out of class	Written response visible to teacher only	3	Appendix R

Note. Gaps between dates include time devoted to other grammar and vocabulary activities essential to the language instruction component of the unit, as well as class time for students to work on projects and presentations described in the unit. Additionally, students were not in session from March 30, 2017 to April 6, 2017 for spring break. No data were collected on these dates unless otherwise indicated.

[a] All class periods are 46 minutes unless otherwise indicated. [b] Half day of school – classes were only 27 minutes each. [c] Out of class assignments are listed on the date they were submitted. [d] Students were on spring break but submitted their reflection journal entries electronically. [e] April 20, 2017 was a half day of school – classes were only 27 minutes each.

[f] One class completed this discussion in one class period, while the other three classes used half of a second class period to finish.

Unit introduction: reflecting on stories. Each unit in Spanish II typically begins with an essential question. For this unit, students worked to answer the question of how people in different places tell their stories. Students began the unit with an in-class brainstorming activity that asked them to think about what kinds of stories we tell and hear, how we often encounter these stories, and which ones are meaningful or important to us. After this brief discussion in class, students completed a more formal reflection assignment for homework in which they were asked to think more about the process of storytelling and to reflect upon why people tell stories, which stories have powerful impacts when we hear them, and why it might be important to hear the stories of other people across the world. (The exact discussion question prompt can be found in Appendix B.) Students wrote a response to these questions through a Google Classroom discussion and were required to reply to three of their classmates' posts. The rationale for beginning the unit this way was twofold: first, it served as an anecdotal "pre-assessment" as a means of understanding how students thought about telling stories before it was discussed in class, and, second, to set the precedent at the beginning of the unit that the learning task at hand was not just to be able to tell a story in Spanish, but also to reflect on storytelling as a both an art and a skill that has the potential to incite change and action.

To continue this reflection, a main component of the unit was the completion of a digital journal in which students answered assigned questions to share with the instructor and also record their own thoughts about the purpose, process, and outcomes of telling and hearing stories. The reflection journal was written in English and submitted electronically in a Google Document, affording Greenhalgh-Spencer's notion of "attentive choice" to students in how they reflected upon and described the storytelling process. Students had time to write and submit their thoughts electronically, avoiding the sometimes pressure-inducing format of face-to-face discussion. Furthermore, this format allowed the instructor to provide more thorough and direct feedback to students so that their reflections could be cued toward thinking about the issues of voice and power at play in telling stories.

The first reflection journal assignment closely followed the essential question discussion post described above. After submitting and commenting on their own thoughts about telling stories, students were assigned a video to watch via Google Classroom (Catsnake, 2015). The video, commissioned by The National Trust, a conservation organization in England, features Sir Ian McKellan summarizing the power of storytelling, which can be described as: sharing information and lessons; creating emotional connections; creating and displaying cultural identity; and making this process of learning and sharing more desirable and entertaining. In the video, McKellan also points to the ways in which hearing stories makes us respond emotionally as if we are living them (as in Hess's discussion of mirror neurons) and points to the ways in which stories can incite real change through the lessons they teach. After students watched the video independently, they were asked to write the first reflection in their journal to summarize the information from the video and to connect it to the discussion post they initially wrote. Students were asked to make comparisons to their own ideas about storytelling and to explain

how the video changed or added to their understanding of why it might be important to tell and hear stories. This journal writing prompt can be found in Appendix C.

In addition to the reflection journal and learning the vocabulary and grammar in Spanish required to tell stories, students engaged in three separate tasks throughout the unit: working on building and telling their own story, exploring the stories of other people, and telling someone else's story. Each of these tasks included a focus on the influence of the past as well as the effects of storytelling on the future - both to focus on more complex grammatical constructs and to help students see storytelling as a nuanced means of combining reflection on the past with action for the future. These three parts are described here.

Part one: telling your own story. Drawing on Hess's concept of mirror neuron activation and empathy growth through digital storytelling, students completed the first task of the unit by telling their own story through a combination of photos and recorded audio. After spending a few weeks (prior to the beginning of the unit) to learn the vocabulary and verb constructs necessary to describe childhood and other past actions, as well as describing and speculating on the future, students built a digital story about their own lives that described an important past event that had affected their life in some key way and a reflection on how these elements of their past had affected their present perspectives and would continue to influence their future. The project description students received can be found in Appendix E. To provide an example of the sort of personal storytelling that was desired in this portion of the unit, I created and shared my own digital story about my experience growing up as an adopted child and meeting my birthmother in college. After viewing and discussing my personal storytelling presentation, students had three days to use class time to construct their own presentations and then shared their storytelling presentations with the other students in their class. As described in

the rubric in Appendix E, students were given the option to create a poster, a book, or another form of paper presentation that would require them to read their story in Spanish to the class, or, as in the researcher's example, to create a digital presentation with music or recorded audio in the background so that their classmates could read the written text of the story while the presentation advanced. During the face-to-face presentations in class, students also completed a note-taking activity. These notes required students to record the past tense actions or events in the story, the descriptions of the presenting students' present life, and the future actions or results of the story. This notetaking activity was designed to help students focus on the key components of each presentation and to reflect in English on the importance of the stories their classmates were sharing

In addition to sharing their stories and taking notes, another essential component of the power of telling stories comes from reflecting on the process itself. According to Hess, part of the ability in mirroring or gaining empathy toward other stories comes from the embodied act of doing it oneself - much like the kind of learning that Lindgren suggest can happen through cueing. It was essential, therefore, for students to spend time reflecting personally on their own process of crafting and telling their story in order for them to make deeper connections to the stories of others. Upon completing their own digital storytelling project, students then added another component to their reflection journal involving a description of how it felt to write and compile these personal stories, to share them with others, and to hear the stories of others. Students were also asked to reflect on what they found more interesting and more compelling in the stories of others - whether they responded differently to stories that they could relate to through their own personal experiences than to those that they had never experienced, and why it might be important to focus on both similarities and differences. The complete text of this

journal prompt can be found in Appendix F. The goal of this portion of the reflection journal was to draw on the notion that empathy requires the ability to take on the perspective of others while knowing that our experiences are different. In this sense, it was essential for students to find ways both to make connections to and understand differences in the stories of others. As in the first submission, this reflection journal was also met with feedback from the instructor to cue student thinking toward the critical issues of voice, power, and audience at play in telling stories. The purpose of this reflection was to set the stage for the kind of storytelling and listening that occurred in the second and third sections of the unit.

Part two: engaging the stories of others. The second component of the unit was designed to allow students to explore the stories of other people. After this transition in the reflection journal toward thinking about the stories of others, students began to use the virtual reality equipment described above to engage with others' stories in immersive ways, beginning with stories related to the Mayans, Toltecs, and Aztecs - three of the primary Mesoamerican cultures in Mexico. Before addressing the stories of these people, students participated in an introductory "virtual field trip" to Aztec, Toltec, and Mayan ruins via Google Expeditions (described above in the technology section of this chapter). While the expedition itself contained a wealth of scripted cultural information to accompany each of six scenes (including two views of Chichen Itza, Teotenango, the Aztec Ruins National Monument, Chacchoben, and Teotihuacan), I only narrated the basic information about each site in Spanish, including which culture was attributed to its creation, the location of the ruin, and the approximate date on which we think it was constructed. Students spent the majority of one class period individually exploring the scenes and recording their thoughts in their reflection journal in a free-writing style to describe what the sites looked like and any initial ideas they had about the purpose of each

ruin, as well as what they might tell us about the cultures who built them, and any questions that the "field trip" sparked about the ruins themselves or the Aztec and Mayan culture. Students completed the reflection portion of this initial exploration in class and for homework and had the opportunity to share some of their observations in class the following day. At the time of the study, some students in Spanish II had already taken or were concurrently taking a class in world geography in which they had already begun to learn about these cultures and their ancient ruins, and others may have visited some of these sites in person. Recording their initial thoughts, prior knowledge, and questions and sharing them with the class provided an opportunity for students to share their own expertise with one another, as well as helping the instructor identify gaps in knowledge that might have been needed to be filled prior to engaging with the cultural stories described below. This introduction, therefore, served not only to pique students' interests with an immersive, first-hand view of ancient ruins, but also to help establish a basic understanding of what students already knew. Dolby describes this notion of understanding the knowledge and skills that students bring into the classroom as an essential component of building empathy; understanding students' initial perspectives is key to encouraging them to take on the perspectives of others.

Next, students engaged in reading the legend of Quetzalcoatl, an Aztec god who was considered to have contributed significantly to human creation. The popular legend tells of his frustration with rituals of human sacrifice and his subsequent taking on of human form to live with the Aztecs and teach them how to live with "purity" through art, science, and agriculture. The legend says that Quetzalcoatl's brother was jealous of his success, so he disguised himself and came to earth, tempted Quetzalcoatl to drink an intoxicating beverage and behave foolishly. In his shame, Quetzalcoatl left the Aztec people (some versions say he leaves in a boat made of

snakes while others say he throws himself on a fire), prophesying that he would return to his people (some stories specify a timespan of 52 years). Students read the legend in Spanish out loud together in class and answered basic comprehension questions about the events in the story to check for understanding.

After reading and gaining a basic understanding of the story, students were asked to complete a small-group discussion activity in which they described how the legend reflected the cultural information they had already learned about the Aztecs through their virtual expeditions. Students were cued to make connections to the purpose of the ruins in religious ceremonies like human sacrifices as well as the importance of art, science, and agriculture in their design and construction. Students were asked to write another short reflection on the similarities and differences in the kind of learning that occurred between using the virtual reality to view the sites where the Aztecs and Mayans lived, as compared with reading the legend that tells a key story of these peoples' lives. This reflection was designed to delve deeper into an understanding of the ways in which different formats – specifically the opportunities for immersive experiences – might help students move toward taking on others perspectives and emotions in non-judgmental ways (following the key attributes of empathy described above). Students were also asked to describe any connections they could make between the Aztec legend and their own cultural stories in order to encourage the same notions of appreciating similarity across difference that have appeared throughout the unit. The text of this compare/contrast and reflection assignment can be found in Appendix J.

Students then watched a short video produced by the BBC that depicted the downfall of the Aztec Empire at the hands of Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés (LeBaron, 2014). The video described the ways in which the Spaniards were welcomed into the Aztec capital because

they believed Cortés was actually the return of their god Quetzalcoatl, as well as the subsequent reactions of the Spaniards to the "barbaric" and "horrifying" cultural and religious practices of the Aztecs that led to their enslavement, conversion to Catholicism, and, ultimately, near complete destruction. After watching the video, students completed a writing assignment in their reflection journal in which they returned to the information from the power of storytelling from the beginning of the unit. Students were asked to reflect on how the Aztec cultural identity was displayed in the legend they read as compared to the depiction of the Aztecs in the video, and then to describe whether or not they thought the video represented a biased perspective toward either the Spaniards or the Aztecs. This reflection concluded with a question encouraging students to think about whether it matters more to hear the story of the Aztecs from their own perspective, from the perspective of the Spaniards, or both. This reflection assignment prompt can be found in Appendix K. The comparison of the legend and the video and, in particular, this written reflection assignment, were included in the unit in order to encourage students to engage with the idea that stories are always told from a particular perspective and, as Applebaum suggests, affording power to one voice over another may be an essential component of storytelling to grow the kind of empathy that would encourage civic engagement for social justice.

Part three: telling others' stories. After reflecting individually in their journals on the importance of perspective in telling stories, students participated in an in-class discussion in which they shared their thoughts on some of the same questions described above - first in small groups, and then as a class. The purpose of this discussion was to expand the dialogue on the power of storytelling beyond individual student and teacher interaction and to attempt to engage students in face-to-face discussion in addition to online communication. Furthermore, after

focusing previous writing and discussion primarily on storytelling itself, this discussion presented the first explicit mention of empathy - after students had an opportunity to discuss and share their initial thoughts on perspective and storytelling, they were also asked to define empathy with their small groups and then share with the class. Students were then prompted to tie those definitions of empathy to ideas they already discussed about perspective and storytelling - particularly the notion of making emotional connections through stories. The ultimate goal of this discussion was to move students toward thinking about the importance of hearing and retelling the stories of others, especially when they are from authentic voices who have experienced oppression and marginalization. The main questions used to guide this discussion can be found in Appendix M – though all classes followed this framework for the discussion, each one also varied slightly as the researcher followed and responded to individual students' responses

As Dolby (2012) suggests in her framework for teaching empathy, research indicates the existence of a biological impetus for empathy, despite declining levels of empathic interaction. She points, therefore, to the need for explicit instruction on empathy in addition to teachers' empathy toward students' perspectives as a means of encouraging growth in empathy. In other words, Dolby suggests that approaching students with empathy is not enough to encourage their own growth in empathy without explicit instruction on why it is important. The discussion described above, therefore, attempted to approach the task of an explicit address of the importance of empathy and its connection to telling stories. Furthermore, after several opportunities for students to reflect individually in digital spaces which afforded the benefits of attentive care in the intentional embodiment of their ideas and perspectives, it was essential toward understanding formats that foster productive discussion to have opportunities to compare

the discussion that occurred online to that which developed in a face-to-face setting. Insights from these comparisons are described in the next chapter of this work.

Finally, after engaging in this reflection and explicit conversation cued to attend to issues around power, voice, and empathy in telling stories, students used the grammar from this unit and the accompanying discussion on the power of telling stories to examine how they might be empowered to help tell the stories of others. For this task, students engaged in another virtual reality experience using the videos described above from NYT VR. After discussing the need to focus on voices and stories that can help us understand, in particular, the perspectives of those who may face experiences of oppression and marginalization, students chose a virtual reality video from several options that portray a firsthand view of these perspectives. While all of the NYT VR videos at the time of this study portrayed unique perspectives of a variety of people, students were required to choose from a list that I compiled for them that represented perspectives of oppression and marginalization, such as a blind man, immigrants who were detained in the United States, Syrian refugees navigating integration into a small German town, and a genderfluid mother. (For a full list, see Appendix S).

To begin their exploration, students chose a story from the list and a partner or group of two other students who were also interested in the same story. First, students watched the VR video independently using the equipment in class and then participated in five to ten minutes of silent writing in response to several reflection questions that prompted them to describe what they saw in the video in terms of the concepts of storytelling mentioned above: the information or lessons described, the emotional connection or response, and the individual or cultural identity being displayed. (This reflective writing assignment can be found in Appendix O). In focusing on their own emotional connection or response to the video, students were asked to write about

any personal experiences they have had that helped them relate to the perspectives portrayed in the video, as well as the parts that they had not experienced or might have struggled to understand. This initial reflection response to the NYT VR videos was designed to engage students in the cognitive work of understanding perspectives of others by directly examining the connections they can make to their lives while also maintaining the self-other differentiation that Coplan describes as a key component in her definition of empathy. The goal of this portion of the unit was for students to gain a greater understanding of the ways in which their lives and perspectives both overlap with and differ from those who, on the surface, may seem entirely unknown or disconnected.

After thinking about making comparisons and connections to these stories. students were also asked to reflect on the final point of the power of storytelling video they watched at the beginning of the unit - that stories, through their emotional connection, incite action. As the final component of the initial reflection described above, they recorded their thoughts on the kind of action that the video might have hoped to encourage. After reflecting individually on their experiences watching the videos and their responses to the stories they told, students shared these ideas with their groups in an informal group discussion. As described above in the reflection after students shared their own stories with the class, the function of the reflection here was similar - students both cognitively and affectively examined the ways in which they could create connections to these stories, even in perspectives from which they've likely never had the occasion to view the world. As Hess describes in her concept of digital storytelling, a key component of building empathy through stories is the slow process of continuously reflecting on the story itself and our response to it; this was the purpose of both the individual reflection, the group discussion, and the presentation described below.

In the final part of the unit, students worked with their groups to retell the stories of the people whose perspectives they watched in their VR videos. Using information from the video and other resources (if necessary) along with the Spanish grammar in the unit, students built a short presentation in Spanish in which they shared the past events of the story, their own responses to the story, and the future actions that the story might have incited. Their presentations were designed to end with ideas on a "moral" of sorts - students were asked to succinctly share how the unique perspective in the video helped them understand the world in new ways and how these new kinds of understandings might engage them toward wanting to act to change the situation of the story they heard. The complete assignment description and rubric can be found in Appendix O. As with the initial presentation of their own stories, students listening to others' presentations were required to take notes on what they learned and any questions they had. Each presentation concluded with an opportunity for follow-up discussion (in Spanish and English to ensure that students could express their ideas accurately) in which students shared their own understanding of the stories that were presented, as well as the groups' reactions to the story and the responsive actions they described. After all students had presented, they completed a brief survey in which they described their experiences watching the VR videos (as some students experienced connectivity problems and others chose to watch the video on YouTube because the goggles or VR experience was uncomfortable in some way), and then reflected on the ways the VR videos and presentations helped them learn about others, create emotional connections, and respond with action. They were then prompted to reflect on similar responses they might have had while listening to their classmates' presentations of the stories from their VR videos. The complete text of this survey and reflection assignment is in Appendix Q.

Unit conclusion. The original plan to culminate the entire unit was to have students return to the Google Classroom discussion board at this point in order to add to their original posts on the power of storytelling. As I began to reflect on the data I had already collected, however, I felt that it would be beneficial to gather input directly from students regarding their thoughts about any potential connections between technology, empathy, and civic engagement. At the end of the unit, therefore, students participated in a final in-class discussion in which they were prompted to think about their own technology use and the ways in which they may or may not be exposed to opportunities for sharing and hearing stories that express voices of marginalization or oppression or that result in some sort of action. The questions used to guide these discussions can be found in Appendix P. Following this in-class discussion and the VR survey and reflection assignment described above, the planned Google discussion post was replaced instead with a final reflective writing assignment submitted directly to the researcher in order to provide a more private opportunity for students to reflect openly and honestly on their own learning in the unit. Students were prompted to think about what they learned and which activities helped them to do so, as well as what future action or learning might result from their experiences in this unit and any final thoughts on technology or any of the other themes that were brought up. The questions used to prompt this final reflection assignment can be found in Appendix Q.

Data Collection

To answer each of the questions described above, qualitative data were collected in four separate formats. First, relevant curricular materials were included to help convey the structure of the unit, as well as the kind of participation in which students were expected to engage. These curricular materials can be found in the appendices at the end of this work. Second, data were

collected in the form of the written discussion question responses, journal reflections, and presentations that were submitted to the teacher/researcher. To understand more about the ways in which students participated in building empathy and developing a disposition toward civic engagement and social justice, it was essential to examine the ways in which they expressed their own ideas on these issues across a variety of formats. Drawing on their own words to depict their thinking was key in developing the kind of thick description essential to qualitative research (Merriam, 1998).

In addition to their writing, students also participated in face-to-face discussions and presentations that pertained to their thinking and learning about empathy and civic engagement. These in-class experiences led to the final two forms of data. Third, I regularly used my own rough recordings, referred to by Sanjek (1990) as "scratch notes" and Emerson, et al. (1995) as "jottings," primarily to record my own thoughts and reactions while students were working in class, listening to others' presentations, or participating in in-class discussions. These jottings were then turned into more complete field notes as time allowed, in the variety of forms that Emerson et. al describe: asides, or "brief, reflective bits of analytic writing that succinctly clarify, explain, interpret or raise questions about some specific happening," (p. 101), commentaries - "more elaborate reflection on some specific event or issue" (p. 102), and in-process memos - "products of more sustained analytic writing [which] require a more extended time-out from actively composing field notes" (p. 103). In other words, I regularly drew on the process of jotting, describing, and reflecting more fully on the events that transpired throughout the unit as time allowed throughout the day and outside the classroom setting. Though I had also planned to use these sort of rough notes during in-class discussions to record verbatim quotes and other quick concept lists in order to jog my memory about particularly enlightening interactions in

class, after the first discussion in the first class I realized that the pace and depth of these discussions would require audio recording. The fourth form of data, therefore, was the transcriptions of these in-class discussions about storytelling, empathy, and technology. The combination of my own notes and reflective writing throughout the unit and the transcriptions of students expressing their ideas in their own words was essential in helping me to reconstruct these classroom experiences with as much detail and thick description as possible while maintaining the fidelity of the experience as it happened, rather than relying solely on my memories after they had blurred through an entire day of teaching.

Data Analysis

Through their discussion questions, reflection journals, written assignments and presentations, and surveys, most of the data gathered for this research was in the form of student writing. A primary mode of data analysis, therefore, drew both on sociolinguistic and discourse analysis. As Josiane Boutet explains, these fields come together "in a scientific outlook, in which the description and analysis of language is carried out not only for the sake of knowledge and to understand the social world, but also for critical reasons - indeed for some, in order to change the way things are" (2005, p. 51). In other words, examining student language use - both in their writing and from direct quotes in transcriptions and field notes - served not only to help understand the ways in which they interacted and made meaning together around empathy and civic engagement, but also to illuminate the ways that this discourse could be shaped toward meeting the aims of critical pedagogy. Using sociolinguistic and discourse analysis was particularly appropriate here in answering questions not only about what and how students think about empathy and civic engagement, but also about the formats that most successfully allow for cued guidance toward a particular outcome.

Drawing on sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, student writing, transcriptions, and field notes were analyzed through coding in order to "begin to probe beyond the behavioral descriptions, considering the social meaning or importance of what's happening" (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). As these authors suggest, this process began with open coding, marking significant passages with descriptors in order to develop a more focused system of categories. This initial open coding occurred using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo, resulting in the organization of data primarily into large groups corresponding with the attributes of empathy described in the literature review for this work. For each activity, student speech and writing was coded as perspective-taking, understanding emotions, and non-judgmental response/communication, with each of these codes also containing any samples where the opposite might have occurred.

This coding process was inductive in which, as Miles and Huberman suggest, "data get well molded to the codes that represent them, and we get more of a code-in-use flavor than a generic-code-for-many-uses generated by a prefabricated start list" (1984, p. 57). In other words, while data analysis was initially informed by the research questions and directed, therefore, toward instances in which students directly address issues pertaining to empathy and civic engagement, codes describing the function of language use as students made meaning of these topics were continuously developed and changed in a second, more thorough process of data analysis. After this initial open coding process, all data samples were printed in order to be further narrowed and analyzed in terms of sociolinguistic analytic tools of "communicative acts" or "functions" of speech and language use. This level of analysis was essential in order to more fully understand not just the general ways in which their speech and writing did or did not demonstrate attributes of empathy, but also to more carefully understand the ways in which they

were (or were not) able to build empathy toward perspectives of marginalization and oppression that would result in increased civic engagement. While Miles and Huberman point to the need for re-coding as a potential downfall of an inductive approach, they also argue that the iterative process of reading and coding data several times is also an essential component of developing a deeper understanding of the case. The process, therefore, of identifying initial themes as data were collected and refining and specifying the particular functions of language use as they illuminated these themes has resulted in the identification of specific examples of language use that illustrate how students used a variety of tools to make meaning of building empathy and developing a disposition toward civic engagement. Many of these specific examples of student language are included in the results of this study to help illustrate student learning and understanding through their own words.

Validity and Clarity

Qualitative data analysis is often subject to questions of trustworthiness and validity when it comes to wondering whether studying a particular group of students in a particular setting can lead to any sort of generalizable claim. Wolcott suggests that we might more aptly approach these issues by replacing validity with the notion of understanding, which he defines as the "power to make experience intelligible by applying concepts and categories" (1984, p. 367). In other words, rather than seeking validity in the traditional sense, he argues that the idea of analyzing a particular experience and making sense of the meaning made within it for others is at the heart of qualitative research. In order to do so with as much validity as possible, particular strategies within the process of qualitative research are described below.

First, Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the notion of *prolonged engagement*, in which sufficient time is spent in the field in order to understand the culture, social setting, or

phenomenon and in order to foster the development of rapport and trust which facilitates the co-construction of meaning between researcher and members of the research setting. In other words, in order to describe the meaning of a particular phenomenon as understood by the participants in such a way as to be meaningful and valid to others outside that context, researchers must have developed a sense of trust with participants to ensure that they understand the same meaning. In the case of my classroom, as described above regarding the participants, I had already worked to establish rapport with my students prior to the unit of study described here. Despite the fact that the data collection for this research lasted for only six weeks, I had already spent at least a semester or, in most cases, three semesters with the students who participated in the study. This prolonged engagement had already, in many ways, established a sense of trust and shared meaning-making that helped to ensure that I can convey that meaning to others in trustworthy ways.

A second strategy often tied to validity in qualitative research is that of triangulation, or seeking the convergence of multiple perspectives in order to confirm that all aspects of a phenomenon have been investigated (Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989). In the case of this study, it was easy for me to make assumptions about students' thoughts on empathy and civic engagement and to draw on their participation as a means of clearly assessing which tools were most productive for this kind of learning in the classroom setting. While prolonged engagement did help me to make these claims more reliably, it was also essential to seek input from the students themselves. To this end, the additional discussion on technology was added, along with a follow-up question about technology, and the survey described above. Triangulation would normally refer to input on data and codes from another individual outside the study, and though it was considered for this study, the amount and depth of data here made this sort of process difficult to achieve. It was

critical, therefore, to gather and analyze students' own thoughts on their learning process as a means of checking my own understanding of what occurred throughout the unit.

Next, Wolcott (1994) provides further suggestions on approaching validity through the careful consideration of the writing process. He suggests that it is essential to record data accurately and to begin writing up notes and analysis as early as possible. He also describes the importance of letting the reader see the phenomena for themselves, finding a careful balance between providing detailed description and analysis. He writes, "I would rather error on the side of too much [detail]; conversely between overanalyzing and underanalyzing the data, I would rather say too little" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 350). To follow this advice, as I began collecting data, writing field notes, and coding and analyzing data, I adjusted my approach to ensure that my analysis is limited by the data itself. This included using audio recording and transcriptions of in-class discussions and, at every step of the writing process, continuing to include large swaths of these transcriptions and student writing to help me stay true to their own words and ideas. In order words, at each step of the data collection, analysis, and writing process, more detail from student language was maintained and less summarizing or essentializing analysis was included, such that those who read my work would have less cause to question its validity to begin with.

Finally, it was essential to remain candid on my role as both teacher and researcher throughout the process of this study. Bresler (2012) writes:

> Part of a postmodern scholarly process is the awareness of one's story and the ability to reflect on how it impacts one's choices of issues and lenses, and the ways in which one shares participants' narratives. This process requires a degree of self-knowledge. (p. 52)

It is key, then, to admit to my own passionate approach to teaching with and about empathy. As described in the consideration of action research at the beginning of this section, as both a

teacher and researcher, the goal of understanding more about how to teach to build empathy and civic engagement is, ultimately, to build empathy and to encourage civic engagement. I conducted this research not just with curiosity about whether these goals could be met and how they might be influenced by technology, but with the sincerest hope that they were met. It is essential, therefore, for me to recognize the need for candor. As Wolcott (1994) suggests, "If circumstances call for me to draw implications or suggest possible remedies, I try to 'change hats' conspicuously" (p. 352). In other words, when I was teaching and I took action to encourage empathy in my students, I have candidly acknowledged this act in my field notes and in the data analysis and results described below. When I was analyzing data, I took care to switch to my researcher hat to candidly understand what student responses to these actions said, whether they met my hopeful goals or not. This approach toward data analysis can be evidenced in the inclusion not only of samples of student language that indicated empathy, but also those that did not. While it was my goal as a teacher that all students would experience growth in empathy and desires for civic engagement and enthusiastically report that technology was an especially effective means of accomplishing this sort of learning, as a researcher I also sought out the ways in which students were unable to build empathy, did not respond to perspectives of marginalization or oppression with desires for increased civic engagement and action, and did not think that technology could be used to meet these goals. It is these contradictory data that are, perhaps, most illuminating toward directing our understanding of these phenomenon, and many of them are discussed in the results below. Ultimately, as described here, I took great care throughout the data collection and analysis process to ensure that what I wanted to happen in my classroom did not blur my understanding of how the students themselves were making meaning of what happened.

CHAPTER 4

FROM SELF TO OTHER: GUIDING STUDENTS' THOUGHTS ON EMPATHY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

In this chapter I will discuss the results of research question one – How do students think about empathy and civic engagement? The discussion of data and results are divided into the two activities from which they came: first, the introductory brainstorming activity that began the unit in which students wrote about and discussed the purpose and power of storytelling, and second, the in-class discussion held at the end of the second part of the unit about empathy and marginalized perspectives. The purpose of describing each of these activities separately is to differentiate between separate stages of the unit. The first brainstorming activity occurred prior to any explicit discussion of empathy or civic engagement in class and was relatively open-ended without much direct feedback from me. Transcripts from the second activity demonstrate the ways in which my immediate feedback and guidance through in-class discussion served to shape students' thoughts on empathy and civic engagement. As some of their initial thoughts on empathy from the brainstorming activity were troublingly self-centered instead of other-focused, the in-class discussion provided an opportunity for me to draw on that initial data in order to intentionally shift their thinking more toward the kind of empathy that aligns with the goals of social justice-oriented civic learning.

Overall, data described below from the pre-assessment writing and in-class discussion that occurred four weeks later demonstrates that students' thoughts on empathy were in line with several key components from the literature discussed in this work, such as the imaginative process of putting yourself in someone else's perspective, appreciating sameness and difference, accepting multiple viewpoints as a way of changing our own perspectives, and the way that

strong emotional connections help us do these things. In the pre-assessment activities students also made specific references to the ways in which understanding others' perspectives helps us to avoid ignorance and stereotypes, and a few students even made references to marginalized perspectives that would help us to approach the social justice-oriented ends of civic learning. All this kind of thinking on behalf of students occurred before any guided discussion of empathy or civic engagement. Without explicitly cuing them to do so, however, students tended to connect empathy primarily to shared experiences and the notion that we must have a specific way to relate to someone in order to build empathy for them. This departs from the social justice-oriented ends of civic education, away from the idea that we can build empathy for marginalized perspectives without having experienced them ourselves. In the in-class discussion, however, the second set of data collected here demonstrates that, when pushed, students began to make connections to the ways in which our emotions and our general understanding of human experience might help us to build empathy for these perspectives regardless of our lack of shared experiences. Each of these components of students' thoughts about empathy and civic engagement is illustrated below.

Pre-assessment of empathy: Initial storytelling discussion questions. The curricular unit used in this study began with a relatively open-ended brainstorming activity in which, without any prior discussion, students were asked to reflect on why and how we tell and hear stories. The specific questions used to guide this discussion and reflective writing can be found in Appendix A. Students in all four of the classes participating in this study spent one short class period (27 minutes each) discussing their ideas about telling stories with small groups of three or four and then sharing their ideas with the class. Afterward, they spent two days outside of class reflecting and writing on those ideas in a Google discussion post shared with their classmates.

After the initial post, students were also required to comment on three of their classmates' answers in order to extend the conversation and encourage them to read and reflect on the thoughts of their peers.

Data described here were collected from the in-class discussion as well as students' Google discussion posts and comments. These data are divided into six segments representing major patterns in student responses, including a few explicit references to empathy, followed by an attempt to track student responses according to Wiseman's four attributes of empathy described in the literature (1996). These attributes are discussed here as perspective-taking, understanding emotions, non-judgmental responses, and the communication of those non-judgmental responses. For the purposes of this work, Wiseman's third and fourth attributes are discussed together, as analyzing student speech and writing as my primary data sources makes it difficult to separate their responses from the act of communicating them. The fifth section here includes a sample of references to action that could be tied to notions of civic engagement. Finally, from this initial brainstorming activity, it was also essential to understand the ways in which students' responses did not align with, or, in some cases, seemed to present the opposite characteristics from these attributes of empathy in order to create a clear and honest picture of students' thoughts. Identifying these opposing thoughts was also important at this point in the study, as the patterns that emerged here in my role as researcher were critical in informing my future actions as a teacher – students' initial responses to this discussion question allowed me to shape the explicit discussion of empathy that occurred later in the study. Ultimately, this section concludes with a summarizing discussion of the key patterns in data collected from these brainstorming activities that were crucial toward not only illuminating an answer to this first research question, but also toward shaping the rest of the unit.

Explicit references to empathy. Interestingly, though the brainstorming prompt questions made no reference to it, one student included a discussion of empathy in his reflection on how stories impact us when we hear them. In his initial discussion post, he suggested that "Stories about tragedies have a powerful impact. When you hear something tragic that truly alerts you or gain empathy for that story, it will stick with you for a longer time." Along the same lines, in his response to another student's post, the same student said:

> I agree with you that negative stories have a more impact on us. I also believe it is most effective. When you hear something tragic, it often sticks with you because you don't want whatever you heard to happen to you. You also build up empathy for whatever you're hearing.

While he was the only student in this brainstorming activity to make an explicit reference to empathy, his responses were part of a much larger pattern of students who tended to focus on the ways in which sad, tragic, or negative stories have very powerful impacts on listeners because of their ability to engage our emotions. This pattern of connecting empathy to feeling sad or feeling bad for someone else and as a means of inspiring us to act for our own benefit to avoid those negative scenarios was one that continued to emerge through other responses as well. As only the one student discussed here made an un-prompted explicit reference to empathy in his reflection, it was also illuminating to analyze student responses in accordance with the key attributes of empathy suggested in literature to understand more about how they might be exhibiting empathetic responses without naming it that way.

Attribute one: Perspective-taking. The first of Wiseman's key attributes of empathy is seeing the world as others see it (1996). Most other scholarly literature on empathy describes this attribute as perspective-taking, an imaginative process of putting yourself in someone else's shoes in order to create connections – to understand both sameness and difference. Several

samples of student writing in which they reflected on the power and purpose of telling stories included language that alludes to these same key themes, including imagination, putting oneself in another's shoes, and commonalities and difference. Students also expanded on these ideas in their reflections into other themes that aligned with the goals of this study, such as the ways in which stories can help us change our perspectives as we learn and understand others, how we might gain a new appreciation of multiple viewpoints, and how this move toward understanding and focusing on others can help us avoid stereotypes and ignorance, and even approach an understanding of marginalized perspectives. Key data samples from each of these themes are included here, along with a brief discussion of their significance in answering research question one.

Imagination. When asked about the kinds of stories we tell and which ones are meaningful to share and to hear, one student reflected:

> An example of a type of story is personal stories, or things that actually happened to us in real life. I think that these stories are the coolest because you can imagine how that was for that person when it happened to them.

As described in the literature, this student (along with a few others) made an explicit reference to the imaginative process of understanding the world as another person sees it. This sample demonstrates a clear comprehension of the need to understand others' perspectives - this student's description of these personal stories as "the coolest" indicates the importance she places on the ability to approach an understanding of another person's perspective that is essential for developing empathy.

Putting oneself in another's shoes. In the same reflection about storytelling, another student said "People often fail to put themselves into anybody else's shoes, and one of the easiest ways to achieve these goals and relate closer to others is by listening to their stories

and experiences." Much like the imaginative process, this student refers to the idea of perspective-taking as the ability to put yourself into someone else's shoes. Her language marks the importance of this act by referring to it as a goal, albeit one that, in her opinion, people often fail to achieve. Despite the lack of an explicit reference to the importance of building empathy, this student suggests the importance of moving toward perspective-taking by sharing in another's experience.

Commonalities and difference. In thinking about the power and purpose of telling stories, several students indicated the ways in which stories can help us understand difference – there are different stories from people of different ages, with different lives, views, and experiences, and from different cultures, and, furthermore, one student wisely suggested that we all hear and analyze stories differently. It seems that many students focused on how stories help us to encounter difference, and more explicit references to the importance of these encounters are discussed below. Of note here, though, are two students who moved the discussion of difference toward an approach of understanding our sameness across these differences. One student said that "Through stories like these we can see that everyone is *different yet the same*, despite where they come from" (emphasis mine). Along the same lines, another student reflected that "Everyone has at least one thing in common, so we all must have one story in common. However, the day to day struggles I have are completely different from what another person has." In other words, this student suggests that, despite living through different everyday experiences, we also share at least some level of common experiences. Other students suggested that stories have the power to bring people together, even "of different age groups and other barriers" or "that otherwise may have never related to each other." As above, suggesting this goal of creating connection across difference as part of the power of sharing stories indicates the

importance of understanding others' perspectives. At the beginning of the study this small group of students already expressed a relatively nuanced understanding of the necessity of recognizing and maintaining an understanding of our difference, but they also demonstrate the importance of seeking to create connection across difference, which is a key component of approaching empathetic responses.

Changing our perspectives. Beyond these linguistic connections to the literature on empathy, students also wrote responses that connected the power and purpose of telling stories to the importance of learning about others. Many of the writing samples from this activity that were coded as perspective-taking included a reference to the importance of understanding others. As one student reflected:

> It is very important to hear other peoples' stories. It will give you a new perspective on life. If you are just thinking the same thing all the time you will never truly understand the world. Your life is just a little part of the world, but by listening to stories it is a way to find out how other people live their life and view the world.

Of particular note, this student not only suggests that it is important to know and understand others' perspectives, but also points to the ways in which this understanding helps to change our own perspectives as well.

Another student pushed this notion further toward not just changing perspectives, but into a particular perspective that is focused on others over the self. He says:

> The only way to expand our understanding and awareness is to listen to the pleas and struggles of others. If not, we stay rooted in our own problems and never allow ourselves to have any sense of cultural appreciation or selflessness. This is true especially where we live. The U.S. is a melting pot of different cultures, blended and immigrated together. The only way to understand ourselves is to understand others.

As in the previous section, these students are focused on the ways in which hearing other peoples' stories helps us to encounter difference. They suggest that these encounters with difference are critical in shaping our understanding of the world, and, though not through explicit reference, they point also to the importance of creating connection. The notion that each of us is only one small part of the world and that stories are necessary for helping us understand others and, therefore, ourselves, seems to indicate that, at least on some level, we are all intricately connected to one another. These students mark an important step in building empathy: perspective-taking pushes us beyond a cognitive understanding of others' experiences and into a move toward allowing that understanding to shape our own perspectives. In other words, these students are suggesting, like the literature around empathy and civic engagement, that understanding others includes a move toward taking on parts of their perspectives as our own.

Multiple viewpoints. Another key part of moving toward perspective-taking that is particularly relevant for the goals of civic learning is the ability to appreciate multiple viewpoints. The students quoted above seem to suggest this idea in their approach of understanding others in order to understand ourselves and the world around us. One student carries out this line of thinking, saying:

> It is important to hear other peoples' stories to get a new perspective. People could tell stories in ways that change your view on something, whether it's your view on food, or your view on the world. The more ways you can view something, the better, and people's stories can help gain more ways to view something.

Rather than simply referring to understanding others, this student makes an explicit case for appreciating multiple viewpoints. His idea about "the more the better" indicates the importance he places on the move toward not just understand another perspective, but on the ability to understand and appreciate more than one perspective at once. Furthermore, this student makes an

explicit attempt to point to a simpler means of creating connection through his mention of food. While views on the world are perhaps a broad and sometimes difficult topic to engage in order to appreciate multiple perspectives, the reminder that we can start with basic topics to create connection is an important one.

In response to the discussion post described here, another student commented:

> I liked how you stated near the end that telling stories is important so we see the possibly differing views of others. This is an important point, as listening to the opinions of others is sometimes a controversial topic in our world today.

While not an explicit reference to multiple perspectives, I found this comment (and others like it) to be of particular interest because of its reference to "our world today." Part of understanding students' thoughts on empathy and civic engagement requires situating these thoughts within the context of their understanding of the world. This student's comment, while suggesting the importance of understanding others' viewpoints, also indicates that he thinks this is perhaps not something that many people seek to do. Much like the data indicating high levels of polarization that has resulted in the rise in social tensions described in the introduction to this work, this student's suggestion that listening to others is "a controversial topic" indicates his awareness of the social trend toward division and the difficulty of approaching connection across difference. Acknowledging students' awareness of these social tensions is a key part of the process not only of understanding how they think about empathy and civic engagement, but also of attempting to shape their educational experiences toward developing skills to help them address and overcome these tensions. Similar references to current social and political climates are also included below in other sections of these results.

Avoid stereotypes and ignorance. Along the lines of addressing the current social and political climate, a few students connected the process of understanding multiple perspectives to

the goal of avoiding ignorance of others' experiences and ways of living. One student pointed to the relationship between ignorance and stereotypes, saying:

> It is important to hear other people's stories because it keeps the mind from becoming ignorant. It helps others to learn what actually goes on outside of their little world. Without stories like these, there would be more stereotypes than there already is.

As suggested above, this student connects understanding others to avoiding ignorance, indicating that hearing other peoples' perspectives helps us learn about them in a way that avoids the generalizing tendencies of stereotypes. This points to a more authentic understanding of others' perspectives, as avoiding stereotypes would seem to suggest a move toward understanding that person's own experiences rather than relying on our own interpretation of those experiences from our perspective. It is this shift in perspective-taking that is essential not only for the development of empathy, but particularly for meeting the social justice goals of empathy-based civic learning.

Marginalized perspectives. Following from these social justice goals, in the introductory brainstorming activity one student wrote:

> History has taught us about our world in the past and how stupid and ignorant the world was back then. One being slavery, a story we've been taught since we were young. Of course, we don't know how it feels like, but we know it's not a good thing. Another famous one, when Columbus sailed the ocean blue leading settlers to drive out the Native Americans from their homes. Wouldn't be too pleasant if someone drove you out of your home. Since these "stories" happened before in history, what would stop them from happening yet another time.

Though not an explicit reference to marginalization or oppression, this student demonstrates a move toward taking on those perspectives with his idea that it "wouldn't be too pleasant if someone drove you out of your home." Rather than focusing on the traditional history of

Columbus "discovering the New World," this student attempts to put himself into the perspectives of the native people being forced away from their land and their homes.

Though he suggested earlier that "we don't know how it feels," it is essential to remember here that empathy does not necessarily ask us to take on every perspective that we encounter, as this would likely result in an overwhelming sense of confusion or possibly even apathy. Instead, we can return to Leake's conception of empathy as "a move to perspective-taking so that one might be more aware" (2016, p. 2). What this student demonstrates is not necessarily the successful result of having been able to put himself fully into the perspectives of a slave or a native person driven from his home, but rather a move toward trying to understand and know these perspectives. This move is a key component in the development of empathy demonstrated in the data samples discussed here, and, more critically, in this specific reference to perspectives of people who have experienced oppression. These results suggest the key finding that some students exhibited a disposition or move toward perspective-taking in their early writing on storytelling.

Attribute two: Understanding emotions. Despite the fact that the guiding questions used for the initial brainstorming discussion activities did not specifically mention emotions, many students wrote about the strong connection between storytelling and our emotional responses. Much like the previous discussion of the first attribute of empathy, data from students' initial brainstorming activities on the power and purpose of storytelling also followed general themes from the literature around empathy. Like in their examples of perspective-taking, students used language in their responses that also connected emotions to *imagination*, as well as *creating connection across difference*. Their discussion of emotional responses to stories, however, also pushed these ideas further not just into an internal empathetic response on behalf of the listener,

but also toward *responding with action*. Each of these three components of understanding others' emotions is discussed more fully here.

Imagination. Many students, in reflecting on which stories have powerful impacts, wrote about how stories that draw out their emotions tend to stick with them longer. One student said:

> The stories that have the most powerful impacts on me are the sad or tragic stories that are told. When I watch happy and excited movies, I just watch them to be entertained. When I watch sad movies, I don't just watch them. I feel what they are going through and imagine how terrible it would be to go through something like they do in the movie.

There is a clear connection here not only between stories and emotions, but also to the ways in which our emotions help us to be able to imagine another person's emotions or perspectives through the experience they have described. Interestingly, most students made similar observation about strong emotional connections particularly in response to sad, tragic, or negative stories. From the beginning of the unit, students expressed this pervasive idea that empathy is connected only to sadness, and that these types of stories create more powerful responses. While this may serve to help connect students more deeply to perspectives of marginalization or oppression, it also seems to be a somewhat troublingly reductive notion of empathy. Furthermore, this connection of empathy to sadness often seemed to lead to a sense of feeling bad or sad *for* the person in the story, rather than necessarily connecting to or understanding that person's emotions. What is notable about the student quoted here, therefore, is that she expressed the way in which these sad stories help her to imagine that person's experiences, allowing her to put herself inside the storyteller's perspective, rather than limiting her relation to the story only in terms of how it makes her feel. Pity, in this case, is not the same as empathy – feeling bad for the person in the story is internal, focused on the listener, while imagining or understanding the storyteller's emotions is external, focused on their experiences

and perspectives. Noting this difference early in the unit was key in helping me craft future discussions around how we respond to stories and helped me to focus on shaping students' thoughts toward these more external notions of response.

Creating connection across difference. As discussed in response to the first attribute of empathy, the ability to relate to others' perspectives while also maintaining our understanding of difference is key in building empathy. Focusing only on differences completely negates the connection necessary to build empathy. On the other hand, assuming that we can have an absolute understanding of another's experiences or that we've experienced the exact same thing is perhaps even more reductive than the responses of pity described above. Creating connection across difference, therefore, allows space to acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual perspective, while also inviting ways to relate to these perspectives, especially when we've never been through the particular experience that created them. Student responses continued to indicate that creating connections across difference was difficult for them throughout the unit – although a few students described the ability of stories to help us learn about and connect to others (as quoted in the previous section), many of them also seemed entirely unable to fathom any way in which they might be able to relate to someone whose experience was vastly different from theirs. Emotions, therefore, became a key component of encouraging students to explore these connections more deeply.

As one student reflected:

> I think people across the world tell similar stories because believe it or not, for the most part our lives are similar. We go through times that are happy, sad, funny, and crazy. There is death, life, wins and losses in everyone's life and that is what makes the best kinds of stories. Everyone has feelings. Whether or not they are the same, everyone still goes through feelings of happiness and sadness. Stories are told through feelings and experiences. Our experiences may not be the exact same, but the lessons we are taught throughout life are similar to other life lessons people across the world are taught.

What is particularly informative here is this student's ability to draw out the ways in which our emotions help us relate to one another even when our lives are different. She has acknowledged that our experiences may be different, but that emotional responses are universal enough that we can all understand them on some level. As another student said, "Something that all people have in common is that we all have feelings and want to feel something. We all want to hear something that causes an emotional reaction within us." This idea that emotions are essential to the human experience and that, though situations and experiences may vary, our emotional responses exist at least on a similar spectrum across the world is a key component of building empathy. These responses, particularly as they were the outliers in this brainstorming activity, were key in developing future discussions around empathetic responses.

Responding with action. In line with the idea that stories create strong emotional responses, a few students reflected in their brainstorming discussion on the ways in which these strong emotional responses may also be tied to action. One student wrote about how we may intentionally use stories to influence others' emotions, saying "Some people tell funny stories if their friends are sad in order to cheer them up. Sometimes I tell happy or sweet stories to my friends or my family to make them feel as happy as the story made me feel." While this is perhaps not the kind of action aligned with the goals of civic learning, it is important to note how this student acknowledges the powerful ways in which we might use stories to influence other people's emotions. If a story is powerful enough for us to want to share it, we might imagine that the retelling of particular stories could be encouraged toward the civic engagement and social justice-oriented goals described in this work. Thinking of the importance of retelling stories, then, became a key first step toward thinking about other kinds of civic engagement.

Additionally, two students wrote reflection responses that did tie emotional responses to stories in ways that related directly to socially just civic engagement. The first wrote:

> Stories that are sad or powerful have a deep meaning when we hear them. I think this is because it triggers people's emotion when hearing those things causing them to think about it more and giving it more meaning. For example when we see a story about how someone helped a homeless man by giving him a fresh set of clothes and food to eat our emotions are triggered more. This causes us to think more about how we could do things like that.

As suggested above, this student focuses specifically on the ways that sad stories create strong emotional responses. However, she does not only suggest that these stories also make us feel sad for the person in the story or even that they might help us understand that person's emotions. Instead, she points to the connection here between both affective and cognitive responses – she says that these sad stories make us think more, ultimately leading to the desire and understanding of the ways in which we may actually take action to change the situation described in the story. More simply put, another student, in response to a similar discussion post about the particular effects of sad stories, concluded his comment by saying "It is up to us to make the sad stories into a better story." What these students expressed here is ultimately the goal of the kind of learning set out in this study – hearing and understanding other peoples' perspectives in a way that builds up a desire and the knowledge of how to take action to make change.

The students quoted here revealed hopeful steps toward meeting the goals of this kind of learning – they demonstrate the key finding that their understanding of empathy is closely tied to emotional understanding. It is important to consider, however, that these answers tended to be outliers rather than the normative response. While more of the typical responses are discussed in following sections, these rare examples of student thinking that did align with the ability to understand others' emotions and the ways in which these emotions might lead us to action are

included here because of their two-fold importance: first, for the hopeful notion that students can, and, in fact, some already do, understand the importance of empathy and civic engagement, and, second, because of the ways in which they influenced the rest of the unit toward helping other students also approach these ways of thinking.

Attributes three and four: Communication of non-judgmental responses. The final two attributes of empathy are combined here, as the only way for me to identify non-judgmental responses in these reflective writing activities was for students to communicate them to me or to one another. On the whole, students' reflections on the power and purpose of storytelling tended to avoid judgment of others. It is worth noting that students interacted respectfully with one another in the Google discussion post and their comments – though upon occasion they commented on their classmates' posts to express disagreement, they did so in respectful and professional ways. This was relatively unsurprising, as students had completed these discussion post activities on several other occasions prior to the beginning of the unit and were already familiar with the expectations expressed in the discussion post rubric they received at the beginning of the year. One of the requirements of these assignments to "Be respectful and keep an open mind as you read posts from your classmates and when you respond." (For the full rubric, see Appendix T.) As described in literature around civic learning, taking these steps to intentionally create equitable and democratic spaces for self-expression in the classroom is a key part of learning these skills and transferring them beyond the classroom as well.

Beyond the non-judgmental ways in which they interacted with one another, a few students also expressed ideas about the ways in which hearing stories can help us to learn about others in such a way that helps us avoid judging their experiences or perspectives. In addition to the notion that stories help us avoid ignorance and stereotypes, one student said:

> I think hearing others' stories shows us that they have faith and trust us to learn their most private things in life. It helps us also to not be quick to judge 'cause we never know what people go through in our daily life even the people closest to us.

Similarly, another student reflected that:

> When you are given "background information," you begin to form an educated opinion about someone instead of judging them based off of their present actions…we learn a lot from [stories] like cultural ideals, emotional ideals, and we can accept and learn from them in many different ways.

These two explicit references to avoiding judgment tie directly to Wiseman's (1996) attribute of empathy, as it follows directly from the first two attributes: attempting to put oneself into another's perspective helps us to understand their emotions, and combining this cognitive and affective understanding leads to avoiding judgment. As the students expressed here, learning about another person's situation and experiences helps us to understand more complex parts of their lives – their cultural and emotional identities, and even the more internal or private things we wouldn't know based only on public observation. As the second student quoted here said, this kind of understanding is not just for understanding's sake, but to help us *accept* and even *learn from* others in important ways. As already described in relation to the other attributes of empathy, the presence of these non-judgmental responses at the outset of the unit pointed to the importance of guidance from the teacher to help set requirements for respectful, non-judgmental interaction in a democratic classroom setting. Furthermore, these responses helped me to more fully understand the ways I could further help students to connect learning about others to the non-judgmental acceptance of their experiences and perspectives necessary for building empathy.

The opposite of empathy. Though the student responses cited here from the storytelling brainstorming activity do include language that indicates the presence of each of Wiseman's

(1996) attributes of empathy, it is also important to consider that each of these responses represented only small outlying patterns rather than the typical response. While many students reflected on similar themes around storytelling, such as the ways in which stories may help us learn about other people and relate to them in new ways, and the majority of students also connected storytelling to emotional responses, a lot of their reflective writing at the beginning of the unit may actually be characterized as counterproductive to the development of empathy and civic engagement. Responses indicative of those larger patterns are described here in three themes: perspective-taking vs. relating, learning from vs. learning about, and emotional understanding vs. emotional response. Taken together, these larger patterns of student thinking seem to indicate that most of their responses were primarily framed toward the ways in which storytelling may influence or benefit their own lives, rather than demonstrating the outward, other-focused response that would indicate the sort of empathy that leads to civic engagement. These patterns are explored more fully below.

Perspective-taking vs. relating. While a few students responded to their first brainstorming question with themes in line with literature on perspective-taking, others pushed against the idea of attempting to take on new perspectives. These responses resisted a move toward creating connection across vast areas of difference and focused instead on the need to relate to others' exact experiences. For example, one student said:

> I think the ones that we connect with and can understand/relate to impact us the most. If you understand what someone is saying, you're more likely to be able to take what you need from that story to better yourself in life.

This student does acknowledge that stories may create connection, but he also suggests that this requires a particular level of understanding. While this prerequisite for creating connection may not be problematic in and of itself, this particular student (along with many others) seems to

place the responsibility for creating understanding on the storyteller instead of, or at least in equal measure to, the listener. There is no indication in this response that the work of creating connection through mutual understanding relies on the willingness and/or ability of the listener to move toward taking on the perspective of the storyteller. What's more, this response also demonstrates a common trend in students' thoughts that a key benefit of connecting with and understanding stories comes from what the listener can gain from the story, rather than what the listener might do in response to help benefit the storyteller. As suggested by a student quoted earlier, the tendency to focus on oneself rather than moving to put yourself in another's shoes is likely a natural human response. Though this student's reflection is in no way incorrect or even morally wrong – learning from others' experiences and mistakes can be very beneficial and is still an important part of listening to others – it does not exemplify the move toward perspective-taking that is necessary for building empathy.

Along these lines, another student reflected:

> I think stories that we can relate to have a bigger impact than stories we can't. When you can't relate to something it's really easy to not understand the message. If a story is about something to do with family, you will have an easier time understanding that message and it sticking with you if you can relate to the family part. If you don't have a family it will be harder to relate and the story sticking with you.

This response carries the same idea that relating to a story through shared experiences is essential in understanding the perspectives of others. What she does differently, however, is point to an example that sets a relatively low threshold for relation. She does not suggest that we must relate to the specific experience described in the story in order to understand the storyteller's perspective, but rather demonstrates the way in which we might move toward perspective-taking by seeking out a connection in relatively basic terms.

The pattern of responses in line with those demonstrated here was particularly illuminating for understanding students' thoughts on perspective-taking in empathy. While many of them insisted that relating to the experiences described in the story was a prerequisite for connecting to and understanding more about the perspectives expressed in the story, acknowledging that this relation can exist at a very basic level was critical in shaping the discussions and student work in the rest of the unit. As described in the following section about our in-class discussion of empathy, part of this discussion became focused on pushing the notion of the need to relate to specific experiences in order to encourage students to take on the work of relating rather than leaving it to the storyteller. In other words, these student responses helped me frame future discussions around the basic ways in which we might relate, based on simple experiences like having families, going to school, being sick, or experiencing particular emotional responses to these and other situations. The understanding that moving toward perspective-taking to build capacities for empathetic response requires work on behalf of the listener is a key finding of this study. Part of teaching empathy to this group of students required helping them to understand more about the ways in which they could (and should) work to build connection and understanding across difference rather than simply writing off stories as unengaging or unimportant because they that didn't automatically connect to their experiences.

Learning from vs. learning about. A second trend in student responses that seemed counter to the kind of perspective-taking described in the literature centered around the idea that the purpose of hearing others' stories comes from what we can learn from them to help ourselves rather than what we can learn about the storyteller in order to help them. Though this kind of response was briefly described above in the student who wrote about taking "what you need"

from the story, this pattern was repeated many times from other students who focused on learning from others' mistakes. One student wrote:

> It might be important to hear other peoples' stories to avoid the mistakes that they made or to remind you that you shouldn't take your life for granted. These stories can impact how you go about every second of your everyday life. If you don't hear these stories and are not taught a lesson, you may have to go through things that you wouldn't have had to had you heard the story. These things could be feelings of regret or fixing/avoiding a mistake that you made.

Another student also reflected:

> Sometimes it is good to just listen, or at least act like you are. In the world, there are so many different perspectives. So much can be gained from the insight of others. There is so much that can be learned from other's words of wisdom. There are so many people that are going through the same thing you are, too. If you take time and listen to what they have to say they can help better your situation. Also, if you take time to listen to them, they will listen to you when you need them most.

These responses do suggest very real benefits of hearing others' stories – learning lessons that help us avoid mistakes or listening in such a way that encourages others to listen to us are undeniably important facets of storytelling. These responses do not, however, reflect a move toward perspective-taking or understanding emotions that empathy requires. The first student points primarily to the idea that one can learn from others' stories in a way that benefits the listener without including any notion of benefits to the storyteller. While the second student perhaps starts to approach this idea with the concept of the importance of listening to different perspectives, it seems negated with the idea that just acting like you are listening might be enough. This student moves away from the idea of listening to learn about the storyteller and his or her unique perspectives and instead focuses on the act of listening as a means of gaining something in return. Many students, like those quoted here, focused on the benefits of storytelling as transactional rather than transformative. Though some students wrote about the

ways that learning about others can help change our own perspectives, more students focused on listening (or pretending to listen) in order to get something in return. Acknowledging the human tendency toward transactional interaction is a key finding in this study, in that understanding these responses helps identify ways that we might effectively change that thinking toward more other-focused goals. In this study, identifying the contrast in these patterns of thought helped me to shape future discussion toward thinking about responding to stories in outward-focused ways that could serve to benefit the storyteller instead of, or in addition to, just benefiting the listener.

Emotional understanding vs. emotional response. Many students who wrote about emotions focused particularly on the ways in which sad stories induce strong emotional responses. While a few students wrote about the power of these sad stories to help us imagine the emotions and experiences of the storyteller, many others focused instead on the ways that sad stories create other listener-focused emotions, like feeling bad *for* the storyteller, feeling guilty, or even feeling thankful to have avoided those negative experiences. Examples of these responses are explored below.

One student said "Sad and upsetting stories have a powerful impact because many people feel upset for you when they hear them. They feel bad for you which makes them remember them and never forget them." As suggested before, this response of feeling bad for the storyteller borders on pity rather than empathy. Interestingly, though, this student wrote from the perspective of the storyteller – most students who expressed similar ideas would have phrased this response as "you feel bad for them", using "you" as the listener and "them" as the storyteller. That this student flipped the roles in his response and positioned "you" as the storyteller seems to slightly shift this concept of a pity response. Instead of suggesting that "you" feel bad for the listener as a natural human response to the story, this shift might actually suggest

that knowing that people feel bad for "you" when they hear your story is also a desired result. In other words, we may tell sad stories because it feels good to know that we have other people's pity. This seems in line with the student above who suggested the importance of at least pretending to listen as a key part of storytelling. It is possible that we don't always tell sad stories because we want other people to understand us or to act to help us change the situation – sometimes knowing they feel bad *for* us may be enough. Though this pity is not the same as the empathetic civic engagement that seeks to address social and structural injustice, these student responses do suggest the need for a nuanced understanding of our role in responding to the stories we hear. Part of responding with empathy is also understanding the storyteller's perspective and emotions well enough to know whether they want only our non-judgmental emotional response or whether they are hoping that we might act on their behalf. Regardless of the desired response, the strong connection between emotional understanding and empathy is reiterated here as a key finding of this study.

Explicit instruction: In-class empathy discussion. Following from the results described above in the pre-assessment brainstorming activities, the second part of understanding how students think about empathy and civic engagement focused on an attempt to explicitly discuss these topics together in class. Literature suggests that teaching *with* empathy must be combined with teaching *about* empathy in order to more fully develop these skills (Dolby, 2012). Therefore, after considering the patterns that emerged from this pre-assessment activity, the prevalence of inward or self-focused responses made clear that this explicit discussion needed to be shaped in particular ways in order to push students' thinking about empathy and civic engagement toward outward responses. What follows here, then, are data from transcriptions of the in-class discussion spanning two class periods in all four sections of Spanish II. The questions used to

guide these discussions can be found in Appendix M. Rather than re-examining the same attributes of empathy from the pre-assessment, these data are divided into four sections, the first of which more fully examines students' thoughts on empathy through their explicit attempts to define it in our in-class discussion. The other three sections represent the attempts to inform students thoughts on empathy and civic engagement based on the patterns that emerged from the brainstorming activity described in the previous section. These topics include building empathy without relating to shared experiences and taking on perspectives of marginalization or oppression, which ultimately lead to responding with action.

Defining empathy. As the first brainstorming activity described above did not include an explicit discussion of empathy, it was informative to continue to understand how students think about the concept by asking them to define it in their own words. The in-class discussion, therefore, after summarizing previous thoughts on telling stories, began with the opportunity for students to discuss their definitions of empathy with their small groups of three or four students for a minute or two and then to share their ideas with the class. Without any prompting from the teacher, having only discussed with their classmates, students described empathy in terms very similar to the concepts expressed in the literature, using phrases like "the ability to understand and share feelings of someone else," "putting yourself in someone else's shoes," "sharing and recognizing other people's viewpoints," "being able to feel what other people felt," "trying to understand what other people are going through," "to be able to put yourself in that situation and how they might feel about it," "feeling how they feel," and "being able to relate to someone else's emotions." As in their initial responses about storytelling, students here focused largely on the emotional component of empathy, suggesting that understanding how other people are feeling is a key part of being empathetic. A few groups also pointed to the more cognitive

processes of understanding not just emotions, but also others' viewpoints and their experiences. Taken together, these responses follow the definitions of empathy in the literature described in this work, combining the cognitive and affective forms of comprehension required for perspective-taking and understanding others' emotions.

While most students framed their definitions as an ability, "being able" to feel or understand, one group characterized empathy more as a process or a disposition, describing it as "trying to understand." Like Leake's (2016) conception of empathy, this response suggests not the end goal of absolute understanding, but rather a move toward perspective-taking as a kind of awareness. Though not made explicit in the students' response, this line of thinking also illustrates the balance of building connection while maintaining difference. Defining empathy as the act of trying admits that we are not fully capable of perspective-taking, maintaining the critical understanding that we can never share another's experiences exactly as they have experienced them. It is this attempt to try, a move toward perspective-taking, or a disposition toward wanting to try, that shaped the conception of empathy through the continuation of this discussion and throughout the rest of the unit.

The first class to have this discussion provided definitions with a relatively broad connection between empathy and any kind of emotion, while the other three still tied empathy primarily to sadness or other negative emotions. In each of these three classes students also mentioned sympathy along with these negative emotions, which provided an interesting opportunity to push students' notions of empathy beyond the pattern described above in which their emotions lead them to feel bad *for* someone. Following are samples from transcriptions that illustrate my attempt to clarify these notions of empathy.

> (Students have just completed their two minutes to discuss their definitions of empathy with their small groups, and the teacher begins by re-directing their

attention toward whole-class discussion. She intends to address each group in the opposite order as the previous question in order to give new students a chance to speak first.)

Teacher: Ok. Let's see what you think. Make sure you're listening, por favor. We'll go the other way. What do you guys think?

Student 1: Uh, we said that empathy is understanding and feeling sad, or… (pause)

Teacher: (prompting) Does it have to be sad?

Student 1: No, it doesn't, but… (pause)

Teacher: Just any emotion, right? (prompting based on student's initial response) Understanding, feeling…

Student 1: Feeling for another person, having sympathy.

Teacher: Sí. Bien. That's a key point. So, you said sympathy. Are sympathy and empathy different?

Several students at the same time: Yes!

Teacher: How?

Student 2: You feel pity when you're, like, sympathetic.

Student 3: Yeah. Empathy is putting yourself in somebody's shoes, like putting yourself in their perspective, thinking about it.

In the final two classes the notion of sympathy also arose through the discussion of empathy, and students in these classes differentiated the concepts similarly, saying "Empathy is more like feeling other peoples' feelings with them and sympathy is more feeling bad about the feelings that they have," or "With sympathy, you, like, feel bad for something, but with empathy you understand." Though not a pre-planned part of the discussion, the mention of sympathy here provided a key opportunity to address the kinds of emotional responses that many students wrote in their initial reflections. The goal here was to push their understanding of empathy beyond

feeling pity or feeling bad *for* someone and more toward an attempt to understand that person's emotions. With little to no prompting from the teacher, these students adeptly separated the concept of sympathy as pity for someone from the idea of empathy as taking on their perspective.

Overall, these data reveal the key finding that students' definitions of empathy – especially when prompted to differentiate from sympathy – closely related to the way it is defined in literature. While these definitions are enlightening toward the goal of understanding students' thoughts about empathy, that they understand empathy as a concept is not indicative of whether they experience or practice it. This discussion, therefore, continued to seek out a more nuanced understanding of how students might actually experience empathy in response to hearing other peoples' stories. The remaining three themes designed to push students' understanding of empathy beyond what they wrote in the initial brainstorming activity are described below.

Building empathy without relating to shared experiences. As demonstrated in the first activity, many students shaped their responses regarding the power of storytelling by focusing on the ways in which stories are more impactful and easier to understand if we can relate to the experiences the storytellers describe. In an attempt to shift this notion and encourage students to think about ways in which they may still build empathy across different experiences, I began by asking students if they thought it was important to hear stories that describe things they haven't experienced. Students were first given a few minutes to discuss their ideas with the group before sharing their key ideas with the class.

In each class, students overwhelmingly agreed that hearing these stories is important. When prompted to explain why, however, students returned to the same sort of relatively self-

centered responses as in their initial discussion posts. In the first class, their reasons included the idea that you can still learn from someone else about something you might experience in the future and that we can avoid repeating certain events – "Like we learn about World War II so that won't happen again." Though the notion of learning lessons from stories that help us (or may help us in the future) is still an important result of hearing stories, it does not constitute the other-focused response indicative of empathy. One group, however, did suggest that hearing stories about things we haven't experienced helps you "relate to people that you wouldn't normally relate to. So like if you hear their story then you'll be able to understand them in a new way." Unlike the other groups, this student expressed a response more closely tied to empathy with her idea that we can learn to relate to or understand others even when we haven't shared similar experiences.

While the next class also included some of the same ideas of learning lessons about things we may experience in the future, they also suggested that hearing these stories "helps you get to know the person and what they've gone through." Like in the first class, this group's response approached the idea that there is value not just in what stories can do for the listener in learning lessons or avoiding mistakes, but also in the ways in which they can help us understand others. Interestingly, in the first class, the group to mention the benefit of understanding others was the last group to share on this topic, so the conversation did not advance much beyond her response. In the second class, this response was the first one in this part of the discussion, so it continued as follows:

> Teacher: So it still does help us create connections. Is it important to understand people if you don't have something in common with them?
>
> Student 1: I mean, yeah!

Student 2: Yeah, because if you're talking to someone who is a lot different from you, you can see how different their life is.

Student 1: Or maybe you think they're different, but, they're…actually…similar! (He slows down at the end and his voices gets quiet, his tone rises, as if he's having a "lightbulb moment" or revealing a great surprise. It seems as if this was a revelation to him as he was speaking it.)

Teacher: (mimicking Student 1's slow, revelatory speech) But, they're actually…not. You have more in common with them than you thought. Bien. So it's about learning about people still. How about you guys?

Student 3: Um, it can develop or change the perspective you already have.

Teacher: Bien. It can develop or change your perspective. So you may think you don't relate, maybe you learn that you do relate, or it just changes your mind about something. It helps you learn about something different. [Student 4], what does your group think?

Student 4: I said I think it's important to still hear stories you can't relate to because they can give you a new way of thinking about something and you can use that as, uh, a new way of thinking.

Teacher: Yeah, so, learning about different perspectives. It changes your mind, it helps you think about something in a new way. How about you guys?

Student 5: Um we said yes because it kind of helps you open up and makes it so you have experienced this.

Teacher: Bien. So that kind of goes along with what they said too about changing your perspective. It can maybe help you be more open-minded, and then you might experience some of those things. Is that what you're saying?

Student 5: Yeah.

Unlike in the first class, students in this discussion continued to expand upon the importance of hearing about new experiences in ways that were closely aligned to the attributes of empathy. Not only does this part of the discussion begin with the idea of understanding others, but in the responses from Student 1 and Student 2 we can see the notion that this understanding includes both knowledge of difference as well as the ability to create connection across difference. In the

discussion, it was almost as if Student 2 was engaging in this very process as his changing rate and tone of voice seemed to indicate that it was occurring to him for the first time that hearing about new experiences might also lead to the discovery of commonalities. Along these lines, the last two groups followed from this idea by adding that this new understanding of difference and similarity can help shift our perspectives and to be open-minded, indicating the sort of non-judgmental empathetic response that follows from understanding others' perspectives and emotions. In pushing the conversation one step further with this class, I asked if they thought it was possible to have empathy for someone that you can't relate to. All the groups said yes, with two key respondents saying that "you could just look at it their way" and "even if you don't agree, you can just be like 'I understand the situation.'" From these responses, it is clear that, when prompted to do so, students in this class could describe the ways in which they could build empathy even without relating to shared experiences.

After leading this discussion in the first two classes and seeing the difference in responses from the first class to the second, I began to intentionally frame the discussion to approach these outward-focused responses. In the next class, instead of simply asking students why it is important to hear stories about things we haven't experienced, I also suggested that we had talked a lot in previous discussions about how stories can teach us lessons, and I encouraged students to think about reasons beyond those that we had already discussed. In response, students concluded that hearing these stories is important because "you can gain different perspectives about topics and also life experiences" and "so you can see, like, what they believe in." Furthermore, as in some of the initial brainstorming, one group suggested that stories about new experiences help us from being ignorant or developing stereotypes because "you think you understand a situation but then you realize when you hear a story oh it's not exactly like you

thought it was." Like in the previous class, this student points to the importance of hearing these stories in that they help us avoid assumptions and judgment about a situation. While it may be easy to assume that we understand a situation or that we can't relate to an experience, these students recognized that listening to that person's own perspective on the situation can help to reverse these assumptions and judgments.

The final student from this class to speak on this topic, in a great shift toward perspective-taking, said:

> We sort of have an obligation to other people to be, like, fair, and treat them right, and so when you don't have the kind of explicit experiences that they do and you refuse to listen to their stories in addition it's sort of impossible to understand motivation, and who they are, and why they feel that way, what they believe.

Like in other classes, this student suggests that listening to others can help us to get to know them in a non-judgmental way, but he also makes a key connection to the necessity of engaging in this sort of listening precisely when we haven't shared in their experiences. He argues that without shared experiences, the refusal to listen to their stories makes it impossible to understand their beliefs and actions from *their* perspective. This is a key shift in thinking not just about changing our own perspectives and understandings as a result of hearing about different experiences, but specifically in moving toward taking on the perspectives of the person who has had those experiences. The nuance expressed here toward the ways in which listening to others helps us understand not just their stories, but also their motivations and other key components of their identity, suggests the kind of intelligent reading of stories that Nussbaum (1997) uses to characterize her definition of empathy. Furthermore, predicated on the notion of an obligation to be fair to others, this response is precisely in line with the sort of empathy that would meet the social justice-oriented aims of civic learning.

When prompted further to discuss not only why it is important to hear stories about different experiences but also whether we can build empathy for them, one student responded:

> I think it all depends on what you've gone through yourself, because if you haven't, like, if you live, like, a very sheltered life then you wouldn't be able to empathize with a lot of different people, so, no matter, like, even if you didn't just, like if you couldn't relate because you hadn't personally, like, there would be no connection, there would be no feeling.

While stepping back into the idea that shared experiences are necessary for building empathy, this response was interesting because of what followed:

> Teacher: So how do we fix that?
>
> Student 1: Read more stories.
>
> Student who provided the initial response quoted above: You listen to more experiences.
>
> Teacher: You read more stories. You listen to more people, right?

What this student ultimately seems to suggest is that stories themselves can help to build up a repertoire of experiences that can help us to relate to more people in more ways. This revelation was key for this study because, as described in the methods, in terms of actual school-based exposure to people with different experiences, these students are quite limited. What this student reiterated here points to the idea that, though we may not initially be able relate to someone's story we haven't experienced, through continual exposure to these new experiences, our capacity for empathy will continue to grow. Furthermore, this response suggests that directing empathy in specific ways can help to expand its benefits. Rather than focusing on empathy for a specific person in the story, if we focus on building an understanding and a connection to the experiences described, it seems possible that empathy would be easier to transfer to other stories as well. This is a key finding in terms of continuing to teach about empathy – if moving toward perspective-

taking requires a means of relating to those perspectives, focusing on empathy for a set of experiences rather than a specific person or group of people may help to build broader ways to relate. As this student suggested, continual exposure to new experiences helps to create more connections. If students are primed to think about how they can work to create connections to build empathy for people they may not automatically relate to, it seems that empathy would naturally extend to other people with similar experiences. In other words, once a student has engaged their capacities for empathy in response to a particular story, the experiences of that story may become like a part of their own experiences, making it easier to respond with empathy to other similar stories. Future long-term research around the transfer of empathy across stories would be well-suited toward further directing this kind of teaching and learning.

Taken together, the excerpts from this portion of the in-class discussion reveal that students' thoughts about empathy can be pushed beyond relating only to things they have already experienced. Though it is important to consider that empathy-building is easier when we do have shared experiences to inform our understanding of other peoples' perspectives and emotions, it is also essential to challenge students' ideas that there is no value in listening to stories when we assume we cannot relate. As they demonstrated in the discussion described here, they recognize that stories may help us relate in ways we wouldn't have expected, and, furthermore, that it is possible to build empathy even if we don't relate or even if we don't agree. Continuing to push the idea of empathy across difference was critical in moving toward taking on perspectives of marginalization or oppression, the second key piece of the discussion described in the next section.

Taking on perspectives of marginalization or oppression. If the aim of civic education is to meet the social justice-oriented goals laid out in the literature, then engaging students in

opportunities for taking on perspectives of marginalization or oppression must be a key component of this kind of learning. The next part of the in-class discussion included an attempt to guide students toward considering this specific set of perspectives. This portion of the discussion was carried on from a reflective writing assignment in which students discussed their responses to a video depicting the arrival of Hernán Cortés and subsequent downfall of the Aztec Empire (discussion questions can be found in Appendix K.) Given this, it was illustrative to begin understanding students' in-class discussion responses by first considering their individual written responses, which are described here.

Cortés and the Aztecs written reflections. Students began considering other peoples' stories by reading the Aztec legend of Quetzalcoatl and then watching a video from BBC Schools (LeBaron, 2014) depicting the downfall of the Aztec Empire at the hands of Hernán Cortés and his men. While watching the video, students were cued to pay careful attention to the language used by the narrator to describe both the Spaniards and the Aztecs and to keep a list of the adjectives used in each case. After watching, students were asked to reflect on whether the movie presented a perspective that was biased or not, and whether that bias shifted in favor the Spaniards or the Aztecs. Of all 77 students, 62 responses included the idea that all stories are biased or at least influenced by the perspective of the storyteller, meaning that it is essential to hear all sides of the story. One student wrote:

> It is important to consider who is telling the stories we hear because the story might be biased towards that person's point of view. People's opinions always affect their perception of what is happening, making each person's version of a story different. Knowing who is telling a story helps us understand why a story is the way it is. All stories are equally important to hear and retell. All sides of a story must be heard to truly understand an event, experience, etc.

As suggested by this student, understanding the ways in which a story may be influenced through the perception of the storyteller is a key component in becoming an "intelligent reader" of these stories (Nussbaum, 1997) – the kind of understanding that leads to critical consumption and to empathy. Many other students' answers contained the same focus on the importance of hearing all sides of a story, though two particular responses also connected this idea to current political or societal trends in interesting ways. One student wrote:

> It is important to understand which side of the story you are hearing. Any person can demonize another. For example, ISIS believes that their radical religion is the only correct religion and everyone should be converted. They tell their people that we are the bad guys and that's all they need to know. For us, it is the complete opposite. Our country demonized ISIS so that we could stop them and do what we believe is right.

This student, like the one quoted above, suggests a sort of listening (or intelligent reading) that seeks to comprehend not just the story being told, but also to understand the perspective of the person telling it. Approaching major societal conflict involves understanding why groups of people act the way they do, which requires understanding the cultural beliefs and identities that lead to the perspective that motivates them to act that way. What this student's response lacks, however, is a consideration of the next step. Understanding the perspective of ISIS or of the U.S., or even understanding that the stories told on either side may function to "demonize" the other, does nothing to address the horrific outcomes of these cultural clashes.

Along the same lines, another student reflected:

> No story is more important than the other to listen to or to retell. If you only listen to one the chances are you will agree with that side. It is like the news these days. Everyone knows what news leans to the right or left. It is a good idea to change it up a bit and watch one that you don't normally so you can get the other side's view on it. If you don't then you will just be tied down to one side and will believe whatever they say is true.

This student recognizes the importance of hearing multiple perspectives and even pushes this recognition into the idea that we should intentionally seek out opportunities to hear opposing perspectives. Her connection to U.S. media is particularly relevant for this work and her understanding of their political tendencies is encouraging, though her statement that "everyone knows" which news sources represent particular viewpoints may be contradictory to some of the data around the proliferation of fake news. While she places a similar importance on hearing others' perspectives as the student above, she also suggests a next step – hearing other perspectives can also help us avoid being "tied down to one side," can help us from simply believing everything we hear that reinforces our own views, and, therefore, can help to shift our beliefs toward a more balanced perspective.

Taken together, though, these responses lead to a troubling end. If we consider the ways in which hearing new perspectives might increase our willingness or ability to take on parts of those perspectives as our own, along with a consideration of the conflicting perspectives of ISIS and the U.S., we are perhaps opening the door for embracing the possibility of taking on radicalized perspectives that lead to acts of terrorism. It was critical, therefore, to encourage students to continue reflecting on the importance of hearing multiple perspectives and to continue seeking out the nuanced understanding of these perspectives that is reflected in the idea of becoming intelligent readers, but also to balance this with the guidance of social justice and critical pedagogy. Adding these guidelines to our consideration to hearing multiple perspectives helps us avoid the violence of assaultive speech and elevates voices of oppression and marginalization that can lead to more democratic change. Toward this end, the next part of the

in-class discussion of empathy, in returning to the perspectives of Hernán Cortés and the Aztecs, was designed to push students toward a more specific consideration of hearing the Aztecs first.

Cortés and the Aztecs in-class discussion. Following a brief summary of students' written responses regarding the importance of hearing all sides of a story, I asked students not whether we should place more importance on hearing the perspectives of the Aztecs or the Spaniards, but rather *why* we should hear the perspectives of the Aztecs first. In other words, I intentionally guided the discussion toward the idea that this is an important strategy, and pushed students to reflect on why this might be the case. In the first class to carry out this part of the discussion, their initial answers about the importance of hearing the story of the Aztecs continued some of the same themes from previous storytelling discussions – it is important to hear from their own perspective and not just the Spaniards, we can learn lessons about not repeating these kinds of destructive histories, and we can help to pass on the legacy of the Aztecs since they are no longer around to tell their story. In order to push this idea further, I asked students to think of other groups of people who, like the Aztecs, can't continue to pass on their own story. Instead of thinking of people who are no longer alive, however, I encouraged students to consider groups who, despite being in existence today, don't have the same opportunities to tell their stories. After discussing with their small groups for a few minutes, students shared their ideas of who these groups of people might be, including Native Americans, people in prison, and "women and slaves in other countries" who don't have "equal speaking rights." After these three responses, I asked students if they could think of a general term for these groups of people, and two of them suggested "minorities" or "people who are oppressed." Though the discussion was structured toward understanding the importance of hearing the story of the downfall of the Aztecs from their own perspectives, it is clear to see through student responses that they were able to make

the connection from those stories to the perspectives of similar groups of people who are alive today, and even to identify these groups as minorities or oppressed. Given their lack of personal exposure to these stories in the school setting, that they arrived at these answers through their own small-group discussion was a promising representation of their understanding of the existence of marginalization and oppression outside their own experiences.

In order to connect again to students' understanding of empathy, the next part of the discussion in the first class occurred as follows:

> (Students had just completed a few minutes to answer the following question with their small groups and are now sharing their responses with the class.)
>
> Teacher: What do we think? […] How does empathy help us understand their stories, for these situations that we've never actually experienced, we've probably never lived through, we may not really be able to relate to very well. How does empathy help? [Student 1]?
>
> Student 1: Well, I mean, it probably helps a little bit, but it's also really hard for us to, like, understand what they're going through, considering we live in [our town], and we come to school every day.
>
> Teacher: It is, yes, very hard for us to understand. […] You experience what's around you and for most of us that's kind of just the same thing every day. And perhaps we don't have a lot of experience with people who have actually been through some kind of oppression. So, what do we do about that then? How do you, how are you more able to understand those experiences that are different from yours?
>
> Student 2: I think you can understand them on a small scale. Like, obviously we don't go through the exact same thing because they're on a much bigger scale. But you can understand, like, partly, and empathy helps to understand greater than what you've experienced.
>
> Teacher: Yes, exactly! Because you've all probably had experiences at some point where you felt left out, or you felt like something was unfair, or like someone wasn't respecting your rights. So on some small level we know what that feels like, you can try to relate to it. But, how do we learn these things about other people who are going through this? What's this whole unit about?
>
> Several students: (in a quiet, drawn out, revelatory, "light bulb moment" tone) Stooooories!

Teacher: Stories! We hear stories, right?

This excerpt demonstrates the continuation of two themes discussed from students' initial reflection and discussion on storytelling and empathy. The first student still suggests that it is difficult to understand the perspectives of, and, ultimately, to have empathy for, people who express these perspectives of marginalization or oppression when we haven't experienced anything similar. The second student, however, reminds us of the ways in which we may draw on our own "small-scale" experiences to take steps toward relating, understanding, and building empathy. Ultimately, when prompted, students arrive at the understanding that hearing stories about these experiences is a way of attempting to understand these perspectives. In line with the definition of empathy at work here, this understanding of the importance of continuing to hear stories that express these experiences represents not the absolute end of perspective-taking, but rather a *move toward* trying to take on these perspectives.

The next class to participate in this discussion followed nearly the same pattern, suggesting it was important to hear from the Aztecs to avoid repeating mistakes and to keep their legacy alive, ultimately identifying other similar groups as minorities or people who have experienced discrimination. Interestingly, though, while the first class centered their discussion of marginalized or oppressed groups primarily in other countries, this class included more local examples. After the first student suggested that "dead people" can't tell their stories very easily, the discussion continued as follows:

Teacher: What about people who are still alive?

Student 1: I think that like, the Me Too movement kind of talks about this, 'cause, like, they feel like people can't tell their, like, stories about certain stuff…

Teacher: Sí. Who was that movement about?

Student 1: Uh… (he seems a little hesitant to discuss this in specific terms, so I continue to prompt him in very natural terms, trying to indicate that this is something that is acceptable to discuss in class)

Teacher: It's ok. Can you remind us in case we're not all familiar with it?

Student 1: Uh, it was about women and like sexual harassment and rape and stuff like that.

Teacher: Right, and so the Me Too hashtag got pretty popular really quickly, because what did it allow some of these women to do?

Student 2: Speak.

Teacher: To speak. To tell their stories that maybe they felt like they weren't able to tell before. So that's a good example. […] Any other examples? [silence] Be bold! I know you have ideas. [Student 3]?

Student 3: Like, your race can determine how much you're heard.

Teacher: Bien. Certainly race. And that's another huge issue in the United States right now that has come up a lot. So things like gender and even sexual orientation and race, all of these different ways that we define people. [Student 4], did you have another one?

Student 4: I was just gonna say the LGBT community.

Teacher: Yeah. Definitely.

As demonstrated here, these students focused their discussion of marginalization and oppression around groups of people who do not only exist in other countries. With my encouragement to think of other more local groups, the other classes also included the young people speaking out against gun violence in response to the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, people with physical disabilities, women in the workplace and the "glass ceiling," and women in sex slavery. As suggested above, these students not only demonstrated an understanding of the existence of these groups of people, but in the last three classes, they also began to approach the recognition of the structural and societal system of identifying groups of people in terms that decrease their

ability to share their story. Rather than pointing to other countries that have laws that allow slavery or prevent free speech, these students recognized that these groups of people exist in our country not because of legal discrimination, but because of societal oppression. Also important to note here is that, despite that the first student discussing the Me Too movement seemed initially reluctant to specify terms including sexual harassment and rape, my prompting seemed to encourage him to continue talking and to encourage other students to discuss other similarly "tricky" topics that are sometimes considered taboo because of the difficulty of discussing them "correctly" or without offending. While more on this is discussed in the next chapter, understanding the teacher's role in shaping this kind of discussion is a key finding of this part of the study. It is critical to recognize that fostering the discussion of sensitive or difficult topics depends on creating an environment in which students understand that they have permission to discuss them.

This portion of the discussion also revealed two other key findings regarding approaching perspectives of marginalization and oppression. First, it is clear that students recognize the existence of groups of people who are oppressed not only in other countries across the world, but also in the United States. The recognition of specific facets of a person's identity that could lead to their restricted ability to share their story – such as race, gender, and sexual orientation – seems almost tacit, or at least very close to, the recognition that these people may also exist within these students' own community. Second, in this discussion, students recognized that they do have means of connecting to and understanding the perspectives of these groups of people, despite not sharing specific experiences of oppression or marginalization. Some students suggested that we can relate on a smaller level to these experiences, and others also returned to the ways in which our human capacity for experiencing emotion helps us relate across differing

experiences. Taken together, these two trends in student responses indicate that students understand both the need to and the ways in which we might develop empathy for people whose stories share perspectives of marginalization and oppression.

Responding with action. Toward the beginning of the in-class discussion on empathy, I asked students to reflect on the part of the storytelling video they watched earlier in the unit that stated that powerful stories incite action. With their small groups, they discussed how stories encourage us to act and then shared their answers with the class. In this relatively open-ended discussion of stories and action, most groups shared answers around a few common themes that were carried over from some of the ideas expressed in their initial storytelling reflections. First, each class started with students sharing the idea that stories make us act by changing our behavior in response to a lesson or an inspirational message. Similarly, a few students suggested that hearing stories about other people who have experienced difficult situations could motivate the listener to feel grateful for not having experienced those things themselves. In one class, that part of the discussion occurred as follows:

> Student 1: Um, we said that it can like inspire you and it can also, like, if you see how somebody has it harder than you, then you might complain less or you might be more grateful or something.
>
> Teacher: Bien. So when you see that people have different experiences it changes how you feel about your own experiences. But what about that person's experience? If we hear a story – and you kind of said this at the beginning – it might inspire you. But if we hear a story about someone who is struggling, it makes us feel better. You guys wrote about that a lot. Is there some other kind of action?
>
> Student 2: [laughing] That's bad!
>
> Teacher: I know! It's not bad, though, it's natural. That's what we do! You realize that you're grateful. You're thankful. [Students keep laughing and chatting] Seriously! It's just a natural human reaction. Someone is struggling and you think, Wow! I'm really lucky. My life is pretty great. Right? But is that it? Is that the end? My life is great so I don't care about anything else?

> [Two or three students answer with sarcastic "yeah" / "yup" responses, one emphatically says No!]
>
> Student 3: I hope not.
>
> Teacher. Me too. So what kind of action might that incite or encourage?
>
> Student 4: Motivation.
>
> Teacher: To do what?
>
> Student 5: To help other people.
>
> Teacher: Yes! To help other people. To make their lives better, right? So the video talks about survival – that we use stories to help us figure out how to survive. And a lot of you write about that personal sort of response. That it makes ME survive, for myself. But I want you to start thinking about what these stories tell us we should do for other people instead. For the storyteller.

As previously discussed, these initial responses were primarily focused on how a listener might act to change their own situation in response to the story they hear. When pushed, however, as demonstrated here, students responded with an understanding of the ways in which stories could encourage us to help other people beside ourselves. In other classes this level of thinking included ideas about how the sad stories we see in commercials about animals in shelters might encourage us to go adopt an animal, or about how stories about bad things that have happened to people (especially if you know or care about that person) make us want to do something to help them. One student said:

> Um, we were talking about how stories can, like, call you to action, like, if there's a problem or an issue, that you might not have felt super strong about but then you hear how it has affected the lives of other people, all of the sudden it might be something you've been more outspoken for, or it's something that, you know, somebody else has done before and you can see that it's possible, it would inspire you.

Like the other responses above, this student shifts the understanding of responding with action toward acting to help others, but she also indicates the specific way in which this kind of action is often a direct response to hearing a story. She says that when we hear about "how it has affected the lives of other people," then we are more likely to take action toward addressing a problem or an issue. In this way, she indicates that our ability to understand the perspective of the storyteller and the ways in which a particular situation has affected their life increases the likelihood that we would want to help them. In other words, she suggests that greater empathy for someone else's situation leads to more civic engagement in response to the problems they may be facing.

Carrying on this line of thinking, we returned to the idea of action later in the discussion to consider more specifically the kind of action that might result from hearing perspectives of marginalization or oppression. As suggested in other sections here, the discussion from the first class was particularly enlightening not only toward illuminating an understanding of students' thoughts on empathy, but also toward shaping the rest of the discussion for the other classes throughout the day. Unlike in other examples, though, this part of the discussion in the first class was influential not because it demonstrated the kind of thinking I wanted to avoid, but because it illustrated a complex and nuanced approach to civic engagement that I hadn't considered prior to the discussion. It went as follows:

> Teacher: So, then, what do we do about it? What about the action part? First of all, I want to talk about the second question. Do you think we have a responsibility to act once we've heard their stories? [brief silence, prompting] This is your opinion. I'm not looking for a particular answer because I think you can argue both sides.
>
> Student 1: We can, but usually when we... there's not a whole lot just one person can do in that situation. Just like, if I'm like, hey I don't agree with

that in another country they might just send the entire police force just to arrest me for saying that.

Teacher: Definitely true. In a lot of ways I think it's hard to think about what one person can do. But sometimes I think just understanding the problem is a good place to start though, right? So if you understand it, you may not be able to go to that country and fix that problem, but you can do some other things about it too. [Student 2]?

Student 2: Um, I think that you can definitely make an impact, because if everyone says I can't do it because I'm only one person then it's never going to change. But, like, if you all believe that if we do it together then something, we can at least make an impact. You may not change it right now, but it can make a small change that maybe in ten years it can be changed.

Teacher: And eventually it will change. Bien. So how do you, you start with one person and you heard a story and it meant something to you, how do you get other people to care? To get on board? What can you do?

Student 1: Share your opinion

Teacher: Share your opinion. What'd you say? Somebody back there?

Student 3: Tell the story again.

Teacher: Retell the story! Right? If the story meant something to you, then you can retell it, and hopefully get more people involved. I'm going to pick on you again [Student 4], because you asked a really great question to your group and I don't think they answered you so I wanna talk about it. What did you say?

Student 4: Uh, what did I say. I said do we have the right to go to other countries and change, like, what they've had forever?

Teacher: So, do we have a responsibility to try to change things that we think are wrong from our perspective? Or is that what the Spaniards were doing?

Student 5: I think we should. It depends what it is – there are certain things that they think is, like, right, but I bet there are people inside their country that doesn't think it's right but they can't do anything about it because they don't have enough power to change it.

Teacher: Yes. How do we know what those people inside that country think?

Student 5: Uh, well, stories? [laughter]

Teacher: Yes! [joking] If you don't know what to say from now on just say stories! Right? So, from the outside, we may think that we're going to go in and we're going to save the people and we're going to make them better. Because that's what the Spaniards thought about the Aztecs, right? They have this crazy scary religion so they're going to go in and make it better. But we can't do that without understanding what the people themselves think about the situation. So I think that's a really important question, [Student 4], and something to keep thinking about. What is our responsibility? And how do we know what we're doing for ourselves and what we think is right or what we're doing for what those people think needs to happen. Did you have something else, [Student 2]?

Student 2: I just have something to add. It's not necessarily, like, that we should change it, it's mostly just that they want someone to be able to tell what they are thinking. Like, they can't speak themselves, so they want someone else to be able to speak for them. It's not necessarily that they want change right in this moment, it's just that they want themselves to be heard.

Teacher: Yes. A lot if you wrote in your reflections about what stories do when we hear them, and I tried to encourage some of you to think more exactly about that point. What happens when we get to tell stories? And especially for someone who doesn't get to tell their story very often, if you have the opportunity to be their voice, because maybe people will listen to you differently, there's, I think, a lot of value in that. So that's exactly what we're going to do!

In terms of our responsibility to act in response to hearing stories of oppression and marginalization, the discussion included here of a person's right to change someone else's life was not something I had considered when designing these discussion questions. The intended goal of this portion of the discussion was both to gauge students' thoughts on their personal responsibility in civic engagement and to encourage an active response toward hearing perspectives of marginalization and oppression. Tackling the complex consideration of when and how we might respond with action seemed beyond the scope of this initial exploratory discussion, but students in the first class demonstrated a nuanced understanding of this

complexity. The ability to connect ideas of carefully considered civic engagement not only to the need to hear firsthand stories but also again to the role of the Aztecs and Spaniards was relatively impromptu in the first discussion cited above, but helped formulate a basic script to also encourage this portion of the discussion in the rest of the classes as well.

A few important results emerged from this segment of in-class discussion. First, students tended to acknowledge that, though we may want to act to help change the situation of people who are experiencing marginalization or oppression, it's often difficult to know how. Following this, however, several students, as in the discussion cited above, returned to the notion of using their own voice to retell the story as both a desired form of civic engagement and also as a means to getting other people to respond with action as well. In another class later in the day, this portion of the discussion resulted in the following exchange:

> Teacher: [A student] said earlier that when you retell someone's story who's actually experienced oppression you are maybe not going to be listened to either. But do you think people will listen to you differently?
>
> Student 1: Yeah
>
> Teacher: Why?
>
> Student 1: Because you're not a minority.
>
> Teacher: Because you're not a minority. Because you have more power, right? Because you may be part of the people who are oppressing the other group, so you can speak out against it. Bien. So then think about the second part. Do we actually have a responsibility to listen to those stories and then go and try to act and change things? [Student 2]?
>
> Student 2: Uh we said, like, no, it's more of a choice. And then that choice is like something that defines you as a person and speaks of your character. Because it's not a duty, it's not something you're bound to, it's something that you choose to do and that's what makes it that much more impactful is that it's not something that you have to do but it's something that you still choose to do anyway.
>
> Teacher. I agree. Do we want people to choose to do it?

Student 2: It depends, honestly.

Student 3: In the most hypocritical way possible.

Teacher: It depends. Why is it hypocritical?

Student 3: We want other people to bother to do it instead of doing it ourselves.

Teacher. And not do it ourselves. That's true. Someone could just take care of it for us. But if we want, we want someone to act, right? How do we get them to do it?

Student 4: We continue to tell those stories.

Teacher: Yes. Keep telling stories. What else, [Student 5]?

Student 5: Well I was going to say that I feel that, like, to a certain extent, you do have some sort of responsibility. Like if you hear a story about, like, someone that's abusing their child, like, you do have a responsibility to like call the cops or do something about that. But, like, when it's like something so huge that like an entire government oppressing a whole civilization, you personally can't do all that much. But if you hear that story and you are just like 'oh someone else will do it' and then the next person does the same thing nothing will ever change. So like someone eventually does need to step up 'cause nothing will happen unless someone starts it.

Teacher: Right. Someone has to be the first person to say ok we're actually gonna do something about this instead of just passing it off. Bien. […] Let's think about the Aztecs and the Spaniards again. The Spaniards thought they were doing something good, right? They were converting them to Christianity. The Aztecs probably didn't think that was good. So if we hear a story and we think let's go help, how do we make sure that we're not being like the Spaniards and doing what we think needs to be done instead of what the people who are experiencing it actually need? [Student 6]?

Student 6: Listen to everybody's stories so we know what everybody is thinking.

Teacher: Sí. But especially who?

Student 6: The Aztecs.

Teacher: In this case the Aztecs, right? The people who, the ones who are maybe experiencing the oppression. Were you going to say something else, [Student 7]?

> Student 7: Like, not forcing yourself in every situation. Like if they don't want your help and they don't want you to actually do anything then you should respect their decision.
>
> Teacher: Absolutely. Maybe they don't want you to come and try to change things but what can you still do for them?
>
> Student 7: You can still listen to their story and be there for them.
>
> Teacher: Because in some cases just the opportunity to tell a story is really powerful, right? So listening, and even retelling their story matters a lot. [Student 3]?
>
> Student 3: Giving them their own opportunity to choose, like, the freedom that they want or whatever rather than imposing your own sort of like moral standard.
>
> Teacher: Right. So we have to understand what counts as freedom or what matters to those people telling the story, not our own ideas, right?

As suggested above, students in this class demonstrated a similar understanding of the ways in which the action of simply listening to and retelling stories of oppression and marginalization are a desired and powerful form of civic engagement. Furthermore, these students, along with the other classes not cited here, demonstrated the same nuanced understanding of our role in civic engagement – in carefully ensuring that we are working to effect change from within the perspective of the people whose situation needs to be changed. Though students here also expressed the difficulty of figuring out how only one person might actually make change and reflected quite honestly on the human response of hoping that someone else might do the hard work instead, they also suggested that we do have a responsibility to act, or, at the least, we want to encourage other people to choose to do so.

Question 1: Key findings. Across the initial brainstorming activity and the explicit in-class discussion, the results described above reveal several key findings about student thinking on empathy and civic engagement. First, most students followed what seemed to be the natural

tendency to first consider the stories they hear and their responses to those stories in terms of their own life – the lessons they might learn, the mistakes they can avoid, the new thankful or grateful perspectives they might gain, and the motivation or inspiration they might feel to better their own lives. In both activities, though, students also demonstrated some of the key attributes or other traits of empathy described in the literature, such as moving toward intentionally trying to put themselves in someone else's perspective through imagination and emotional understanding, recognizing similarities as a means of creating connection while also maintaining an understanding of difference, and the importance of appreciating multiple viewpoints in order to balance our own perspectives and understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Students' initial responses rarely followed the desired goal of seeking out and building empathy for stories that give voice to authentic perspectives of marginalization and oppression, and their early reflective writing indicated little to no understanding of the need to take socially just action toward more equitable democratic participation for all. Of critical importance, though, is the result of explicit instruction and teacher guidance on empathy and civic engagement, in which students' thoughts on the topic revealed that they did understand their capacities to build empathy across vast areas of difference, that they recognized the need to hear stories of oppression and marginalization over the voices of the majority, and that they may have a responsibility to engage in civic action, even in acts as simple as listening to and retelling those stories. It is critical to continue to consider the role of the teacher both in creating a classroom environment in which students know they can safely discuss difficult topics and in guiding these discussions toward thinking that meets the goals of empathy-based civic learning. While it was illuminating to examine students' thoughts prior to explicitly discussing empathy and civic engagement, the most powerful result from attempting to answer this research question is

perhaps the understanding that these concepts are clearly teachable. With teacher guidance, the in-class discussion about empathy demonstrated that students as young as fifteen and sixteen years old understand empathy and civic engagement in complex, nuanced ways.

This discussion also revealed a few key findings that are critical to consider for future research around teaching empathy. First, many students insisted that it is essential to have a way to relate to a story in order to engage capacities for an empathetic response. Acknowledging this as a requirement of empathy helps inform new ways of expanding students' capacities for empathetic responses. Second, they also demonstrated that this threshold of relating to a story may be lowered by drawing on emotional understanding, making more basic connections to experiences rather than the specific context of the story. Third, building empathy based on experiences rather than specific contexts or people may help to more successfully transfer empathetic responses to a broader range of stories that share similar experiences. Finding ways to engage students with new stories to which they can relate and build connections across a variety of educational experiences must become a goal of civic learning. Ultimately, tracing changes in student thinking between these two activities demonstrated that the work of encouraging growth in empathetic capacities centers on teaching empathy as a disposition. Students were capable of making connections to new experiences when cued to do so. Teaching empathy, therefore, requires teaching students to take on the responsibility of creating connection and moving toward perspective-taking themselves rather than relying on others to make those connections for them. Though students in this study demonstrated a cognitive understanding of the process of moving toward connection, it was too short-term to demonstrate whether this understanding transferred to any changes in student disposition. Future research must continue to examine the ways in which these teachable topics can transition beyond the classroom into actual

practice. It is critical to know whether the cognitive understanding of empathetic responses, over time, can be expanded into an empathetic disposition, toward continuing to seek out new connections and new ways to engage in social justice-oriented civic action.

CHAPTER 5

TEACHERS AND TECH TOOLS: ENCOURAGING PERSONAL CONNECTIONS TO LEARNING

In this chapter, I will discuss the results for research question two - How do different formats for reflection and interaction influence student participation in discourse around empathy and civic engagement? As eleven years of teaching experience have shown me, teaching the same material across a variety of formats helps to more successfully meet the needs of all learners, and the data discussed in this chapter demonstrates that the same holds true for learning around empathy and civic engagement. Toward this end, the curricular unit taught for this study included not only explicit opportunities to teach and learn about empathy, civic engagement, and technology, but also attempted to vary that teaching and learning across multiple formats for interaction. These formats included individual activities in which students completed a variety of assignments on their own both in and out of class. Individual in-class work included watching a video about storytelling with headphones in a computer lab, viewing immersive virtual reality photos of Aztec and Mayan ruins, watching virtual reality videos from the New York Times, and writing reflective journal responses. Outside the classroom, students continued their individual writing through several reflection journal assignments and Google Classroom discussion posts, as well as completing other comprehension-based homework assignments. Students also had multiple opportunities to interact with others in the unit, both in the digital space of the Google Classroom discussion board and through small-group and whole-class discussions on storytelling, empathy, and technology, reading the legend of Quetzalcoatl out loud together in class, and completing individual and small-group storytelling presentations.

Across each of these activities, data described here demonstrates a few key results. First, web-based technologies that encouraged silent, individual work helped to convey essential content material and provided space for some students to take time to reflect more deeply on the material. On the other hand, these individual activities also seemed to prevent the authentic discourse and multi-directional feedback that other more interactive activities allowed. Second, students overwhelmingly responded to a survey of their learning in the unit in favor of activities that let them connect to their classmates, including in-class discussions and the opportunity to share and hear personal stories from their classmates. Third, students also gave strong responses regarding the ways in which immersive technologies helped engage them in learning about others. Each of these results is explored in more detail below, as illustrated by data collected both from field notes and from students' reflective writing on their experiences throughout the unit.

Research reflections: Student attitudes, behaviors, and responses in class. Throughout the unit, I took as many opportunities as possible to "try to 'change hats' conspicuously" (Wolcott, 1994) between teacher and researcher. When time allowed for me to remove myself from teaching and interacting directly with students, I attempted to engage my researcher role to observe their behavior, interaction, and language and to record these observations in jottings or other more thorough field notes, as well as a variety of memos and reflective writing between class periods or at the end of the school day as time allowed. Some of these field notes and reflections are included here as a means of understanding more about the ways in which different formats influenced student interaction in class.

Individual storytelling video. One of the initial in-class activities in the unit involved taking students to the computer lab to watch a short video about the power and purpose of storytelling (Catsnake, 2015). Students watched these videos individually with headphones and

completed a comprehension and reflection worksheet to help record their thoughts while watching (Appendix C). While observing students during this activity, many of my jottings included reflections on students' silence and focus while viewing the video and completing the comprehension and reflection questions in response to what they watched. In one class that was normally particularly social and interactive, I wrote "Wow. Super silent! This never happens – no one socialized at all during the video portion of the class. Much like first hour they were all quiet and seemed focused." While, as a teacher, I was naturally encouraged that students appeared to be intently focused on their work, after a full day of observing this behavior I reflected as follows:

> I felt very disconnected from students during this lesson – silent individual work is out of the norm for my class. If they are working on something in class that doesn't involve direct instruction they are almost always working together and interacting with me in some way. Today they did not, and because of that it almost felt like a waste of time to me. I planned this activity to be individual with headphones rather than watching the video together purposefully – the format of individual time to watch and think was intentional to communicate to students that I want them to reflect individually. Overall, they seemed to do this well based on their silence and focus. I will have to see how their writing reflects their thinking from the worksheet and reflection 1 – I need to pay attention to how this changes my feeling about the lesson being a waste of time due to the lack of interaction.

As demonstrated here, my observations suggest two competing components of individual work. Students seemed focused – not distracted by the typical temptation to socialize – and most of them worked intently on completing their work in class. Writing from the worksheet and reflection mentioned above also indicated that students were attentive to the video, in that they not only correctly answered comprehension questions about the content of the video, but a few of them also reflected on how much they learned about the purpose of storytelling from this activity. Taken together, my observations and the quality of student work indicate that this silent,

focused, individual activity was a successful means of communicating content knowledge. On the other hand, the quality of student work and level of their comprehension did not mitigate my feeling that the silent, individual nature of this activity had been a waste of time because it did not provide as many opportunities for interaction as the typical activity in my classroom might. A main component of my approach to teaching is centered around creating a classroom space that provides safe and engaging opportunities for students to express themselves, as this sort of communication is central not only in the goal of learning a new language, but also for developing the kind of student that empathetically engages in civic action. While this sort of individual work may accomplish the goal of distributing curricular content material, it falls short of the more interactive aims of teaching and learning that characterize both my typical methods and the learning outcomes of this study.

My digital storytelling presentation. My second set of field notes came from the next curricular activity, in which I introduced the digital storytelling project by presenting my own story about being adopted as an infant and meeting my birthmother for the first time in college. To demonstrate to students the new ways in which they might use technology in their presentations, I created an automatically advancing PowerPoint presentation with the text and photos of my story on each slide and a recording of myself playing the piano in the background. Some of my initial jottings taken while observing students as they watched my presentation were similar to those described above – most students in all four classes were silent, attentive, and engaged in watching and trying to understand the Spanish text on each slide. I noted that a few students turned around to look at me and smile at various points in the presentation, which I understood at the time to indicate that they were responding positively to the story I was sharing. I also reflected after sharing my presentation in the first class that "I was anxious to tell the

story," and recorded that I had even interjected a few jokes about hearing my dogs' collars shake in the recording of the piano music that accompanied the presentation to try to break the tension of sharing such a personal, serious story. Despite frequently spending time at the front of the class as the focus of students' attention, I noticed that the shift in focus from curricular content material to my own personal life felt "intimidating and uncomfortable."

After sharing my story, students had time to begin brainstorming about their own personal stories they would share with the class. To encourage productivity while students began thinking, I asked them to write down story ideas to turn in to me before they left class that day. While brainstorming, several students asked me questions about what kind of story to tell or told me they didn't have any ideas because they felt like nothing important had happened in their lives. I encouraged students to "think about important things that they do or are now and try to think of a story from their past that has influenced this." After the first class period, I glanced through the story ideas they submitted and recorded that "everyone turned in a paper, but most students still had multiple ideas to think about or said they'd probably change their mind later." Later in the day I reflected that, like me during my story presentation, students were already beginning to experience some of the vulnerability attached to sharing personal stories as exhibited in their seeming reluctance to commit to a story idea. I wrote that I felt as though a lot of students were asking questions of me and of their peers about what and how to present as a means of seeking "validation that 'you're doing it right.'"

As students were brainstorming for the rest of these class periods, several of them took out their cell phones to look at photos to help them think of ideas, and most students spent the rest of the class period sharing stories and discussing ideas with their classmates. The rest of these classes felt much more like a typical day in Spanish II, as I walked around to the small

groups of students to ask them about their ideas, listen to their discussions with one another, or answer any questions they might have. After one class I reflected that "The tone felt different today. This class is usually quiet, sometimes sleepy, it's been a slower process of breaking through and interacting on a more personal level like I do with my other classes." Unlike the individual video activity described above, including my own personal story and then giving students time to think about the stories they might tell created an opportunity for much more personal interaction. It seemed that, especially in the class described here, my willingness to share such a personal part of my life led to more of the sort of personal interaction I tended to seek that helps foster connections that lead to the development of empathy. Showing these students that I trusted them enough to share these personal details and that I wanted to learn more about their lives was intended to approach the kind of teaching with empathy that Dolby (2012) suggests is necessary toward encouraging its growth in others.

At the end of that day, after presenting my story and encouraging students to begin thinking about their stories in all four classes, I reflected that:

> This was a great lesson for emotional connection – but one that probably looks like wasting time from the outside. I enjoyed it – despite my anxiety. I'm glad I told the story I did. I'm frustrated that there isn't more time for this kind of sharing or that I don't feel more capable of working it into more lessons in Spanish.

Two key considerations regarding formats for interaction have emerged from reflecting on the part of this activity in which I presented my own story. First, taken with the reflection described above, I seemed to be regularly preoccupied with the idea of the ways in which certain activities may be seen as wasting time in class. I suspect that, amidst increasing pressure to cover curricular content and to prepare students for standardized tests on top of college preparation and idealistic notions of equipping students for working toward a socially just democratic society,

many teachers share this preoccupation. Interestingly, taking these reflections together demonstrates conflicting notions of wasting time. The first individual video activity, designed to communicate content information, felt like a waste of time to me because it did not provide opportunities for personal interaction and connection. The second personal storytelling activity, though communicated in Spanish, led me to worry that someone judging the lesson from the outside would think the focus on personal interaction over explicit content instruction was a waste of time. While it's possible that neither of these activities were a "waste of time," these reflections indicate a tension between content delivery and personal interaction that is critical to address in a consideration of formats that could successfully balance curricular content with developing empathy and civic engagement.

Second, as suggested in both my own feelings of anxiety while sharing my story and the validation-seeking questions students asked of me and of each other while brainstorming, fostering personal connection in the classroom is a vulnerable act that can sometimes be uncomfortable and intimidating. After hearing my story, some students seemed almost reluctant to come up with ideas of their own, suggesting that they required the time to decide that it was acceptable to be vulnerable, accompanied with the permission to change their mind later. Creating the classroom environment and student-teacher rapport that led to the sharing of these personal stories was not accomplished in this single class period, but was rather the work of nearly eight months of intentional interaction, sometimes of the off-topic, personal, time-wasting sort. But the results, not only of this specific class period, but of the entire personal storytelling project, suggest that creating time and space for students and teachers to interact in vulnerable and sometimes uncomfortable ways is a key consideration toward understanding the format of activities that would serve to foster the development of empathy.

Students' digital storytelling presentations. After brainstorming their story ideas, students had time in class to work on building their digital storytelling presentations, and then they shared them with the class. Though much of my attention was focused on watching the presentations and attempting to moderate discussions following each story, I did record observations of student behavior during each class. In each class, students listened attentively and took notes (as required) during all the presentations. Following each presentation (in Spanish), I led a short discussion (in English) in which students summarized the main aspects of the story to help ensure their understanding. After these summaries, I encouraged students to ask any questions they might have had about the stories, but at no time did these questions move beyond the basic content comprehension that was required to fill out their notes sheets. I reflected that "Students listened respectfully, [but] they didn't engage with one another except asking their group for help after some of the presentations." Students were not particularly social in between presentations, but rather spent the entirety of each class period listening, asking a few brief questions, and recording their notes. It was difficult for me to gauge their responses to the presentations based on this limited interaction in class.

What was easy and interesting to observe, however, was the behavior and interaction of the individual students as their stories were being presented. As in the example I provided to them, most students chose to design a presentation with music that would auto-advance so that they could stay at their desk and watch, rather than reading their stories out loud in Spanish. Most of the observations I recorded during the presentations were behaviors that, as described above, seem to suggest that students felt vulnerable or even uncomfortable while their presentations were playing. Some of the behaviors I observed were physical, like students who looked away from the screen or from their classmates while their presentation played. One girl

looked at her desk and repeatedly ran her fingers through her hair, while two others shuffled the papers they had on their desk several times. I recorded that one of these girls:

> briefly shuffles her papers, then wraps her arms around her stomach, puts her feet up on the book tray under her desk and leans forward over the desk – almost in fetal position. This seems very self-protective to me, as if she's feeling vulnerable and wants to be smaller, feel safer, etc.

In addition to these physical indicators of anxiety or uncomfortability, several other students talked quietly to someone sitting next to them or even laughed quietly during their own presentations. This seemed, much like my own joke-making during my sample presentation, like a move to break the tension of knowing that the whole class was intently focused on watching their personal story. Other students also said things immediately before or during their presentations that made their anxiety clear, like "I can't even watch this," or "I'm so nervous, my heart is beating so fast like severe heartburn." Overall, most students exhibited some kind of physical or audible indication of the vulnerability involved in sharing personal stories with the class.

It also became clear, however, that this uncomfortable vulnerability was often rewarded with new levels of connection. Most of these results came from the student reflections described below, but I also recorded a few instances in which students continued to discuss and connect over the stories they had shared. In one instance, two students who were normally very quiet in class were chatting at the end of a day of presentations. They both had shared stories about the death of a grandfather, and at the end of the class one student said to the other: "Ever since my grandpa died my grandma has been really depressed." The other student responded: "Mine too!" As the bell rang at the end of the class period, these two students walked out of the room together

continuing to talk about their grandmothers. At the end of another class period, I wrote the following reflection:

> They are quiet. They listen. They are asking each other specific questions. They seem to have a genuine balance of interest in each other's' stories and also wanting to be successful. This class feels more like a community than I thought they would.

Though perhaps not as obvious as I had originally expected through the discussion of these stories in class, students clearly felt new connections to one another after sharing these presentations. In the way that it often does, the atmosphere of the class described here shifted in perceptible but difficult-to-describe ways as students began to relate to one another in new ways. As suggested above, maintaining an understanding of the levels of vulnerability involved in creating personal connection is a key facet of understanding the efficacy of different formats for interaction. These brief reflections on students' responses to their classmates' stories is the notion that this vulnerability is a necessary, and perhaps even welcome, step toward creating connections and developing empathy.

Another important consideration in thinking about formats for participation around empathy-building came from my own reflections at the end of all three days of student presentations. I wrote:

> This is harder than I thought, in a few ways. Despite knowing that it was hard for me to tell my story - I set it to music and sat in the back at my desk and know that my face and neck were red while I was asking them about it afterward (I even left the lights off during the discussion to hide a little more…) - I wasn't expecting to notice so clearly how hard it was for some students to share their stories. […] I also was not expecting students to share as deeply as they did. I feel completely unequipped to respond. Students are already feeling vulnerable and I know I need to acknowledge that they shared these really meaningful things with me, but I don't want to do so in a way that adds to their feeling vulnerable. I don't know what to do with the stories they tell except that hope that the reflections provide sort of a way to decompress. They are not outwardly sharing and processing with each other afterward and this worries me. I'm also seriously struggling with the

> weight of these things they've shared. […]. This is dangerous territory for people whose empathy is already strong. I don't know if they all fully understand each other's stories [because they were presented fully in Spanish] but I do. And it's hard. […] Kids need space. These are hard things and they're sharing them in my classroom. This stuff matters. That's why it's hard. How do I acknowledge the weight of meaning? Do I need to? Is the sharing and the classroom environment I've created enough? Will the reflections help?

Once again, the theme of vulnerability is woven through this reflection. Of importance here, though, is the recognition of my lack of preparation for the depth to which students would share with one another. As we wrapped up this project, a few salient ideas stuck with me. First, students clearly took advantage of the opportunity to share deeply personal stories with one another. It appeared that they wanted the permission and the space to bring important piece of their personal lives into the classroom, and they were willing to overcome the uncomfortableness of vulnerability to do so. Second, hearing so many deeply personal and occasionally tragic stories was overwhelming to me. As I suggested in the reflection, the students didn't seem overwhelmed by this, but it's possible that this was due to their more limited exposure and understanding of Spanish – though we practiced basic grammar and vocabulary concepts in preparation for this project, many students had to look up and learn new words for their presentations in Spanish that their classmates didn't know. I was entirely caught off guard by my desire to respond to students' stories in meaningful ways, and perhaps even more surprised by the feeling that I was incapable of doing so. It is critical to consider, therefore, not only the ways in which we create classroom environments that encourage vulnerability and foster connection and growth in empathy, but also the means of preparing for the weight of that vulnerability. Ultimately, it is essential to ensure that both students and teachers are equipped with a means of decompressing after experiencing these vulnerable moments of connection. For me, this process was one of slowly and thoughtfully responding to each student's presentation, while also

spending a lot of time writing and reflecting with colleagues. It was helpful for me to process the weight of the stories that I heard by sharing the story of this project with others.

NYT VR videos. The final segment of my field notes that speaks to understanding more about formats for interaction was from the day that students watched the NYT VR videos in class. These were the VR videos that would become the stories of oppression and marginalization they would retell in their final presentation of the unit. Unlike the silent focus of the first individual video assignment described above, students responded to viewing the VR videos in a variety of ways. First, despite viewing the videos individually with VR goggles, several students made vocal exclamations while watching, like "Oh! It's over there!" or "This is so cool!" Other students responded after watching the video in ways that indicated a level of emotional engagement that was absent from the original content-based video. One student explained to me that "This movie got dark, for like two minutes, but then it got happier again. I'm glad." Three other students who all watched different videos concluded "That was really sad," "I'm depressed now," and "Well, that was depressing." Another student was inspired to read an article to learn more about the story presented in his video, and while reading he said "That's sad. This is a quote from the article. She says 'I didn't do anything and now I'm paying for it.'" These responses – particularly those that are emotional in nature – are entirely different from the silence that accompanied the first individual video activity.

There are two key differences between these two activities that could be responsible for inducing such different results. First, while the first video was told as a story and several students said they thought it was interesting and informative, it was focused primarily on delivering facts about the power and purpose of telling stories. These NYT VR videos, however, had no curricular information to deliver, and instead were designed only to tell the story of a real

person's lived experience. In this regard, it seems logical that these authentic, personal stories would induce more emotional response from students than the informative storytelling video. Second, while both activities included similar isolating actions – students sat in a chair with headphones and watched a video on their own – the immersive, interactive nature of the virtual reality videos likely changed the ways in which students responded more interactively as well. As students watched these videos, many of them moved their heads to take in the multi-dimensional views, while others even carefully stood and moved their bodies to navigate around the virtual space. Following the literature presented earlier in this work, it also seems logical that the immersive qualities of presence and flow in these VR videos would encourage a more interactive response. In combination with the novelty of this technology (as compared to watching a video on a computer screen), it seems understandable that students responded more actively and more emotionally in class to the VR videos than they did to the initial storytelling video. These data suggest, therefore, that individual, informative activities can successfully transfer content material to students in comprehensible ways, while these more interactive and personal activities, though perhaps vulnerable or intimidating, can foster the kind of emotional connection that leads to the development of empathy.

NYT VR video presentations. Unlike in the personal storytelling presentations, I did not record many field notes while students presented the stories they watched in the NYT VR videos. The format of these presentations was different – students stood at the front of the class individually or with the small groups they chose to work with and presented the information from their PowerPoint or Google Slides. While I did still observe a few signs of anxiety or nervousness, there was much less of a pattern of vulnerability exhibited while students were presenting. Based on their reflections (described in the next section), the anxious behaviors

exhibited in these presentations stemmed more from anxiety about speaking in Spanish in front of their classmates – much like in any other academic presentation. My observations of the students watching these NYT VR presentations were relatively similar to the storytelling presentations as well, in that most students sat quietly and attentively and listened to the stories their classmates presented. I did observe a slight increase in off-topic behavior or students who weren't as fully engaged in the NYT VR stories as they were in their classmates' personal stories, and this pattern is also demonstrated in the student reflections described below. More students reported strong responses to the personal stories than the NYT VR presentations, both in the act of presenting and telling each story and in listening to others' presentations. Their reflections also revealed, however, that many students were powerfully impacted by hearing these stories of marginalization and oppression from their classmates and did self-report feeling empathy for the people and experiences that were described. These results regarding students' reflections on these presentations are discussed more fully in the next section.

Comparing the personal storytelling and the NYT VR presentations reveals a few key points. First, while students demonstrated more anxiety in response to the vulnerability of sharing their personal stories with their class, this anxiety was met with a stronger sense of connection and empathy for their peers than with the less personal NYT VR video presentations. While the NYT VR presentations were less anxiety-inducing for most students due to the less personal nature and the opportunity to present in a small group, many of them still did express nervousness at having to present in Spanish. Many students also reported an empathetic response to the NYT VR presentations, particularly to the part of the presentation in which students were required to share their own emotional responses. These emotional connections, as in other activities, were a driving force behind engaging students' capacities for empathy in response to

hearing others' stories of oppression or marginalization. While these emotional connections may have been more apparent in students' personal stories, requiring them to focus on this component of sharing the NYT VR videos they watched proved instrumental in helping their classmates develop empathy in response to the stories as well. It is essential to consider the ways in which teachers can continue to shape activities to draw out these emotional connections to content material, particularly when it comes to relating to stories of oppression or marginalization that students haven't experienced themselves.

It is also key to consider, therefore, the ways in which students could most successfully engage these emotional connections when they share stories with their classmates. My reflections demonstrated that students were emotionally engaged in watching the immersive NYT VR videos, and their post-presentation reflections reported a moderate level of emotional engagement in their classmates' presentations of these videos. While in the personal storytelling presentation many students used music and pictures to help create emotional stories, most of the NYT VR presentations were more basic academic presentations with a few sentences and a picture on each slide that students read out loud to the class. In the personal storytelling presentation, I modelled my own presentation with personal photos and dramatic piano music in the background, and many students developed similar presentations. I did not provide an example of a presentation re-telling an NYT VR video story, and so it seems that most students fell back on the "template" of what is often required in an academic presentation. It would be interesting for future research on the format of activities that engage empathetic learning to combine these components – it seems that taking advantage of the ways in which technology can serve to engage emotions in combination with the opportunity to re-tell stories of oppression and marginalization would serve to create strong emotional and empathetic connections.

Student reflections: A survey of learning. In addition to my own field notes and reflections describing student interaction across a variety of activity formats, I sought to validate these findings by asking the students themselves to reflect on their learning in the unit. At the end of the curricular unit, students completed a final reflective writing assignment in which they described what was the most important thing they thought they learned in the unit, which activities helped them learn that concept, whether and how their future learning, ideas, or actions might be different because of this concept, and any final thoughts on empathy, civic engagement, and technology. Students had five days out of class to complete this reflection assignment and submitted it electronically at the end of the unit. While much of the data from their responses corresponded with the observations in my field notes, student reflections also illuminated patterns that I was not able to observe or record because of the demands of my teaching role in particular activities. The results of these student reflections, therefore, are discussed more thoroughly below.

In-class discussions. A key example of student input that was difficult for me to observe while teaching came from their responses regarding the in-class discussions we had about storytelling, empathy, and technology. As I was focused on moderating and guiding these discussions in each class, it was difficult, and sometimes impossible, for me to record jottings during these classes. Though the transcriptions of these discussions were an invaluable source of data, they do not reveal nearly as much about student behaviors and attitudes toward the activity itself as they do about the content of students' answers. It is significant, therefore, that around 10% of students from each class (the third largest response) suggested that these in-class discussions were the activities that most helped them learn about empathy and civic engagement. When asked why they thought this might be the case, students wrote about the ways in which

they felt that these discussions encouraged open communication and allowed for a more in-depth treatment of these topics than the individual writing assignments they completed. Some of them expressed frustration that in other formats, like the Google Discussion post, students were only responding to meet requirements and not to carry on the discussion. In the in-class discussions, though, many students felt that the conversational nature and the immediacy with which they could respond to one another or hear someone else's responses to their own thoughts was very influential in shaping their ideas about empathy and civic engagement.

Though not reflected in my field notes, the data included in answering research question one seems to support this notion as well. While students expressed some ideas in line with the literature on empathy and civic engagement in their first open-ended reflection assignment, discussing these topics in small group and whole class discussions allowed me, acting as the teacher whose goal it was to continue to develop students' ideas about empathy in specific ways, to more directly influence their thinking than was possible in the individual reflective writing assignments. As each of these discussions was designed to pose a question and then give students a few minutes to discuss with their small groups before reporting to the class, I also listened to the small group discussions and often called on students who had expressed responses in line with my learning goals to share first. It was clear from the transcriptions that, as these discussions continued throughout the day, I became more prepared to guide student thinking in specific ways and to call on some of the outliers who had already expressed key ideas to share with the class. In one excerpt of a discussion from the first class period of the day, I overheard a student ask his group if they thought we have a right or responsibility to go to other countries and change the way they live. Though his group didn't respond, I asked him to share this question with the class, as it encouraged a much more nuanced discussion of civic engagement than I had

planned. After engaging this discussion in that class period, I also posed the same question to the other classes, though it wasn't part of my original list of questions. As this example demonstrates, I was able to incorporate student thinking to guide in-class discussions toward particular ends. This excerpt and other transcriptions that demonstrated the influence of my guidance on student thinking about empathy and civic engagement through these in-class discussions were described thoroughly in chapter four. In considering formats for interaction, though, both the transcripts and the student feedback described here indicate that these in-class discussions provide critical opportunities for immediate feedback and guidance that was key in shaping student thinking.

In addition to my own ability to guide the discussion toward particular ends, students also reflected that they were able to learn more about these concepts by listening to their classmates as well. One student wrote:

> I thought that talking with our whole class helped a lot. It was nice to hear other people's ideas about what the stories meant and what their opinions were on other things. It felt almost like we were listening to each other's story. It was a little bit of practice for truly listening to the stories of others.

Not only does this student point to the importance of opportunities for students to share their thoughts with one another, but as Dolby (2012) suggests in her theory of teaching empathy, she is also demonstrating the ways in which teaching *with* empathy and teaching explicitly *about* empathy work together – in a discussion about empathy, she is able to practice the skills of listening and moving toward perspective-taking required to build her own empathy. As suggested in literature both on empathy and civic engagement, opportunities to practice these skills within the normal functions of the classroom space is key in transitioning their application beyond the classroom as well.

Along these lines, nearly all the students who chose these in-class discussions as the activities that most influenced their learning suggested that their power came from the ways in which they allowed students to understand the perspectives of others. Like the student above who connected these discussions to listening other peoples' stories, several others suggested that hearing other perspectives helped foment their own understanding. One student reflected:

> I thought that the in-class discussions were the most effective for me. I love to hear the perspectives of others and contribute to conversation with my own ideas. I think that by hearing the thought processes and opinions of others, I have a more wide-spread level of understanding for myself.

In other words, as suggested in some of their early ideas about empathy, these in-class discussions helped them not just reflect on, but also take action toward understanding and accepting the perspectives of others as a means of increasing their own understanding. From the student responses described here, it is clear that these in-class discussions provided an engaging format for learning about empathy and civic engagement, and, more importantly, that this particular format for learning about these concepts also allowed students to put them into immediate practice.

Classmates' digital storytelling project. The second largest group of students (18%) claimed that the first project, in which students shared digital presentations of their own personal story in Spanish, was the one that most influenced their learning in this unit. Many of these responses were similar to those described above, in that students who chose this activity also suggested that it was powerful because it helped them practice the skills connected to building empathy. Some students pointed to the powerful impact of being able to tell their story. As one student said:

> Our personal storytelling presentation was also helpful because I got to see firsthand the effects that storytelling has. I got to experience the nostalgia and see

> how my classmates reacted to what I presented to them. It was interesting to see and hear the reactions to my own story. I got to experience being a storyteller.

Like the students who suggested that in-class discussion helps them practice taking on the perspectives of others, this student suggests that practicing sharing our own perspectives can also help us to understand how powerful that process can be. Again, the opportunity to practice the skills that students have explicitly been taught is a key component of engaging empathy and civic action.

Also similar to their responses on the in-class discussion, many other students suggested that these storytelling presentations help them to learn about and understand their peers in new ways. Several students reflected that there were some people in their classes they felt that they didn't really know before this project but that they felt they could now connect with people they didn't normally interact with, and others even suggested that they learned new things about people they had already considered close friends. As described in my own reflections on the project in the previous part of this chapter, the depth to which students shared with one another in their stories allowed for a kind of authentic learning about one another that is often not a part of the explicit curriculum. These students, however, made it clear that the opportunity to do so in class was influential and very valuable to them. One student summarized his thoughts on the project by saying:

> My favorite activity, and the one that was the most effective, was the personal digital storytelling presentation. You were able to learn from your classmates. I learned a lot about people that I never would have. It allowed everyone to open up without saying a word. That is why it was so helpful. People didn't have to be embarrassed to tell their story, but instead they just needed an audience who could read. This project was by far the most effective. It might be my favorite project I will do in my schooling career.

As this student suggested, part of the powerful sharing that occurred in this activity came from the permission for students to present their stories in ways that were sensitive to the vulnerabilities and discomfort that accompany this sort of sharing. A key consideration in the format of activities that encourages perspective-taking and empathy building, therefore, is balancing students' desires to share with one another about themselves with the permission and possibility to do so in non-threatening ways. These activities not only let students experience the benefits of sharing their stories with new people, but they also allow them to practice the skills of empathetic listening and perspective-taking in very real ways.

NYT VR video. The largest student response regarding the activities that most influenced their learning in this unit was in favor of the NYT VR videos they watched for their final presentation. Almost 30% of students suggested that watching these virtual reality videos to prepare for re-telling a story of oppression or marginalization most helped them learn about storytelling, empathy, and civic engagement. Much like the results already discussed here, many students who chose this activity pointed to the ways in which it let them experience and practice the components of empathy-building, perspective-taking, understanding emotions, and moving toward civic engagement that we had discussed together in class. One student reflected:

> I think that watching the VR videos or wherever people watched the videos helped a lot with gaining insight on the stories of all these people from all over the world. The thing that helped describe that even more is that everyone presented their stories they chose. Getting to learn about all these different lifestyles showed that other people's stories are SO different than what we are used to. They are so different that we probably have no clue how they handle these situations and we can't even begin to imagine how hard life is for them during this specific moment. Empathy in this case is hard to have, but it is still possible because we get a sense of sadness or happiness and that may only be a slight amount of what the storyteller felt, but it is the closest we can get due to the fact that we have never went through what they did.

This student response, along with a few others, demonstrates the benefits of the VR videos and subsequent presentations in accordance with a few key themes that have already emerged here. First, she pointed to the ways in which the presentations helped increase her exposure to stories that she otherwise may never have heard. Second, she suggested that hearing these stories reminded her that her life is very different from other peoples'. Third, and most importantly, she concluded that the ability of these stories to engage her emotional understanding did allow her to build empathy for the perspectives they expressed, despite this recognition of difference. She suggested that watching these VR videos was the "closest we can get" to actually experiencing these scenarios of oppression or marginalization, pointing to the delicate balance of maintaining our understanding of difference, while also moving toward trying to put ourselves into a new experience.

Other students suggested similar benefits toward perspective-taking that resulted from this project. Instead of focusing, as the student cited above did, on hearing the presentations, several students also claimed that the process of re-telling the story in their own words was a powerful way of building understanding. One of these students said:

> The last project we did gave me a better perspective of what goes on around us that we don't take time to think about. I think it helped because we were directly learning about people on our own and having to tell the story ourselves made us go deeper into the story.

Along the same lines, another student reflected that he thought "those presentations were the most effective because we were telling the stories of other people in their own point of view but in our own words and we were relating to them and thinking about what our reactions were." For these students, like many others cited here, the opportunity to practice not just hearing the stories of others, but having to engage their abilities in perspective-taking in order to then re-tell those

stories, was an influential mode of practicing the concepts we had already discussed. As this final student pointed out, the delicate balance of maintaining someone else's perspective while using their own words was a powerful means of engaging the sort of move toward perspective-taking that empathy requires.

Beyond the perspective-taking and emotional understanding that occurred through this project, one student pointed to the ways in which it also moved her toward civic engagement. She wrote:

> I was moved by emotional stories, such as how babies would grow up in jail only to be separated from their mothers. These stories really gave me many examples on how powerful a story can be emotionally, and listening to these stories caused me to want to do something to help these people out. Without listening to these stories, I wouldn't be able to experience how a story can cause action by listeners, and how they affect the listeners.

Like other students, she drew especially on the emotional impact of hearing these stories of oppression or marginalization. Unlike in some earlier discussions around how stories might make us act that resulted primarily in self-centered responses, this student pointed specifically to the way in which hearing these stories encouraged her to "want to do something to help these people out." In other words, these VR storytelling presentations sparked her desire to engage in the sort of action that would ultimately lead toward the social justice-oriented aims of civic education.

Taken together, student responses about the NYT VR videos and the storytelling presentations that followed suggested that the format of this activity was beneficial in a few key ways. Like the other activities described here, this one let students move beyond explicit discussion of empathy and civic engagement and actually put them into practice. Students were able to experience the power of telling their own story, of listening to the stories of others, and of

retelling stories in their own words through perspectives of marginalization and oppression. As the majority of students responded in favor of this activity, it seems as though the opportunity to actually practice these skills is a key factor in considering the format of activities that engaging learning around empathy and civic engagement.

Consideration of learning preferences. The activities already described from student reflections represented the three largest categories of their responses in terms of activities that most helped them learn. It is worth mentioning, however, that smaller groups of students also suggested other activities that were most valuable to them. Three students suggested that the reflective journal writing assignments were beneficial because they had time to reflect outside of class, that writing helped their ideas to flow more freely, and that the privacy of submitting these responses only to the teacher made it easier to express themselves more honestly. Two students reported that the online Goggle Discussion posts were most beneficial because of the ways in which they allowed students to learn from their peers and gain new perspectives that they may agree or disagree with, therefore encouraging a more open-minded approach to listening. One student even reflected that reading a poem in class (that was more of a time-filling activity than a pre-planned component of this unit) was the most powerful because it helped remind her that everyone has a story and it is important to listen. A few other students reflected that reading the legend of Quetzalcoatl was very interesting because they enjoyed learning about history, while others, when asked about which part of the unit they might change in the future, suggested that they would eliminate reading this legend because it was boring. While each of these categories of responses is relatively small in comparison with the first three activities, they still suggest an important consideration. Students all have individual preferences and learning needs, and, so, as

with any curricular material, engaging a variety of formats that can help appeal to those interests and needs is critical.

Question 2: Key findings.

Data from my own field notes, combined with students' reflections on various activities in this unit, suggest a few key findings regarding the format of activities that are most beneficial for learning about empathy and civic engagement. First, while silent, individual work was good for the delivery of content material and individual reflection, it was not as effective at providing opportunities for interaction, the expression of ideas, and engagement with others that was critical in this unit. Second, opportunities that did allow for students to interact with one another, to tell their own stories, and to learn about their classmates providing meaningful ways for them to create personal connections to their educational experience. Third, activities that allowed for immediate feedback and guidance from the teacher were critical in shaping students' thinking about empathy and civic engagement in intentional ways. Fourth, these in-class, interactive or immersive activities provided a powerful means of learning about empathy and civic engagement because they provided opportunities for students to practice these skills.

Taking these together, it is critical to consider the ways in which literature on teaching empathy and civic engagement suggests that learning these concepts requires three things: students must be taught *with* empathy and in a democratic setting, they must be taught *about* empathy and civic engagement, and they must be able to *practice* empathy and civic engagement in safe but authentic ways. While direct, individual instruction may accomplish the explicit act of learning about these concepts, it falls short of the other two requirements. In order to practice these skills, though, it was clear that many of these students and I experienced feelings of vulnerability or discomfort to participate in the sort of sharing and emotional connection required

for empathy-building. Furthermore, too much of this practice can lead to an overwhelming sense of empathy or an inability to process all the emotions that were expressed. To teach *with* empathy, therefore, requires maintaining an understanding of the vulnerability required to share, the permission to share in ways that are safer or more comfortable, and the space and guidance to decompress or recover. While students themselves didn't report feeling overwhelmed in response to the vulnerability or emotional connection they experienced in this unit, considering means of addressing this potential must be a critical piece of future research on this kind of learning. Finally, the importance of this emotional connection as a foundation for developing empathy is clear from students' responses both to their personal storytelling presentations and the re-telling of NYT VR videos. Future research on formats for learning must not only carefully consider creating space for personal sharing, but also the ways in which various technologies may engage the same kind of emotional connections when sharing is inherently less personal. Drawing on the immersive components of these personal storytelling presentations and NYT VR videos that created emotional connection and transferring these kinds of experiences to other formats for learning can help to create opportunities for empathetic engagement across a variety of content material.

CHAPTER 6

IMMERSION AND EMOTION: USING TECHNOLOGY TO MOVE BEYOND THE SCREEN

This chapter includes data from a wide range of activities designed to answer the third research question: Can technology aid in empathetic engagement with perspectives of marginalization and oppression and, if so, how? Students engaged with a variety of technologies throughout this unit, and their participation with and reflection on the activities described in this chapter illuminate key points about their effectiveness in teaching various components of empathy and civic engagement. Across these technologies, data from student reflections indicate that opportunities to see, imagine, and immerse themselves in firsthand stories of others was a central component of their ability to move toward taking on others' perspectives. They maintained the need to be able to relate to another's experience as a means of building empathy throughout much of the unit, but they also pointed strongly to the role of emotional connections in fostering the ability to relate. Students reflected on the many ways that technology can aid in telling emotional stories, but they also suggested that technology may sometimes hinder our ability and desire to relate to others' perspectives and emotions. While students' reflections and feedback on their experiences learning about others with a variety of technologies in this unit provide myriad strong examples of the key attributes of empathy, their explicit input on technology seems to indicate that they aren't likely to see it as a means of building empathy. As suggested in literature, students' relationship with and understanding of technology and its uses are complex and often conflicting. The activities that engaged students with various technologies are described here, including the personal digital storytelling project, Google Expeditions virtual fieldtrips to Aztec and Mayan ruins, the legend of Quetzalcoatl, and NYT VR videos and

presentations. Each of these sections includes feedback from student reflections that align with Wiseman's (1996) attributes of empathy, as well as general reflections on the benefits and barriers of using technology. The final sections of this chapter includes data from the in-class discussion in which students directly shared their ideas about using technology to build empathy and civic engagement, as well as a follow-up question in which students summarized the messages they had learned about technology at school.

Digital storytelling project reflection. After presenting their personal stories to the class, students wrote a reflection journal entry about the project that focused on their thoughts and reactions to building and sharing their own stories and listening to their classmates' presentations. (The full text of this reflection journal prompt can be found in Appendix F). Data from these reflections are presented here in accordance with the ways students demonstrated the four key attributes of empathy – perspective-taking, understanding emotions, non-judgmental responses, the communication of these non-judgmental responses. Some data from these reflections also indicated a move toward future action that resulted from hearing these personal stories. In addition to broadly reflecting on their responses to the project, I also encouraged students to think about the technology itself by asking them to write about how the choices they and their classmates made in how to present their stories affected the storytelling and listening process. The final part of this section includes general themes regarding the benefits and barriers of using technology for personal storytelling that emerged from students' reflections on the format of the presentations.

Attribute one: Perspective-taking. Most students reflected heavily on the ways these presentations helped them learn more about their classmates, using language that indicated a move toward understanding new perspectives. One student wrote:

> I liked watching other people's presentations, it taught me a lot about them, and made me realize that everyone has gone through tough times. I loved getting to hear a story that meant something to them, it shows the kind of person they are.

While many students wrote generally about learning more about their classmates' lives, this student pushed that learning toward Nussbaum's (1997) intelligent reading in thinking about "the kind of person they are." Similarly, another student reflected:

> Listening to other people tell their stories was very enlightening. I didn't know a lot about my peers and I think learning their stories helped me to understand them more. I was able to consider where they come from and what their motives are for the way they live. I think that it kept me from being ignorant and assuming things about them, even though I really have no clue what they go through at all.

This student included the phrases "where they come from" and "what their motives are," indicating that listening to these stories helped her not only to learn the content of the story, but also to understand more about that classmate's perspective.

Some students, on the other hand, wrote about perspective-taking in ways that maintained the notion of only connecting or understanding through shared experiences. One student wrote "Stories only matter if they involve you or if it is something you relate to. Which is why only some stories can truly ever mean anything to you." This insistence on personal involvement in a story as a prerequisite for finding meaning or connection is antithetical to the sort of move toward perspective-taking that forms the first step toward building empathy. Though these kinds of responses were infrequent in students' reflections on the digital storytelling project, they informed my planning for the rest of the unit in that I intentionally created opportunities to challenge this sort of thinking through in-class discussions. The results of these in-class discussions are discussed more thoroughly in chapters four and five.

Considering the challenges of perspective-taking, another student wrote:

> When some of their stories were about losing their grandparent, I was able to relate to that very well because I have gone through that. Some peoples' stories were also about their passions for certain things, including volleyball which I can obviously make a big connection to because I am always playing.

The importance of creating connection through shared experience is undeniable – this student indicates that having experienced the loss of a grandparent helps her more closely relate to others who told similar stories. She also suggests, though, that these connections may be formed from more basic experiences, like sharing a passion for a sport. Lowering the threshold of shared experience and challenging students to think about intentionally seeking out connection across difference became a key focus of the rest of the unit.

Attribute two: Understanding emotions. As indicated in chapter four, a central means of creating connection across difference was through understanding emotional responses. Students' reflections demonstrated that emotion played an important role in the digital storytelling presentations, suggesting that students who shared emotional stories and expressed emotions themselves had stories that were more relatable, easier to understand, and more engaging to listen to. One student wrote:

> Listening to others made me think and relate in many ways. I could relate to what many people said about the future, and to what many people have been through because I have been through the same thing or something similar. I could relate to many of the stories that I heard and the emotions that the "author" went through. I didn't go through the same things that they went through, but I can imagine the emotions they went through because there are times where I felt the same way they felt.

As in the previous section, this student focuses on sharing similar experiences as a means of relating to the story. However, he also lowers the threshold of connection even further by explaining the ways his emotional response helped him understand the emotions expressed in the story. As suggested in the literature on empathy, he points to this emotional understanding and

move toward perspective-taking as an imaginative process (Coplan, 2011). More simply put, another student stated that "Stories that were more emotional created a relatable and meaningful presentation that I will likely remember longer." Several students also pointed to the way that music and pictures more completely engaged their emotional response to a story – these results are described more fully in the barriers and benefits of technology at the end of this section. Taken together, these data suggest a key result illustrated by students' response to this activity: engaging emotions is a central component of moving toward creating connection and taking on others' perspectives that is necessary in developing empathy.

Attributes three and four: Communication of non-judgmental responses. Several students reflected on the feelings of anxiety and nervousness that arose from presenting their stories, similar to the vulnerability of sharing described at length in chapter five. A few students even made explicit references to fearing judgment from their classmates during the presentation, like the person who wrote:

> I knew exactly what I wanted to do when this project was brought up. I was nervous to share something too personal with the entire class. Watching the video in front of everyone was nerve-wracking because people can be judgmental and I didn't want it to be like that. I enjoyed watching the other videos because I like learning about other people's life and what has happened to them that has shaped them.

This student aptly acknowledges the vulnerability of personal storytelling, and points to the natural human tendency to respond with judgment. Interestingly, though, he immediately followed these thoughts with his own non-judgmental response that was focused on enjoying hearing and understanding others' stories.

Another student made this transition in thinking even more explicit, writing:

> At first I was nervous for the class to see my story. This was because my story seemed as if it wasn't as impactful and emotional as some of the other stories that

> came from the people in my class. I felt my story was not as good as the rest, but I continued thinking and I realized my story is just as important and impactful to me as the other stories were to their owners. My story was just impacting me in a different and more positive way.

This student demonstrated a sense of ownership of her story that developed throughout her storytelling process. Though she initially worried about the potential judgment of her classmates, she developed confidence through understanding that her story could be meaningful without being sad, breaking from other students' ideas that connection and empathy stems only from negative emotions.

This development of ownership and understanding of personal meaning in stories was a desired outcome of this digital storytelling project. Drawing on Hess's (2014) conception of mirror neurons, developing meaning in one's own storytelling process leads to an increased ability to understand that others' stories carry that same meaning, creating an automatic connection for the development of empathy. While this particular student expressed finding meaning through an internal sense of ownership of her story, others focused instead on meaning through external validation. One student suggested that having feedback from the students who listened to his story could have made this project more meaningful. Though I tried to encourage discussion after each presentation, students were hesitant to participate. I was able to observe the positive, non-judgmental ways that students responded to hearing others' stories through reading their reflections, but as these were submitted only to me, students did not have the opportunity to gain personal ownership and meaning in their own stories through feedback from their classmates. Were I to lead this project again, I would focus on helping students experience a non-judgmental sense of ownership in their stories by creating a low-risk forum for feedback from other students. Though their feedback submitted directly to me provided space for honest

reflection on the project, an additional component involving a Google Classroom discussion post or similar opportunities for public feedback to other students would have been beneficial in helping them see the non-judgmental, empathetic responses of their classmates.

Engaging future action. A common response in these reflections, as indicated in students' attempts at perspective-taking, focused on the ways these presentations allowed students to learn about their classmates. Two key quotes are relevant here. The first student said:

> Hearing a story about a person I was very close to, though I still had no idea this was happening, made it really memorable for me and made me realize how little we know about the majority of the people we are around. These stories really made me realize how much peoples' lives are affected when we have no idea it's going on. Overall, these stories made me realize how little I know about the people I spend the majority of my time with and made me want to talk to these people about life more.

And second:

> A lot of people were choosing to tell sad, personal stories. My responses to their presentations were not verbal. I felt discomfort asking them what their slides said or questions about their presentations. I did not want to see them look sad. However, by seeing all of these sad stories it made me really think. Personally I never talk much to [a classmate]. Then hearing what she had to go through made me feel really bad for her. I want to be there for everyone, because I just feel like I need to be. Whenever I see her next I might say hi, or start a conversation. [Another classmate] is one of my very good friends and I knew that her presentation was going to be emotional. I just want her to know that I am there for her no matter what. This presentation might be my favorite thing I have ever done in school.

These students (along with many others) claimed that part of the powerful impact of this project was that it helped them learn about their classmates in new ways – both those they had previous relationships with and others who they didn't know as well. This suggests that students were able to create new connections to their classmates, leading to the ability to understand their perspectives and emotions and, therefore, building empathy.

Notably, these students suggested another outcome beyond learning and understanding in their desire to continue talking "about life," or wanting "to be there" for one another. Students were hesitant to interact with one another in between presentations, likely in part due to the emotional content and vulnerability of sharing, as indicated by the second student quoted above. These students wrote, however, that their future action was influenced by these stories, suggesting that they wanted to take action to continue the connections that were developed through sharing these presentations. In feedback to these reflections, I wrote responses encouraging these students to pursue their plans for future action. Due to the limited timeframe of this study, though, I can't say whether their actions were influenced or not. Future research that can examine these results long-term would be beneficial in understanding how student responses to continue creating new connections might move beyond desire and into action.

Barriers and benefits of technology-based presentations. In addition to reflecting on the content of the presentations, students were prompted to write about how the formatting choices their classmates made affected their response to the stories they told. As students responded overwhelmingly positively to this project and reflected at length on the ways in which they created new connections with their classmates, understanding the role that technology may play in aiding or hindering those connections is a key component of gauging its effectiveness in building empathy. From the reflection questions designed to engage more direct thinking on the use of technology, data here reveals a few key benefits and barriers from students' perception. Technology can be beneficial for accomplishing the powerful task of connecting through stories primarily because it makes it easier to share more personal details, but also because it provides new formats for creating emotional connections. Furthermore, students pointed to the ways in which technology can make stories easier to understand. On the other hand, student reflections

also indicated, as suggested in chapter five, that responses to these presentations also vary based on personal learning preferences. Despite the majority response regarding the benefits of technology in understanding and connecting to these stories, it is key to consider that certain technologies may not fit the learning preferences or needs of all students. These benefits and barriers to technology that arose from student reflections are discussed more thoroughly in the following sections.

Technology makes it easier to share. Given the vulnerable and sometimes uncomfortable nature of sharing stories discussed in chapter five, providing opportunities for students to tell their stories to the class in less intimidating ways was central in fostering the kind of connections they were able to create. To this end, most students reflected at some point on the ways in which their ability to choose the format of their presentation made it much easier to share. One student said:

> Sometimes when I have to present something to a class I get nervous, but this time I did not. Since we were able to just play the slides for the class instead of standing up in front of everyone, it was much easier. I liked this way of presenting much better too. This was a way for people to learn more about someone that meant a lot to me.

This student claims that telling her story as a video that she got to watch along with the rest of the class helped to ease the nerves that are often present during this type of activity. Furthermore, she makes a direct connection between the format of this presentation and the meaningful process of learning about her classmates.

Other students suggested that the ability to present this way encouraged them to share more personal or emotional content that they might not have otherwise. One of them who presented about losing a grandparent reflected:

> I decided to present my story to the class by just letting it roll. I didn't want to go up in front of the class and talk about it because it was a very emotional time in my life. It also happened pretty recently and I don't think I feel comfortable talking about it yet, even if it is in Spanish.

While her strong emotional ties to her story prevented her from telling it with her voice, the overwhelming response of students described in the previous section would indicate that her emotions as portrayed through the presentation still induced an emotional response from her classmates. Along the same lines, another student wrote:

> I usually don't like to present things in front of the class, especially in Spanish. I am not the best at public speaking and to add it in a different language makes it even worse. That is why I chose to do it as a slideshow and just have the music play. It was meaningful to me to be able to share my stories with my grandpa.

Unlike the other student here who mentioned Spanish as an extra barrier that might have helped her feel more comfortable sharing her story, this student (and several others) pointed to the extra stress that speaking in a second language normally adds to their presentations. While as a language teacher I value the importance of providing opportunities for students to practice their speaking and I also think practicing presentation and public speaking skills are an essential component of the curriculum, the students cited here make it clear that having the option to practice their second language through a written presentation was critical in balancing their willingness and ability to share meaningful stories that fostered the new connections they were able to make with their classmates. In this regard, technologies such as PowerPoint, Google Slides, and even YouTube that students used to link to music that would play in the background of their presentations were key in facilitating the deeply personal storytelling that occurred in this project.

Technology provides new formats for emotional connection. In addition to being able to share personal stories in more comfortable ways, several students also pointed to the ways in which the technology-based presentations helped them make a stronger emotional connection to the story. As students were required to have some sort of audio component to make their presentations more engaging, those that chose not to read their stories out loud included background music that played during their presentations. As one student reflected, "Some people chose to read, […] and theirs were good, but the music that others had made the story more emotional. I could feel the emotions of the author whenever the music was playing." Similarly, another student wrote:

> The music they used affected how I listened to a story. If the music was sad, I became really interested because the sad stories to me are more interesting. If they didn't have music, it was harder for me to pay attention and listen to their stories. I think the music helps to draw me in.

As suggested here, the music not only engaged listeners' emotions and increased their interest in the story, but several students also reflected on the ways that music was more powerful when it matched the tone of the story. Along these lines, another student reflected:

> Most of my classmates had the same idea that I had, which was to use a PowerPoint with a song in the background for their presentation. These PowerPoints, along with their song choices gave their presentations a more organized tone, which caused me to get hooked into each presentation, because I got sense the passion each student had as they wrote their project, especially when the audio related to the project itself.

This student suggested that audio that related to the tone of the story increased his engagement and helped him "sense the passion" from the perspective of the storyteller. Similarly, others reflected that reading a sad story while listening to upbeat music made the story more difficult to understand and left them feeling more disconnected.

In addition to music, other students reflected similarly on the use of photos. As one student wrote:

> [My classmate] met Barack Obama…that is awesome. I think there are certain things in everyone's presentation that made it really good. For [that student], it was definitely the pictures because you could see the happiness in his face when Obama was talking to him. There are so many emotions that can be captured just by the pictures that people chose to put on their slides.

The language these students used points to the ways in which their emotional engagement in the story helped them to take on the perspective of their classmates, referring to the passion the storyteller had as they wrote the project, or seeing the happiness on the storyteller's face. As discussed in chapter four, these quotes include specific references regarding the way students' increased emotional investment in the stories of their classmates helped them be more interested and create stronger connections to the perspectives of the storytellers. Notably, though, these students make clear connections to the ways in which technology that allows them to include music and photos helps to increase their emotional involvement while listening to the story. Technologies that help to clarify or exemplify the emotional perspective of the storyteller also serve to more thoroughly engage the emotions of the listener, creating a stronger connection that leads to perspective-taking and emotional understanding, two of the key attributes of empathy.

Technology makes stories easier to understand. In a similar pattern, a large number of students also reflected on the ways that music and photos helped make their classmates' stories easier for them to understand. This is particularly informative for stories told in a non-native language - as students in this study were still working to learn Spanish, presenting and listening to stories in Spanish adds a basic comprehension challenge. To this end, music and photos not only helped engage students' emotions, but several also reflected on the ways they helped increase their comprehension. One student wrote:

> I think their choice of presentations and music helped me better understand their story. The type of music helps show the way they felt about the situation and kind of helped when imagining their stories. The presentation was a great way to explain their story because the pictures were able to provide a visual to the words that were on the screen and helped it play out like a movie.

In reflecting on the format of the presentations, this student referred to the role of both music and photos in increasing his understanding of his classmates' stories. In line with the literature, he refers to the process of "imagining their stories," suggesting a move toward perspective-taking that would lead to an empathetic understanding of the story. With the combination of music and photos, this student seems to have pointed to the immersive quality of the presentation – appealing to a variety of senses increased both content-based and emotional understanding of these presentations. Taken together, these responses about music and photos indicate that technologies that move toward even basic levels of immersion through the inclusion of audio and visual representations increase both cognitive and affective means of understanding the storyteller's perspective.

Student learning preferences. As indicated in chapter five, student reflections on the format of the digital storytelling projects also included the important reminder that not all students work based on the same set of preferences and needs. Though most students chose to present their stories with PowerPoint or Google Slides and use music as an audio track, a few students chose different formats that included reading their story out loud, either from slides, from a poster, with photos that were passed around the classroom, or even from a handmade storybook. In response to these types of presentations, one student reflected:

> I was less focused on the story when it was just music. The ones where people read theirs had a bigger impact than the ones that just had music. [One person] had a poster board and I thought that was cool. I was able to focus on it more because it stood out more. When you watch fifteen slides with sad music in the background it gets a little repetitive.

Unlike the many students who suggested that music helped them understand and relate to the stories their classmates told, this student claims that the music was repetitive and, perhaps, distracting from the story. For him, hearing the story read out loud was easier to focus on. A few other students also reflected that hearing students' voices and seeing their pictures on a poster or a in a book made the presentation feel more personal. From these results, we see the contradictory ways in which the disconnected nature of technology can make it easier to share and understand stories for some people, but may also prevent authentic connection for others. This complex pattern is discussed more thoroughly at the end of this chapter.

Finally, one student wrote:

> The only issue that I have encountered with story-telling or with the methods I used is that it doesn't always support all types of learners. And most presentations only work for learners who learn via audio or visual aid and hurt the people who learn the best by a hands-on experience.

Though many students pointed to the nearly immersive quality of the audio and visual input from slides presentations that helped them understand and connect to their classmates' stories, this student suggests that these forms of input still may not meet the needs of all learners. For some students, a more first-hand or hands-on experience is required in order to make cognitive and affective connections to content. It is particularly informative for this study to know if even more immersive learning environments, like virtual reality videos, might approach the kind of hands-on learning that would meet these needs. This question is explored more fully later in this chapter in the section that describes students' emotional understanding of the NYT VR videos, including additional input from the student who suggested needing a hands-on experience.

In a consideration of the role of technology in developing empathy, student responses to the personal digital storytelling project demonstrate a few key themes. First, technology makes it easier to share more personal stories in situations that are typically vulnerable or even anxiety-inducing. Second, technology provides formats for sharing these stories in ways that create more emotional connection through the inclusion of additional input through music and photos. Third, this additional input can make stories easier to understand, even across cultural or linguistic barriers. Fourth, however, these technologies do not automatically lead to the same results for all students. While many student reflections indicated promising outcomes from the technology-based presentation of personal stories, contrasting responses from another small group of students indicates the importance of choice that can help accommodate the preferences and learning needs of all students.

Aztec ruins virtual reality reflection. As suggested from student responses to their classmates' personal digital storytelling presentations, technologies that allow for strong emotional connections are key in moving toward perspective-taking and empathy building. As most students pointed to the role of music and photos in approaching immersion in the storyteller's own emotions and perspectives, it is especially informative to examine the outcomes of technologies that are more immersive. This section, therefore, includes data from student reflections on their "virtual fieldtrip" to Aztec and Mayan ruins using Google Expeditions. Though fully immersive, these fieldtrips only allowed students to experience a 360-degree view of static images. Students could move their heads to view the entire image around them as if they were standing in the middle of the historical site, but the scene didn't change until it was intentionally advanced by the person leading the expedition. In terms of immersion, these virtual fieldtrips were more immersive than the PowerPoint or Google Slides presentations used by

students in their personal story presentations, but less immersive than the NYT VR videos discussed later in that they included silent images rather than the video and audio in the NYT VR. It is informative, therefore, to compare student responses based on these levels of immersion in order to understand whether immersive technologies can lead to more empathetic responses.

In regard to these virtual field trips, student reflections are described below in alignment with the four attributes of empathy. First, students indicated that they were easily able to move toward perspective-taking in this activity, highlighting the ability of the immersive images to aid in the imaginative process of putting themselves into another's perspective. Second, unlike in their reflections on classmates' presentations, however, students made no explicit reference to any emotional connection they developed through viewing these immersive images of Aztec and Maya ruins. Third, while many of their reflections included a non-judgmental recitation of the cultural information they learned from this activity, most of this information seemed to come from my historical instruction rather than from the immersive virtual expedition. Finally, in reflecting on a comparison between viewing these virtual sites and hearing a firsthand story like they did in their classmates' presentation, a new key theme emerged regarding the trustworthiness of stories. Students revealed contradictory thoughts regarding our ability to believe a story, with some students favoring the authenticity of viewing the sites in a virtual "firsthand" experience but no narration, and others suggesting they were more likely to believe the word-of-mouth stories of these sites passed down through generations. These complex and contradictory responses are key in considering the role of technology and trustworthy narration, particularly in the "post-truth" era of "fake news."

Attribute one: Perspective-taking. Drawing on a key theme from literature on empathy, most students reflected on the ways their virtual field trip to Aztec and Mayan ruins helped them imagine the experiences of these ancient people, almost as if the students had lived through it themselves. One student said "When you visit these sites, you get to see, firsthand, where these people lived. The buildings tell their story. You can just look and imagine the way they lived." This student, along with many others, equated his experience viewing these sites through virtual reality with the" experience of seeing them "firsthand, suggesting the strong immersive quality of the activity. Similarly, another student reflected:

> When you visit these sites, it is almost like you were a part of that culture. You get to experience almost the same things they did when their buildings are still standing. Even though we are in much different times/circumstances, we can still feel the culture that once was there.

In addition to imagination, this student makes a reference to the way this immersive experience helped her create a connection to the culture of the Aztec and Mayan people across barriers of time and lifestyle. Her claim that she experienced "almost the same things they did" points again to the power of immersion in these sites, suggesting that offloading the work of imagination to the technology itself may make it easier to create connection across difference.

In a comparison between viewing the sites and reading about the Mayan and Aztec cultures, another student wrote that "By just reading these stories you don't really get to feel what happened at these places. You can almost feel the connection as you visit the sites." Like the others quoted here, this student points to the power of the immersive experience of virtual reality in helping to "feel the connection" to the people who lived on these sites and the experiences they lived there. Overall, most students' reflections on these virtual fieldtrips pointed to their attempts to move toward perspective-taking, both through their ability to imagine and to

create connections across difference in ways that were perhaps easier than simply hearing stories. Much like the influence of the music and photos from their classmates' presentations, student responses indicate that technologies that can more fully immerse them in the experiences of another person can more easily help them move toward perspective-taking.

Attribute two: Understanding emotions. Unlike in their response to their classmates' presentations, however, student reflections on their virtual fieldtrips included no explicit reference to emotional connection. Notably, these virtual fieldtrips immersed students in scenes of Mayan and Aztec ruins, but there was no narration or mention of the people themselves. While students indicated that immersion in these scenes helped them understand the experiences of the people who lived there, the lack of personal, emotional input from or about the Mayan and Aztec people resulted in an entirely non-emotional response. While students reflected strongly on the emotional connections they felt with classmates after hearing their personal stories, this same emotional connection was not present even in a more immersive environment. It stands to reason, then, that understanding the emotions of the people represented in a story may require at least some level of emotional input from those stories. Achieving this second attribute of empathy, therefore, necessitates not just immersion into the experiences and perspectives of another person, but also into their own emotional response to these experiences.

Attributes three and four: Communication of non-judgmental responses. Part of students' reflections on their virtual fieldtrip to Aztec and Mayan ruins included a general summary of what they learned from the experience. In response, most students listed a variety of facts based on their observation of the sites or the explicit cultural instruction I gave them preceding the virtual fieldtrips. These lists included observations regarding the typical pyramid-like structures and the artistic representations of warriors and animals that were common at each

site, as well as the simple recitation of other cultural information, such as the practice of human sacrifice, the creation of the Mayan calendar, the belief in multiple gods, and the reliance on agriculture as a means of survival. Though not particularly informative in terms of perspective-taking or emotional understanding, these factual lists did demonstrate a key facet of non-judgmental response. It seems that when I provided this basic cultural information to students in a judgment-free, fact-based manner, they also recited it back to me upon request in a similar, non-judgmental way. Though the cultural attributes of these people – particular in terms of some of their religious beliefs and practices – are drastically different from students' own perspectives and experiences, they did not respond to these differences with a strong sense of judgment or of connection. Instead, their responses suggest that neutral, fact-based input on other people – even those that do not overlap or connect to students' own lives – can lead to a neutral, fact-based understanding of those people and their perspectives. This sort of informative approach to difference is particularly essential in considering learning about people who are marginalized or oppressed, as those experiences are also likely very different from the experiences of these students. Additionally, neutral or non-judgmental stories about people who are marginalized may not be the norm in the social media-heavy consumption of news. Understanding the ways in which factual presentation of cultural practices and perspectives can lead to a neutral understanding of others' experiences is a key finding in this study.

Trustworthiness of stories. In reflecting on the similarities and differences between hearing stories about the Aztecs and Mayans and viewing their ruins in a virtual fieldtrip, students responded in two contradictory patterns. Several students who suggested that the immersive VR experience helped them imagine the lifestyles of the people who lived at these

sites also questioned whether this imaginative process revealed trustworthy information. One student wrote the following about viewing the sites and hearing stories:

> They are different because viewing a place doesn't give you exact details. You can take guesses, like who used to live there and what the culture was like, but you don't know exact details. Whereas in a story that you are hearing or telling, you have exact details so you know what to imagine.

Similarly, another student reflected that "Viewing a place doesn't give you all the details. You would have to guess compared to a story where it gives you all the details." These students aptly pointed to a flaw in the imaginative process of perspective-taking in that we may be guessing or making incorrect assumptions as we create information or perspectives for ourselves. This flaw is likely present in an activity like these virtual fieldtrips, as the immersive experience did not include any historical information and, in particular, did not include any first-person perspectives of the Aztec or Mayan people who lived at these sites. Without narrative information to guide these experiences, students were able to observe basic facts about the buildings and to imagine what it might have been like to live there, but, as many of them pointed out, these observations are based on inferences that might not be true. It seems troubling, though, that the two students quoted here assume that stories include "exact details" or "all the details" about what happened in a particular place or time. Toward this end, one of the next activities in the unit included an intentional attempt to encourage students to think about the way that stories – even those presented as historical fact – may be biased toward particular perspectives. Student reflections from this activity on biases in the presentation of historical information about the downfall of the Aztecs at the hands of Hernán Cortés were discussed in chapter four.

On the other side of this discussion, several students also claimed that viewing the sites leads to a more authentic understanding of what happened there than hearing a story would. One

student wrote that "The sites are also firsthand and the stories are passed down and could not be accurate." Similarly, another suggested that "Stories sometimes are exaggerated or false." While this awareness of potential inaccuracies of stories – both intentional exaggeration or the natural progression of change as information is passed on – is key to the sort of learning that would encourage authentic perspective-taking, the assumption that we could understand the experiences or perspectives of others without hearing directly from their point of view is equally as troubling. The move toward perspective-taking at the foundation of empathy requires an attempt to put oneself into the experiences of another and to understand their emotions from *their* perspective – this is an impossible task without input that directly illustrates those experiences and emotions from that person's point of view.

It is worth noting that two students pointed out the difficulties in perspective-taking both from hearing stories and viewing the sites of these Aztec and Mayan ruins. One of them wrote:

> [Telling stories] is different [from viewing sites] because we are not certain if these stories are even close to true. When we hear stories from other people we know that for the most part they are true although it could change over time from the original. However looking at these sites we get to let our imagination free and think all on our own of the stories and things that occurred there.

Unlike those cited above, this student suggests problems with trustworthiness both from stories that are passed down and from the imaginative process of creating these stories from our own perspectives. Similarly, another student reflected that "[Viewing the sites] is similar to telling stories because their history is passed down somewhat by word of mouth. We don't know exactly how they lived, so we have to make some inferences." He suggests that both processes – hearing stories and viewing the sites without additional information – require us to make our own inferences about what might have actually occurred. This critical approach toward evaluating information we hear in any form is essential in moving toward authentic perspective-

taking. However, left unchecked, the tendency not to trust anything could equally hinder perspective-taking and empathy-building.

This virtual field trip activity was informative toward understanding how virtual reality may influence students' abilities to move toward perspective-taking. From these reflections, it seems that combining the factual information students received with the virtual fieldtrips to the sites where those factual events occurred would be well-suited to engaging students' capacities for empathy. Including both the cognitive, factual input of new experiences with a more affective, immersive, near firsthand experience of visiting these virtual sites would draw both on non-judgmental understanding and the emotional connections that move toward authentic perspective-taking. In serving as an intermediate level of immersion between reading stories or watching them in a PowerPoint presentation and viewing them in a fully-immersive virtual reality video with narration, student reflections illuminated the ways in which the immersive quality of the virtual fieldtrips allowed them to more easily imagine the experiences of the people who lived there. Ultimately, though, the lack of stories or other direct input from those people seems to have mitigated the authenticity of perspective-taking, and also led to an absolute absence of emotional connection to those perspectives. While the connection between immersion and perspective-taking is an important consideration, the strong influence of emotional understanding that students developed by hearing the personal perspectives in their classmates' stories remains a key component of empathy-building. It seems, then, that immersion in the sites that shape the context of another's experience, combined with factual, non-judgmental information as well as that person's input on their experiences and emotional responses, would be a powerful means of approaching the move toward authentic perspective-taking and emotional understanding required for building empathy. Future research, therefore, must

continue to work toward developing educational technologies that can combine fact-based content material with opportunities for immersion in new perspectives and experiences.

Aztec legend of Quetzalcoatl reflection. As viewing virtual reality representations of Aztec and Mayan ruins wasn't effective on its own for moving toward perspective-taking and emotional understanding, the next activity students completed involved reading the legend of Quetzalcoatl that more directly depicts some of the practices and perspectives of the Aztecs. As this legend was narrated in third-person about the Aztecs rather than from their own perspective, student reflections on this activity did not indicate any level of emotional understanding or connection. Much like the results from the virtual fieldtrips described in the previous section, student responses often indicated a cognitive understanding of Aztec experiences and perspectives and these responses were communicated in very factual, non-judgmental ways. Several students reflected on what they learned about the Aztecs through reading the legend, saying things like "It helped me see they weren't as ruthless as I imagined with their human sacrifices." This response in particular suggests the importance of balancing the imaginative process of perspective-taking with direct input about those perspectives. While this student had learned that the Aztecs conducted human sacrifices and then seen the sites where these occurred, she indicates that, without hearing about these practices in a more neutral way, she imagined that they were "ruthless." Though she doesn't state that she now understands the practice to the extreme of taking it on herself, her characterization as "not as ruthless" suggests a move toward understanding the perspectives of the people who practiced it.

Similarly, another student wrote:

> It tells me they weren't heartless monsters. For example, I thought they did human sacrifices because of the god's will. Now I kind of see it as them following in their gods' footsteps. Since most of the Aztec and Mayan gods at the time glorified sacrifices, it's natural that the Aztecs and Mayans would, too. The story

> also made me realize we're similar to them in a way of living. They aren't just warriors that made sacrifices to gods but they were civilized and did things like we do.

This student's response indicates an even clearer move toward perspective-taking, as he suggests that his own understanding of why they conducted human sacrifice has now been replaced with a recognition of this practice as a "natural" outcome of their religious beliefs. That he suggests this was natural for the Aztec and Mayan cultures indicates not only a move to perspective-taking, but also a non-judgmental response to these practices. As he characterized his previous consideration of these cultures with the phrase "heartless monsters," his description of the ways in which his understanding changed through hearing some of their own perspectives in the legend indicates a less judgmental and more understanding response. Furthermore, this student also demonstrates a clear attempt to make connection across these drastic cultural differences. He admits difference in their cultural and religious practices of war and human sacrifice, but also explains that they "were civilized and did things like we do." The lack of judgment and attempt to create connection point to this student's move toward perspective-taking in response to reading the legend of Quetzalcoatl.

While several student reflections indicated similar trends in the cognitive components of perspective-taking and non-judgmental response to different cultural practices, student responses to this activity overwhelmingly lacked the personal, emotional, passionate connection they had to their classmates' stories. While some of this lack of connection undoubtedly stems from their literal lack of connection to the Aztecs (as many students suggested that stories mattered to them more when they had shared experiences or knew the storyteller personally), it is also clear that the lack of emotional content in this legend effected students' emotional responses. The immersive quality of the virtual fieldtrip to Aztec and Mayan ruins allowed students to imagine

the experiences of these people and the legend provided the cognitive information that helped to inform these perspectives in non-judgmental ways, but the lack of emotional connection indicates an overall lack of empathetic responses. A key finding of this study, therefore, is that emotional input that depicts peoples' own responses to their experiences is a key component of fostering the emotional understanding of and connection to those experiences that would build empathy in others.

NYT VR videos. It seems that virtual reality videos that not only immerse students in the contextual scenes of others' experiences but also provide first-person input on the perspectives and emotions that have developed from those experiences would lead to the development of empathy toward those people. Drawing on earlier key findings from this study, the immersive quality of music and images helped students more easily and clearly imagine others' experiences, while sensing the emotions that accompanied those experiences through music, tone of voice, or explicit reference helped them create strong emotional connections. Furthermore, the factual presentation of information supported students' non-judgmental cognitive understanding of others' perspectives. Taken together, virtual reality videos that immerse students in the context of another person's experience, combined with factual and emotional narration, create promising potential for allowing students to develop empathy for people whose experiences they do not share.

After having the opportunity to view such videos, data from brainstorming worksheets, presentations, and reflections discussed below indicate that student responses more strongly aligned with all four literature-based attributes of empathy than in any of the other activities described in this study. First, their responses to the NYT VR videos they watched demonstrated a clear move toward perspective-taking, despite the inherent lack of shared experiences with the

people and perspectives portrayed in the videos. Several of these responses also made explicit reference to the ways the virtual reality helped them make this move. Second, most students reported strong emotional responses to the videos and their classmates' presentations. Notably, many of these emotional responses moved beyond pity for the people in the story and toward an understanding of the emotions of those people. Students reported that this emotional understanding came from the power of a near firsthand experience with the storytellers and the clarity with which they could sense their emotions. Third, the communication of students' nonjudgmental responses to these experiences and perspectives occurred through the sensitive and careful way in which they retold these stories of oppression or marginalization to their classmates. Finally, almost all student responses indicated that the development of an empathetic response to these stories led them to a desire to want to work to change the situations that allowed them to happen. Knowing how to take steps to make these changes, however, is a difficult task, and one that students struggled with in response to hearing all these stories. Data that demonstrates each of these components of an empathetic response to the NYT VR videos depicting perspectives of marginalization or oppression are explored in the following sections.

Attribute one: Perspective-taking. The videos that students chose to watch portrayed stories to which the students participating in this study likely wouldn't have thought they could relate. Given students' previous focus on the need to relate through shared experiences in order to build empathy, I sought to encourage a move toward perspective-taking through a consideration of ways they might be able to relate. Immediately after watching the video they chose, students completed a brainstorming worksheet that asked them to list what kind of experiences they shared with the person in the story, and which experiences from the video were new to the students. In answering these questions, students connected the story of an Ebola

survivor in Liberia who credited her survival to her religious faith to both their personal experience with having lost loved ones to illness and relying on their own religious faith in difficult times. Other students who watched the story of children traveling long distances to visit their fathers in jail reflected on their own experiences traveling to see family members they couldn't see very often. Some connected children born to incarcerated women who spend their first three years of life in prison daycares to their experiences growing up in daycare, and others tried to connect to families displaced from their villages by terrorist violence through their own understanding of fear and loss.

It is important to clarify that my attempt to encourage students to describe these similar experiences was not intended to trivialize the perspectives of marginalization and oppression portrayed in these stories or to minimize the impacts of these experiences. I was not asking students to demonstrate that they could fully relate, nor was I encouraging them to assume they fully understood the experiences described in these stories. Instead, my goal was to encourage students to take the first step in moving toward perspective taking – in *trying* to create connection across difference. As demonstrated in previous results, some students suggested it may not even be worth listening to others' stories if they assumed they couldn't relate. The goal of this brainstorming activity, then, was to encourage students to lower the threshold of relation to give them a means of accessing the story in a more personal way. Following this attempt at connection with the brainstorming question that asked students to list experiences from the story that were new to them helped them to maintain their understanding of the true difference of their experiences. In accordance with the literature on maintaining self-other differentiation (Coplan, 2011), this activity sought to frame students' first responses to these stories of marginalization

and oppression in terms of an attempt to create connection across difference rather than assuming complete separation. As one student reflected:

> I built empathy for the kids who were growing up in jail, even though I can hardly imagine that experience. But I know what it's like to go to daycare and also to be separated from family when you don't want to be. I know how it feels to be alone.

This student, like many others, demonstrated his understanding of vast difference – he says he can hardly imagine growing up in jail, acknowledging that his experiences are very dissimilar. On the other hand, he claims that he developed empathy for these children through both a cognitive understanding of experiences like daycare and family separation and an affective understanding of feeling alone. Like this student, most others were able to create at least a small means of connecting to the experiences in the story through similar forms of cognitive or affective understanding.

Five of the 77 participants wrote that they had no shared experiences with the people whose stories were portrayed the virtual reality videos. It is difficult to measure this response in terms of growth or a shift in this perspective throughout the unit because there are no data from earlier activities that explicitly asked students to relate to others' perspectives. While it is a small portion of participants, it is still a critical reminder that activities that lead to certain results for most students don't necessarily lead to predictable outcomes for all students. Considering methods for designing activities that guide particular ways of thinking that could lead to similar outcomes for all students must be a critical component of future research on teaching empathy.

Beyond this guided move toward perspective-taking in response to the NYT VR videos, several students reflected on the specific ways that the technology itself contributed to their ability to understand these new experiences. One student explained that he was able to watch the video in full virtual reality with the VR goggles and said "it really helped give an understanding

of what that family was going through." Another student reflected that "the video also pictured their hardships and helped me put myself in their shoes," and another suggested she felt she was able to experience the story "like how you would in real life." The ideas of putting oneself in another's shoes or having a "real life" experience point clearly to a shift from a cognitive understanding of others' perspectives toward the practice of taking on that perspective. These students demonstrated not only a factual recitation of others' stories, but also suggested that the immersive nature of the videos helped them to put themselves directly into those stories and to experience them more directly. As one student stated, "other than being there this was the best way to experience it." These data demonstrate that immersive technologies are useful in shifting beyond an understanding of difference and toward an actual move to experiencing others' perspectives.

Attribute two: Understanding emotions. Another component of the brainstorming activity that guided students' initial responses to the NYT VR videos asked them to record their personal reaction to the story. 55 of these reactions included some sort of emotional response, with most of these indicating that students felt sad in response to the story. Unlike in earlier activities, however, most of these responses were not characterized by pity or feeling sad about the story, but rather by an understanding of the emotions of the storytellers. One student reflected that "To be able to hear the despair in the voice of the victims who spoke was very impactful." As suggested in previous activities, this student demonstrates that hearing first-person perspectives that illustrate the emotions of the storyteller often elicits a powerful emotional response from the listener. Similarly, another student wrote:

> The video let me see everything these kids have experienced. Even though I haven't been in their situation I got to see it. Seeing the places and hearing their voices and emotions makes the story even more real and emotional.

Both of these students demonstrate that seeing and hearing directly from the storytellers lead to strong cognitive and affective understanding of their experiences and emotions. These VR videos allowed them to see the places and situations that shape their experiences, similar to the virtual fieldtrips described in the previous section. Notably, though, these students point to the importance of hearing the voices and emotions of the storytellers in forming their own emotional responses to the stories. It seems that these students don't just feel bad for the storytellers, but rather are demonstrating responses in kind with the emotions portrayed in the stories.

Furthermore, as discussed in chapter four, this emotional understanding creates another means of connecting to the story. As one student reflected, "Even though I couldn't relate to what's happening to them, I could relate to them emotionally." Basic emotional understanding is a key means of lowering the threshold of relating to stories, so it seems that stories that more clearly display the emotions of the storyteller in powerful ways would make it easier for students to relate. One student quoted earlier in response to hearing his classmates' personal story presentations suggested that the technology used for those presentations didn't meet the "hands-on" learning needs of all students. While he claimed that the music and photos from his classmates' presentations didn't help him connect to their stories, he did report a strong emotional connection to the NYT VR video he watched. While this doesn't mean that VR videos meet the learning preferences and needs of all students, it does perhaps suggest that the full immersion into the emotional perspectives of another person may be more likely to foster emotional understanding and connection than other less immersive technologies. Taken together, these student responses demonstrate that the immersive quality of these VR videos leads to the development of empathetic responses because it encourages cognitive and affective means of understanding. Immersion in these new perspectives allows them to more directly engage with

the both the factual situations and the emotions of the storyteller, leading more easily toward the perspective-taking and emotional understanding required for developing empathy.

Attributes three and four: Communication of non-judgmental responses. After watching VR videos from the New York Times and reflecting individually, students retold the stories they watched in a small-group presentation to the class. By design, the videos that students could choose to watch told stories of experiences that were not only likely unfamiliar to them, but also that represented a perspective of marginalization or oppression based on class, race, nationality, immigration status, ability, gender, or sexual identity. Given both the lack of shared experience and the historical and current trends of marginalizing these groups and their perspectives, it seems that the potential for a judgmental response to these stories would have been strong. Three students wrote answers in the brainstorming activity that may have indicated a certain kind of judgment in response to the stories they watched. When asked what kind of action the story might incite, one student wrote "don't become a drug addict and do what's best for your children." The video she watched told the story of a woman in Brazil who gave birth to a baby with Zika. Though the mother's previous drug addiction was mentioned in the story, most of the video focused on her dedication to the medical care of her child and her own journey to recovery. While this student and her group successfully presented all these components of the story to the rest of the class, the notion that her initial response regarding future action was to avoid becoming a drug addict was disconcerting. While this was undeniably a powerful part of the moral message of the video, this response does not seem to represent the kind of social justice-oriented actions that would meet the goals of civic learning. Furthermore, it also suggests that this student was not successful in taking on the perspectives of the storyteller. If she were, her thoughts regarding the actions in response to the story might have focused more on changing

the situation that led to this woman's story, rather than considering how the student could avoid that situation for herself.

Similarly, another student suggested that the action resulting from his story about children who spend their first three years of life with their mothers in prison was to avoid going to prison. While this student's initial response was similar to the one quoted above, his thinking ultimately changed in an important way. In my field notes from the day this class watched their NYT VR videos, I recorded the following reflection regarding this student and his presentation partner:

> [These students] asked a lot of questions about the brainstorming worksheet – they struggled to come up with shared experiences and the action they were talking about was not to go to prison. I asked them if they felt like the story was more about the children or their mothers and they agreed that it focused primarily on the children. They felt it was unfair that the kids were in prison just because their mothers were. We talked about the way the video describes the benefits of mother/child interaction and they agreed that the daycare actually seemed like a pretty normal way to grow up. I pushed harder to ask if they learned anything about the mothers. They said no, so I reminded them that most of the VR videos also had written NYT articles that told more of the story. [This student] read the article about growing up in prison – while reading he said "That's sad. She says I didn't do anything illegal and now my child is paying for it." I asked him if he thought it was possible that other mothers felt this way – [he and his partner] said yes. After considering this new perspective from the mothers, I asked again what kind of actions they could think of. [His partner] suggested donating money to the prison to help make the daycare even better, and [this student] said he wished there was something "bigger" he could do that would have helped to keep this mother out of prison to begin with.

In a big shift from his initial response, this exchange indicates a clear move toward perspective-taking – not just of the children who grow up in jail, but of their mothers who may not deserve to be there but are doing their best to care for their kids. Thinking about changing the "big picture" that might have resulted in an innocent pregnant woman raising her child in prison is much more aligned with the ideas of social justice and democracy that characterize civic learning goals.

Even more importantly, this shift in thinking also demonstrates a sort of removal of judgment. While this student's initial response suggested to avoid going to jail, by learning more about this particular mother, his judgment of her actions shifted toward an understanding of her perspective that led him to want to help her rather than blame her. This exchange reiterates the key finding that opportunities to directly address and guide student thinking are critical in civic learning. Through a brief exchange, I was able to encourage this student and his partner to dig deeper into the story to move toward perspective-taking in a way that eliminated judgment rather than allowing him to terminate his response at blame or pity.

Aside from these few examples of responses that seemed to judge or blame the storytellers for the situation described in their stories, most students reflected on and presented these stories with sensitivity and care. As demonstrated in results from other activities, the factual presentation of the context of these stories resulted in a factual retelling in students' presentations. Furthermore, the immersive quality of these VR videos seemed to foster strong emotional understanding between students and storytellers, leading to the kind of response that understands and accepts the perspectives of the storyteller rather than judging them. This was evidenced in student presentations around potentially contentious issues like illegal immigration. One group watched a story about an undocumented woman who had been caught using fake identification documents after living in the US with her husband for twenty years. She had been fighting a case to reverse her deportation order and maintaining her regular check-ins for eight years, but was afraid that her upcoming check-in might result in immediate deportation and separation from her husband and three children under new direction from the Presidential administration. At the time of the video, she was seeking sanctuary in a church basement. While students might have responded to the story with judgment regarding this woman's undocumented

entry into the United States or the illegal activity that led to the threat of deportation, instead, their presentation focused on her strength and love for her family that led her to risk her own life to give them better opportunities. Their reactions to the story included feeling "very sad because her family did not deserve this situation," and the actions they reflected on included changing the way that immigrants can "come and feel safe in the United States." Both their presentation and written reflections, like those of most other students, indicated a strong understanding of the perspectives and emotions portrayed in the story that resulted in a non-judgmental retelling of the story.

Civic engagement. Notably, in many cases the non-judgmental understanding of the perspectives and emotions expressed in these NYT VR videos also led to a more nuanced understanding of civic action that could result from hearing the stories. From two of the examples above, students who were fully immersed in the perspective of the storytellers suggested actions that pointed toward change at systemic levels, like reforming the criminal justice system or immigration process. When students initially began considering the actions that result from hearing other peoples' stories, they focused heavily on the personal benefits they could gain through learning lessons, avoiding the mistakes that others have made, or even feeling more grateful for having avoided some of the tragic things that they hear about in other people's stories. Through guidance in our in-class discussion on empathy, I encouraged students to reflect more on the kind of actions that are focused on helping the storytellers rather than helping themselves. In this final storytelling activity, students were prompted again to consider the actions that could result from watching these VR videos that depicted experiences and perspectives of marginalization and oppression. From student reflections and presentations, I coded 84 responses that connected their emotional understanding and response to the story to

some kind of civic action, including key patterns like raising awareness of these stories, donating money, giving resources to help people who are suffering, volunteering to help, or working to make change.

Most overwhelmingly, though, was the feeling that students *wanted* to help, but didn't know how. As one student reflected:

> Through all the stories, I feel that I learned something about each person and built an emotional connection. There were many I built a response to and wanted to help take action, however, I'm not sure how. For example, with the story about communities with ebola, I know I could volunteer, but I feel so uninspired because I'm too young and it's difficult to imagine making a notable difference from across the world.

This student illustrates a common pattern from many other responses – though they wanted to take action, they felt incapable of doing so. Sometimes, like in this response, students felt that they were too young to take action on their own or that their voices or actions wouldn't matter if they were discredited because of their age. Other students felt they couldn't act because they didn't have their own resources to give. A third, large group of students suggested that they didn't know how to respond because they felt overwhelmed by the number of problems that need to be addressed. This trend toward "compassion fatigue" is discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter, as it was also a pattern that emerged from in-class discussions on technology.

Ultimately, students' reflections on taking action in response to hearing stories of oppression and marginalization demonstrate a few key findings from this study. First, there is a strong connection between stories that elicit powerful emotional understanding and responsive civic engagement. Students who were able to connect to the emotions of the storytellers seemed more able to take on their perspectives, which led them to want to act. Second, while emotional

engagement in stories may lead to a strong desire to act, it does not automatically result in a cognitive understanding of how to act. Though almost all students reported wanting to do something to help the people in the NYT VR videos they watched, nearly all of them also reflected on not knowing how to do it. Much of this inability to act seemed to stem from the idea that students were not capable of effecting change. It follows that future research should also seek to understand how we can follow the desire to take action with guided input on ways that young people can work toward the socially just democratic goals of civic learning. The desire these students expressed to work for change suggests that they would have responded positively to a constructive opportunity to partake in these actions. Though that opportunity was outside the time restraints of this particular study, it should be a key component of future research that seeks to engage students in civic action.

Technology and empathy in their own words. After observing and reflecting on the way students' behaviors, speech, and writing demonstrated attributes of empathy across a variety of technologies, this study concluded with a final in-class discussion on technology and empathy. I asked students to think about the ways they personally use technology, how it allows them to tell and hear stories, if it allows them to learn about others, to create emotional connections, and if it inspires them to act. At the end of the discussion, I asked students if they thought they *could* use technology to do those things, and how the technology or their uses of it would have to change. In some classes this line of questioning also resulted in a brief discussion of the practicality of teaching about technology use and empathy in schools. Overall, student thoughts about technology use reflected many of the contradictory themes described in literature – anonymity can help make it safer and easier to connect to others, but it can also make us feel disconnected or encourage us to share too much; technology provides space for careful,

thoughtful, and emotional discussion that can eliminate the pressure of face-to-face judgment, but it also increases exposure to so much emotional discussion that it can be difficult to maintain individual opinions and this over-exposure might result in compassion fatigue. Finally, in some ways technology makes it easier to participate in civic engagement, but in other ways it is "all talk."

Ultimately, students suggested that technologies that allow for sharing authentic stories that lead to emotional connection and action already exist, but that taking advantage of these possibilities requires re-thinking the way we use those technologies. When pushed, students were hesitant to believe that people *would* choose to use technology this way. After reflecting on the data from this discussion for several months, I began to wonder what part the school setting played in developing a relatively pessimistic outlook toward technology. In the fall of 2018, I worked with a former colleague who was currently teaching many of the students who had participated in the study during the previous spring semester. I sent a follow-up question to my colleague to share with those students, who then had the option to email me directly in response. The question asked students to share their thoughts on what they had learned about technology from school (Appendix R). While a few students reflected relatively neutrally on the technology-based skills they had learned and three of them clearly indicated positive responses toward this learning, 23 of 28 respondents indicated feeling that the messages they learned about technology from school were primarily negative. Given the results from other sections of this study indicating that students' thoughts on ideas beyond core academic content, like empathy and civic engagement, can be directly influenced by input from teachers, understanding the ways in which we might shift the stories we tell about technology in schools must be a key consideration of

future research. Each of these results from the in-class discussion and follow-up question on technology in schools is discussed below.

Anonymity on the internet. In thinking about using technology to tell and hear the kind of first-person, emotional stories that helped students build empathy in the NYT VR video activity, many students pointed to a few key benefits of anonymity. First, several students recognized the ways that anonymity makes it easier and safer to share personal stories. One student said:

> Sometimes it could be good, though, because like you take a look at people that might not be fully confident in sharing their story, 'cuz, you know it might be a big risk for the, they might be put in danger for telling it, like, um like a rape victim, or someone that's a victim of domestic abuse or something, like maybe they're still in that situation but they want to tell their story to help other people but it kind of allows people to be anonymous with it.

As suggested here, the anonymity provided by telling stories in digital spaces can create forums that are much safer for people who may not be comfortable or able to share their stories otherwise.

In a similar vein, another student pointed not only to the ease of sharing that comes from anonymity online, but also the ways in which these spaces provide more time for careful self-expression than face-to-face exchanges. He said:

> If you're the one who's telling the story using technology I think it's a lot easier to kind of really think about what you want to say and, like, it's so much easier to express things that you wouldn't to somebody else because you kind of have that shield with technology. You don't have that, you're not like on the spot talking to somebody face-to-face where you would be embarrassed if you start crying or something.

Beyond safety for sexual or domestic violence victims, this student points to the increased ease of sharing emotional stories online. While expressing emotions in person can sometimes feel too

vulnerable to be comfortable, the "shield" of technology helps lessen that discomfort and provides time to the storyteller to consider how to carefully and authentically express those emotions. Other students in this discussion also suggested the ways that pictures and music help you "visualize" and "feel what they're saying" in order to connect to their emotions, much like in their responses to their classmates' digital storytelling presentations. As suggested in other results, the ability to create emotional connection is a key component of relating to others' stories and moving toward taking on their perspectives.

A third related trend regarding the benefits of anonymity demonstrated the ways in which technology can help to avoid judgment. One student suggested that the disconnected nature makes it easier to share, because "if people don't know you, then there's less judgment or you're not worried about it." Similarly, another student focused on the ways in which we might listen without judgment, saying:

> Well, like, if someone is trying to tell you something face to face, and, like, you see what they look like and then you might judge them based on what they look like, but if it's online then you don't really know who they are and it can be anyone so you can't judge them.

Not only does anonymity make it easier to share emotional stories, but, as these students suggest, it can also change the way we speak and listen to one another because it eliminates some of our human tendencies to judge based on appearance and other impressions. Taken together, these students suggest the ease of sharing personal stories online also makes it easier to connect in more emotional ways. As this was consistently a key component of developing empathy throughout the study, it seems that technologies that help to create emotional connection without judgment must be a central focus of future research in this field.

While many students recognized benefits of anonymity for sharing stories and creating emotional connection through their technology use, many others pointed to the possibility for troubling results of that anonymity. First, several students suggested that sharing stories anonymously actually disconnects them from the storyteller's emotions. One student claimed that "typing out stories makes it a little emotionless, less emotional, because you don't have, like, the eye contact and their behavior and actions." In considering their own social media use, it is understandable that stories told through typing, as this student said, are likely less emotional than in-person stories. His specific mention of eye contact, behavior, and actions, however, suggests that immersive technologies that allow storytellers to share in a way that can include these additional forms of emotional input might also help to create emotional connections beyond typed words. Along the same lines, another student said that speaking with someone face-to-face about a personal experience would be more impactful than seeing the story on social media because "if they were telling their story and it was, like, sad or happy you'd probably see it in their face and, like, feel more of what they're feeling because you see it, through their words." Much like the student who suggested the importance of eye contact and actions, this student points to the power of seeing facial expressions and hearing stories "through their words." Another student suggested:

> It's harder to have empathy with things on technology because a lot of times like a news story or something is telling that story so it's not coming directly from that person, so then, like, they might not tell the whole story or we might not be able to get in their shoes and understand.

According to this student, much of the ability to build empathy is tied to hearing first-person perspectives, as this is what allows us to "get in their shoes and understand." While it is important to acknowledge the additional connection created through sharing and sensing these

various types of input in face-to-face exchanges, these specific components mentioned by students are also critical in thinking about technology use. With technologies that can replicate the sense of connection created through eye contact, facial expression, and first-person voices, it seems that much of this emotional connection could be maintained.

It is undeniable that some digital forms of interaction are less connected emotionally and personally than face-to-face interaction. While immersive technologies could help to overcome some of that emotional disconnection, students pointed to another outcome of anonymity that may not be as easy to minimize. In one class, we were discussing civic engagement in the form of political discussion when the following exchange occurred:

> Teacher: When you think of technology do you generally think that technology creates a good environment for having those kinds of discussions?
>
> Student 1: No, most of the time.
>
> Teacher: Most of the time no. Why not? What happens instead?
>
> Student 2: It becomes impersonal.
>
> Student 1: They say stuff they wouldn't say face to face.
>
> Teacher: They can say things they wouldn't say face to face, so what usually ends up happening? Do you learn about each other and share stories?
>
> [Students chattering, several say "no," shout out other responses]
>
> Teacher: [repeating student responses] misunderstandings, people tend to argue instead of actually listening or learning from one another
>
> Student 3: We end up listening to reply instead of to understand.
>
> Student 4: People can just comment or share their opinion without actually listening to what anyone else has to say.

As suggested by these students, the same anonymity that makes it easy to share stories and opinions may also make it too easy to share, allowing for disagreements and misunderstandings

that might not occur face to face. Students also revealed in this segment of discussion that disconnection changes the way we listen, creating the situation in which people often speak over one another, focusing more on their own reply than what anyone else is saying. In another class I asked students why they thought this kind of communication (or lack thereof) is so common in online spaces, and a student said "Nobody sees a reason to be courteous to each other because there's no real incentive […] There's no consequences. You never have to see them again." Students here are pointing to a key trend in technology use that is described in much of the literature on polarization and problems with anonymity online. As is so often the case, civic, political, and religious discussion on social media often devolves into disagreement, argument, and sometimes hateful responses instead of civil interaction.

Students suggested that this outcome is a result of the disconnected nature of anonymous online interaction that negates the consequences of incivility. While disconnection and anonymity are a very real facet of online interaction, it is critical to consider these potential problems in terms of the benefits that anonymity and disconnection can provide. The tools themselves do not inherently guide toward positive or negative uses, so it seems that avoiding technology in creating connections toward empathy-building and civic engagement is not only unnecessary, but also eliminates a safe and easy way for people to share who might not otherwise do so. Instead, we might think of these issues of disconnection and incivility that arise from anonymity online more in terms of "user error" – if we frame these outcomes as not only potential uses but as wrong ones, we might use the student input described here to consider how we could focus on teaching the "right" uses instead. Students are clearly aware of both the benefits and barriers of anonymity for creating authentic, empathetic connections through

technology, so it seems that future research must continue to consider the ways we might teach a disposition toward taking advantage of these benefits.

Increased exposure online. Part of the general consideration of technology use in this study was whether or not it could increase students' interaction with stories of people who are different from them and, particularly, who have experienced oppression or marginalization. Students' reflections indicated that their experiences with the NYT VR videos they watched did increase their exposure to and empathy for these kinds of stories. Outside this guided instruction in school, though, students' reflections on these trends in their own technology use were more contradictory. Most students agreed that their technology use – focused primarily on social media – does increase their exposure to different stories. As students in one class described:

> Student 1: I know when I go on Facebook and I see all the videos and they just kind of liiiine up and I can watch those for like an hour straight…
>
> Teacher: Do you?
>
> Student 1: Like the puppies and the babies.
>
> Teacher: Ok, ok.
>
> Student 1: Because there's like puppies, and then, ope, there's a baby, and then ope there's like this really moving story about this kid, and like they're really good at drawing your attention and, and putting it in a place that normally, like, if you were just talking about it in person it might not come up but if you're scrolling Facebook or Instagram or Twitter or whatever and you see it pop up and you're like 'Oh this is cool maybe I'll check it out.'
>
> Student 2: Yeah, because, like, if things are trending on Twitter, like refugees, and then, even though they themselves cannot tweet about what's going on to them, the reporters who are following them can allow you to get an insight into what's going on.
>
> Teacher: So are those things that you seek out or they just show up because they're trending?
>
> Student 2: They just kind of show up, or on the explore page on Instagram you get who knows what sometimes. So they just kind of pop up places.

As students described here, the "pop-up" nature of videos that are shared, suggested, or advertised across social media applications increases their exposure to stories they would not otherwise seek out. As Student 1 stated, in many cases this exposure begins with a story of personal interest (like cute puppies or babies), but can often continue into other realms, like moving stories about children or even refugees. Also key from this exchange is the way in which Student 2 considered perspective. While many students indicated that firsthand stories help them build empathy more than others, this student suggests that learning about the experiences of refugees from the perspective of reporters is still an important means of gaining insight into those stories. If, as Student 1 suggested, these stories are "really good at drawing your attention" and allow students to build an emotional connection to the story, then this increased exposure may be the beginning of building empathy and taking action toward working to help the people in these stories.

In another class, students shared similar thoughts on their increased exposure to stories. Their reflection, however, focused primarily on stories that are sad. They said:

> Student 1: I think it's more common for us to see, like, more sad stories or like stories that make us angry than it used to be, because you have to tell it by word of mouth, or you have to, you know, you have to hear about it from other people. But through technology we get it like every day. You see something depressing on Facebook, or you see something sad on Instagram, and then you go to Twitter and that story's there too, and there's a couple other new stories, and it's just all around you.
>
> Teacher: True. So, if you see all of these sad stories then do you think that you are building empathy? Are you relating to these stories? Are you putting yourself in that story?
>
> Student 1: It's kind of, it can do both. It can kind of keep you from empathizing because it's just so common but it can also, depending on the story, if you can put yourself into it a little more easily, if it's more relatable, then you might be able to empathize with it easier.

> Student 2: You can read all the stories and like there's videos of the stories and the more you watch it the more you realize what's going on in the world and the more you want to help and the worse like, the really sad story, the more you feel bad and the more you want to help and just empathize for people.

As in many other examples, these students focused primarily on the ways that sad stories help them empathize through the emotional connection they build. As Student 2 suggested, the sadder the story, the more emotional engagement occurs. He expressed not just emotional connection, but explicitly referenced both increased empathy and wanting to help. For him, it seems that this increased exposure through technology could lead to the sort of empathetic civic engagement this study sought.

It is also critical to consider the response from Student 1 suggesting that over-exposure to these sad stories may minimize empathetic responses. In another class, the following exchange occurred:

> Student 1: Well we see, like, so much stuff, like we're pretty much dead inside. [laughter from other students] Like, we see so many bad things happen every day and it's just like, oh, well, it's not here, so it doesn't…really…
>
> Teacher: Yeah. There's a real response called compassion fatigue where if you hear so many stories about like, school shootings, or just people getting shot in general, you can't keep caring about it because it just keeps happening, so you almost become desensitized to it. Do you guys feel like that happens?
>
> Student 1: Yeah, that's what I meant. Like, not actually dead. [more laughter from students]
>
> Teacher: No, I know. I figured. Do you guys feel like that happens? So, someone else said earlier too that you're just scrolling through all these stories on Instagram or whatever, is that most of how you just technology? Just, dead, scrolling? [laughter]
>
> Student 2: [sarcastic, fake inner monologue voice] Oh, look, another school shooting, man look at all these people who are dying.
>
> Teacher: Right? It feels that way sometimes doesn't it?

> Student 2: And we're just like 'I'm completely fine with this in every way' and we go on.
>
> Teacher: Well I don't know about 'I'm completely fine with this,' but you don't have the same emotional response to it every time. You get kind of desensitized to it, right?
>
> Student 3: Also, like, you see it so often but we're also not around that kind of stuff, so it's also like you don't know how you would feel, and I feel like we can be like, we would feel a certain way, but if it actually happened we would probably feel, be surprised on how we reacted to it. Like you try to understand it but you won't until it actually happens.

As demonstrated here, students often feel so overwhelmed by the increased exposure – particularly to sad stories – that it's difficult to continue creating connections and building empathy. Furthermore, Student 3 suggested that this overwhelming exposure online, when combined with a lack of personal experience, might lead to a false sense of understanding. In considering perspective-taking that builds connection while also maintaining an understanding of difference, it is important to recognize that repeated exposure to similar stories may mislead students toward eliminating that understanding of difference. Not only does this increased exposure have the potential to minimize emotional connection through the desensitizing effects of repetition, but it also may disrupt perspective-taking with the assumption that repetition leads to an understanding of experiences that eliminates the need to continue listening to those perspectives.

These contradictory patterns of thinking about increased exposure to stories are similar to those about anonymity – the design of the technology leads to an increased opportunity to hear new perspectives, but individual use dictates whether this exposure will create emotional connections that lead to civic engagement or mitigate perspective-taking through repetition. Unlike with barriers and benefits to anonymity, teaching a particular disposition toward using

technology in a way that fosters emotional connection is not as clear. While taking advantage of anonymity and disconnection to share authentic stories and avoid incivility entails generalizable skills that could be taught relatively universally, balancing exposure to foster emotional connection is a much more individual process, in that not everyone's emotions are engaged in the same way or at the same level. Data from this study indicate that technology can increase emotional connection in critical ways, but future research must also consider how we might go about teaching students to reach their own balance of creating these connections without reaching compassion fatigue.

Acting, talking, and wondering what's real. As part of the storytelling theme of this unit involved considering the ways in which stories incite action, I also asked students to reflect on whether they thought increased exposure to new stories through their technology use led to any kind of action. In an excerpt from this part of the discussion in one class, students suggested the following ways of acting:

> Teacher: Does the way you use technology make you want to or ever make you act based on the stories you here? [silence, then, prompting] What's the most simple way to act through technology when you hear a story?
>
> Student 1: [sarcastic tone] Comment 'Oh, I'm sad.'
>
> Student 2: To retell a story.
>
> Teacher: You don't even have to comment. You can like it, right?
>
> Student 2: Share it.
>
> Teacher: Or share it. Is that the same as retelling it?
>
> Student 2: In some ways.
>
> Teacher: Or you can comment on it. Anything else? About action?

> Student 3: I mean there's all these websites now to donate to all these causes. So, well, like, maybe I haven't personally, other people have clicked on the links and donated to support different countries or even in our own country.
>
> Teacher: So does technology in that way make it easier to act?
>
> Student 3: Yeah because if not then you have to, like, seek it out, like write to them or send it by mail, which is much slower than just like transferring money from your account to theirs.

Like this class, many students pointed out the relatively simple ways we can respond to stories we encounter through social media, through liking or commenting on the story. We may even consider sharing links to the stories we encounter as a means of retelling the story. Furthermore, as Student 3 suggested, the ability to donate money directly to support a cause at the click of a button facilities an easy means of taking action.

Student 1's response about commenting on the story, however, suggests a key consideration about these kinds of responses. The sarcastic tone with which he described commenting "Oh, I'm sad" indicated that he probably thought there wasn't a lot of value in this action. In another class, a student said that "whenever someone is telling you a story on technology you could be like 'Oh, I feel so sorry for you, I feel awful, that's so bad,' but you could just be sitting there, like, not really having an emotion. But it's harder to fake it in person." Related to the disconnected nature of technology, these students indicated that technology-based responses like commenting on or liking a story are likely not as meaningful or as authentic as they would be in face-to-face exchanges. As another student suggested, "I think that in person people might have, like, more influence on me to act than on technology where you just scroll through and it doesn't affect me as much." These responses reiterate the pattern that the disconnection or repetition of social media doesn't have the same effect on our emotions that

encourages us to invest in acting to change stories as those we encounter in more engaging or immersive ways.

Though several students indicated that exposure to the sad stories they encounter online may increase their desire to act, they also suggested that they are cautious to take action because they question the authenticity of stories. Students in one class said:

> Student 1: Uh, I think technology doesn't, like, hinder storytelling, but, like, it's easier to get more stories and more information but it's harder to find authentic stories.
>
> Teacher: Why do you think that is? What's different about it?
>
> Student 1: It's just so much easier, to, like, if someone told a story it's so much easier to lie online than it is face to face.
>
> Student 2: Yeah. I think it's good if it's, like, genuine, but a lot of people now like won't go fund, like to the GoFundMe or whatever because you don't know what's real or what's not. There's just so much out there on technology.

Taken together, then, these data indicate that students felt that acting on the stories they hear through social media is difficult in a few key ways. First, though technology can increase their emotional connection to stories, the inundation of sad stories may actually decrease their desire to act because of overexposure and compassion fatigue. Second, the "easy" actions that technology enables may be less effective or meaningful than a similar response in person that would provide more authentic emotional connection. And third, even if there were enough emotional connection to create a desire to act in more meaningful technology-based ways like donating money, students suggested they might be hesitant to do so because of the difficulty in knowing "what's real or what's not." A key finding from this section is that that technology may be an effective means of fostering a desire to act for change, but does not itself enable those actions in meaningful ways. Future research must further consider means of transferring the

desire for action that develops through the increased exposure of technology toward real-life civic engagement. While technology – particularly that which creates immersive, emotionally engaging encounters with others' stories – fosters strong possibilities for perspective-taking and emotional connection and may facilitate some easy actions through retelling stories or donating money online, further equipping students with skills to respond to these stories through continued civic engagement is critical in meeting the goals of civic learning.

The technology is there, so let's change the way we use it. Given students' contradictory responses about building empathy for others' stories based on their own technology use, I asked them to consider whether they *could* use technology in ways that we more aligned with taking on others' perspectives, building emotional connection, or taking action. In one class, the following discussion occurred:

> Teacher: Could you change your use or the technology itself to help make these things easier?
>
> Student 1: [skeptically] I mean yeaaah you coouuuld…
>
> Teacher: How? What would have to change?
>
> […]
>
> Student 1: How you use it. I mean if you went, I don't know you don't really ...I guess you do kinda tell stories in a way already but I don't know how you can really improve it unless you get another app that's just for that.
>
> Teacher: So, what, you would need a different kind of tool to use then to tell different stories, or to tell stories differently?
>
> Student 1: Probably. It's already kinda telling stories. Like if someone posts something on Instagram and they put like prom 2018 that's kind of already a story. I can look at the pictures and that tells a story for itself.
>
> Teacher: Absolutely, but is it the kind of story that does these things?
>
> Student 1: Not necessarily.

Teacher: Not necessarily, not all the time. So maybe we're thinking about just changing the kinds of stories we would tell to help do these things a little more. Ok. How about you guys?

Student 2: Uh yeah, we said just like changing the types of stories that you tell. Like more sad stuff tends to be more personal.

Teacher: Ok. Bien. How about you guys in the back? What do you think?

Student 3: Uh, we said we could do everything else they said, but also, like, positive, follow more like positive and character-building people that like tell stories.

Teacher: Ok. So not just sad stories but some of the other inspirational stories, too. So then when you're talking about responding with action then that would change, like, how you live your own life? [Student 3 mumbles agreement] Alright. How about you guys in the back? What do you think?

Student 4: Pretty much what they said. Positive, like following more positive people.

Teacher: Ok. So the technology is already there, it's just changing how you use it. Anything else?

Student 5: Well I think the technology itself is fine, it's just kind of the individual who's using it because every person varies on how they see it or how they might act. Some people might want to change it just so they can get it more connected and some people may just want to stay kind of like solitary and kind of just, separate from everything.

Several themes emerged here that were also repeated in other classes. First, students suggested that they could change the stories they tell to include more authentic stories that would create stronger, more personal emotional connections. Second, they could change their consumption – rather than relying on the "pop-up" effect of exposure to new perspectives, they could seek out or follow people who tell these kinds of stories. Interestingly, one response in this class focused on telling sad, personal stories, while the others suggested positive, inspirational stories. Though contradictory, these both seem to reiterate the power of emotional connection in building empathetic responses. Taken together, these first two themes indicate that students felt that it

would be possible to change their technology use to continue to build empathy for others' perspectives by engaging in more emotional connections online. Third, however, students – like Student 5 above – suggested that not everyone would make this change.

> In another class, this exchanged followed the same pattern:
>
> Teacher: Ok, what do you think, clase? Could technology help with these things?
>
> Student 1: Yeah.
>
> Teacher: Yes? How?
>
> Student 1: Same way it does now, except nobody bothers to do anything. Nothing has to be different besides your state of mind. We have the resources and the opportunity and everything but nobody cares. In a cynical sense it's like everybody wants to pretend they care about something or stand for something that makes them seem better.

This student similarly suggested that technology that would help us connect and build empathy that leads to civic engagement already exists, but he also believed that the most common use of technology to respond to stories or the social issues they describe is based upon a desire to improve one's reputation rather than to address the issue. This illustrates the idea that there is some aspect of human behavior that might inhibit the use of technology for building empathy and civic engagement as a natural practice. Another student added:

> I think it changes depending on the type of person that you are. So, like, if you, um, if you're an empathetic person it doesn't really matter what kind of, like, how you hear a story because you're still going to build, like, feelings for, like, how, you're still gonna put yourself in somebody else's perspective, like how they're feeling. So I don't think it, I don't think it's the technology it's more so the type of person that you are.

Despite their awareness of the potential for technology to create emotional connection and to help build empathy, and even their acknowledgement of ways they might be able to change their

personal social media use to meet these goals, students in all classes overwhelmingly indicated that they weren't sure this was something people would actually do.

Can we teach about using technology in more empathetic ways? I felt discouraged in response to the negative outlook on using technology for emotional connection and empathy-building that was expressed in the first class in which this discussion occurred. From my teaching perspective, it seemed as if the whole curricular unit had missed its mark. As a researcher, my data collection, analysis, and reflection to this point suggested a hopeful shift in students' own empathetic responses to hearing others' stories, and most of them explicitly credited this shift to the immersive power of the NYT VR videos. Their reflection on their own technology use, however, indicated that they felt people weren't very likely to use it to meet the same outcomes. There was a disconnect for me between my researcher experience through the unit that demonstrated that students could use technology this way, and my teacher realization that they perhaps hadn't learned the skills or the importance of doing so on their own. After this discussion in the first class, I tried to use this realization to re-direct these in-class discussions one more time to see if students' thoughts might shift. In addition to asking if they thought people would change their technology use on their own, I asked them to consider whether we could start teaching people to use it in more positive ways. In the first class in which I asked this question, the exchange occurred as follows:

> Teacher: Do you think, so, you guys use this kind of technology a lot already, right? Is this something that would be worth trying to teach? Would it be beneficial to have some kind of school experience, especially when you're younger, about how to use technology in more positive ways? [In response to a student shaking his head] [Student 1] says no. Why not?
>
> Student 1: I think being empathetic and sympathetic is already reinforced by good parents, as like a good background, but, I think that just kinda plays hand in hand that you should just be like, you don't need a class to tell you how to act.

> Teacher: Sure. A lot of people, though, now, a lot of teachers especially seem to think that parents aren't doing their jobs anymore and now schools have to teach things like this 'cause hey're not learning it at home.
>
> Student 2: That's true
>
> Teacher: You think that's true? [head nod] Ok. [Student 3] what were you gonna say?
>
> Student 3: I was gonna say some students don't have family members that are willing to do that, or like they're not good influences, so they have to learn it at school.

While this class did not offer much input on whether teaching the skills or disposition toward using technology to build empathy and civic engagement would be possible in schools, they did demonstrate that it might be important. Student 1 began the discussion by suggesting that things like empathy and sympathy aren't necessary to teach at school because kids learn them at home. He refers to these things that are reinforced by parents but also things that "you should just be," and not that need to be taught in class. This follows the same line of thought as students who expressed that empathy is something that some people have and others don't. After my input, however, a few students agreed that not all students have the opportunity to learn things like empathy at home. This indicates, first, that some students thought it was something that could be taught, and, second, that they recognize a need for facilitating this kind of learning at school.

I had the opportunity to ask this question at the end of the discussion in one other class, and they responded as follows:

> Teacher: So if it's about people and how people use it, not the technology itself, how do we get people to use it to do these things? Can we? [Student 1]?
>
> Student 1: I think advertising works, really.
>
> Teacher: Advertising? How so? Can you give me an example?

> Student 1: ‘Cuz, like, well, we always see, like, you’re surrounded by these commercials that’s like a new trend that’s popular like people want to go out and get the newest version.
>
> Teacher: So, advertising, I mean that’s true. But advertising, like, how technology could have these benefits would maybe get people to think about how they’re using it? Is that what you’re saying?
>
> Student 1: Yeah, that and like, basically, what we have that we used to not have and what better stuff we could be doing with it.
>
> Teacher: Right! So if we tell people they can use technology for better things, maybe they will. Anybody else?
>
> Student 2: Uh, no. I just said no.
>
> Teacher: Oh, you just said no. We can’t get people to use it differently? Why not?
>
> Student 2: We have our own free will, so we can’t make somebody do something. They have the option to make the choice for themselves.
>
> Teacher: Well sure we can’t make somebody do it, but can we try to teach people to use it differently?
>
> Student 2: We can try, but there’s some people out there who just aren’t going to change because of the stuff they believe in. They’re just that self-centered that they don’t care and they’re just not going to change that.

As in other results, this discussion indicated that some students view the self-centered nature of humans as too difficult to overcome for some people, suggesting that even teaching explicitly about using technology and building empathy may not reach all students.

The results of this discussion were difficult to analyze, as they seemed in conflict with what my previous observation and analysis indicated about student learning and the outcomes I’d hoped to achieve as a teacher. I taught this unit because I believed in the value of trying to answer these research questions, but, more importantly, because I wanted my students to learn about using technology to build empathy, to listen for perspectives of marginalization and oppression, and to work toward addressing the social tensions that continue to perpetuate that

oppression. Though most of the end-of-unit data indicated that their NYT VR experience helped them build these skills in meaningful ways, their insistence that people simply wouldn't do this on their own or may not be able to learn it at school was disheartening and frustrating. As a researcher, though, I realized it was critical to let these data speak for themselves and to continue asking questions about how to shift this kind of thinking.

What have they learned? As I continued to reflect on the outcomes of this discussion about technology and empathy, I developed a follow-up question regarding the kind of learning students had previously done about technology use. If part of the future research that stems from these results involves understanding more about teaching a disposition toward empathy-based technology use, I began to wonder about the current messages these students felt they had heard from their school about technology. In other words, I wondered if they had other explicit learning experiences at school that might have shaped these negative views toward technology use. 28 students responded to my follow-up question asking them to describe what they remembered being taught about technology in school, and their responses resulted in data that fit into a few specific patterns. 12 students mentioned technology-based skills they learned, including typing and document formatting, graphing with calculators, and using library databases. Some of these 12 also included other academic skills, like explicitly being taught how to Google Classroom to submit assignments.

Beyond academic skills, students also reflected on the lessons they've been taught about when and how to use technology in school. Two students mentioned yearly discussions in their English class about academic dishonesty and how using the internet to cheat would have a negative effect on the rest of their academic career. Two students specifically mentioned learning that they had to ask for permission to use their phones in class unless they had been directly

instructed to do so by their teacher. Seven students said the primary message they'd learned was only to use technology at school for academic purposes, though several of these students acknowledged that these rules seem to vary based on the teacher. Some teachers would let them use phones for non-academic purposes during a free period if they had already completed other academic work, while others didn't allow any sort of technology use at all during study hall or advisory. Seven other students said that they felt the school had told them not to use technology at all – despite its potential academic benefits. Within these responses, a few students reflected on the tension between the increasing academic requirement to use technology and the restriction of its use at school. One student wrote:

> I feel like right from the beginning of school we are taught to not let technology consume us. However, it seems as the years go on and more technology advances they make us do assignments online. If I'm being honest it is a struggle.

Similarly, another student reflected:

> At school, I feel as though our teachers do not want us to use technology and take advantage of its benefits. In English class, students use a physical dictionary. Which is a good skill to have, but nowadays, I can easily find a definition on my phone. When I get a job, my boss is not going to tell me to look up a word with a dictionary. They will ask me to do it efficiently with the help of technology. Teachers at school have you put your phone away right when you walk in the door but also expect you to do online research and assignments with the help of technology outside of school.

Like this student, many of them reflected on conflicting messages regarding technology. While direct instruction on technology-based academic skills and concepts like typing, using online systems like Google Classroom, and discussing academic honesty are undoubtedly critical components of current educational curricula, combining this with the notion that technology use is something to be measured, moderated, and even mitigated seems to be confusing.

Beyond these conflicting rules on when and how to use technology at school, other students also wrote about lessons they had learned regarding their personal use of technology outside of school. Five of them mentioned an English project they completed in which they were required to spend 12 hours without using any kind of technology. In writing about these projects, they reflected on a few lessons they had learned, like "these days people rely on technology too much," or "how technology might be making us more distant from those around us." Most students who mentioned the project suggested that the goal had been to get them to consider how much they use technology and perhaps to use it less. As one student wrote:

> Part of the goal of this assignment was geared towards us being on our phone less in the future but frankly I'm on my phone for the same amount of time as before, even though I do realize it may be unhealthy.

The students who wrote about this project reflected on it positively, saying that they felt it was a positive reminder of other ways to interact and spend time that didn't include social media. This student was the only one who mentioned whether this reminder had continued to influence their technology use, though the way most of them wrote about the difficulty they had not turning on their phones for those twelve hours made it seem likely that they all followed this pattern.

In addition to the English project, many students mentioned lessons they had learned at school regarding their personal social media use. 18 students described a guest speaker who came to the school earlier that year to describe his own experience losing a job because of inappropriate posts he had made on Twitter. During his presentation, he also publicly shared several social media posts from current students at the school (without revealing their names) to demonstrate how easy it could be to track down information. Several students reflected on taking a beneficial reminder from his presentation to carefully consider what they posted and the future consequences it might have. Troublingly, though, several other students (and a teacher I spoke to

in order to triangulate this point) suggested that they felt his main message wasn't really to avoid posting insensitive or inappropriate things, but that "It's okay if you post inappropriate things, just make sure you delete it so your employers don't find out." Additional comments that students made about their experiences with learning about technology at school included learning not to participate in cyberbullying, not to post offensive things on social media, and to carefully consider what information they made available and to whom.

These lessons are undeniably important, and students that mentioned them tended to recognize their importance. However, it is critical to carefully consider the repetitive message of avoiding these negative uses of technology. One student wrote "Since we were little we have been taught about the dangers of the internet. We have been told that if we use the internet then bad things could happen." If this is a message that is continuously ingrained in students' thinking at school, it is perhaps unsurprising that they weren't particularly optimistic about using technology in more positive ways. A few students even suggested that they felt it would be beneficial to hear more positive messages about technology at school. One student reflected:

> In general, I can recall various instances where teachers have made comments about technology, primarily cell phones and social media, referring to them in a negative light. They often reference them as a distraction and a source of danger (bullying, for example). While there are dangerous things to be aware of with technology, it's something that has many positives to it that are rarely recognized.

Similarly, another student wrote:

> Honestly, in these years we have only been told the consequences if we use it incorrectly. It would be nice to learn what could happen if we use social media and technology to our advantage and use it kindly. Social media/technology has very good things about it, but we aren't taught those things. If anything, ideas are put into the heads of people. High schoolers aren't really worried about consequences, so hearing these things won't change anything they're doing.

These students suggest that they feel they have only been taught about the distracting, dangerous, or otherwise negative uses of technology, as their school experience has focused on trying to encourage safe uses of social media. However, as the second student suggested, it seems that teaching positive uses by focusing only on avoiding the negative ones or by suggesting that we don't use it at all is not an effective means of portraying that message. Finally, another student wrote:

> I think something that schools, at least [my school], don't tend to talk about is how beneficial technology and social media can be. It has helped a lot of people express themselves, be creative, start businesses, promote causes, and the list can go on and on. I think we should be taught how to use it wisely, but also we should be taught the many benefits that it can bring us.

As this student suggests, technology provides accessible spaces for creativity, entrepreneurship, and even for civic engagement. If these are the ways we want students to use technology in their future, then it seems troubling that the school focus tends to trend instead toward restricting its use and avoiding its negative potential. As these students recognized, it is important to learn how to use technology safely, but if this learning also included more explicit instruction on the beneficial uses of technology that expand beyond the classroom then it seems possible that the negative messages of restricting use might become less necessary.

Question 3: Key findings. The key findings from this chapter can be summarized in terms of a set of requirements for engaging students' capacities for empathy and an examination of the ways in which various technologies may help to meet these requirements. First, student responses to the variety of technologies used in this unit demonstrated repeatedly that, regardless of the technology, relating to stories was a prerequisite for building empathy for the perspectives they express. Second, making emotional connections can help in relating to a story even if it isn't about a shared experience. Third, technology provides engaging means of creating emotional

connection, through music, pictures, videos, and even immersive environments. Fourth, hearing emotional, personal stories from someone's own perspective is critical in developing empathy, and engaging with these perspectives in immersive environments leads to a stronger emotional connection than hearing them from an outsider's perspective or reading them in another form. Fifth, the emotional connections that resulted from these immersive experiences led to an increased desire to act to help, but that desire did not automatically translate to an understanding of concrete ways of taking action.

Despite the fact that students described this kind of learning experience in their own words, at the end of the unit they were still hesitant to believe that it is possible to teach people to use technology in ways that creates connection, builds empathy, and leads to civic engagement. As it is critical to teach both with empathy and explicitly about empathy, this final discussion about technology revealed that it is equally important to teach not just with technology, but about technology. Though students experienced firsthand the ways in which technology could help them create emotional connection, build empathy, and desire to take action, that experience didn't necessarily translate into an understanding or a willingness to use other technologies in other ways to reach the same result. It is essential, therefore, to understand more about how we can explicitly teach about technology in school. A critical piece of encouraging students to shift their own technology use toward empathy-based civic engagement requires that we shift the messages they hear away from the repetitive restriction of negative uses and toward the benefit and expanding potential of positive ones. Teaching empathy with technology requires teaching an empathetic disposition toward technology use.

Finally, to meet the social justice-oriented goals of civic learning, building empathy through and toward technology must also move beyond the technology itself. At various points

in this unit, students expressed desires for real-life actions that resulted from their learning – they wanted to continue talking to and connecting with their classmates, they wanted to support and "be there" their peers and have direct feedback from one another, and they wanted to volunteer, send money, and figure out ways to work for change. This study demonstrated that engaging in the stories of others through immersive, personal, and emotional interactions led to empathetic responses and a desire to act on that empathy. To gauge the real impact of this kind of learning, future research must take up the work of long-term studies that seek to understand whether these educational experiences move beyond the walls of the classroom. Teaching about empathy, civic engagement, and technology use are critical in addressing trends of polarization and social tension, but social change occurs beyond the screen. Expanding on the findings from this study to move beyond a cognitive understanding of these concepts and toward growing a disposition of empathy, civic engagement, and civic-minded, empathetic technology use is a critical next step in creating a generation of students equipped to meet the demands of social justice-oriented civic learning.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION: DESIGN AND DISPOSITIONS FOR TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED PERSPECTIVE-TAKING

The goal of this study was to approach an understanding of the ways in which technology might be used build empathy, in particular in response to perspectives of oppression and marginalization. Furthermore, it sought to build the kind of empathetic responses that would lead to increased civic engagement in working to reverse the societal structures that maintain systems of oppression and marginalization. As an exploratory study, it aimed to understand how students think about empathy and civic engagement, how different formats for interaction would influence their participation in learning about these topics, and whether and how technologies might aid in their empathetic engagement with perspectives of marginalization and oppression. In answering these questions, a few key findings came to light.

Research Question One

While it is difficult to separate students' thoughts on empathy from their empathetic responses, this question was designed to investigate th eir cognitive understanding of empathy and civic engagement as theoretical concepts. It was enlightening, therefore, to consider the ways these thoughts changed throughout the unit. While a few students at the beginning of the unit expressed thoughts about storytelling that demonstrated Wiseman's (1996) key attributes of empathy, much of their initial thinking was focused on the personal benefit they could gain from hearing others' stories, like learning lessons and avoiding mistakes. Through explicit guidance from in-class discussions as the unit progressed, most students expressed ideas about empathy and civic engagement that aligned with the key components of literature on empathy: they understood the imaginative process of putting themselves into another's perspective, they

demonstrated their ability to use emotional understanding to create connection while maintaining their understanding of difference, they recognized the need to hear stories of oppression and marginalization over the voices of the majority, and they expressed a desire to act in response to hearing those stories. These results suggested that students achieved a more nuanced cognitive understanding of empathy through their experiences in the unit.

Research Question Two

In investigating the second research question considering how the format of different activities shaped students' learning, it was clear that opportunities for me to directly guide their thinking through immediate feedback and to shape discussions by calling on students who had previously expressed the desired outcomes was critical in achieving that cognitive understanding. Furthermore, student reflections revealed that activities that included the opportunity to practice these skills were most influential to them. While direct instruction and content delivery was useful for achieving cognitive understanding and a non-judgmental recitation of facts, students pointed to the opportunities they had to interact with one another and to engage directly with others' stories as critical in helping them learn about empathy and civic engagement. Several of them reflected on the ways that the activities that let them learn about one another and talk directly to one another felt like they were practicing building empathy for one another. While some of the activities that required them to share personal stories led to feeling vulnerable or uncomfortable, adjusting the format of these activities to create safer, easier ways to share their stories helped them build their capacities for empathy in meaningful ways. The guidance from literature on teaching with and about empathy, combined with opportunities to practice, was key toward shaping these interactive activities that helped students learn these skills.

Overall, formats that provided opportunities for authentic, personal engagement with the stories and perspectives of others were powerful, but it was also important to consider the kind of participation they incited. If students in this study had completed the digital storytelling project in which many of them shared deeply personal stories with their classmates without the follow-up reflective writing, I would never have known the impact that this act of sharing and listening had on them. Similarly, while many students reflected positively on the learning that occurred as they listened to their classmates during in-class discussions, some of those students rarely or never spoke during the discussions. Designing different formats for interacting with the curricular material and with their classmates was key, but equally important was providing different ways of gauging this interaction – silence in class was not reflective of the level or quality of their engagement with various activities. Furthermore, it became clear that students wanted opportunities to continue this engagement. Were I to teach this unit again, I would continue to provide these outlets for students to reflect upon and grapple with their learning, but I would also focus on designing more ways to break the silence. Students in this study overcame the vulnerability of sharing personal stories, and it is critical to meet that willingness to share with more opportunities for feedback and continued connection.

Research Question Three

In seeking to answer the third question regarding the influence of technology, student reflections revealed that technology did aid in developing and engaging their capacities for empathy in a few critical ways. In some cases it made it easier for them to share their stories or to encounter or understand the stories of others. It allowed for stronger emotional connection to stories through photographs, music, and videos. Immersive technologies helped them approach a near first-hand understanding of others' perspectives and emotional responses, and other

technologies helped them retell those stories in their own words in sensitive, non-judgmental ways. When cued to do so, students used technology to build empathy. Though this study was not structured in a way that intended to tie certain technologies to specific learning objectives, student reflections on their technology use throughout the unit do point to particular considerations for technology affordances and design that are explored more fully below.

Despite evidence that technology was influential in students' abilities to take on others' perspectives in empathetic ways, their explicit discussion of technology use painted a more complex picture. They pointed to some of the same contradictory concerns around anonymity, overexposure, and inauthenticity that are reflected in literature. Furthermore, despite their own experience of building empathy through technology, it was difficult for them to translate that experience to their own technology use or toward teaching others to use technology in more empathetic ways. It is possible that the overwhelmingly negative lessons they have learned about technology at school have influenced their views of the possibilities of using technology in more beneficial ways. It is clear, however, that teaching empathy through technology use had a stronger impact on their thoughts about empathy than it did on their thoughts about technology.

Implications and Future Work

Future research that involves similar learning outcomes based on empathy and civic engagement must include two key considerations that this study did not. First, in terms of empathy, students in this study did not indicate feeling overwhelmed by the emotional component of experiencing these perspectives of oppression and marginalization or even the sad stories their classmates told. I, on the other hand, felt caught off guard by the weight of the stories students shared and my inability to adequately respond to each one. I was not prepared to address the need to decompress or process these emotional experiences, but given this potential

response, such preparation is critical for future study. On the other hand, students in this study also reported feeling a sense of compassion fatigue due to the overwhelming amount of information they can access through technology. Along with preparing for overwhelming empathy, future work must also consider meaningful ways to engage students in specific, focused, empathetic actions that avoid the tendency toward apathy in their own technology use.

Second, though students responded to these stories of oppression and marginalization with strong desires to help and to work for change, they expressed frustration at feeling incapable or not knowing how to take action. Though the time constraints of this study didn't allow for it, the civic engagement goals of this kind of learning would best be met through an additional component in which students could have been given direct instruction on actions to take and even had the opportunity to put them into practice. Much like the idea of service learning, culminating this experience with the opportunity to take action would have undoubtedly been powerful toward teaching about civic engagement, and should be a component of future studies. Furthermore, conducting long-term study around the influence on students' future action – even regarding changes in interaction with their peers after sharing personal stories – will help move this research beyond the classroom. While technology is a useful tool for discussing and engaging capacities for empathy, it is critical to understand how we can transition these responses beyond the screen in a way that turns these initial empathetic responses into dispositions toward future empathy-based action.

Technology design. This study did not seek to measure the efficacy of individual technologies or to connect their individual use to particular learning goals. Given the affordances of various digital spaces and immersive technologies discussed in the literature, it sought to understand more about the ways in which we might best take advantage of those affordances for

teaching concepts like empathy and civic engagement. In the process of this study, however, students provided feedback that builds on these affordances and suggests particular components of design that would have made these technologies even more effective. It is helpful to consider these components first in terms of a set of prerequisites that students described for engaging their capacities for empathy. Critically, they maintained throughout the unit that building empathy was difficult without a means of relating to a story in some way. While some students suggested that there were some experiences they simply couldn't relate to, others thought more creatively about ways to relate. They relied heavily on emotions as a way to build connections to a story, and demonstrated that they felt strong emotional connections when the stories felt more personal. This happened when they listened to stories of their classmates that were inherently more personal, as they were from people they knew. But it also happened when they watched immersive VR videos, as the students suggested that the firsthand view into another's experience and that person's own emotional response helped engage their emotions, too. In order to engage an empathetic response, it was clear that students needed to connect to a story through personal perspectives and emotion.

At the time of the study, NYT VR videos and Google Expeditions were some of the only free content that was easily accessible for the participants. Neither of these technologies, however, seemed to fully meet the requirements that students described for engaging empathy. The VR scenes in Google Expeditions were designed for academic virtual "fieldtrips." Though each expedition was combined with factual information about the site, it had to be narrated by the teacher. The virtual scenes drew students' interests toward engaging with factual information in new ways, and as a means of transferring factual content material it was very effective. In combination with other curricular materials, these virtual field trips helped to expand students'

understanding of the cultural practices of other people. The expeditions on their own, however, did not represent any of the firsthand perspectives of these people. In this regard, they were gravely lacking in the personal, emotional content that engaged students' capacities for empathy. The NYT VR videos, on the other hand, contained more of these emotional perspectives. They were not necessarily designed for academic use, so finding stories that were appropriate and interesting to students and that they could engage with on a personal level was difficult. Furthermore, the content and design of each video varied drastically, so that some students watched videos that were only a four or five minutes long and others were closer to 15 minutes. Some groups decided to watch a different video after the initial one they chose didn't contain enough firsthand perspective or any narration at all. Others watched videos with less of these personal components and did further reading and research on their own to find engaging, personal stories. Though each of these technologies added meaningful learning experiences to the unit, neither of them alone served to meet the criteria that students set forth for engaging empathetic responses.

Based on their experiences using these technologies, student feedback regarding their empathetic responses suggests a few key components of design. While immersion was critical, it was not enough to engage empathy on its own. Technologies designed to develop these capacities for perspective-taking would be most effective if they provided firsthand perspectives into stories that encourage students' lowered threshold for relating. As students repeated at many times throughout the study that they needed an "in" to the story, developing immersive educational content that tells stories of other young people would be a key component in developing these means of relating. Though students related strongly to the stories of their classmates and people they knew, they also clearly indicated that hearing about the emotions of

the storyteller helped engage similar empathetic responses. Developing firsthand perspectives in which students can participate not only in someone else's story but also in the emotional aspect of those experiences would increase the likelihood for engaging their capacities for empathy.

While the ultimate goal of this study was to engage empathy for experiences that are wholly different from these students', providing immersive content that scaffolds their ability to relate across degrees of difference is a critical component of design. Engaging students' capacities for empathy in this study involved the process of increasing their willingness to take on the burden of connection. Beginning with stories of oppression and marginalization that are so contrary to their own experiences that they can't begin to imagine them and requiring immersive technologies to fill the whole gap between those experiences is a lot to ask of the students and of the technology. The immersive technology already exists in forms that engage students' capacities for empathy, but the content must be designed to bridge the gap between experiences in scaffolded degrees rather than all at once. For students who may not experience regular educational encounters with difference or, critically, with perspectives of oppression or marginalization, continuing to develop and design immersive content that tells firsthand, emotional stories about these perspectives is critical in helping students build empathy for these perspectives. Scaffolding this content to immerse students in these perspectives in careful ways is critical in also developing their willingness to move toward perspective-taking by taking on the work of creating their own connections.

Teacher influence. Regardless of the technologies or the methods used in this study, it is hopeful to consider that concepts like empathy and civic engagement are teachable. As this unit went on (and, in some cases even as the day went on), I targeted particular ideas or attitudes and students responded. I was able to call on the outliers who had strong civic-minded and social

justice-oriented ideas about empathy early on and to use their ideas to shape in-class discussions. I learned from them about how to craft these discussions to scaffold thinking in this unit as much as they learned from me. By the end of the final presentation in which students retold the stories of oppression they watched in the NYT VR videos, every group was focused on creating emotional connections and thinking about how to respond to stories with action. While the technology allowed them to experience these connections, it is critical to consider that they wrote these responses because they had been cued to do so. Many technologies used in this unit were useful tools, but they wouldn't have functioned on their own without my intention to use them toward specific ends. Formats that allow for this kind of cuing and feedback from the teacher or from their peers and that also foster continued engagement and connection among students are a key component of this kind of learning. Students can learn about empathy and civic engagement, and technology can help us teach it, but the technology does not replace the central role of immediate feedback and guidance that is afforded through face-to-face interactions. Learning in this unit was most successful when it happened in conversation – between students, myself, and the new perspectives and experiences with which they were engaging.

Teaching civics in other spaces. It is also essential to note that teaching empathy and civic engagement and sharing these personal, meaningful experiences is possible beyond the civic education classroom. When asked about the things they learned in this unit, many students reflected on themes like the importance of telling stories, remembering that everyone has an important story to tell, wanting to listen more, and wanting to find ways to take action to help others. While at the surface these may not appear to be social justice-oriented civic actions that will fight oppression and marginalization, they hold the promise of future empathetic responses. Furthermore, at the end of the unit, several students expressed excitement at the amount of

Spanish they had learned and the pride they felt in being able to tell entire stories in Spanish. At the end of the unit, students met both sets of curricular content goals for learning and reflecting on empathy and civic engagement while also advancing their target language skills. While the state of Illinois requires one semester of civic education, it is essential to continue working toward teaching these critical concepts in other spaces. This study demonstrates the ways in which such work can occur in a foreign language classroom through the linguistic and cultural focus on storytelling. It is easy to imagine how similar themes might be included across other content areas, such as English, history, geography, fine arts, and technology or computer science courses. Furthermore, the need for culturally-sensitive content that engages multiple perspectives through immersive environments suggests the potential for new curricular focus in design-based technology courses. Engaging underrepresented voices in this process must be a central component of continued work. Ultimately, if students who participated in this exploratory study suggest they might be willing to listen to others in new ways, the potential for approaching this kind of learning as a means of reversing the current trends of division and lack of civic discourse seems great. Transitioning this short-term unit into multiple educational experiences that encourage not just a cognitive understanding of empathy and civic learning but also a disposition toward continuing empathetic civic engagement is essential.

Flipping the script on technology. Much like the need to repeat these experiences in which we teach students *with* and *about* empathy, we must continue to consider the stories we constantly retell them about technology. Despite feedback indicating that their technology use in this unit engaged their capacities for empathy, students felt as if they wouldn't be likely to use it that way on their own. They also reported learning overwhelmingly negative messages about technology at school that served to relegate its use to academic purposes or to mitigate it entirely.

If we want to reverse trends of cyberbullying, of unproductive discourse, uncritical consumption, and the polarization that dominates current technology use, addressing these topics in school is critical. Seeking to teach students to use technology positively by continuously reminding them to avoid its negative uses seems counterproductive. As students themselves recognize the potential for using technology in empathetic ways that encourage civic engagement, understanding more about teaching these skills as a generalizable disposition toward technology use is a critical component of future research. Drawing again on Katz and Raths' (1985) notion of dispositions as patterns of behavior, this work can begin by changing the way we talk about technology and its uses in school. Providing multiple opportunities for students to engage in civic learning across curricular areas can be combined with new opportunities for explicit learning about technology. Perhaps if we start telling students that they can use technology to engage with the world around them in empathetic and meaningful ways, and if we give them repeated opportunities to practice those uses in school, we can begin to develop these patterns of behavior in a new generation of technology users. Learning in the areas of civic engagement and technology must shift beyond cognitive understanding or even a mastery of skills and into dispositions – toward patterns of behavior and habits of use that are empathetic and empowering. As research from Watkins (2012) and Cassell (2006) suggests, students are willing and capable of using digital spaces in these empowering and transformational ways. Part of the work of encouraging these uses revolves around shifting the narrative and the perception of the adults who monitor and control them. Rather than (or in addition to) engaging students in projects in which they disengage from technology to experience "real life," we might consider teaching them to use it in ways that have more powerful implications for reshaping real life.

Teacher support and preparation. Despite results indicating that students learned about both Spanish and empathetic civic engagement, many of my reflections during the unit expressed preoccupations with wasting time or concerns around the balance of content delivery and personal interaction. Though the school year in which this study occurred presented a unique set of circumstances that made me feel as though I had the permission to spend time on the personal things, and I wholeheartedly believe that learning like this belongs in every classroom, it was easy to succumb to feeling pressured from other outside forces. Helping teachers balance this kind of learning with the pressures of covering core curricular content and preparing for standardized tests must be a central focus of teacher support. I felt lucky to have conducted this research in a particular year in this specific school setting where I was certain that I had full administrative support to use my classroom for this kind of learning. In a conversation with one of my administrators regarding my teaching evaluation at the end of this year, he remarked that he understood that some of what looked like unorganized or undisciplined use of class time was also part of what added to my efficacy as a teacher. He acknowledged that taking pauses and making space for off-topic, personal, and meaningful interaction was an important part of our students' educational experience. I am certain that not all teachers experience the freedom of teaching in such a setting. It is critical, therefore, to work toward building educational spaces that provide these permissions to teachers. It may be that some of this work takes the shape of educating and developing administrators who prioritize this kind of learning as much as standardized, measurable, and monetized results.

As suggested above, goals for learning about civic engagement, empathy, and technology use can best be met when students have opportunities to engage in the development of dispositions across multiple educational experiences. This indicates that teaching about civic

engagement and technology use are not relegated to particular fields of study or to particular realms of the teaching profession, but rather that this sort of learning should become part of the curriculum for all teachers. As described in the literature on CRP, supporting teachers to engage in this kind of teaching also requires helping prepare them to teach about and with empathy. Though I gained a lot of knowledge that helped to prepare me for teaching this unit through my graduate studies, little of my pre-service training experience prepared me for this sort of teaching. Teacher preparation must include a consideration of ways of creating democratic classroom spaces that prioritize personal connection so that students have the permission and possibility to participate in vulnerable experiences in non-threatening ways. Furthermore, as Warren (2017) suggests, this kind of teacher preparation must not end at pre-service education. It is critical to prioritize both in-school and additional professional development opportunities for teachers to learn about their students and their families and communities, as well as practical strategies for transferring theories like CRP into the classroom. Teachers must be taught with and about empathy themselves in order to take the same approach to their students. Though it was not the focus of this study, it stands to reason that developing educational experiences for engaging capacities for empathy across diverse perspectives similar to those described in this work would also be useful in pre-service teacher training.

Furthermore, toward developing dispositions of empathetic technology use, teachers must be prepared to teach not only with, but also about technology. Teaching with technology encourages students and teachers to focus on using technology for educational ends. This has undoubtedly become a central component of the unwritten curriculum in many classrooms, but it is not enough to influence technology use outside the classroom. Across multiple content areas, teachers must be prepared to teach about technology use – it must also become a written part of

the curriculum to educate students on the empathetic, empowering, and transformational uses that these technologies afford. This sort of change begins both in the policy realm – as attaining these dispositions toward technology use should become a mandated educational requirement for students – and in teacher preparation. To meet this requirement, teachers must be equipped to teach not only about empathy, but to move toward empathetic technology use. As Vickery (2017) suggests, shifting our expectations away from the fear of harm and toward the opportunity for agentive participation in shaping new forms of democracy and civic engagement is a critical component of this work. Young people do this on their own – our role should be to foster those uses through explicit encouragement and instruction, not just through avoidance or regulation.

Students want to connect. It is not a small burden to place upon the shoulders of our teachers – to ask them to master their own content and then to teach it through and with empathy and technology in ways that meaningfully engage students' cultures and personal stories in the classroom. It is hopeful to know, though, that students *want* to engage in this kind of learning. The qualities that Ladson-Billings (1995) and others describe as "good" teaching are "good" because the elicit success for all students – and particularly for those who are often underrepresented and ignored. I suspect that part of this result comes from students' desire for connection – when students see themselves as valued, cared-for members of a learning community who can contribute knowledge in meaningful ways, learning takes on a new form. A few students who participated in this study reflected that this unit was their favorite thing they'd ever done in school. Another wrote "I really like this unit, and I hope that it continues. I think it is very beneficial to learn and understand because it may, just a little, change a kid's life for the better." Similarly, as I was preparing to leave this teaching position, another student wrote:

> I really appreciated this unit. I am very sad to see you go because not many teachers care (or seem to care) about teaching students beyond the textbook. Not many teachers try to teach life lessons or try to develop good people to leave their classroom.

I do not intend to make any claims about my skills or talents as a teacher – there were many things in this unit that could be greatly improved. I also don't think this student feedback indicates that other teachers – my colleagues who I appreciate and respect – don't approach their craft with a shared sense of passion and care. It is critical to know, though, that students desire opportunities to connect to their educational experiences in personal ways. Because of their positive response to these opportunities, despite the anxiety, the vulnerability, and the tension of wondering what counted as wasted time, I can say without a doubt that this unit also felt like the best, most important thing I've had the privilege to teach.

Students' thoughts and my own reflections on this unit point to the power of intentionality. In all of my years as a teacher – but especially this year – I wanted students to know that I cared about them beyond their academic success in my class. I took intentional steps to make that care clear to them in meaningful ways, without which this unit wouldn't have occurred the way it did. Identifying and developing dispositions of intentional care in teacher preparation programs is a critical part of ensuring the success of this kind of teaching. Equally important is the knowledge and support provided to in-service teachers so that they can take clear, intentional steps toward building rapport and caring learning environments, and, ultimately, so that they know they have the permission to pursue this sort of passionate teaching.

Technology for perspective-taking. Perhaps the most far-reaching implication of this work is the possibility of using technology to engage perspective-taking in multiple ways. As demonstrated in this work, immersive encounters with experiences that were very different from

their own engaged students' empathetic capacities to move toward taking on those perspectives. Engaging students' empathy for underrepresented perspectives is critical work in meeting the goals of civic learning, much like engaging teachers' empathy for their students' perspectives is a critical component of social justice, critical, and culturally responsive pedagogies. Using a similar study design with immersive content that helps teachers move toward taking on the diverse perspectives of their schools and community holds promise for helping prepare them to teach with empathy. As students in this study suggested, combining immersive encounters in firsthand perspectives with the opportunity for real-life practice in how to engage with and respond to those perspectives resulted in powerful learning experiences. For pre-service teachers, exploring diverse student perspectives and practicing the empathetic ways in which they can respond to, support, and sustain those perspectives to engage all students in rigorous learning is critical. Using immersive technologies to approach this sort of preparation – both in the safety of simulation and in real-life classroom encounters – should become a focus of research on teacher preparation and professional development.

The previous examples consider the ways we might use immersive technologies to move students and teachers to take on the perspectives of others, but we may also consider using these perspective-taking technologies to shape how they see themselves. Empathetic responses to perspectives of marginalization and oppression are critical for social justice and civic learning, but engaging those underrepresented voices themselves is the ultimate goal. As Watkins (2012) suggests, closing the digital literacy divide means ensuring that all students don't just have access to digital devices, but have instruction and support on using them in empowered, creative, and civic-minded ways. Some of this work of ensuring equity lies in the way that teachers approach learning through and about technology. But part of it also lies, as Pinkard (2005)

suggests, in the explicit design of culturally responsive technology that brings the everyday lived experiences of diverse students into learning spaces in new ways. Pinkard points out that designers unconsciously design based on their own experiences, therefore suggesting that designing educational software based on diverse cultural backgrounds requires designers who have lived diverse cultural experiences. Encouraging this sort of design, therefore, requires traditionally underrepresented students to see themselves as capable technology users – not only as consumers, but as creative and empowered producers. In this case, using immersive encounters with new perspectives doesn't function to bridge drastic difference, but rather to build on cultural similarity to allow these students to see themselves in new ways. In the particular case of diverse software design, immersing themselves in perspectives of people who come from similar backgrounds and have successful experiences with technology design could empower students to see themselves as capable of success in this field.

From here, the possibilities are far-reaching. While ideas about curricular representation for promoting the success of minority students are not new, transferring these ideas into the realm of technologies that immerse students within these perspectives holds powerful potential. Engaging students with firsthand perspectives across multiple fields of underrepresentation can challenge many forms of educational inequity based on traditional gender and race-based notions of success. As important as it is for white, middle-class teachers and students to engage with these underrepresented perspectives in order to see their students and peers as capable of high achievement, empowering those students to see themselves that way is critical. Engaging the powerful potential of technologies to immerse us in new perspectives about ourselves, our peers, people we know and those we don't, animals, the environment, and the misunderstood, misrepresented, and marginalized must be a focus of future work. The progress of education

toward social reconstruction and a democratic social consciousness always calls for this work, but at a time when some of the loudest “democratic” voices around us speak freely in a dangerous rhetoric of division, violence, and hate, our future demands it.

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Appendix A

STORYTELLING BRAINSTORM

¿Por qué contamos cuentos? (*Why do we tell stories?*)

What kinds of stories do we tell?

- As children? To children?
- As adults? To adults?

What is the purpose of these stories?

What kinds of stories do you like to tell? Or hear?

Think of different ways we communicate - how do you hear, see, or share stories?

Which stories stick with you? Why do you remember some and not others?

Appendix B

STORYTELLING REFLECTION

¿Por qué contamos cuentos? (*Why do we tell stories?*)

After today's in-class discussion, think more about the stories we tell. Answer the questions below - use specific examples of stories or your own personal experiences that help support your ideas.

1. Why do we tell stories? Provide a variety of examples of the kinds of stories we tell and what you think their purpose might be.
2. Which stories have powerful impacts when we hear them? Why?
3. Do you think other people across the world tell similar or different stories? Is the purpose the same or is it different in different cultures?
4. Why might it be important to hear other peoples' stories?

Appendix C

STORYTELLING VIDEO

The power of storytelling

Answer each of the questions below based on information from the video.

1. We spend our entire lives surrounded by _____. They are a powerful way of _____ _____.
2. What are the 4 reasons why stories have such power? These are woven through the video - see if you can identify all 4:
3. What happens in the story of the two tribesmen? Write a short summary.
4. How is the story of Brian and Kevin passed on and retold? He mentions 4 or 5 different ways. These are also woven throughout the video - do your best to pick them out!
5. Why is a horror story scary, despite the fact that it doesn't present any danger? Read link #1 on Google classroom (after the video). How can you relate this idea from the video to the concept of mirror neurons?
6. How does the video define culture? Do you agree? Is there anything you would take away from or add to their definition?
7. Think about the author and the audience. This video was made by the National Trust - a British historical and environmental preservation charity. Visit their website (via the second link on Google classroom) and look around. Then answer these questions on the other side:
    a. Why do you think the National Trust created this video? What was their goal?
    b. Who were they hoping would watch this video?

Appendix D

STORYTELLING VIDEO REFLECTION

First, watch the video using the link posted in Google Classroom. We aren't going to do this together - bring headphones so you can watch the video on your own. This way you can pause, re-watch, and think about answering the questions for the in-class worksheet!

Next, create your reflection journal. At the top of the page, type Reflexión 1. Then rewrite each question listed here, followed by your answer (in English!) You're going to continue adding to the same document, so make sure you clearly label the number of the reflection and each question you're answering each time so I can follow along! You don't have to retype the questions word for word - a short summary is fine.

1. Using the information from the worksheet you completed in class, how would you summarize the point of this video - what message do you think the video is trying to convey? (Think here about the information about storytelling - not the goal of the National Trust that you already wrote about on your worksheet!)
2. Think about the discussion question and comments you wrote on Google Classroom yesterday. How does the information from the video support or agree with what you already wrote/thought about telling stories? Use specific quotes from your writing and from the video where you can! (You don't need to cite your own writing or the video since this is just a journal assignment for me to read!)
3. What *new* ideas does the video give you about the importance of telling and hearing stories? Use specific quotes from the video if you can, and then put them into your own words. Explain why you think these new ideas are important.

Appendix E

DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT RUBRIC

Mi Cuento

When we talk about the power of stories and our ability to make connections with others (think about those mirror neurons you read about!), it's good to start by finding meaningful ways to tell parts of our own story. The more passion and creativity you put into this project the more meaningful it will be for you and the more interesting it will be for your classmates. You've had lots of opportunities to write about yourselves this year, but a lot of them were also made up (like in your travel presentation or your childhood speaking quiz). This is probably your last chance to share something real, so make it count!

En alguna manera, necesitas escribir y presentar un cuento de tu vida. El cuento necesita incluir palabras escritas o dichas en español y fotos auténticas (con otras representaciones visuales también si es posible). Es como un "show and tell" de algún momento importante en tu vida.

No hay requisitos específicos de vocabulario, pero necesitas incluir una variedad de verbos:

verbos	descripción	puntos
imperfecto	Provide the background description for your story. This can include general information about yourself and the other people in your story (personality / appearance descriptions, ages, etc.) and other pertinent information about the specific event you are describing (time, date, weather, location, ongoing actions before the main event began…) You don't need to provide all this information - only if it is relevant to the main story you want to tell!	__ / 5
condicional	As part of your background description of this time in your life, try to include some verbs in the conditional. The easiest way to do this is to write about what you thought about the future at that time. *Cuando era niñ@, pensaba que … (something* would *happen later)*	__ / 5
pretérito	Describe some completed actions. This is the main event - what is something meaningful that has affected your life in some way? (Something that happened to you, a choice you made, a gift you received, an important milestone, etcl). Make sure that the things you've already described in the imperfect and conditional help lead to this part of the story - don't just provide a string of random sentences and then switch topics to describe this event!	__ / 5
presente	Tell us how the event you already described affects who you are today. Is your personality different from when you were young because of it? Do you have or know or do different things?	__ / 5
pretérito perfecto	Along with the present tense description, include a few things that you *have done* as a result of this significant event. Don't forget to use the verb *haber*!	__ / 5
futuro	Conclude your story by sharing a few ways that you think this event will shape your future. Will your personality be different? Will you do something new or different in the future? Will you keep doing something you do now? If you can, try to connect this to what you wrote in the conditional → *When I was young, I thought (or didn't think) I would _____, but because of _____, I will…*	__ / 5
contexto de los verbos	Did you include enough information in your sentence to support your choice of verb tense? Remember the phrases we've practiced that indicate repeated actions or specific	__ / 5

	completed actions, and other time markers or sequencing words (always, often, yesterday, once, then, next, now, in the future, etc.)	

gramática	I'm looking for the main concepts we've been practicing all year: spelling, accents, word order, adjective endings, word choice (pay special attention to <u>ser, estar, and haber</u>!), little words (que, de, con, sin, en, a, etc.), contractions (al, del), and verb conjugations (in addition to the tenses described above, did you use infinitives or -ing verbs correctly in a series? etc.)	___ / 20

complejidad	Your story should not read like a series of simple, disconnected sentences or a list of random actions. I'm not counting words or sentences, but I should see a clear effort to stretch the complexity of your writing in Spanish. You can achieve this by including transition words and phrases, combining multiple ideas into one sentence, weaving verb tenses together (i.e. don't have an imperfect section, then a preterite section, then a conditional section - they may primarily be together, but mix it up when you can!), and by creating more complex verb phrases (you know how to say what you have done and what you would do - can you figure out how to combine them to talk about what you *would have done*? Or *will have done*? This is not a requirement - just an example!) This is your chance to push yourself a bit - show off!	___ / 10
representación visual / audio	You are required to include photos and/or a visual representation to help us understand your story. The more you can include, the easier it will be for us to follow. Use authentic items - not clip art, stock photos, etc. You have the option to speak your story to the class - if you do this, you should *tell* the story, not *read it* from paper. Alternatively, you can record your presentation as a video ahead of time, or you can make a slideshow video with photos, text, music, etc. However you choose to represent your story for the class should be interesting, engaging, and creative! ***Regardless of the format of your presentation, you should turn in a complete written version of your story (handwritten or typed).***	visual: _____ / 5 audio: _____ / 5
esfuerzo	As always, you will earn points for working in class. This includes writing your sentences, creating slides, scanning / editing photos, recording or editing video and audio, making a poster, practicing your story, etc. You have two-ish days and a lot of freedom - use your time wisely! (This also includes any effort required out of class - be sure that you have a polished finished product to share with the class in order to earn these points!)	___ / 10
creatividad / seriedad	I already said it once - but it's worth repeating: <u>*Be creative*</u>! Think creatively and thoughtfully about *which* story you want to tell, *why* you want to tell it, and *how* you can tell it in an interesting and meaningful way. I'm looking forward to hearing your stories. Don't let me down. (Only a small guilt trip from Sra.) ☺	___ / 15

<u>A note about translators:</u> You *may* use translators for words you don't know, but the point of this project is to show me what you *do* know. (Ok - the main point is to tell an interesting story. But you have to do it in Spanish, so focus on the ways we've already learned to communicate. Do this by **thinking in Spanish** - not thinking in English and then translating! If you come across something you don't know how to say, ***before you translate*** - ask yourself if there is another way to express the same idea using vocab and grammar you do already know.) ***<u>Translating large portions of your project will result in a major reduction in your final grade. You should turn in a separate vocabulary list of the words you translated along with the written version of your story.</u>***

Appendix F

DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT REFLECTION

Describe the things that stood out to you for each part of project 1 listed below. You can describe your thoughts and/or emotions during each process, whether it was easy or hard for you, what was or was not meaningful, or any other responses or reactions you have. Remember - you can be honest. If it wasn't meaningful to you, that's ok! You'll still get points for reflecting on *why*.

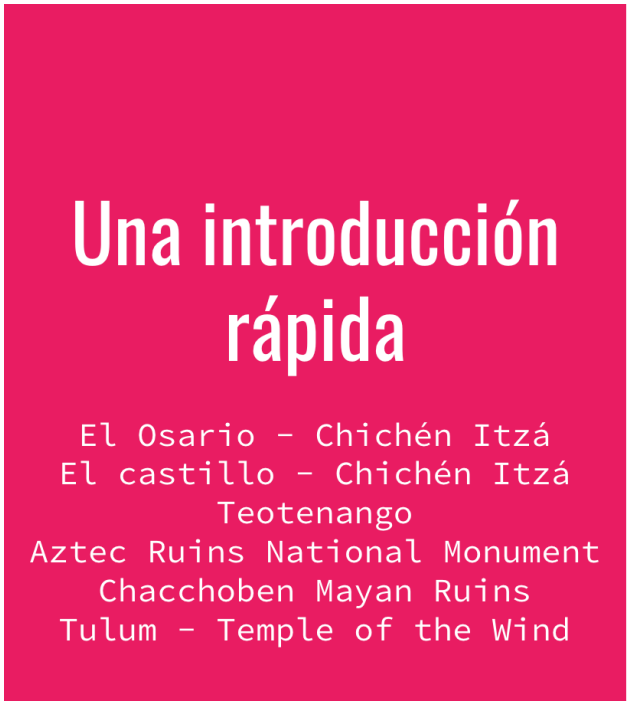
1. brainstorming, planning, and creating your storytelling project
2. presenting your storytelling project to the class
3. listening to other people present their projects to the class

Then, explain:

1. How did the tools and method you chose affect your storytelling process? Why did you choose a poster, powerpoint, video, etc.? How did these choices affect your responses to your classmates' presentations?

Appendix G

AZTEC, MAYAN, AND TOLTEC INTRODUCTION



You will see 6 scenes - only a minute or two to look around each one for today!

Tarea: on the same paper from class today

Write 4-5 sentences to describe what you see in these scenes (you don't need to worry about specific names or details - we'll do that tomorrow!)

Then write 4-5 more sentences to explain what these scenes might tell us about the cultures who built them. How were they built? What was their purpose? Use any prior knowledge you have or make some logical predictions - you don't need to look up any information other than pictures!

Appendix H

AZTEC, MAYAN, AND TOLTEC VIRTUAL EXPEDITION

las ruinas de los aztecas y mayas

Antes de empezar - busca la localización de los sitios y escribe los nombres en el mapa:



1. *Chichén Itzá*
2. *Teotenango*
3. *Aztec Ruins National Monument*
4. *Chacchoben*
5. *Teotihuacan*

Escenas 1 y 2: Chichén Itzá

El nombre Chichén Itzá significa 'at the mouth of the well of Itza' *- era una de las ciudades mayas más grandes de su tiempo. La gente Itzá es un grupo específico de los mayas - hay personas con herencia Itzá que viven en México y Guatemala todavía hoy. En el año 987 CE un líder Toltec - otro grupo cultural que vivió en esta región y tenía gran influencia en el arte y la arquitectura de los mayas y aztecas - se juntó con los mayas y construyeron esta ciudad poderosa. En este sitio hay muchos cenotes - ríos que corren bajo la tierra. Los cenotes eran importantes como fuente de agua fresca y también son un lugar donde los mayas hicieron sacrificios humanos. La arquitectura de los pirámides en este sitio tiene influencia de la gente Toltec*

Escena 1: El Osario es una palabra para un cementerio. En el pirámide grande del Osario se puede ver imágenes de serpientes con plumas. Bajo el pirámide hay muchas tumbas antiguas.

Escena 2: En el templo de los Guerreros se puede ver columnas de piedra decorada con imágenes de guerreros. En el pirámide más grande, el castillo, hay otro serpiente con plumas y hay un total de tres cientos sesenta y cinco escaleras.

2. Who are the Itza people? And the Toltecs?
3. What is a cenote? How were they likely used by the Mayan people?
4. How did the Toltec people influence the Aztecs and the Mayans? If the Itzá people are affiliated with the Mayans, what does the architecture of this site tell us about these three cultures?

5. The “plumed serpent” - or combination of birds and snakes - is a recurring image in Mayan and Aztec cultures. Where do we see it in this site? Where else can you see it today?
6. Who are the guerreros? Why would they be recognized at such an important site?
7. What is notable about the number of steps at *el castillo*?

Escena 3: Teotenango
Esta ciudad se construyó en el año 750 CE por los teotihuacanos, pero luego fue ocupado por los aztecas por muchos años. Fue construido en la colina Tetepetl [hill]. *Con los aztecas, la ciudad floreció* [flourished] *hasta su destrucción. Hoy todavía se puede ver ruinas de pirámides, muchas escaleras, una cancha deportiva, y un sistema compleja de purificación del agua.*

1. What do you notice about the “hill” where this city was built? Why would it have been a desired location?
2. What do the ruins of this site tell us about the Aztecs?

Escena 5: Chacchoben
Este sitio fue descubierto en el año 1940 por una familia maya que construyó una casa y vivió aquí por casi 30 años. Luego un arqueólogo americano reportó las ruinas al gobierno mexicano y la familia maya acordó a mudarse a otro lugar.

1. How are these ruins similar to the other sites you’ve already seen?
2. Why do you think the American archaeologist reported the existence of these ruins to the Mexican government? In your opinion - should he have reported them? Should the Mayan family living there have moved? Why or why not?

Escena 6: Teotihuacan
Esta ciudad - construido en el año 100 BCE - era hogar de más de 150,000 personas. El nombre azteca significa ‘birthplace of the gods’. *Como los otros ciudades, la ciudad tiene pirámides y templos - un pirámide del sol y un templo de la luna. La ciudad también incluye casas familiares y muchas tallas* [carvings] *y murales. En esta ciudad también se puede ver evidencia de un cuadriculado* [grid pattern] *de calles y avenidas.*

1. What specific details can we infer about the people who lived in this city? Think about their religious beliefs, cultural practices, knowledge and skills, etc.

Appendix I

AZTEC RUINS VR REFLECTION

para resumir

Think about the brainstorming you did (in class yesterday in class and for homework for today). Make a list here of at least 5 new key characteristics of these cultures from the information today:

Now think about what you've already read, heard, and written about the power and purpose of telling stories. In your opinion, how is viewing or visiting these sites similar to telling and hearing stories? How is it different? Be sure to explain why!

Appendix J

QUETZALCOATL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Tres Preguntas Para Resumir

Hablen con sus grupos para compartir sus ideas. Para tarea, escribe sus respuestas de las tres preguntas (en inglés) en la última página de la leyenda.

1. *How are the Aztec and Mayan cultures represented in the legend of Quetzalcóatl? Use specific lines from the story to make connections to things we've discussed this week.*
2. *This legend comes from cultures who existed hundreds of years ago. What do you think was their purpose for telling the story? Does the purpose change when we read and re-tell it today?*
3. *How does this story help you connect to or understand the Aztec and Mayan cultures in a new way? Provide examples of specific lines from the story that might connect to your own cultural stories.*

Appendix K

CORTES VS. AZTECS BIAS REFLECTION

Para resumir: Think about the idea that stories always have storytellers.

In a NEW google doc, answer the following reflection questions. Be sure to number your answers and to answer each question completely (in English) - that means you shouldn't just say what you think, but you should also explain **why**. Whenever possible, use specific examples from the movie or the legend to support your ideas.

1. First, this video is made by BBC Schools and intended to teach the history of the downfall of the Aztec Empire. In your opinion, is the video biased toward a particular perspective or have they done a good job of representing both sides of the story (considering both the Aztecs and the Spaniards)?
2. How are the depictions of Aztec culture in the video different from the cultural depictions in the legend we read? (For example, think about the description of the city of Tollan from the legend and how the video describes Tenochtitlan.)
3. If the Aztecs and Spaniards are both telling stories about the same group of Aztec people, why would their descriptions be different?
4. Why is it important, therefore, to consider who is telling the stories we hear? In the case of the Aztecs and the Spaniards, is one voice or one story more important to listen to and to retell?

Appendix L

THE PERSON NEXT TO YOU POEM

La Persona a Tu Lado

Prissy Galagarian

La persona a tu lado es el mayor milagro
y el mayor misterio que jamás
conocerás en este momento.

La persona a tu lado es un fuente
inagotable de posibilidad,
deseo y terror,
sonrisas y ceños, risas y lágrimas,
miedos y esperanzas,
todos luchando por ser expresados

La persona a tu lado cree en algo,
apoya algo, cuenta por algo,
vive por algo, trabaja por algo,
espera algo, corre de algo,
corre a algo.

La persona a tu lado tiene problemas y miedos
se pregunta como se va,
es a menudo indeciso y desorganizado,
y ¡dolorosamente cerca al caos!
¿Se atreve de hablártelo?

La persona a tu lado puede vivir contigo
no sólamente junto a ti,
no sólamente a tu lado.

La persona a tu lado es parte de ti,
porque tú eres la persona al lado de ellos.

milagro – *miracle* jamás – *ever* fuente - *reservoir*
agotar - *to exhaust* apoyar - *to stand for* atreverse - *to dare*

Appendix M
EMPATHY DISCUSSION

Un repaso - ¿Por qué contamos cuentos? (*A review – Why do we tell stories?*)

1. for entertainment
2. to share information
3. to learn about others
4. for survival
5. to teach lessons
6. to learn from others' mistakes
7. as basic human instinct
8. to create connection
9. to share parts of who you are (cultural identity)

Creating connection

1. Is it important to hear stories about things we *can't* relate to or we *haven't* experienced?
2. Why or why not?

La empatía

1. What is empathy?
2. How is it related to telling stories?
3. What about when you don't have shared experiences or you can't relate to someone - or even if you disagree with them? Can you still have empathy for them or for their story?

Remember the video…

1. Stories incite action. How or why?
2. How does empathy affect the actions we might take after we hear someone's story?

What about the storytellers?

1. Why is it important to hear the story of the Aztecs from their own perspective instead of (or in addition to) the perspective of the Spaniards?
2. If the Aztecs aren't around anymore to tell their own stories, why is it important for us to know and continue to retell them?

Are there people today who can't tell their stories?
[Think about people whose voices are silenced, who don't have as many opportunities to speak, or who aren't heard equally when they do speak…]

1. How does empathy help us understand their stories?
2. What kind of action might their stories incite? Do we have a responsibility to act once we've heard their stories?

Appendix N

NYT VR VIDEO INTRODUCTION

We've discovered that stories teach lessons, create connections, display cultural identities, and entertain.

You told your own story and experienced some of those connections firsthand.

Then we read stories about people who we might not be able to connect with - you got some ideas about the Aztecs from their own stories first (this was on purpose!). You visited their ruins and most of you wrote (judgment free) about how they lived in these locations and what we can learn from them and their stories.

Then we heard the perspectives of the Spaniards who couldn't (or chose not to) communicate - they didn't try to understand the stories of the Aztecs. Instead, they responded with greed and fear and maybe even hatred because they didn't understand. They reacted with violence.

We talked about how stories *can* help us understand people that we don't know, don't share many experiences with, can't relate to, or might even disagree with. Stories help us build empathy - even for these people - because our brains are hardwired to allow us to participate in other people's experiences when they share them with us with enough emotion and vivid detail.

You all said that it's important to understand these stories from the perspective of the people *in the story*, because it's **their** story. This is especially important for people who may not have many opportunities to tell their story or who aren't heard equally, because we can see what happens when people's stories aren't heard (like the Spaniards, it's far too easy to misunderstand, to fear, and to hate). You also expressed that sometimes there's just value in knowing that you're *heard*.

But stories also incite action. Sympathy (understanding how other people feel in a situation) can lead to empathy (*feeling* what other people feel in a situation) which can lead to action - *acting* based on what we learn and feel by participating in other people's stories.

So when we have the opportunity to hear the stories of the oppressed, the marginalized, the less-often-listened-to, the compassionate response is to act. In some cases we may be able to act to change the situation for that person or those groups of people - but remember not to be a conqueror. Don't act based on what *you* think is best. Act based on what their stories tell you that they *need* and they *want* you to do for them.

And if nothing else, use your voice. Share their stories with other people who might not have ever encountered them. Remember that, for many of you, in many ways, your voice may inherently carry more power because people will listen to you differently. So use it. Use it to help expose others to the idea that different people have different experiences and the best way to avoid fear, hatred, and violence is simply to hear their stories.

Be a listener. Be a person who wants to know the stories of others. Be a person who looks for ways to create connections with others, even across vast divides of difference.

And then - **become a storyteller**.

Appendix O

NYT VR VIDEO RUBRIC

La nota:

- retell the story from your video with authentic, vivid detail
- use a variety of verb tenses (preterite, imperfect, present, present progressive, present perfect, future, conditional, subjunctive, commands)
- express your reaction and response to the story - how did it make you feel, and what does it ask you to do?
    - [this is a great opportunity for a variety of verb tenses - describe your own emotional reactions using the subjunctive, explain what you'd recommend people to do or suggest that they do using the subjunctive, talk about what you will do differently using the future, etc.]
- use correct Spanish grammar (accents, spelling, adjective endings, word order)
- do your best to present your story with accurate pronunciation in an interesting and engaging way
- include any visual or audio aids that will help the class understand the story you're sharing

Think about the reflections you wrote about the first presentation and take steps to help your classmates understand the story - include pictures, limit the words per slide, give people time to follow along and understand,. include lots of details but do your best to use vocabulary that we already know (and, in a pinch, it's ok to include some translations of just a few of the tricky words or the main vocabulary for your story)

After watching your video, write some ideas here to help you plan your presentation:

What identities were displayed in this story?

What info was shared?

What kind of experiences do you share with the person in the story?

What are the experiences described in the story that are new to you?

How does this story create emotional connections to your own life?

What kind of lessons does this story teach?

What kind of action does this story incite?

Appendix P

TECHNOLOGY DISCUSSION

Señora Nelson's Research Questions

1. How do students think about empathy and civic engagement?
2. How do different formats for reflection and interaction influence student participation in discourse around empathy and civic engagement?
3. Can technology aid in empathetic engagement with perspectives of marginalization and oppression and, if so, how?

How does technology influence storytelling? In your personal experience:

1. Does it hinder or prevent authentic storytelling?
2. Does it make it easier to share real stories?
3. Or - does it do both? When, how, or why?

Does your technology use ever help you meet the goals of storytelling we've discussed?

1. share your own real-life story
2. learn about other people's experiences - especially voices of the oppressed
3. build empathy
4. respond with action

Could you change your technology use to meet these goals? How?

Would you? Why or why not?

Appendix Q

TECHNOLOGY SURVEY AND UNIT REFLECTION

La última reflección

First, briefly describe how you watched your video for this project. (With the glitchy NYT VR app, just on your phone, with VR goggles, with or without sound, etc.) Each class had a different level of tech issues, so give me some details to help me understand your experience!

Then, think about how watching the video influenced each of these experiences we've talked about regarding storytelling. Rate each part (1 = didn't happen at all and 5 = happened a lot) and write a few sentences to explain why or why not. If your answer is no, try to add a sentence or two about what changes would have helped you experience it.

1. Stories help us learn about other people.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Stories help us create emotional connections and build empathy for others.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Stories invite us to respond in some way - by retelling the story, by acting to make a change, etc.

1 2 3 4 5

Finally, think about how you experienced (or didn't) each of these steps while listening to your classmates' presentations. Write a few sentences to describe your reaction - did you learn about someone different from yourself? Did you create emotional connections or build empathy? Did you feel the need to respond to these stories? Explain why or why not using some specific examples from the things you wrote down while listening to the presentations.

Final reflection: ¿Qué aprendiste? Create and share one more google doc with Sra. Nelson by Wednesday, May 2nd.

1. What is the most important thing you learned in this unit? (It could be a topic related to Spanish vocabulary or grammar, or other ideas about telling stories, or it could be nothing – anything you want to share is fine!)

2. Which activities in the unit most helped you learn what you described above? You can choose more than one activity – but please share your thoughts on which ones were most effective and <u>why</u> you think that might be.

Activities included: verb review, vocab/grammar worksheets, Google discussion posts, Ian McKellan's storytelling video, reflection journal writing, your personal digital storytelling presentation, exploring Aztec ruins with virtual reality, the legend of Quetzalcoatl, video about Hernán Cortés, in-class discussions, New York Times VR video, group presentation (feel free to include anything else I left off the list!)

3. Do you think that your future learning, ideas, or actions might be different because of what you learned in this unit? If so, explain why and how they will change. If not, explain why not.

4. Any final thoughts or reflections on technology, storytelling, empathy, and action? Feel free to share your general reactions - what did you enjoy or not enjoy about this unit? Would would have have changed? What else do you want me to know?

Appendix R

FOLLOW-UP TECHNOLOGY QUESTION

Aside from our conversations last year, describe any experience(s) at school where you have been explicitly taught about how to use (or not use) technology. Tell me as much as you can – when it was taught (freshman, sophomore, junior year), who taught it and to whom (English class, advisory, etc.), and what it was about. Then, considering any and all of these experiences, summarize (in a sentence or two) what general lesson about technology you feel you've been taught at school and whether you felt it was a positive, negative, or neutral message about using technology.

Appendix S

NYT VR VIDEO LIST

Title	Description
Sensation of Sound	a woman who gained partial hearing through receiving a cochlear implant at age 20
Explore Bears Ears Through Indigenous Voices	Bears Ears National Monuement is at the center of America's public lands debate. Visit the area in 360.
Southern Slavery, Unsanitized	The Whitney Plantation became the only plantation museum in Louisana with a focus on slavery when it opened to the public in 2014.
Food Inequality in Venezuela: Dining Out	Venezuela's economic crisis has left more than 80 percent of its citizens in poverty. But some can still afford to eat out.
Children in Crisis	Food shortages and the lack of affordable goods has led to growing malnutrition rates in Venezuela.
Feeding Eight on Scraps	Food shortages and rising inflation have made basic groceries unaffordable for many Venezuelans, over 80 percent of whom now live in poverty.
Growing Up in Prison	Step into a nursery in Lima, Peru where children play and learn within the confines of the Santa Monica de Chorillos prison, where their mothers are inmates.
Keeping Indian Folk Painting Alive	An award-winning Madhubani painter explains the historic art form and how she plans to help keep it alive
AfroPunk: Celebrating Black Diversity	The Brooklyn-based festival has everything from state competitions to public art. It is built to be a safe space for expression.
U.S. Rallies Behind Charlottesville	Vigils were held across the country on Sunday to honor the life of Heather D. Heyer, who was killed a day earlier while protesting a rally of white nationalists.
Swimming While Black: Then and Now	Black children drown five times as often as white children, according to the Centers for Disease Control. The Harlem Honeys and Bears, trying to help by teaching free youth swim lessons.

U.S. Citizenship's Final Step: The Oath	Attend a naturalization ceremony with a lawyer from Cameroon as he takes the oath of allegiance to become a U.S. Citizen.
6 Years Old and Desegregating a School	On Nov. 14, 1960, Ruby Bridges desegregated the all-white William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans.
Five Sites of New York's LGBT History	Jacob Rils Park, a Manhattan Church, Bum Bum Bar and more. In 360 degrees, visit five sites that helped shape New York City's LGBT community.
Visiting Dad in Prison	Derek Smith has been incarcerated for most of his daughter's lives after robbing a jewelry store. Make the trip to visit him in prison.
Remembering the Pulse Nightclub Attack	On June 12, 2016, the Pulse nightclub in Orlando was the scene of a mass shooting. Hear from some of the people who visit the site.
Forced From Their Village by Violence	In northwest Central African Republic, an armed rebel group has burned villages to the ground, displacing thousands.
Confederate Monuments Come Down and Emotions Rise	New Orleans is removing four monuments dedicated to the era of the Confederacy. See what remains of the sites in 360 degrees.
A Refugee Camp Inside an Abandoned Airport	Asylum seekers live inside the arrivals terminal of a decaying airport in Greece.
A Gender Fluid Mother's Day	During Drag Queen Story Hour, drag queens read books to children. Sit in as Ona Louise reads a story in celebration of Mother's Day.
Omar and Sarah, a Syrian Refugee Story	The Times spent months with several Syrian refugee families as they navigated integration into Weimar, Germany. Step inside Sarah's and Omar's home.
Genocide's Legacy: Preserving Auschwitz	Nazi Germany's largest death camp is under construction in order to preserve the memory of the Holocaust.
Genocide's Legacy: Reconciliation Village, Rwanda	The 1994 Rwandan genocide tore the country apart. But today, in the village of Mbyo, perpetrators and victims live side by side.
Genocide's Legacy: Museum in a Khmer Rouge Prison	At least 1.7 million people were killed under the Khmer Rouge rule of Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. Take a 360 tour of a former prison now museum.

A Border Town's Fragile Revival	Boquillas del Carmen in Mexico is a small village which destiny depends on an open border. The proposed border wall could pose a threat.
The Road to Nowhere	People Seeking safety from Boko Haram – many of them women and children – are living along a highway in Niger, struggling to survive.
Few Entrances, and Sometimes, No Exit	Ride along as a New Yorker in a wheelchair explains why more people with disabilities don't take the train.
This Week in Hate: A Sikh Woman's Subway Ride	Rajpreet Heir was on the L train, on her way to a friend's birthday party, when a man started harassing her. She tells her story in this 360-degree video.
Coming Out in Droves for Free Health Care	A nonprofit sets up temporary clinics that provide free medical services to people in rural areas of the United States. Hundreds show up.
A Mother Goes Into Hiding.	Fearing deportation, Jeanette Vizguerra has been living in a church basement in Denver. Watch her family visit her in sanctuary.
How a Mother Copes with Zika	At the epicenter of the Zika crisis, a mother in Refice, Brazil, struggles to care for her afflicted baby.
'It Could Happen Anywhere'	Volunteers and family members assess the damage at two Jewish cemeteries that were vandalized in the same week.
Florida's Forgotten 'Above-Ground' Railroad	Escaped slaves and Native Americans created a thriving community in the Florida Panhandle. Hundreds were killed when U.S. forces attacked it in 1816.
A Standing Rock Camp Is Burned.	The largest protest camp at Standing Rock was cleared on Wednesday after the governor of North Dakota ordered its evacuation.
Before the Wall: a Borderlands Journey	Take a trip along the Texas portion of the 1,900-mile border between the United States and Mexico, where a fence may be replaced with a wall.
Meant to Resettle Refugees, An Empty Home	A refugee family from Myanmar expected to move into a house in St. Paul, Minn., this month. Furnished and full of toys, it will sit empty for a while.
Protests of Immigration Ban Continue	Protests emerged across the country in response to Trump's executive order about immigration. See the signs and hear the chants in several American cities.

‘Living in a Condition of Hopelessness’	Precious Land was one of 64 people shot in Chicago over Memorial Day weekend. After over seven months in a coma, she died this month.
In Solidarity: Women’s Marches Across the World	Thousands of people marched in solidarity with American women in support of equal rights. Listen to voices from around the world.
A Nation Divided at Inauguration	Stand between supporters and protesters as Donald J. Trump is sworn in as the 45th president of the United States.
Where Civil Rights Meet the Civil War	Lexington, Va., has a rich Confederate history. This year, residents marched in the city’s first Martin Luther King Jr. parade.
Seeing Family Through the Border Fence	At the border near San Diego, separated family members reunite through the fence.
Sleeping on Denver’s Bitter Cold Streets	A video of the Denver police seizing blankets from Jerry Burton and others in late November created a public outcry.
Syrian Girls Do Robotics	In Lebanon, hundreds of Syrian refugee girls participated in a robotics workshop designed to inspire them to pursue STEM careers.
Still Living With Bottled Water in Flint	In Flint, officials say the filtered water is safe. Keri Webber describes the health issues her family and other residents still face.
‘It’s True, the Germans Killed Us’	More than 100 years after a genocide of the Herero people in Namibia, Germany is acknowledging its role. Listen to a Herero elder recounting the story.
‘Democratic Spaces’ in La Paz Street Parades	La Paz, Bolivia is host to more than 1000 street festivals a year, and participants describe them as a safe space to express themselves
Taking Border Security Into Their Own Hands	Arizona Border Recon has patrolled the state’s southern border since 2011. Follow the controversial group on one of its operations.
The Cramped Quarters of a Migrant Boat	Abandoned boats, once used by migrants crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe, lie in a junkyard on the Italian island of Lampedusa.
Feeing Boko Haram and Food Shortages	Along the Niger-Nigeria border, just like other areas where militants are active, hundreds of thousands of people are facing food scarcity.

Floating Across the Mexico Border	A ferry in a small Texas town has been offering trips to and from Mexico for decades. Take a ride across the Rio Grande.
One Man's Fears for Standing Rock	Richard White, a life-long resident of Standing Rock, discusses his relationship to the land and the water, and his fear for their future.
Living With a Hurricane's Devastation	More than a month after Hurricane Matthew ripped through parts of Haiti, some residents in the coastal town of Jeremie are still in their broken houses waiting for aid. Visit the home of a survivor.
'Jungle" on Fire: Migrant Camp Destroyed	French authorities demolished the sprawling camp in Calais, France, last week. Step inside 'the Jungle' as it was razed and burned.
The Fight for Falluja	Embed with Iraqi forces as they retake a city from ISIS – and experience the battle's aftermath.
Notes on Blindness	After he went blind, John Hull used sound to rediscover a rich sensory universe.
The Displaced	War has driven 30 million children from their homes. These are the stories of three of them.
We Who Remain	A relentless war persists in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. Thousands of people have been forced to flee. This is the story of those who remain.
Indefinite	Immigrants facing a future of indefinite detention. Step inside their world.
Policing Flint	Step inside a police department struggling with budget cuts and public distrust.
10 Shots Across the Border	The killing of a Mexican 16-year-old raises troubling questions about the U.S. Border Patrol.
Vivid Memories of Tule Lake Internment Camp	A survivor of a maximum-security Japanese Internment camp recalls his experience at Tule Lake in Northern California.
Waves of Grace	An ebola survivor recalls her harrowing experience with the disease and her gratitude for life.

Appendix T

DISCUSSION POST RUBRIC

Online Discussion Rubric
Online discussion is meant to enhance your learning of the subject as you share your thoughts, perspectives, and experiences with the class. Be respectful and keep an open mind as you read posts from your classmates and when you respond. Abuse of the online discussion board will be subject to disciplinary action.

Criteria	Unacceptable 0 points	Acceptable 1 point	Good 2 points	Excellent 3 points
Initial assignment	Did not complete assignment.	Posts adequate assignment with some thought and preparation; doesn't address all aspects of the task.	Posts well developed assignment that addresses all aspects of the task; lacks full development of concepts.	Posts well developed assignment that fully addresses and develops all aspects of the task.
Follow-up post (when applicable)	Posts no follow-up responses to others.	Posts shallow contribution to discussion (e.g., agrees or disagrees); does not enrich discussion.	Elaborates on an existing posting with further comment or observation.	Demonstrates analysis of others' posts; extends meaningful discussion by building on previous posts.
Content	Posts information that is off-topic, incorrect, or irrelevant to discussion.	Repeats but does not add substantive information to the discussion.	Posts information that is factually correct; lacks full development of concept or thought.	Posts factually correct, reflective and substantive information; advances discussion.
References and support (when applicable)	Includes no references or supporting experience	Uses personal experience, but no references to readings	Incorporates some references and personal experience	Uses references to readings or personal experience to support comments.
Clarity and mechanics	Posts long, unorganized or rude content that may contain multiple errors or may be inappropriate.	Communicates in friendly, courteous and helpful manner with some errors in clarity or mechanics.	Contributes valuable information to discussion with minor clarity or mechanics errors.	Contributes to discussion with clear and concise comments in an easy to read style that is free of grammatical or spelling errors.

APPENDIX U

IRB APPROVAL

RPI Name: William Trent

Project Title: Engaging Technologies for Empathy-Based Civic Learning
IRB #: 18440
Approval Date: January 2, 2018

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form and related materials. Your application was reviewed by the UIUC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS). OPRS has determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b)(1). This message serves to supply OPRS approval for your IRB application.

Please contact OPRS if you plan to modify your project (change procedures, populations, consent letters, etc.). Otherwise you may conduct the human subjects research as approved for a period of five years. Exempt protocols will be closed and archived at the time of expiration. Researchers will be required to contact our office if the study will continue beyond five years.

Copies of the approved consent form(s) (page(s) 25-29 in the attached, approved protocol) are to be used when obtaining informed consent.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me at OPRS, or visit our website at http://oprs.research.illinois.edu

Sincerely,



Rebecca Miller, MSW

Human Subjects Research Specialist, Office for the Protection of Research Subjects