Facing Versions of the Self: The Effects of Digital Storytelling on English Education

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Abstract:

This teacher-researcher case study examines the use of digital storytelling in a teacher assisting seminar. During the field placement, students composed a digital story of a teaching hour. Combining reflection with classroom footage, students exhibited their work for their colleagues. Digital stories added to the written narratives from the field. This technological opportunity provided teacher assistants with multiple views of themselves as teachers. Implications for future teaching and research include ongoing digital storytelling, mentoring, and the maintenance of the complexity of classroom teaching.

Digital storytelling is emerging as a way to shape narrative. Banaszewski (2000) described how his elementary students tell digital stories by "scanning photographed hand-drawn images into the computer, using a digital camcorder, importing music, recording voices, composing and editing their stories using Apple's iMovie program" (p. 6).

Although some are starting to write about its classroom use, digital storytelling is being written about in many places outside of the educational community. In *Business Week,* Daniel Pink (1999) profiled the "founder" of digital storytelling.

Dana Atchley...uses modern tools — computers, scanners, video — to update the ancient craft of telling tales....Using QuickTime, Adobe Premiere, and Macromedia Director, he devised a system that allows him to tell stories through film, video, music, and photography. (p. 15)

Artists and businesspeople are examining the effects of digital storytelling on their practices, yet teacher educators have not made as many inquiries into the possible effects of digital storytelling.

Like Atchley, I am one of these people who happened into digital storytelling through working with my Macintosh computer. Unlike Atchley, I am not confident with technology. My friends characterize me as "techno-shy." Yet, I am overcoming my "techno-shyness" through seeing the potential impact of digital storytelling technology in my work in English education. With the ability to choose what becomes part of the story, as opposed to fast-forwarding past videotape of students writing quietly at their desks or throwing spitwads at a neighbor, digital storytelling can offer teacher educators a new way to shape narratives about classrooms. Control over what is viewed in the video is placed in the hands of the videotaped teacher. Examining this control is a major catalyst for this research.

Digital storytelling efficiently facilitates efforts to capture classroom moments for preservice teachers to reflect upon and revise practice, as well as to develop a teaching consciousness. What I have experienced is not just videotaping and critiquing one's attempts at teaching. What I have experienced is a chance for preservice teachers to view, reflect, compose, and imagine versions of the teaching "self." These discoveries are focused on some new possibilities for creating narratives about one's own practice. As a teacher educator, I am attempting to use this technology primarily through camcorder work, voice recording, composing, and editing. Telling the story of a case study from my class is my attempt to represent what I have begun to learn about the effects of digital storytelling on one preservice English teacher's development. My purpose is not to prove that all teacher educators should be using digital technology, but rather to describe what happened in my classroom as a way to further a careful inquiry into the use of technology in English education.

Through using a screenplay to represent my research findings, I will attend to what Geertz (1990) called the "how" of research writing. Much like Baff's (1997) work to represent discussion in her research poetically, it is my hope that the screenplay might evoke responses from readers involving a change in seeing and thinking similar to the one I have experienced in researching my own practice. Representational form has been explored in recent books (e.g., Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Van Maanen, 1995) and articles (e.g., Denzin, 1996; Richardson, 1994) as a way to deepen and extend research findings. Representing what I have found in screenplay form has enabled me to get quickly to the core issues of the data.

Narrative, English Education, and the Technological Opening

As an English educator, I privilege narrative. Yet, I am coming to believe that technology, specifically digital storytelling, can support my narrative commitments. Significant work from recent years focuses on the narratives that preservice and in-service teachers tell to make sense of, as well as facilitate their development (e.g., Draper, Puidokas, Schoafsma, Tendero, & Widmer, 2001; Fleischer, 1996; Vinz, 1996;). Too often, preservice teachers face idealized examples in their teacher training, examples that seem unattainable. I want to examine what happens when preservice teachers face less idealized versions of their teaching "selves."

In her foundational work on student teaching, Britzman(1992) asked, "What does learning to teach do and mean to student teachers and those involved in the practice of teaching?" (p. 2) Britzman's discussion of why she likes the question is persuasive to me. "We are able to shift the discourse of teacher education from an instrumentalist belief in controlling and manipulating variables…to a dialogic discourse" (p. 1).

I appropriate this for my digital storytelling research: "What does producing a digital story of one's teaching do and mean to teacher assistants and those involved in the practice of teaching?" I want to better understand the dialogic discourse that occurs as the teacher assistants shape the digital storytelling process, as well as how the digital storytelling process shapes who these teacher assistants became through their reflection on their practice teaching.

During the teacher assisting seminar at State University, students spend a semester in the field, working with individuals, small groups, and whole English classes. They lead classes for extended periods of time. In their accompanying teacher-assisting seminar, the students write stories about their teaching to be shared on the class Blackboard, and compose digital stories about their teaching. I privilege narrative as a teaching strategy, hoping to provide an experience similar to the one that Vinz (1996) documented in her work that explores the value of reflective practice for preservice, new, and experienced teachers: "These teachers made observations about their individual experiences that led them to tacit understandings about themselves as teachers. Their shared inquiry helped them bring what they were learning about teaching to a conscious level" (p. 238).

Developing a "teaching consciousness" through narrative is a priority for me. In addition to this consciousness, I want to help these teacher assistants improve as teachers. I know from my own experience as a middle school English teacher that I cannot simply tell them what to do, though often they ask me to do exactly that. I have to help them first be able to tell/write/produce their stories, primarily for the storyteller's benefit, much in the same way that Draper, Puidokas, Schaafsma, Tendoero, and Widmer (2001) described their new teacher group in *California English Journal:*

The storyteller distills his or her own experience, for his or her own use. Curiously, while listening to the story, the others sometimes find that an altered perspective on their own experience is a sweet by-product of the distillation process. (p. 7)

Having teachers tell stories is an established method in English education. My research speculation is that asking them to tell stories digitally adds dimensions to the distillation process described by Draper and his colleagues.

At the same time, digital stories can help the other teacher assistants who view the digital story during the seminar. Fleischer (1996) described the effects of narratives as she examined the role of teacher research in her work as an educator: "Full-fledged portrayals of individual classrooms become valuable to other teachers as they insert their own experience into the reading of another description, raising questions and creating connections across classrooms, and ultimately helping to effect change" (pp. 38-39). I wondered whether the teacher assistants—as they saw each other's digital stories—would begin to do this same type of translation.

With all of my narrative commitment, I knew that something was missing from the written narrative. With the privileging of the written narrative, my students were not able to examine fully the actual performance of their teaching. Lamm Pineau's (1994)

theoretical focus on p erformance in teacher development helps me consider possibilities particular to the digital narratives:

Performance privileges the fluid, ongoing, often contradictory features of human experience that resist reification and closure. It acknowledges that identities are always multiple, overlapping ensembles of real and possible selves who enact themselves in direct relation to the context and communities in which they perform. (p. 15)

Digital storytelling provides the possibility of seeing and hearing the t eaching performance, rather than simply reading about it. Lamm Pineau's work suggests that the possibility of attending to the broader performance represented in the digital story might evoke more of the fluid performance of English teaching, rather than s imply the written story of the teaching. Too often English teachers are inculcated with triumphant teacher narratives that are static and singular. Video of even one class period might start to provide the teacher assistant and the viewers a sense of the multiple and simultaneous events that English teachers acknowledge and sometimes celebrate in their own practice.

In addition to multiplicity, preservice teachers need to realize the complexity of actual classroom practice. Unlike representations of teac hing in films, teacher assistants realize quickly that uncertainty is a consistent feature of the teaching day. Prioritizing uncertainty in his work, Dudley-Marling(1997) provided a way of understanding how uncertainty informs the development of preservice and in-service teachers in his story of return to the elementary classroom—after years in teacher education. He wrote,

The challenge for teachers and teacher educators is to find ways to confront idealized models of the good teacher who succeeds with every student....For the sake of teachers and the students they serve we need an alternative that acknowledges the messy reality of life in classrooms. (p. 188)

Digital storytelling allows teacher assistants to face more of this valuable uncertainty as they view and edit footage from their practice teaching.

Up to this point, I have described how narrative and performance in teacher education can provide a logical launching point for the exploration of digital storytelling. Now an examination of research on video and teacher education will help identify the need for both classroom and largerscale inquiries into digital storytelling.

Videotape and Teacher Education

Looking back at examples of research on videotape use in teacher education, Ajayi-Dopemu and Talabi (1986) noted that groups using videotaping made significantly more progress in their mastery of specified teaching skills. Lonoff's (1997) research focused on her work at Harvard's Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, videotaping teachers since 1976. The following interview excerpt with a young instructor shows one reason behind Lonoff's commitment to videotape: "There's nothing like being a third person seeing yourself teach....Viewing the class gave me space in my head to follow the dynamics, and now when I teach it's like I have a mental videotape going" (p. 14). Tempering this advocacy, Smith (1996) found that teachers will need to be helped over their initial discomfort of sharing their teaching with others and they must control what is made public about their videotapes.

Offering the easy ability to choose what becomes part of the story, as opposed to fast-forwarding, digital storytelling offers teacher educators a new way to shape narrative. In

this composing process teachers can decide what to include and what to edit out, making digital storytelling an important opportunity. Composing a narrative of one's teaching includes reflection but is not limited to reflection. In a similar way, composing a digital story is much more than simple digital reflection. It involves a conscious process of choice and intention to represent. The field of English education needs to pay attention to this process.

While Mellon (1999) and McLellan (1999) developed theoretical considerations for classroom applications of technology like digital storytelling, Banaszewski (2002) offered one of the few classroom-based examinations of digital storytelling with elementary students. He told the story of how his students blossomed as storytellers as a result of his work with iMovie. He cautioned at the end, "It's vital to note, of course, that the technology was always secondary to the storytelling." (Banaszewski, 2002, p. 6) His prioritizing of the narrative is vital as our field examines the implications of digital techno logy. Although this elementary classroom research is important, more attention needs to be paid to the qualitative effects of digital storytelling upon English education. New dimensions of seeing and composing can be synthesized into our narratives of experience. In this complex synthesis, we have much to learn.

Teacher Researcher Methodology

Through this research I describe what happened in one classroom. I have conducted this teacher-researcher case study to push our field to take another step of theorizing and describing in response. I expect that others will follow and offer their descriptive and eventual larger comparative research. Teacher research can be useful for the larger field of English education if care is taken to develop the context for a particularized study such as mine. Fecho (2001) described how teacher research can be both rigorous and valid:

Most often being descriptive research, teacher research derives understandings that are often situated in a specific place and time, but the teacher researcher has ample potential to juxtapose a range of studies that expand that sense of place and time. Therefore, rigor can be derived from ongoing and systematic inquiry within a single study….Simultaneously, validity can be derived from the immediacy, contextuality, and historical framework of the study. (p. 3)

This article provides a detailed a picture of what happened in one teacher assistant's work situated in my classroom, during a semester. Through our class Blackboard and my teacher journal, the primary data was collected in an ongoing and systematic way. Through my subsequent reading into video and digital storytelling, I developed the necessary context and history for a valid case study focusing on one student, Heather.

The data set, collected during the winter semester, consists of the following: critical incidents composed by students on Blackboard (CI), responses to critical incidents composed on Blackboard (RE), my teacher journal (TJ), students' digital stories (DS), and two student interviews embedded in the digital storytelling process (SI). This screenplay will focus on the scenes created from the teacher journal, the students' critical incidents, the digital stories, and the interviews. These are the tools that were most conducive to representing the data that pertained to effects of digital storytelling.

I have read and reread the data set to identify emerging themes and to track them in Heather's work. The theme of representation emerged as the critical incidents (e.g., penc il lead breaking) were analyzed and compared to the digital story (e.g., Billy turning

around) composed. It emerged in the discussion of the video by other teacher assistants (e.g., Carmen's observation of the finger to the lips).

 The theme of consciousness emerged in data such as Heather's written and digital reflections (e.g., "This is not who I want to be"; "I was amazed.") The theme of dialogic practice particularly emerged in the Blackboard conversations about the digital stories (e.g., "I wondered, 'Can I do that?'").

 In keeping with suggested qualitative practice (MacLean & Mohr, 1999), I analyzed the data set for both congruent and incongruent examples of emerging themes and categories. In an attempt to draw upon multiple perspectives, I have shared the data set with and asked for interpretations from class participants, consultants to the class's video work, and colleagues in teacher education. With these themes, I hope the following screenplay can push forward our field's conversation on digital storytelling, contributing a description of the potential this work with digital storytelling might hold for English educators.

Scene 1—Context for Case Study

Cast

T—teacher educator at State University.

Heather—student in T's teacher assisting class. Teacher assisting is the first semester of teacher education fieldwork at State University. The second semester of fieldwork is named student teaching.   State University's conception of teacher assisting is similar to preservice teaching or student teaching found at other institutions.

Tim—film and video undergraduate who assists in digital editing.

Jolynn— student in T's teacher assisting class.

Carmen— student in T's teacher assisting class.

Dave— student in T's teacher assisting class.

All other student/teacher/school names are pseudonyms.

[The camera pans over different shots of State University campus. A growing regional university located outside of an urban center, State University's English Education program trains approximately 150 secondary English teachers in a given year. Students are primarily in-state. Eighty-five percent are Caucasian. Fifty percent live on-campus and most are working their way through school. The camera pans to Mack Hall where the Teacher Assistant Seminar is located.]

T voiceover: The seminar meets once a week for 2 hours. We spend time discussing texts like Ruth Vinz's, *Composing a Teaching Life,* and Greg Michie's, *Holler if You Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students,* as well as telling stories—oral, written and digital—about the seven teacher assistants' experiences in classrooms. The assistants are placed all over the metropolitan area in a range of rural, suburban, and urban schools. As their seminar leader, I observe them in their classrooms.

During the second half of the semester, two teacher assistants are taped per week. The next week, they receive a VHS copy of the videotape and are instructed to make their time codes and notes. Later in the week, they meet with Tim, my research assistant to edit the tape and post the Quicktime video on the class Blackboard for previewing by the rest of the class. As they edit, I tape the next two teacher assistants. The following week, we review the digital stories and use them as a focus for class, spending 45 minutes on each story and discussion.

[still shot of Heather walking out of Mack Hall]

In considering how to talk about the effects of digital storytelling, I wanted to develop more of what Vinz (1996) calls "fullness" and what Geertz calls (1990) "a thickness." My aim was to provide an in-depth and nuanced study. To understand the qualitative effects of digital storytelling, I chose to focus on Heather's work from the semester. Heather's work offers an opportunity to examine the stories of a teacher assistant who enjoyed, struggled over, and eventually grew through her experiences in the classroom. This sense of complexity made her a compelling choice for a case study. Heather was in her fourth year at State. As an English major, she had progressed through the program like many of her peers, poised to finish in 4 1/2 years. Earlier in the semester, reflecting on her placement in an urban middle school, she expressed an interest in how her Catholic schooling and white middle class upbringing would inform her entry into an urban middle school. Her uncertainty about the placement did not overwhelm her, though it maintained a consistent presence in her stories of her experience.

Some of the teacher assistants had triumphant teacher success stories to tell all semester. Other teacher assistants struggled mightily all semester. Heather put forth consistent effort all semester and found successes and challenges throughout. With the rich narrative tensions found in Heather's work, I selected the story of her semester as the appropriate place to start documenting responses to my research question, "What does producing a digital story of one's teaching do and mean to teacher assistants and those involved in the practice of teaching?"

Scene 2—Analyzing the Data: Heather's First Critical Incident

[Silent Shot of T's Teacher Assisting Seminar]

T voiceover: On the first day, I framed the course as storytelling about teaching and learning. Drawing from Vinz's work (1996) with critical incidents, students identify one key moment from their week of teacher-assisting and compose a present-tense narrative focused on description. Students post these incidents on Blackboard and other class members respond. To gain some sense of how Heather uses narrative to make sense of her teaching, it is important to look at her first written story of the semester.

["Heather's First Critical Incident" fades in and out. Cut to silent shots of Heather teaching in her classroom.]

Heather voiceover: Breaking Me In-Critical Incident #1

Mrs. Smith told me that she wanted me to work in small groups with some of the students who are quite behind on their assignments. In fourth hour, the most unruly class of the day, she said she was going to challenge me a bit. She asked if it was okay, and I was then given the four biggest behavioral problems in the class.

[shots of Heather's classroom continue]

T voiceover: Heather focuses on her work with the most difficult students. Her title, "Breaking Me In," builds on this image of newness. As the story emerges, the title serves to focus the reader on her student's act of breaking the pencil.

Heather voiceover: Jairod is wandering around the room, taking the most indirect route to the table as possible. Tony sits down with his back towards me. Then he asks if he can sharpen his pencil, which I just saw him purposely break out of the corner of my eye. Luckily, Curtis is ready to work. One out of four. I call their names and tell them to hurry up.

[Classroom scene continues]

T voiceover: Her narrative represents a growing consciousness as she notices the indirect route and the actions happening at the edges of her vision. She even has an ongoing tally, "one out of four" that inserts itself as she narrates.

[Classroom scene continues]

Heather voiceover: I want all of them to get extra practice with these words because they're really tricky. I don't want them to think that they're the "dumb ones" but it's kind of hard when they mostly all have that mentality already. Kevin crumples his paper into his folder, and I feel bad that he's feeling as though he wasted his time by actually doing the assignment.

T voiceover: In the face of her move to put a positive spin on the activity, Heather's story displays the added awareness of history. She identifies how feelings of failure in English can create recurring struggles.

[Classroom scene continues]

Heather voiceover:

- I have to constantly remind them to stay on task at first, but after the first couple rounds they have it down—pretty much.
- The worst is getting them to be quiet after they finish their sentences until I can get to them, and they don't get a whole lot better throughout.
- I made the dubious mistake of complimenting Tony on his perfect handwriting after he had completed three sentences, at which point he began writing it over "even better" for me.
- It's hard to keep them quiet enough to where I can assume that they're listening to me, because they have a tendency to interrupt me midway through anything I'm saying. But it actually isn't bothering me as much as I would think, because they're trying to give me answers and that shows me how eager they are. I can't say that they're necessarily eager to learn, but a couple of them are so hungry for praise that it's saddening.

T voiceover: Repeatedly, Heather inserts moments of struggle into her overall story. Much like the experience that teachers have in a difficult classroom, her story carries on despite these struggles. Yet this initial story seems noteworthy for these interruptions. Knowing that her classmates will read this critical incident on the classroom Blackboard,

Heather makes the choice as a storyteller to consistently insert these moments where she was uncertain and struggling as a teacher. Interestingly, she does stay optimistic in her conclusion to this first critical incident of the semester.

[Classroom scene continues]

Heather voiceover: Today has been a really cool day; the four students finished their assignments and did a great job, and I felt like I learned from them and about them at the same time.

[Camera returns to a still portrait of Heather in front of her class.]

T voiceover: In looking at Heather's first story, there is a halting quality to the progression of the narrative. As a storyteller, she works to push in the seemingly small moments of pencil lead into the larger work with tough kids. Heather wants to get to the last sentence of the story, "I felt like I learned from them and about them at the same time," yet in order to get there she needs to attend to the interruptions and all the uncertainty that accompanies them.

Scene 3—Analyzing the Data: Heather's Digital Story

[Silent shots of T entering school and videotaping Heather teaching]

T Voiceover: In late February, I went to tape Heather. She was one of the first ones to be taped. She seemed to be pretty calm about the whole thing. Afterwards, we debriefed about the observation and made plans to do the editing of the video.

[cut to Portrait shot of Tim]

Tim: Working with Heather was one of the better experiences. She came with more than enough material to work with, including about 10 minutes worth of video clips from her observation, and 8 minutes of relevant interview footage. To keep her video as intact as possible, we gave her video a voiceover effect, keeping her interview dialogue and playing that over the video clips of her classroom observation. This was a good way to focus and show exactly what she was talking about.

[Cut to Heather in front of her class]

T voiceover: Eventually Heather's video came in at just under 10 minutes. In order to undertake some of the analysis, I'll give a brief outline of the actual final video to set up a closer look at a number of illuminating sections (see Video 1).

[T explains the video as the outline scrolls on the screen.]

- Heather is on screen to introduce the video.
- Voiceover as she goes over the instructions for the bio-poem.
- Return to Heather for more reflection on instructions.
- Return to classroom scene to see an example of Heather giving instructions.
- Return to Heather for introduction of Billy.
- Voiceover with scenes of working with Billy.
- Return to classroom scene to see an example of Heather working with Billy.

- Return to Heather for introduction of Latoya.
- Voiceover with scenes of working with Billy.
- Return to classroom scene to see an example of Heather working with Billy.
- Return to Heather for introduction of Crystal and Ramon.
- Voiceover with scenes of working with Crystal and Ramon.
- Return to Heather for conclusion.

T voiceover: In this digital story, there is a distinct way of opening. "What you're about to see . . ." indicates a level of presentation not found in Heather's written critical incident. In her opening paragraph of the critical incident, Heather's tone evokes a sense of control.

[Heather's critical incident scrolls down and remains as Heather reads it aloud.]

Heather voiceover: Mrs. Smith told me that she wanted me to work in small groups with some of the students who are quite behind on their assignments. In fourth hour, the most unruly class of the day, she said she was going to challenge me a bit. She asked if it was okay, and I was then given the four biggest behavioral problems in the class.

T voiceover: It seems important that she selects this critical incident and frames the written narrative as her work with the "four biggest behavioral problems in the class." She makes choices about what to tell and how to tell it.

In contrast to this control of choices, digital storytelling has a third entity, the actual videotape of the teaching. This entity represents a version of the story that must be acknowledged and mediated.

In her narration, Heather begins with a tone of amazement, recognizing a reality different from her expectations. Unlike her work in her first critical incident, her digital story takes on a more self-critical tone. Her feelings of discomfort, regret at a lack of contextualization and regret with being overly structured were privileged in the opening comments.

With my first viewing of the video, I was surprised by this tone. In my observation debriefing, I shared my thoughts on a successful lesson. Students seemed to understand the explanation of the bio-poem.

[Bio-poem form scrolls down screen.]

Line 1: First Name

Line 2: Four descriptive traits

Line 3: Sibling of...

Line 4: Lover of

Line 5: Who fears...

Line 6: Who needs...

Line 7: Who gives...

Line 8: Who would like to see...

Line 9: Resident of...

Line 10: Last Name

 [Return to shot of Heather in front of class.]

T voiceover: In watching the video, the introduction did seem less sculpted than the written narrative, where she identifies quickly how she is up to the challenge of four resistant boys who in turn "break her in." The digital opening privileges what Lamm Pineau (1994) called "fluid, ongoing . . . features." (p. 15) With these features, this story seems to allow Heather to reflect more deeply on her performance (see Video 2).

T voiceover: Heather's digital story seemed to be an opportunity for her to bring "teaching to a conscious level" as Vinz (1996) described. The digital storytelling helped her to think about silent resistance as well as how engagement might happen in the midst of resistance. A "teacher consciousness" seemed to be prioritized in the digital narrative; one that highlights discovery. As Dudley -Marling (1997) urged, Heather's digital story provides an opportunity for uncertainty and what Vinz (1996) called "not knowing."   For Heather and others, this uncertainty is not as easily accessed in other narrative forms. To be clear, her critical incident does make room for uncertainty, yet the uncertainty is clearly managed by Heather.

 [Heather's critical incident appears and she reads it]

Heather voiceover: It's hard to keep them quiet enough to where I can assume that they're listening to me, because they have a tendency to interrupt me midway through anything I'm saying. But it actually isn't bothering me as much as I would think, because they're trying to give me answers and that shows me how eager they are.

T voiceover: The piece where she struggles "to keep them quiet enough" is ameliorated by the insertion of "they're trying to give me answers and that shows me how eager they are." The sense of control distinguishes this particular storytelling enterprise. Issues of control in the digital realm emerge in other distinct ways as she discusses students. The video creates a version of Heather and the classroom that can exceed her attempts to frame and represent the meanings (Felman & Laub, 1992). Hence, surprise can be one of the added dimensions that digital storytelling brings to the teacher education classroom.

[Cut to shot of Heather]

Heather: Latoya is one of the brightest students. But the past couple weeks, she has gone boy crazy. I knew that she was just asking me silly questions... (See Video 3)

T voiceover: A new tone emerges as she continues with this digital story; a tone that was held in check throughout her written critical incidents. Annoyance surfaces. Heather uses the term "mean." Though she had the choice not to include Latoya in her digital story, she did. Whereas with the critical incident, Heather attempted to balance the boys' disruption with their eagerness, here she allows Latoya to stand on her own. In allowing

Latoya to stand on her own, Heather needs to grapple with the Latoya's presence in the story. And this grappling does not allow itself to be muted as with the critical incident.

One particular line seems to highlight this important finding. "That might sound kind of mean but she really just wanted me to hold her hand through the entire activity and goof around." In this digital story, Heather starts to present sides of her teacher persona that are honest, but that could also be misinterpreted. She is taking risks with this story. The first risk is that of a teacher who is uncertain and making mistakes. The second risk is that of a teacher who is openly critical of kids. In the common discourse of teacher education classes, a warmth for children is privileged (e.g., Atwell, 1998; Calkins, 1986; Michie, 1999). Heather's honesty seemed to challenge this discourse. The digital story seemed to create the space for multiple and possibly contradictory views of the classroom.

Eventually, Heather includes some places where she felt like she was effective during this teaching hour. Her self-identified effective teaching came in her interactions with two of the numerous English language learners in the sixth-grade classroom (see Video 4).

T voiceover: I would agree that this was the moment that stood out for me as an observer. I actually didn't understand the scope of their conversation until we debriefed. At that point, I noticed that she had been talking with Crystal and Ramon. I asked her to tell me about it. When she was done with the story, I remarked that she did a nice job with redirecting the student. She agreed.

Two things seem important here. First of all, Heather picked up on my comments as an observer and decided to insert that moment in the video. I start to wonder about what the relationship might be for the observer and the video editor. In subsequent semesters, I have taken on all roles. Playing all these roles, I would reserve my comments about the teaching until we were actually watching the video together and discussing the choices about the video. Lonoff (1997) highlights the importance of watching the video with an experienced observer. My experience starts me thinking that the same type of Vygotskian (1986) scaffolding will be important for composing digital stories.

The second finding is the technological challenge that this work presents. This important scene occurred across the class and had no audio component. Two options were available to me. I could have hurried across the room to get close to the conversation. I also could have had a wireless microphone for Heather. Scurrying around the room will certainly limit spontaneous conversation and the wireless microphone may overemphasize the teacher talk in the video. Sound quality will continue to be one of the most challenging parts of distinctly and discretely documenting classroom interaction with 20 or more energetic adolescents.

T voiceover: [See Video 5.] Two dimensions of her conclusion seem to carry over from her written narrative. One move consistent in Heather's storytelling is her attention to the revealing and minute descriptive details. Whereas in the critical incident she picks up on the small things like the broken pencil, her digital story is focused on all the little things that she had not noticed in the act of teaching. The digital medium also seems to be well suited to her rhetorical tendency to interrupt. The interruptions seem more natural in the genre of digital story, which can jump from subject to subject more quickly.

Yet with these similarities, digital storytelling starts to create new opportunities for teacher educators and preservice teachers. Ndebele (1994), the South African essayist and novelist, claimed that the revolution is to be found in the everyday. In order to better understand the changes in South Africa, he advocated for close attention to the seemingly

mundane. In ways, the act of composing the digital story helps Heather recognize the significance of the everyday with Billy and with Latoya.

To begin the process, she watches the entire class period. This initial experience of the whole period shapes her attention to the overwhelming amount of details from each class period. She starts out with how she was "amazed" in reviewing the tape and ends with the benefits of reviewing. I start to wonder whether we need to attend to the everyday and the boring in hopes of coming to a fuller understanding about teaching. I want to ask the question of what does "boring" mean? Heather's experience of boring confirms Vinz's (1996) look at popular culture's misrepresentation of teachers.

Perhaps the notion prevails that if we do not have a "seize the day" moment each time we teach, we have not taught. From my experience, teaching is a much slower, more patiently developing relationship, like we see in Heather's work with Crystal and Ramon. Perhaps the digital story medium is the technology most appropriately suited for documenting these slow stories. Perhaps we need to seek more of the everyday and the boring in our teaching.

Another distinction seems to be found in the tone of the narratives. Her opening story does pay attention to some of the struggles with the "tough boys." Yet it makes a point of ending with, "Today has been a really cool day." In contrast, her tone in the digital story is consistently critical from her opening that identified things she "felt bad about," to the conclusion where she reasserts her "boring" demeanor. This tone of critique is amplified by her uncertainty in working with Billy and Latoya. Her only positive interaction that she inserted in the video was with Crystal and Ramon.

A third appealing dimension of the digital realm for teacher educators is a ready translation into teaching practice. The process of watching, talking about the observation, and then composing the video gives seems to give Heather some percolation time. She uses this to her advantage. "There were a bunch of things that I picked up on that I hadn't noticed, like the thing with Billy, and I try not to have Latoya occupy my time, so I thought that doing this tape was more beneficial than I thought it would be. "Whereas her critical incident shared her experience, she did not seem able to find explicit implications for practice. Yet with the digital story, she moved out the realm of commiserating with fellow teacher assistants about struggles and successes and into a practice based story that had implications for her and her classmates.

One of my concerns with the teacher assistant seminar is an obsession with classroom management techniques. I realize that this is one of the new parts of teaching for these apprenticing teachers and time needs to be spent on it. Yet, I will resist reducing teaching English to teaching kids how to be quiet. I make space for students to write critical incidents about these issues of management, yet I try to always link it to issues of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Heather's digital story does this linking in some specific ways. She worries about the perceived lack of student engagement and connects this to her work with the bio-poem. She thinks through notions of structure and teaching throughout. She thinks about how Billy and Latoya are engaging with the bio-poem assignment. She helps Crystal to revise her letter based on her understanding of the student. Whereas, the critical incident focused on the rowdy boys, the digital story works to represent the richness of the teaching experience in connection with subject matter.

Scene 4—Analyzing the Data: Blackboard Responses from other students

[Shots of Jolynn, Carmen, and Dave typing at the compute.r]

T Voiceover: Drawing upon Blackboard's ability to post the videos before the class, I asked students to preview the videos and post responses. With all the difficulty of computer compatibility and download speed, three of the students did not engage in the previews. However, Heather's particular video sparked a number of comments, which were echoed during the in-class discussion.

[Camera shot of computer screen with Jolynn's response to Heather's video.]

Jolynn voiceover: I took notes, let me see...I think the thing that I noticed absolutely the most (like I said in my response to your CI) is how much it shows that you know your students. You were ratteling [sic] off information about each of them..."she does this, he does that..." It really made me stop and think, can I do that? You sounded too hard on yourself when you talked about "feeling bad about not doing this or that..." Cut yourself some slack, the first time you teach something is never going to be the "perfect" thing.

I liked it when you talked about the things you notice afterwards. Too bad we can't always have a camera to see those little things we wish we would have noticed at the time. I'm sure there will always be times when we say, "if I would have seen that..." Something else I noticed was the way you got down to the level of the students when you were helping them. You didn't just stand leaning over them, you took the time to stop, stoop down, and talk. You did great. I hope my video looks that good!

[Camera shot of computer screen with Carmen's response to Heather's video.]

Carmen voiceover: Heather, there are a couple things that really stand out in your video. I like how you did the voice-over. Also, there's one point that you're down at the student's level and talking to him about his poetry. Your body language says it all....I can't remember what you did exactly, but between getting down to his level and something with your finger over your mouth or something... whatever it was, sent the visual message of "I'm really thinking about this poem of yours...you matter..." It was a nice, teacherly move.

[Camera shot of computer screen with Dave's response to Heather's video.]

Dave voiceover: I think you are probably too hard on yourself. I think you taught the lesson very well. Prepare them? There's a limit to teaching them EVERYthing they need to know to complete it, including capitalization. I'll cover major instructions and then go back and revise and focus on what I see as the major needs. (Maybe you'll see this in my video? Maybe you'll see that your idea is better?) I like your remark about how it doesn't count if you WISH you were an only child. Sounds like Billy has a hard time with his esteem. He could do well but doesn't expect to so he doesn't expend an effort that might dash his expectatio ns?

[Camera shot of computer screen with all the responses to Heather's video.]

T voiceover: The online conversation about the video had three striking dimensions that did not emerge in the discussions about critical incidents. The visual element for the story emerged for Jolynn and Carmen. They both noticed the crouching and the look.

Carmen even translated the pose into a teaching disposition. "I'm really thinking about this poem of yours...you matter..." Paying attention to how Heather's performance conveyed commitments she held is an important awareness that these teacher assistants developed.

At the beginning of the semester, they all could parrot the 'student centered' commitments of the English education program at our university. Yet now, Carmen was using the digital story to consider how these commitments could manifest themselves, even be incarnated into, the classroom. This dimension of the digital story holds much promise for those becoming teachers. The everyday detail that can change classrooms, practice, and teacher consciousness is available when viewed through the digital lens.

In terms of teaching implications, Jolynn and Dave develop particular pedagogical approaches in response to Heather's story. With the opportunity to "be there," it seems like they are better able to think about what "teacherly moves" make sense, all the while avoiding the form of advice. Jolynn is prompted by the digital story to reflect on her own teaching. "I think the thing that I noticed absolutely the most (like I said in my response to your CI), is how much it shows that you know your students. You were ratteling[sic] off information about each of them....'she does this, he does that...' It really made me stop and think, can I do that." Jolynn begins to explore the role of relationship and knowing in her own teaching. Jolynn's attention to "knowing her students" seems grounded in the digital story's ability to capture the detail of the everyday. She identifies this as an important part of becoming a teacher.

Dave, reflects on the move of preparing the class. "There's a limit to teaching them EVERYthing they need to know to complete it, including capitalization. I'll cover major instructions and then go back and revise and focus on what I see as the major needs." He identifies and articulates a teaching approach with a responsive dimension. Heather's digital story provides Dave with a specific teaching move, "preparing a class," that he is able to flesh out his own response to this teaching questio n.

In his parenthesis, I find one of Dave's most important moves. He links the digital stories together and then suggests some implications for practice through comparing and contrasting stories. He also pays attention to the everyday humor that Heather injects with her remark about the only child; humor that seems easier to document in the digital story than in the written story. Finally, Dave continues his dialogic interaction with Heather through extending her thoughts on how to revise her practice with Billy.

This data amplifies some of the findings from the actual digital story. Despite the current technological difficulties of the genre, these responses suggest some of the dialogic possibilities inherent in the use of digital stories in teacher education.

[Cross-dissolve to Tim, T's digital editor, in front of the computer.]

Tim: Looking back, I tried to look at how the teacher assistants developed their own personality on video and juxtaposed that with what I knew of them in the classroom and working with them on their videos. Heather's personality in the classroom didn't seem to be too far from her "real-world" persona, but there was definitely a sense in her video that she was "on" when she was teaching.

[Still shot of Tim.]

T voiceover: With this final piece of data, the effects of digital storytelling gain other dimensions. Tim highlights "personality" and the proximity of different versions of self. Future research might investigate how the availability of one's classroom presence creates the need to navigate between selves in ways that help the development of teachers (Pineau, 1994).

Scene 5—Heather's Final Critical Incident

[Still shot of Heather.]

T voiceover: In attempting to represent the effects of trying to tell one's story, it makes sense to include Heather's final written reflection on who she is becoming as a teacher. In this, she seems to capture the mixture of consciousness, uncertainty, a widening repertoire of tones that seems to point to an uncomfortable and useful appropriation of her teacher identities that have emerged in the course of her storytelling and teacher assisting.

[Cut to Heather speaking to camera.]

Heather: At this point, I don't think I've ever been so confused about who I am as a teacher. I know who I want to be—someone who the students enjoy learning with, who enjoy coming to the class, who will learn how to be better thinkers and better people (not just facts that they will forget tomorrow), and who will hopefully have some sort of appreciation for English when leaving my class. I never thought this would be so hard, because it seemed simple to me before this semester.

But now who have I become? Yes, there are some students who have begun to enjoy coming to class when I'm teaching or who have found something to like about English because of my help....Kelly has begun writing me all sorts of poetry in the past few days because I took an interest in what she was writing. Steve was writing about a poem he found today and when I asked him if he actually liked it or was just writing about it to get it over with, he said that he didn't like it or understand it. I was able to point him in the direction of something that he ended up getting really excited about, and he later thanked me for "knowing" him enough to know when he was bs-ing me. Billy completed his first assignment without my prodding, just because I bothered to seek him out and give him a book I knew he'd enjoy reading (which he kept reading for the whole hour and didn't mess around at all!!!). I gave poetry from Latino authors to Ramon, Roberto, and Rita, who are some of our ESL students, and they enjoyed the special attention and me telling them how envious I was that they could speak two (useful—I speak French) languages. So there have been many mini-triumphs for me in terms of becoming who I want to be as a teacher.

But what about the actual activity that was scheduled for today? Mrs. Smith was gone and I had explicit instructions to be as structured as possible. So the students were to look through poetry journals, books, and their textbooks to find something that they liked and then answer questions about it. The questions were more than just surface-level, so that was okay, but there was to be no talking, period. Yesterday was one of my worst days ever, so I walked into the room this morning with the idea that they were going to basically be on lock-down, especially since Mrs. Smith wasn't there to back me up. Pretty soon, much to my surprise, the kids were so into it that I was floored. The poetry in the journals was student-written so it really appealed to them. And they wanted to share it with their friends. which was supposed to be against the rules today. In general, I let them get away with it, even with the sub giving me dirty looks from across the room. But when there was

too much talking they were back to complete silence. I have a hunch that most of the talking was actually about the poetry, but it was my job today to keep them quiet and working, much like a drill sergeant.

This isn't what enjoying poetry, or learning, for that matter, is all about. It should be shared and it is something to talk about and something to get excited about. But there I was, quieting them down. This is NOT who I want to be as a teacher. Today and most days, I am an extension of Mrs. Smith, afraid that things will get out of hand and I won't be able to take care of it. That's my biggest fear and I haven't been able to get over it. In terms of becoming who I want to be as a teacher, I'm miles from there. I still have the same goals for myself, but I've realized that it's intensely more complex than I ever could have imagined. There are little things almost every day that make me feel a sense of accomplishment, like the few who have started to find something they like about poetry, or the hugs I get in the halls. But there is nothing to make me think that I've even half mastered any one of my goals for myself. I'm not saying that to be pessimistic, but it's all the more reason for me to keep working at it. Those few things that give me a lift every day are the things that make me work towards my goal and give me hope that I must be doing something right so far.

Implications for Our Practice as Teacher Educators

Reflecting on my research, I see both possibility and challenge for the use of digital storytelling in English education. Heather taught me how reflection and performance are shifted when attention is given not only to the written story but also the visual narrative. Consistently, Heather was aware of the struggles and successes that she was experiencing throughout the semester. In the digital storytelling medium, she acknowledges and mediates her various "selves" seen on the screen. While Heather found this process usefully uncomfortable, other students worried that this would freeze them forever in this moment of "teacher struggle" with no opportunity to change. Any move towards "finalizing" in the digital screening might not be useful for developing student teachers.

I do wonder whether the camera offers enough encouragement. "A dark night of the teaching soul" can point out that one's performance is not what is desired. Should this "face-off" happen in the first semester of field placement? I'm not sure. But I do think that this "face-off" helps teachers to confront idealized models that Dudley-Marling (1997) has attempted to challenge.

In our work with teacher assistants and student teachers, we need to do more than help them figure out who they do not want to become. Through these digital stories, we have the negation in Jolynn's comment "I don't want to be my cooperating teacher." We have Heather's comment, "Who I am now, is not who I want to be." What we now need is to be able to look more at other examples of teachers on video. Having students notice the positive examples of Heather crouching down to student level is of vital importance. The next step of this work will be to accumulate a range of positive examples of digital stories for developing teachers.

Heather's reflective awareness seems to develop through the medium of digital storytelling. She sees Billy's complicated behaviors, recognizes Latoya's actions, and even identifies the lack of her interaction through the act of viewing herself. As Jolynn stated on Blackboard, "Too bad we can't always have a camera to see those little things we wish we would have noticed at the time. I'm sure there will always be times when we say, 'If I would have seen that . . .'" Digital storytelling afforded Heather moments of "surprise." We need to provide opportunities for all teachers to experience these moments of "surprise" when our sense of the classrooms, our students and our selves is challenged by

digital documentations. These surprises are the source for our continuing growth as educators.

At the end of the semester, Heather expressed a wish for the opportunity to see herself at various points during her teaching. Dave said, "Now after this video, I've got an imaginary camera on my shoulder while I'm teaching." This act of viewing oneself seems to shift the reflection itself, bifurcating it as the teacher and the viewer. This bifurcation seems to parallel what Mohr and MacLean (1999) described as being teacher and researcher at the same time. This dual consciousness intuitively seems like a goal. But the effects of this duality need further study. One caution will be to examine the possible development of some kind of panoptic surveillance instinct (Foucault, 1995) for developing teachers. We will need to be consistent in the interrogation of our practices as teacher educators, no matter how "appealing" the technology is.

Heather's reflections highlight the question of "what is boring?" Digital storytelling seems to amplify this aspect of performance. It remains to be seen whether the use of digital storytelling privileges the "teacher as performer." Heather does seem to be concerned about this absence in her teaching story. She thoughtfully links interaction to the idea of excitement. She may be closer to what Skilton-Slyvester (1999) positively described as "teaching without charisma" rather than a Robin Williams' teacher-as-entertainer standard. What is important for me as a teacher educator is that digital storytelling raised a question that I would have a hard time posing as an observer— "Am I a boring teacher?" Digital storytelling allows for reflection on performance that leads to questions stemming from authentic teaching that might not otherwise be asked in the context of simply talking about teaching in a methods class or a seminar. It allows for all the viewers to ask performance questions.

In Heather's case, digital stories also offered her a chance to have a different teacher-self emerge. In her criticism of Latoya, another part of Heather as teacher emerged, the part of her teaching identity that draws boundaries with students. In the course of the video, this self mixed with the Heather who explained the bio-poem, the Heather who was surprised by Billy and the Heather, who connected with Crystal and Ramon. In the written narratives, there seemed to be one self. In the digital narrative, multiple selves emerged and required acknowledgement and mediation.

Implicated in this process is my own teacher preparation work. I have been changed significantly as I consider the effects of digital storytelling. I have begun to consider Heather's suggestion for semester-long viewing. It starts me thinking about how to provide shorter opportunities for students to view themselves earlier in the semester. I also think students need more access to video editing. It would be nice to have students do at least some of the initial editing to speed up our final editing sessions, though I wonder how self-as-editor would change the final product. I start to imagine how they can keep an updated DVD of themselves as teachers for their own use and for their interviews.

The most important effect that my teacher research has had on my teaching is the realization now that I will be doing some intensive teaching in the editing session for their digital story. Since, Heather's class, I have worked without Tim. I am finding the teaching that takes place during these editing sessions is very rich.

I am starting to view this as a conference with a student writer. I want them to be able to see things on their own, to create their own meanings, to make selections for their stories based on what seems most relevant to their development. At the same time, I want to figure out how to offer my more experienced viewing of their processes along with their

self-reflections. This will be the next step to examine in this process. How I talk with students about the sections they select will be just as important as the responses that I give them during the actual observation. It is clear that this conference will be the key to helping preservice teachers face their selves.

I have become convinced that this is the kind of technological improvement that teacher education needs. Our work needs to acknowledge the "messy reality of classrooms" (Dudley -Marling, 1997). Teacher education cannot be improved solely with bottom-line mandates *to leave no children or teachers behind.* Becoming a teacher is a process that is inherently complex. It demands a narrative that honestly represents this complexity as well as the incremental changes that occur in the classroom. Digital stories—with their ability to document the surprising everyday qualities of the classroom—afford teacher educators the opportunity to linger over the important story of learning to teach.

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