

Carroll, D., & Carney, J. (2005). Personal perspectives: Using multimedia to express cultural identity. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 4(4), 465-488.

Personal Perspectives: Using Multimedia to Express Cultural Identity

[David Carroll](#)

Western Washington University

[Joanne Carney](#)

Western Washington University

Abstract

The Personal Perspectives multimedia project described in this article engages teacher candidates in examining and representing their cultural identity by means of Apple's iMovie software. This digital storytelling project was developed by the authors, who are instructors in elementary education and instructional technology at a state university whose college of education strongly emphasizes intercultural education. The paper begins with a project overview, then explains how the project is scaffolded in each course—providing downloadable pdf files of task sheets and student work. A discussion follows of the benefits and challenges of a cross-course multimedia project of this type, citing feedback received from students.

Personal Perspectives: Using Multimedia to Express Cultural Identity

How can teacher educators prepare elementary teachers who will respond sensitively to students who are ethnically and culturally diverse? We might begin by making them more aware of their own culture—helping them see the values, beliefs, and ways of living that underlie their own behaviors and attitudes. Once they are aware of their own cultural identity, preservice teachers are better able to recognize how culture operates within their classrooms, empathize with students from different cultural backgrounds, and take steps to adapt their teaching accordingly (Leeman & Ledoux, 2003; Zeichner et al., 1998).

The Personal Perspectives multimedia project described in this article engages teacher candidates in examining and representing their own cultural influences. The project was developed collaboratively by the authors, who are instructors in the elementary education department at Western Washington University, whose college of education strongly emphasizes intercultural education. During the first or second quarter after admittance to the elementary education program, students enroll in a block of five courses concurrently. David Carroll teaches an Effective Teaching course in this block; Joanne Carney is the instructor for Classroom Uses of Instructional Technology. The project described in this paper contributes in a significant way to achievement of learning objectives in both.

In this article, an overview is first provided of our multimedia Personal Perspectives project. An explanation of how it is scaffolded in each course follows, providing links to downloadable pdf files of all task sheets and assessment rubrics. Information about the project's evolution is also included. Finally, the benefits and challenges of a cross-course multimedia project of this type are discussed, along with feedback received on the project from our students.

Personal Perspectives: An Overview

Personal Perspectives is an extended learning activity that asks students to express their own cultural identity in text, image, sound, and video. It is situated within Classroom Uses of Instructional Technology (IT) as a graded assignment and represents at least 2 weeks of class activity in that course. The project also plays an important role in Effective Teaching (ET), for there it is the first stage in a quarter-long exploration of ethnicity, culture, social class, and family structure. The Effective Teaching course culminates in a cultural inquiry project, whereby students investigate the cultural characteristics of a particular family group.

In the following section, our learning goals for the assignment will be discussed, then the process by which Personal Perspectives is scaffolded in both Instructional Technology and Effective Teaching will be explained. When references are made to task sheets and assessment rubrics, hyperlinks are provided so that the reader is able to download them in pdf format. A model Personal Perspectives presentation (in QuickTime format) is linked in the Classroom Uses of Instructional Technology section.

Effective Teaching

As part of the first course block in our teacher education program, Effective Teaching is designated as the site for introducing ideas about intercultural education, or as we more commonly refer to it, culturally responsive teaching. The course launches our students toward developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for helping all students learn. The 1 day per week practicum associated with this first block of courses places students in schools with a significant ethnic/racial diversity and high rates of poverty.

Two extensive inquiry projects undertaken in the Effective Teaching course are designed to help our students understand the experience of school from the perspective of children and their families and learn how to use such knowledge to adapt their teaching to better support student learning.

Teacher candidates work in teams on a cultural inquiry project in which they focus on a family group represented in their practicum site or the region more generally (e.g., Mexican-American; particular Native American tribal groups; Russian; Punjabi) that is

unfamiliar to them. Using both campus and library resources and direct investigation in the community, they explore the history of the group in the area, economic opportunities and difficulties experienced, organizations and resource providers working on the families' behalf, and the group's experiences with education and schools.

To guard against the potential for students' developing an "essentialistic" approach to ethnic-cultural differences (Leeman & Ledoux, 2003), they also complete a descriptive child study, in which they observe patterns of physical presence, relationships, temperament, interests, and approaches to learning in the school participation of one child in their practicum experience. At the end they develop recommendations for sustaining or adapting instruction and the classroom environment to support this child's learning.

Learning Goals

In developing the Personal Perspectives project David was looking for a way to launch both the cultural inquiry and the child study project by locating ideas about culture and individual difference in the lives of our teacher education students. A former colleague teaching the Classroom Uses of Instructional Technology course initiated the Personal Perspectives Project before Joanne arrived. In that first iteration, it served as a kind of electronic PowerPoint scrapbook, in which students learned some basic instructional technology (IT) skills, but because of the press of other business in the course, there was little scaffolding of ideas about culture and identity.

Joanne arrived on campus right at the point when David contemplated devoting more attention in the Effective Teaching course to students' own cultural identities. Together, we decided to work on strengthening the assignment and making it part of both courses. Our common goal for the project was to foster a genuine and significant examination by our students of how their personal perspectives had been shaped by cultural experience and how that shaping, in turn, had influenced their ideas about teaching and learning and schooling.

Prompted in part by reading from Sleeter (2001) about home and family culture, we began to consider how to use the project to get students thinking and talking about culture and, eventually, race and class, so that it would draw more extensively and critically on students' own backgrounds and experiences. As Banks suggested,

Every person has multiple identities that are formed through a unique and complex intersection of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, and ability. In order for prospective teachers to become effective teachers in our multicultural society, they must first understand their own identities as complex multidimensional people in a multicultural society. (as quoted in Zeichner et al., 1998, p. 168)

As a preparation for the further investigation of issues of race and class in the Effective Teaching course, David also expected this project to provide students with their own texts of experience for examining how their prevailing mainstream backgrounds had situated them in particular ways in American society. More than one of our students had expressed the view that they had no culture as white Americans. As Florio-Ruane and Raphael (2001) noted, this kind of comment

...resonates with work in the field of cultural studies, which asserts that members of the so-called "dominant culture" hold taken-for-granted assumptions of an amorphous

monoculturalism (Frankenburg, 1993) and a stance of “color blindness” (Paley, 1979/89). This social positioning limits their reflection upon and discussion of race, racism, privilege, and Whiteness (McIntyre, 1997).

Although the large majority of our students come from a white, middle, or upper class background, we also have students of other racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. We hoped that by helping all of our students investigate and recognize the distinctiveness and variation in their own backgrounds, despite the many similarities superficially visible among those with a European/American background, they would all gain a starting point for investigating how cultural variables influence teaching and learning more generally.

Project Sequence

In the Effective Teaching course, the Personal Perspectives Project was designed in four parts. We agreed to frame the project around a list of questions inspired by Sleeter (2001):

- What is the structure of your family? Who are members of your family and what roles do they play?
- How is leisure time spent?
- What role does religion play in your family?
- What do you and others in your family read, listen to as music, enjoy as art?
- Who works hard at what? Are there particular occupations common in generations of your family?
- Where did your family originate and how did you come to live in the Northwest? Are there any common experiences that tie you, your family, and others in a larger group together?
- What languages are spoken?
- What does your diet consist of? What are the times and routines of your meals?
- Are there any visual symbols of your family or larger group membership (i.e., clothing, jewelry, etc.)?
- Are there any organizations or rituals that are important in your family life?

The complete assignment appears in [Appendix A](#). Parts I and II were to be completed after the first class session. The headings in Part II were generated to encourage students to explore connections between patterns of family life and their emerging beliefs and values about being an adult and a teacher in our society.

In order to help students use the bulleted questions to examine their own cultural roots, David tried an experiment using poetry. The purpose was to tap into a deeper level of expressiveness that is often illusive in responses to graded course assignments in which students have become experts at anticipating what they think their professor will want to hear. The Personal Perspectives assignment was introduced on the first day of class with a preliminary ungraded activity borrowed from Christensen (2001), based on writing poetry using imagery about childhood settings, voices, and people. Students were asked to think about the bulleted questions and, using the poem “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon (1999) as an example, come to class with a similar poem to describe their own upbringing. (This poem is reproduced on several Web sites, including http://www.carts.org/staff_poem2.html)

The next day in class, students matched up in pairs with the same person they had introduced themselves to on the first class session and completed the Where I’m From

partner activity (see [Appendix B](#)). Even though this activity occurred during the second class session when students hardly knew each other, they were noticeably excited and engaged. The qualities of vividness in their descriptions and discussions and the genuine imagery of their poems were striking. Three examples are included in [Appendix C](#).

After sharing the Where I'm From poems with each other in class, David wanted students to gain perspective on the ways in which their own family culture influenced their viewpoints on issues of teaching by hearing from each other. Part III of the project was designed to achieve that aim and to prepare students for writing a concluding essay, as described in Part IV (see [Appendix A](#)).

Before beginning the group work in class, David invited students to think briefly about ground rules they should keep in mind for conducting the conversations. The first group to try this assignment agreed upon three: don't denigrate others' ideas; use good listening skills; respect the confidentiality of this conversation.

Impact of the Project in Effective Teaching

This project has now been used in four successive quarters of teaching. Although the class has limited time to carry out the group work and talk together about it afterward, there are typically some striking comments, a few of which David noted in a journal after class one quarter. Allison (student names are pseudonyms) spoke about how her siblings were all encouraged to make choices and follow their own interests as children and have done so as adults. She valued that idea and expects children she teaches to have their own interests and hopes to give them choices in her teaching. Claudia spoke about her family's love of endless talk. David suggested to her how that might influence the atmosphere she chose to create in her classroom around talk. Charlotte, an older student, spoke of her daughter telling her at a certain point, "I'm not my sister!" and how that had opened her eyes as a mother and made her realize how individuals were distinct despite a common family background.

After combining the introductory poetry activity with subsequent individual and group reflection in several iterations of the project, David is pleased with how the process seems to evoke genuine recollections and insights underlying the ways in which each student is situated in personal cultural influences. Students become engaged in linking their own identity and autobiography with their own emerging perspectives on teaching and issues related to intercultural education (as in Leeman & Ledoux, 2003).

The following excerpt from one student's Personal Perspectives essay illustrates how this project provided her with an occasion for examining her own ethnicity/race.

My standpoint has also been shaped by how I view my own sense of ethnicity/race, and although I almost always classify myself as "Caucasian" when having to check a specified box on an application, sometimes, if it is offered, I am happy to choose "Other" instead. I feel that when people look at me, they see a "white person," yet many times throughout my life I have been asked, "What are you?" My olive-colored complexion and dark features come from my dad, who is half Italian (my ancestors are from Sicily) and half Lebanese and Syrian (or as I call it, "Middle Eastern"). The other half of me is Norwegian, Irish, English, Dutch, and Scottish, and I have grown up surrounded by the American culture for all of my life....Personally, I have always liked to have the complexion that I do. I absolutely love how I can tan easily and I guess it has always been easy for me to blend in with the majority (white) crowd, since I have only half of my dad's genes. My dad, on

the other hand, has struggled throughout his life with feeling oppressed by racist comments, especially after September 11th....

Students begin to learn important things about each other that help create a kind of inclusive atmosphere in the class. They also gain a more informed and complex picture of how issues associated with race, class, and culture work in our society and, in particular, how they have played out in each others' lives.

Classroom Uses of Instructional Technology

After the project is scaffolded in Effective Teaching and students have had the opportunity to think about their own home and family culture, Joanne introduces the project in Classroom Uses of Instructional Technology (IT 444). Project learning goals and sequence are described in the following sections.

Learning Goals

It has been widely recognized that in order to use technology effectively in their own classrooms, preservice teachers need to experience it in their professional preparation (e.g., Moursund, 1999). This project is part of a college-wide effort to integrate models of technology usage into teacher education coursework; thus, its most comprehensive goal is to show how technology can support teaching and learning. Personal Perspectives is a particularly powerful model because it extends across two courses. As instructor of IT 444, Joanne also has a number of specific learning goals for the project:

Students will...

- Experience the manner in which multimedia can engage learners and promote deep learning.
- Consider how multimedia might be used in a diverse P-12 classroom for active learning, the development of media literacy skills, and multicultural education.
- Develop skills in using hardware and software associated with multimedia production.
- Demonstrate *National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers* (NETS-T) (International Society for Technology in Education, 2002).

Engaging Learners and Promoting Deep Learning

Research suggests that the animation and interactivity of multimedia can significantly improve student learning, when compared with traditional forms of media such as textbooks and lecture (Meyer, Rocheleau, McMullen, & Ritter, 1991). Research also suggests that a curriculum enhanced by multimedia will support the learning of students with varied backgrounds, different learning styles, and limited language proficiency (e.g., Brown & Campione, 1986; King, 1994; Wittrock, 1990). It is with this research in mind that Joanne provides teacher candidates with a model multimedia project that can easily be extended into the P-12 classroom

Engagement theory (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999) provides a conceptual framework to explain why ambitious, technology-supported projects like Personal Perspectives can be so effective. Technology used in a collaborative context and for an authentic audience can foster student engagement in ways that would not be possible without technology.

Kearsley and Shneiderman noted that engaged learning prompts active cognitive processes such as creativity, problem-solving, reasoning, decision-making, and evaluation. In the Personal Perspectives project, IT students both produce and view multimedia—which gives them direct experience of its engaging nature and cognitive challenge. After the project's completion, Joanne structures a written reflection on how this technology might be used to promote active learning in the P-12 classroom.

Promoting P-12 Media Literacy and Multicultural Education

Teachers from elementary through higher education ought to have the development of media literacy among their goals. Theorists have suggested that these skills are an important part of intercultural education. As Kellner (1998) noted,

Media literacy is an important part of multicultural education because many people's conceptions of gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, and class are constituted by the media...media literacy involves reading images critically, interpreting sounds, and seeing how media texts produce meaning in a multiplicity of ways. Since media are a central part of our cultural experience from childhood to the grave, training in media literacy should begin early in life and continue into adulthood, as new technologies are constantly creating new media and as new genres, technical innovations, aesthetic forms, and conventions are constantly emerging. (p. 118)

Kellner argued that, in light of the important role of media culture in young people's lives, it is extremely important to begin teaching multicultural and media literacy at early grade levels.

McLaren, Hammer, Sholle, and Rielly (1995) made a similar point about how important it is to teach students the conventions and techniques of media production; she noted that P-12 student video projects can be empowering—the skills enable them to advance their own aims. Preservice teachers themselves need to be empowered with those same multimedia authoring skills in order to teach them to their students. Preservice teachers also need models for teaching their students how to critically evaluate media products. For these reasons, a critical literacy activity has been built into the Personal Perspectives project.

Developing Multimedia Hardware and Software Skills

Helping students learn or enhance their skills with the hardware and software associated with multimedia production is another project learning goal. Hardware used during the project includes computers (Mac and PC), digital still and video cameras, and scanners. A number of software applications are also taught. Although PowerPoint was the basic software tool used for organizing and presenting text, images, and sounds when the Personal Perspectives project began, we have now begun using Apple's iMovie software. Other ancillary software used includes Adobe Photoshop and Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>), a free audio editing program.

Developing NETS-T Competencies

In addition to developing skills with multimedia hardware and software, Personal Perspectives was designed to align with *National Education Technology Standards for Teachers* (International Society for Technology in Education, 2002); the following Professional Preparation Performance Profiles are addressed:

Students will...

1. Identify the benefits of technology to maximize student learning and facilitate higher order thinking skills.
2. Differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate uses of technology for teaching and learning while using electronic resources to design and implement learning activities.
3. Identify specific technology applications and resources that maximize student learning, address learner needs, and affirm diversity.

Achieving these NETS-T competencies and the previous three learning goals gives future teachers essential technical and pedagogical skills they will need in their own classrooms.

Project Sequence

[Video 1](#) and [Video 2](#) provide an introduction to the Personal Perspectives project by showing some model presentations. These models are helpful in giving students ideas about how multimedia can communicate culture metaphorically, and how a 2-4 minute digital story can communicate the essence of oneself. To show students how others have captured personal experiences through digital storytelling, we explore the [Digital Family Story](#) Web site—the [Capture Whales](#) link on that site, in particular. [**Editor's Note:** See the [Resources](#) section at the end of this paper for a list of URLs to Web sites mentioned in this paper.] To give students a better sense of how the technical features of iMovie software can be used to bring images, sounds, transitions, titles, and video together, we view prizewinning P-12 student movies on the [Apple iLife](#) Web site. Exploration of this Apple site also gives students ideas about how the technologies they are learning have been used in schools. Viewing these high-quality multimedia products prompts even technophobes among the group to say, "If kindergartners can do this, I ought to be able to!"

Once they have images of the possible, students are then directed to a link on the class Web page where they download a task sheet that gives an overview of the project and its objectives (see [Appendix D](#)). The project has four parts: Thinking about Family Culture, Demonstrating Technological Skills, Cultures in *Our* Community, and Extending It Into the P-12 Classroom.

Part 1: Thinking About Family Culture

Before plunging into the technical work of creating the presentation, students need assistance in developing the content. How is one to capture the essence of one's cultural identity in a 2 - to 4 -minute iMovie? Much of this preparation has already occurred in David's Effective Teaching course; Joanne's IT 444 Personal Perspectives task sheet simply provides students with the same questions by Sleeter (2001) they have used earlier. Students review these questions once again as they begin writing text and collecting images and sound files for the project.

Part 2: Demonstrating Technological Skills

After identifying the essential characteristics of their own culture, students assemble their media in a 2- to 4-minute iMovie with these technical characteristics:

- One or more digital pictures.
- Piece of art or poetry.
- 5-15 second video clip.
- Sound file of a piece of music.
- Voice recording.
- At least two transitions and two titles.
- Credits to indicate the source of music or image files.

After seeing model presentation and receiving the task sheet, students begin gathering and scanning photos, finding appropriate music, filming video segments, and accomplishing other tasks. While they work outside of class to assemble project components, we do our in-class critical literacy activities (resources on the [Project-Based Learning with Multimedia](#) website and instructor-designed materials are used). Students also create storyboards as a planning device for their stories.

Once the various media components are on hand and video segments downloaded, students are given two class periods of instruction in the use of iMovie software (nearly 4 hours). Afterwards, they continue working on the project independently, receiving technical support from consultants who staff the college computer labs.

Part 3: Cultures in *Our* Community

The most exciting and rewarding stage of the project is the day when students show their presentations to classmates. Having this authentic audience of peers is one reason why Personal Perspectives is so motivating. All are deeply invested in their presentations: Each movie reveals deep aspects of self and is shown to people who, due to the cohort structure of the program, are becoming close friends.

The day Personal Perspectives are presented, Joanne brings snacks, and the atmosphere is festive. Their faces alight with enthusiasm, students cheer each presentation and exclaim over the things they are discovering about each other. Images of beloved individuals in their lives and stories of family traditions are accompanied by whimsical or poignant musical choices, voiceovers, and artful transitions. When the media are brought together skillfully, these presentations become truly evocative expressions of individuals in their cultural context.

The project contributes greatly to the development of community in the group. It is also a primer in multicultural education. These prospective teachers discover several important lessons: that culture is not simply about food, festivals, and costumes. It has to do with the quotidian events that have shaped each of us within our families and communities. They learn too that it is not only the people who look “diverse” who have different cultures, but that even those whose faces are the same color may have had exotic experiences and be culturally quite dissimilar. Both of these lessons are of value for aspiring teachers who must themselves respond sensitively to students from diverse backgrounds and educate them to live in a multicultural society.

Students have commented on what a powerful emotional experience these presentations are and how much they contribute to a sense of community among the group. For example,

I had never thought about technology’s community -building abilities. Building a classroom community is something that I have recently found to be extremely important to me. And I have been thinking a lot about fun and creative ways to get to know one

another in order to trust and feel comfortable taking risks around each other. Our iMovie presentations showed me a new way to allow my students to share a piece of themselves. After watching my classmate's iMovies, I felt so much closer to them. By providing personal visual information, I could see where these people came from and what kinds of things we had in common. It really made me feel more comfortable around them because I had opened myself up to them and them to me. Integrating these types of things into the community-building portion of the school year can be very powerful. I just think that using the technology really allowed me to see more and become more engaged in each person than if they had gotten up there and given a report on themselves.

Leeman and Ledoux (2003) noted how important it is to create a feeling of safety so that students can make the personal contributions necessary for intercultural learning. This student has realized with some surprise that technology has helped individuals in this class feel more comfortable taking risks around each other.

Sharing personal stories seems to be a transformative experience in Joanne's class. McDrury and Alterio (2002) have noted, "Some stories have little to do with knowledge and more to do with ways of being. When stories touch us in this manner, the way we view others and ourselves and the worlds we inhabit alters irrevocably" (p. 50). Student comments suggest Personal Perspectives may have this kind of impact (an outcome we will be investigating further).

Part 4: Extending It Into the P-12 Classroom

As noted previously, while students are in the midst of the project, working independently to gather various media components, Joanne engages them in a critical literacy activity that models how they might develop their own students' media literacy skills. Later, after project presentations are complete and students have read a research article on multimedia in P-12 classrooms (Penuel, Means, & Simkins, 2000), they are prompted to reflect on the following questions:

- What are the advantages of multimedia for learning—especially for learning about different cultures?
- How could you use similar technologies in an elementary or middle school classroom?
- What are the challenges for the teacher in planning a project of this sort?
- What do we mean by "active learning" (see <http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/>) and how can multimedia projects and other technologies encourage it?

The writing done in response to these questions is later used in a final course reflection paper on how technology can support valuable learning outcomes. Students are also engaged in large group discussion of the issues.

Impact of the Project in IT 444—Student Response

Student response to the Personal Perspectives project has been positive: On an evaluation form distributed at the end of the quarter, nearly all ranked it as 1, 2, or 3 in terms of usefulness (out of 10 tasks that are part of the IT 444 course). They noted its difficulty but see the technology's potential for future use and its value for learning about culture:

This experience of making an iMovie was fun, frustrating, time-consuming, and inspiring. I learned that iMovie is not as hard as it looks—it has wide possibilities for future use. I also learned that you can learn a lot about somebody by watching their movie. Just by

seeing what they choose to put into their movie says a lot about what they value and where they come from. What a great way to explore culture!

In informal conversation, students beam with pleasure as they talk about sharing the project with family and friends; they place a small QuickTime Web version of their Personal Perspectives on the Web site they have begun to construct. Students also report excitedly to Joanne as they use their skills with iMovie to create multimedia presentations in other block classes. These movies are also placed in students' electronic portfolios, generally with some comment to this effect: "If you want to know who am I as a person and will be as a teacher, take a look at my Personal Perspectives presentation."

Student responses, while positive at the end of the term, are not always so sanguine while in the middle of the project. Hardware and software glitches at times have caused great anxiety among these technology novices. The stressfulness of the project is also increased, paradoxically, by its meaningfulness. Communicating one's personal stories and the touchstones of one's culture prompt students to invest much more time and effort in the project than is required. One difficulty has been trying to convince students to "Keep it simple!" when they are attempting complex tasks beyond their technological capabilities or that of the software they use. Like all artists, they have visions in their minds of how their creation ought to look and sometimes are frustrated when they lack the means to translate that vision into multimedia reality.

Because they are so personally invested, many students spend long hours in the computer lab working obsessively on small details. A peer influence also contributes to the passion for high-quality products. Students observe their classmates' presentations as they work elbow-to-elbow in the lab, and they are inspired by others' successes, given new ideas by other's innovations. Thus, no matter how much restraint is preached, students are predisposed by personal factors to invest a great deal of time and energy in the project. They are not working primarily for a grade. When this tendency toward complexity is combined with technical snafus, the result can be a quite demanding period of 3 weeks. As one student noted during the project's first year: "I think the Personal Perspectives is a good assignment, but maybe making it clear that it doesn't have to be as involved as many of us made it." During the project's second year, this feedback was addressed through several significant modifications.

Impact of the Project in IT 444—Instructor Response

Joanne has had the opportunity to implement this Personal Perspectives project in the IT 444 class four times. At first we used PowerPoint as the basic tool for multimedia authoring, and the results were oriented toward text and literal expression. Students seemed to think they were doing a boring old academic presentation, with bullet points for all the important facts of their lives. They were not thinking visually or metaphorically. Most were not taking advantage of the rich capabilities of multimedia. Later, as David began scaffolding the task with poetry and another Effective Teaching instructor introduced the project in her class with a metaphorical drawing task, the products gradually became more expressive.

Joanne also made modifications in the assignment. The most significant alteration occurred in the project's second year. Students began using only iMovie software, rather than inserting a QuickTime movie into a PowerPoint framework. This change in software proved to be highly beneficial! We were able to avoid many of the technological problems we had experienced when using multiple applications, and framing the task as a *story* has made student presentations much richer and more expressive. Thinking of their lives as *narratives* enabled students to tap into the human predilection for storytelling and more

easily to find organizing themes. McDrury and Alterio's (2002) claim appeared to be true: "Storytelling is an ideal learning tool for expressing cultural realities" (p. 34).

Modifications also included introducing the project in a more effective way—giving students visions of what was possible with multimedia by showing Personal Perspectives done by previous students and by digital storytellers whose multimedia products are on the Web. These models raised the bar for students technologically and expressively. These changes in software and project introduction, along with David's experiments with poetry and other activities, helped our students express their culture thematically and poetically—getting beyond inert, scrapbook images to something deeper.

As we began the second year of the project, we also solved many of the technological problems that had bedeviled us the first year: our 7-year-old iMacs were working better with OSX, the network connecting students to remote server storage space had been upgraded, and many of the software glitches we faced when dealing with multiple applications were eliminated by using iMovie for the entire project. We also prepared more online support materials so students could refer to explanations as frequently as necessary and alerted lab consultants to hardware and software problems that might be anticipated when students worked independently.

Personal Perspectives is an effective project for developing preservice teachers' ability to teach with technology. It provides students with an authentic, meaningful task that requires high-level cognition and the application of numerous technological and media production skills. The project is highly motivating because it is experiential and self-directed. Instructors provide only a broad framework for investigation and allow for maximum learner creativity and ownership. It is a good model for the kind of technology-supported active learning we hope students will establish in their own classrooms.

The project is also a model for ways technology can promote social learning. Because the project is difficult for the technology novices who still predominate in the IT 444 class and much of it requires hardware and software students do not have on their home computers, they do most of the work in a college computer lab. Sometimes late in the day or on the weekend, nearly every seat in the lab is taken and groups of students are clustered around assorted computers, either helping each other with the latest technical problem or inspiring each other with their newest innovation. Spending time together and sharing knowledge fosters a team spirit in the cohort.

Since Joanne is often part of the group clustered around a computer to troubleshoot and problem-solve, this arrangement also allows students to see the instructor as a learner—not the omniscient "sage on the stage," but one who must herself seek out advice from more knowledgeable others—including her students. Experiencing this kind of informal, collaborative learning is a good antidote to the traditional ideas many of these aspiring teachers bring with them as they enter the program—that knowledge in their elementary classroom should properly be transmitted by the teacher, and they must at all times be "the expert" or lose credibility with their students.

The complexity of this project makes it a real challenge—both in pedagogical and technological terms. Technological difficulties can be especially aggravating and unnerving for computer novices who lack a full repertoire of problem-solving strategies. In dealing with whatever technological problems occurred, calmness and flexibility are necessary in responding to student needs—providing extra help sessions, modifying due dates, and reassuring students they could work through or around whatever problems occur. Troubleshooting skills are explicitly taught and experiences are connected to the

elementary classroom. Students are reminded that, as technology-using teachers, they will have to respond to problems with the same calm flexibility.

Student responses showed that Joanne has had some success in modeling methods:

You were absolutely responsive to our needs. You were observant and made adjustments and accommodations as needed (the sign of an excellent teacher!) And whether you intended this or not, you taught us useful troubleshooting skills.

By the end of the project, most of these preservice teachers have become quite adept at troubleshooting technology.

Summary

The overall verdict on this Personal Perspectives project has been overwhelmingly positive. Students recognized the value of the technology for telling stories about self, for learning about culture, and for building community:

The iMovie was an amazing tool for myself as well as others. We learning how to use the technology, but at the same time it was an incredible community building activity. After spending several weeks working closely with my peers, it was not until we watched everyone's iMovies that we truly knew each other. This was incredible! I would use this technology in my classroom in the same way. It was a great tool to learn how to use, but the assignment that we completed with it was the most important part. The music, photos, and videos told such incredible stories. It meant much more to see the iMovies than to hear someone talk about where they came from. It truly helped us see who they really were.

As this student observed, the technology is a great tool enabling students to tell their stories with music, photos, and video, but she realized that the assignment itself is the important part. All the pieces, technological and pedagogical, had come together!

Conclusion

There is an inherent and challenging tension in this project between the lure of the comfortable, scrapbook-like representation of oneself to which many students are easily drawn and the deeper probing we are hoping to prompt about personal perspectives and culture. To succeed, the project must provoke a reexamination of values and ideas and their influence on students' perspectives in light of the professional imperative to work across difference. Yet it is easy to be too heavy-handed in trying to persuade students to adopt a vision of intercultural education and elicit canned responses and superficial representations aimed at achieving a grade without the accompanying genuine re-examination.

In that middle ground, experimenting with expressive activities like narrative or poetry (Rosaen, 2003), and encouraging playfulness with media tools to generate electronic texts representing candidates' cultural roots show promise for negotiating the tensions. (Unbeknownst to David, a former colleague has experimented with the same poem for similar purposes in her literacy methods course. Rosaen's account offers another example of using poetry as the sight for cultural identity development.) Developing commitments toward intercultural education is essentially a matter of identity development associated with the dispositions necessary for working across difference (Leeman & Ledoux, 2003; Rosaen 2003; Traugh 2001). We are seeking to nurture commitments to responsive

teaching based on knowledge of and sensitivity about the diverse cultural influences that shape learners. Like poetry, multimedia offers a wealth of possibilities for harnessing the expressive arts in service of this process of identity development. Our Personal Perspectives project is one model showing how careful scaffolding, thoughtful collaboration, and the choice of appropriate technologies can create a synergy for deep learning.

References

- Brown, A. L., & Campione, J. C. (1986). Psychological theory and the study of learning disabilities. *American Psychologist, 41*, 1059-1068.
- Christensen, L. (2001). Where I'm from: Inviting students' lives into the classroom. In B. Bigelow, B. Harvey, S. Karp, & L. Miller (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Vol. 2. Rethinking schools* (pp. 6-10). Williston, VT: Rethinking Schools Ltd.
- Florio-Ruane, S., & Raphael, T. (2001). Reading lives: Learning about culture and literacy in teacher study groups. In C. M. Clark (Ed.), *Talking shop: Authentic conversation and teacher learning* (pp. 64-81). New York: Teachers College Press.
- International Society for Technology in Education. (2002). *National educational technology standards for teachers: Preparing teachers to use technology*. Eugene, OR: Author.
- Kearsley, G., & Schneiderman, B. (1999, April 5). *Engagement theory: A framework for technology-based teaching and learning*. Retrieved September, 7, 2004, from <http://home.sprynet.com/%7Egkearsley/engage.htm>
- Kellner, D. (1998). Multiple literacies and critical pedagogy in a multicultural society. *Educational Theory, 48*(1), 103-122.
- King, A. (1994). Guiding knowledge construction in the classroom: Effects of teaching how to question and how to explain. *American Educational Research Journal, 31*, 338-368.
- Leeman, Y., & Ledoux, G. (2003). Preparing teachers for intercultural education. *Teaching Education, 14*(3), 279-291.
- Lyon, G. E. (1999). *Where I'm from, where poems come from*. Spring, Texas: Absey & Co.
- McClaren, P., Hammer, R., Scholle, D., & Reilly, S. (1995). *Rethinking media literacy: A critical pedagogy of representation*. New York: Peter Lang Publications Inc.
- McDrury, J., & Alterio, M. (2002). *Learning through storytelling in higher education*. London: Kogan Page.
- Meyer, B. E., Rocheleau, D. J., McMullen, J., & Ritter, B. E. (1991). The use of Macintosh 24-bit color and animation programs in undergraduate research and visual perception courses. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments and Computers, 23*, 166-182.

- Moursund, D. (1999). *Will new teachers be prepared to teach in a digital age? A national survey on information technology in teacher education*. Milken Family Foundation. Retrieved August 15, 2004, from <http://www.mff.org/publications/publications.taf?page=154>
- Penuel, W. R., Means, B., & Simkins, M. (2000). The multimedia challenge. *Educational Leadership*, 58(2), 34-38.
- Rosaen, C. (2003). Preparing teachers for diverse classrooms: Creating public and private spaces to explore culture through poetry writing. *Teachers College Record*, 105(8), 1437 - 1485.
- Sleeter, C. (2001). *Culture, difference, and power*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Traugh, C. (2001). Learning how to talk (and work) across difference. *Educators for Urban Minorities*, 2(1), 33-47.
- Whittrock, M. C. (1990). Generative processes of comprehension. *Educational Psychologist*, 24, 345-376.
- Zeichner, K. M., Grant, C., Gay, G., Gillette, M., Valli, L., & Villegas, A. M. (1998). A research informed vision of good practice in multicultural teacher education: Design principles. *Theory Into Practice*, 37(2), 163-171.

Resources

- Apple iLife - <http://www.apple.com/education/ilifeawards/>
- Capture Whales - <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/capturewales/>
- Digital Family Story - <http://digitalfamilystory.com/>
- Project-Based Learning With Multimedia - <http://pblmm.k12.ca.us/PBLGuide/Activities/Activities.html>

Author Note:

David Carroll
Western Washington University
Email: David.Carroll@wwu.edu

Joanne Carney
Western Washington University
Email: Joanne.Carney@wwu.edu

Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education is an online journal. All text, tables, and figures in the print version of this article are exact representations of the original. However, the original article may also include video and audio files, which can be accessed on the World Wide Web at <http://www.citejournal.org>

Appendix A

EEd 320 Winter 04

Personal Perspectives:

Investigating Cultural Characteristics of Your Own Identity

Part I: Working by yourself and jotting down notes to prompt and record your thoughts, use the questions¹ below to think about the characteristics of your own home and family culture. You don't need to "answer" every question; rather, scan over them to see what seems to open up a vein of ideas or recollections and pursue that where it leads you in relation to the questions in Part II.

- What is the structure of your family? Who are members of your family and what roles do they play?
- How is leisure time spent?
- What role does religion play in your family?
- What do you and others in your family read, listen to as music, enjoy as art?
- Who works hard at what? Are there particular occupations common in generations of your family?
- Where did your family originate and how did you come to live in the Northwest? Are there any common experiences that tie you, your family, and others in a larger group together?
- What languages are spoken
- What does your diet consist of? What are the times and routines of your meals?
- Are there any visual symbols of your family or larger group membership (i.e., clothing, jewelry, etc.)?
- Are there any organizations or rituals that are important in your family life?

Part II: Who are you in the context of your culture? What is your "standpoint"²?

How did these concrete attributes of your family culture lead or nurture you in constructing particular meanings in growing up? How did they shape such things as your attitudes, values, norms of behavior, learning styles, and perspective on social roles?

Consider your viewpoint toward such things as the following:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">-- appropriate behavior for elementary-aged children-- discipline-- appropriate activities for girls & boys-- work ethic , study habits |
|--|

¹ Questions adapted from Sleeter, C, 2001.

² See Fabiano, P. (2001) "Baseball and Roots: Two Perspectives on Standpoint.

-- relationship with books / literature
-- participation in activities, sports, group efforts
-- relationship with writing
-- relationship with math, science, history, other subjects

-- expectations of parents
-- your sense of what it means to be a man or woman in this society or what a "good" life would entail
-- your relationship/experience with money, wealth, class

Jot down notes for yourself about the elements listed in each box above.

Part III: Working in Groups to Make Sense of Your Findings

Pick at least one element from each box above in Part II. Reflect on how your viewpoint about each was influenced by your home/family culture. Share these in your group. Consider what implications they may have, both positively and negatively for your perspective on teaching. If you have time, also consider how other "socializing agents" besides your family (education, media, friends, church, etc.) have combined or competed with the influence of your family in shaping your perspective on the things listed in Part II.

Part IV: Writing About Your Standpoint

After completing Parts I-III, write an essay (3-4 pages) that traces characteristics of your home family culture which you considered in Part I and explores their influence on your own standpoint regarding at least one element from each box in Part II. Conclude your essay by considering what implications these characteristics, as well as other socializing agents (education, media, friends) have had, both positively and negatively, on your perspective about teaching.

Format:

Introduction: Indicate which elements from the boxes you will address

Exploring Your Standpoint in Relation to Elements: Develop each element in relation to how the cultural characteristics of your family culture shaped your standpoint. Also include comments, if they are relevant, about how other socializing agents influenced your standpoint.

Linking Your Standpoint to Your Perspective on Teaching: Examine how your standpoint as developed in the previous section may influence how you perceive or interpret aspects of teaching, classroom life, or relations with children's families. Identify both strengths and vulnerabilities which accompany your standpoint and propose goals for your further professional learning in relation to your findings.

Evaluation

This essay is worth 10 points (10%) of your overall grade for EI Ed 320. The components of your essay will be evaluated according to the following guidelines:

Introduction (2 points) : Identifies at least three elements from different boxes in Part II which you will focus on.

Exploring Your Standpoint (4 points): Your essay should draw clear connections with specific description / examples to examine how your family culture influenced your standpoint in relation to at least three elements.

Linking Your Standpoint to Your Perspective on Teaching (4 points): Your essay should examine each element of your standpoint developed in Part II and consider how your perspective contributes to / potentially obscures key dimensions of teaching, You need to identify both areas of strength and potential vulnerability related to your standpoint and how it shapes your perspective on teaching.

Appendix B Where I'm From Partner Activity

Why: Working with someone else is helpful in getting perspective on our own standpoint; we want to use that to help us recognize how we are each enculturated in unique ways that influence how we think about teaching.

- Match up in pairs with the same person you introduced.
- Read your phrases/poems to each other and explain and discuss them; look for contrasts and similarities.
- Write out each of your “where I’m from” phrases on small sticky notes.
- Arrange them on a scrap page to create a two-voice poem; look for ways of creating contrasts or patterns in your arrangements; feel free to edit your words to make them more vivid and particular as new ideas come to you.
- Redraft your poem in alternating colors / columns on the large paper.
- Meeting in groups of four, read your poems aloud together and look for contrasts and similarities.

Appendix C
Where I'm From....
By

**Gray clouds released soft cottons from heaven, I sing of wise elders down
yonder in the Deep South,
As the still crisp cold flows through my soul, I feel the nurturing of nuns and
priest,
The raindrops of love makes me so happy, I lay comfortably watching the
"The Jeffersons" and 'Good Times",
I sing the songs of sweets, my grandmother would give to us after school,
I sing of "sit still" and "don't get your clothes dirty" while the smell of
homemade cinnamon rolls and hot combs filled the air,
As the thunder roars, I sing of honesty, discipline and respect for my elders,
Dressed in my Bell-bottoms with my perfectly shaped Afro, I croon to the
tune of sweet potato pie, collard greens and cornbread, and the slow cooked
friend with pineapples and cherries,
Seasons began mystified with songs of lynching and colored only water
fountains,
As dark as night comes early, the verse of revolution is heard loudly in my
memories,
The wind swiftly sweeps away bigotry and hatred of yesterday, I sing of
familial everlasting relationship,
Where I'm from there was yes ma'am, stand up straight, mind your
manners, and use good English,
As the season change I am from strong providing fathers and strong college
bound mothers.**

April 4, 2004

I Grew Up

I grew up amongst music
Dancing along with the lilting melodies
And percussion
From the clopping of my little feet
As I ran through the shroud of stretched up trees
At Causland Park

I grew up amongst toys
Who made their way across invisible stages
That constructed and deconstructed
In a matter of moments within the bowels of my remodeled garage
For, there was never a moment to waste

I grew up amongst blue curtains and stage lights
Silly costumes and memorization
Cartoons after school and endless summer afternoons
Full of potential

I grew up in complete naiveté
In undying possibility
I grew up without knowing it
Or perhaps denying it

And now
As I watch others grow up
Too fast
I strive to make sure that they won't take what they have for granted
Because growing up can be amazing

Where We're From*

I am from 'soysauce please!'
I am from 'I'll take that plain'

I am from 'let's go shopping!!'
I am from 'let's go shoot some hoops'

I am from 'no English in the house!'
I am from 'uhh... English please!'

I am from 'do it yourself'
I am from 'I'll do it, you take it easy'

I am from 'respect your elders!'

* This poem was authored jointly in class by two students, one of whom came to the United States as a young girl and learned English as a second language.

Appendix D

IT 444a—Personal Perspectives: Communicating My Cultural Identity through Digital Storytelling

You will be doing a cultural inquiry project in your Effective Teaching class (EEd 320) in which you investigate the cultural characteristics of a particular family group. As a prelude to that activity, this assignment will help you think about some of the features of your own culture and, using iMovie as a tool, express who *you* are in the context of your home and family culture. Becoming aware of your own cultural identity should make it easier for you to respond sensitively as a teacher to students who are ethnically and culturally diverse. You have already begun preparing for *Personal Perspectives* by writing a *Where I'm From* poem and an essay, "Investigating Cultural Characteristics of Your Own Identity," in EEd 320.

OBJECTIVES

- To gain insight into the cultural characteristics of one's own identity
- To use multimedia presentation software to express one's own cultural identity in text, image, and video.

THE TASK

Stage 1

1. Use the questions below (Sleeter, C., 2001) to think about the characteristics of your own home and family culture:
 - What is the structure of your family? Who are members of your family and what roles do they play?
 - How is "leisure time" spent?
 - What role does religion play in your family?
 - What do you and others in your family read, listen to as music, enjoy as art?
 - Who works hard at what? Are there particular occupations common in generations of your family?
 - Where did your family originate and how did you come to live in the Northwest? Are there any common experiences that tie you, your family, and others in a larger group together?
 - What languages are spoken?
 - What does your diet consist of? What are the times and routines of your meals?

- Are there any visual symbols of your family or larger group membership? (i.e., clothing, jewelry, etc.)
 - Are there any organizations or rituals that are important in your family life?
2. After you have identified important characteristics of your family and home life, you will use Inspiration software to prepare a storyboard script for a "digital story" that expresses who you are in the context of your culture. You will most likely choose to focus on some of the areas of culture suggested by the questions above rather than all of them, perhaps taking a thematic or metaphorical approach. ***Your storyboard/script is due January 26.***

Stage 2

1. Borrow a digital videocamera from ATUS Classroom Services (Miller 155) and film some people or events that will contribute to a viewer's understanding of you and your culture (2-4 clips of 5-15 seconds).
Please note: Digital video uses up lots of memory, so don't go overboard! Also, don't worry if you have a "good" segment of video in the middle of a sequence you won't be using; you can download or edit so that you save only what's useful.
2. ***Bring your digital videotape to your IT444 class on January 31, so it can be downloaded and used in your digital story.***

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

3. Your 2-4 minute digital story must have these features:
 - One or more digital pictures
 - A piece of art or poetry
 - A 5-15 second video clip
 - A sound file of a piece of music
 - A voice recording
 - At least two transitions and two titles
 - Credits to indicate the source of music or image files

Stage 3

You will present your Personal Perspectives digital story to your classmates on February 9.