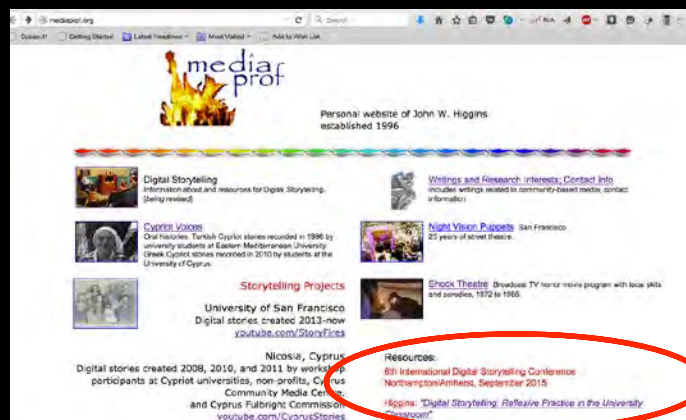Digital Storytelling: Reflexive Practice
in the University Classroom

John W. Higgins
University of San Francisco
HigginsJ@usfca.edu   www.mediaprof.org

Voices of Change
Storywork in Activism, Education and Public Service
Sixth International Digital Storytelling Conference - September 25-27, 2015
Hosted by Smith College (Northampton, MA), the University of Massachusetts (Amherst, MA) & the Five Colleges.

Presentation Resources & Links:

www.mediaprof.org
   -Resources: DST 2015 Conference

Program:

- Personal Context
- Student Stories and Reflexive Responses
- Reflexive Practices
- Definitions
    - Reflective -- Reflexive
- Theoretic Frameworks
    - Freire's Critical Pedagogy
    - Dervin's Sense-Making Methodologies
- Student Story

bell hooks:
Radical/ Engaged Pedagogy

"... a simple practice like including personal experience may be more constructively challenging than simply changing the curriculum. That is why there has been such critique of the place of experience -- of confessional narrative -- in the classroom.

"One of the ways you can be written off quickly as a professor by colleagues who are suspicious of progressive pedagogy is to allow your students, or yourself, to talk about experience ..."

Higgins

PERSONAL INFLUENCES

This was the last moment that my father felt that warmth and con

To Grow Up

- Ancaline
- Near East University, Nicosia, Cyprus 2010
  - youtube/CyprusStories   https://youtu.be/yjkhYQ59Jjc

When I lost my father, I realized that I was suddenly a grown up. when I realized this, I also realized that I

Reflexivity Form

- End of term or workshop
- Questions based on Dervin's Sense-Making Methodology.
  - Implement Freire's notions of reflection/ reflexivity;
  - Implement Roland Barthes' notion of self-reflexivity;

Reflexivity (S-MM)

1. The best of what I have achieved in this class/ workshop (what I'm most proud of);
2. An idea or concept I found invigorating/ stimulating/ exciting/ useful;
3. An idea or concept that I have struggled with;
4. Something I learned that I would consider a "lesson for life."
5. Something I learned about myself during this process is:

→ See Reflexivity Form: Resources – www.mediaprof.org

Ancaline: Reflexive Response

1a. The best of what I have achieved in this experience (what I am most proud of) is:

I always used to keep this story to myself. I didn't use to say that my father passed away unless I had to talk about it, I used to be embarrassed. Maybe it was because of this, that I couldn't accept my situation. It was very strange to share this story with everybody but at the end, saying these things relieved me. Also I recognized that my story was everyone's story.

1b. What leads me to this response is:

This "digital storytelling" workshop helped me to experience it that way.

Ancaline: Reflexive Response

2a. One idea or concept from this experience that I found invigorating / stimulating / exciting / useful is:

It was very exciting that a couple of people who didn't know each other closely came together and shared their private stories.

2b. What leads me to this response is:

When group members talked about their stories, they were very sincere and they really were giving value to these memories.

Ancaline: Reflexive Response

3a. One idea or concept from this experience that I have struggled with is:

After preparing my narrative as a text I had difficulties deciding how I would transform it into the visual material.

3b. How I resolved this struggle / am resolving this struggle:

My friend Erman helped me so much about it. He was always there when I needed his ideas and support and he produced solutions.

Ancaline: Reflexive Response

4a. Something I learned from this experience that I would consider a "lesson for life" is:

At that workshop I shared my private and also very sad story with other people, and I learned that the sorrow can be relieved by talking about it.

4b. How I arrived at this conclusion was:

After I finalized my project, the reactions to my work was very beautiful. This was a very nice feeling for me.

Ancaline: Reflexive Response

5a. Something I learned about myself from this experience is:

4a. Bu atolye çalışmasında öğrendiğim ve "yaşam dersi" olarak nitelendirebileceğim deneyimlerim şunlardır:

As I said above, I learned that "sorrow can be relieved by talking about it."

4b. Bu sonuca ulaşmamı sağlayan şey nedir? (ayrıntılı olarak açıklayınız):
    Projem bittikten sonra, insanların beğenisi ve yaklaşımı beni bu sonuca ulaştırdı.

5b. How I arrived at this conclusion was:

At first, I wasn't sure if it was all right for me to tell my story, but after seconds I realized that I was feeling lighter by disclosing it.

Reflexive Response

"We have to thank you. We have bonded in this class in a way we haven't in other classes. In other classes, maybe we hate each other. But in here we bond together. We see that we are much alike.

So thank you for helping us see we are a lot alike. I didn't dream we had so much in common."

(Joana, EUC, Cyprus 2010)

"Lesson for Life"

"That everyone is different. Everyone has different ideas, different ways of going about things, different ways of producing content, different likes and interests, and just an overall different perspective on how they see the world.

I think it is important that we embrace these differences instead of rejecting them, even if we don't completely agree with them. I think by listening to people and hearing their experiences, stories, concepts, and ideas, we can formulate and validate our emotions, beliefs, values, and opinions and can create the foundation of how we think and how we want to live our lives and share our experiences.

(Maddi, USF 2014)

Story Venues

- Digital Storytelling
- Story Circle … and just photos [process-focus]
- Blogs (Storehouse, Exposure, Medium, Cowbird)
- Comic books/ Graphic Novels
  - Comic Life by Plasq.com (and mobile apps)

WHERE IS SALVATION

IN A MEDIA ENGULFED SOCIETY?

Nick Loiacono 2012

Digital Detox: Response

24 HOURS WITHOUT MEDIA

I WISH I COULD LISTEN TO MY IPOD TO GO TO SLEEP

THE FIRST NIGHT WITHOUT MEDIA...

Olivia Leary 2012

The Clones of San Francisco

- Madeline Morrissey (2015)
  - > https://www.storehouse.co/stories/p25c0-the-clones-of-san-francisco

University of San Francisco 2015 Comic Books/ Graphic Novels http://sco.lt/85GWA5

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  - Joshua Presley-McMahon 2007
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- YouTube:
  - CyprusStories
  - StoryFires
  - MenloTV
- Comic Books:
  - http://www.scoop.it/t/usf-events-ideas-people
- Cypriot Oral Histories
  - Cyvoices.org

REFLEXIVE PRACTICES

Practices

- Read Freire and others
  - Higgins, "Paulo Freire and Social Transformation"
- On-going reflective practices
  - Journals
  - Discussion circles
  - Reflection Guide
- End of term/workshop Reflexivity Form

→See "Resources" www.mediaprof.org

Reflection Questions (S-MM)

- What did I think and feel?
    - ideas, thoughts, emotions, questions, confusions, etc.
- What does that say to me?
- What did I learn about myself?
- About others?
- What personal and/or professional growth did I experience through this?
- Did this experience confirm or challenge my personal values?

Reflection Questions (S-MM)

- If given the chance, what would I do differently? What would I do the same?
- What difference did my actions or the experience make to my community?
- Did my actions have any impact?
- What more needs to be done?

Reflection Questions (S-MM)

Always:
- *What leads me to each of my observations and conclusions above?*
  - Discuss/ explain/ explore/ probe *each* deeply and thoroughly

Next:
- Link theory and experience

Important: *Connections*

- What *connections* can I make between
  - the experience or information

  and
  - my thoughts, ideas, feelings, confusions

  and
  - outside stuff:
    - things I've read or heard in this class
      - or other classes - or sources - or people
        - theories, ideas, evaluations, comments, etc.

  and
  - things I've experienced in the past

Important: *Connections*

"… sharing personal narratives yet linking that knowledge with academic information really enhances our capacity to know. (hooks 1994: 148)

THEORETIC FRAMEWORKS

Reflexivity

"Reflexivity doesn't mean simply to `reflect on' (which usually comes either later or too late) but is an immediate critical consciousness of what one is doing, thinking or writing."
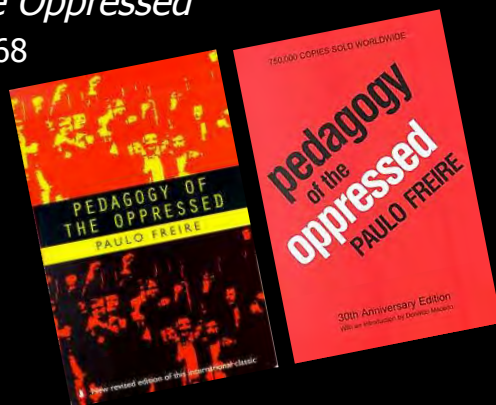
Roland Barthes

Theoretical Frameworks

- Critical Pedagogies
  - Paulo Freire
    - > Self-reflexivity, dialogue, praxis
- Sense-Making Methodology
  - Brenda Dervin
  - disciplined dialogue
  - manner of questioning (others, self)
- Conflict Transformation
  - John Paul Lederach

FREIRE

Paulo Freire & Critical Pedagogy

- Paulo Freire
  - *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
    - >Portuguese: 1968
    - >English: 1970

Freire

- Brazilian educator / adult literacy education
- Pushed education for
  - liberation
  - emancipation
  - transformation
- "Banking system" of education
  - critique of "schooling"

The "Banking System" of Education

Paulo Freire's critique of "schooling"

teacher →
deposit

"information"
("Truth")

student ←
withdrawal

student

student as *object*: passive, accepting, acted *upon*

Freire's Alternative:

- Liberatory, Transformative Education
  - Goals:
    - >Desire to have student as *subject*
      - ✓ Actively taking charge of own learning and transforming the world
    - >"life-long learning" for
      - ✓ personal & social transformation
        - ▪ self growth
        - ▪ social empowerment
      - ✓ Liberation - Emancipation

Critical Pedagogy

- How to achieve these goals?
  - Processes:
    - >"Problem posing"
    - >"Self-reflexivity" / "critical-reflection"
      - ✓ Not the same as mere *reflection*: "thinking about"
      - ✓ "critical":
        - ▪ goal: to transform the world
        - ▪ power relations, inequalities
    - >Praxis
      - ✓ "[critical] reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it."
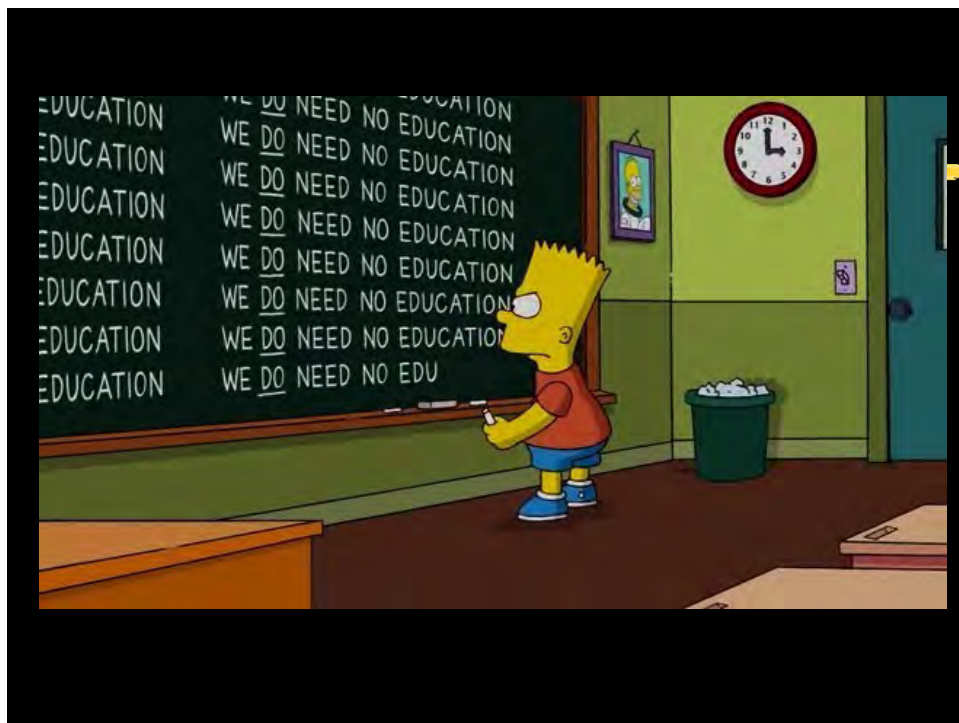
Critical Pedagogy

- Role of teacher:
  - expose students to alternatives to the main view of the world
    - >challenge mainstream perspectives
    - >NOT "balance"
    - >often is personally uncomfortable for students at start of "pushing the envelope"
      - ✓"limit situation" leads to "empowering moment"

Critical Pedagogy

- Role of teacher (cont'd):
  - help students recognize & express own belief systems
    - >self-reflexivity
    - >"what leads you"
      - ✓pushing deeper and deeper into why you responded the way you did
  - help students find own answers through questioning

Critical Pedagogies

- Radical/ Engaged Pedagogy
  - bell hooks
  - Learning: not always warm and fuzzy
  - Personal experience in the classroom constructively challenges the status quo
  - Need to link personal narrative with academic information
- Feminist Pedagogies
  - Ways of knowing beyond rational thought
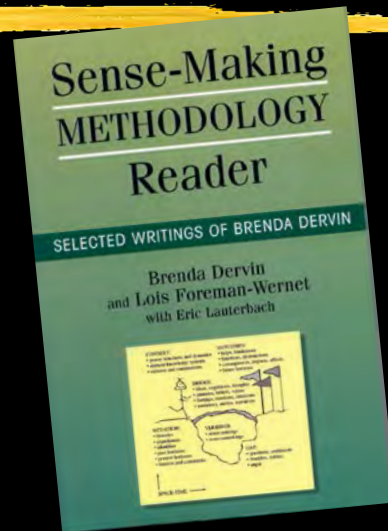 - Self reflection required of both teachers and students

Brenda Dervin

SENSE-MAKING METHODOLOGY

Dervin's Sense-Making Methodology

- Disciplined dialogue
  - deep listening
  - each takes turn holding the" talking stick"
- Manner of questioning (others, self)
  - Open ended & reflexive
    - > "tell me your story"
    - > "what leads you to …"
- Often heard during the interview:
  "You know, I'd never thought about it that way until now…"

Dervin's Sense-Making Methodology

- Meta-theory, Methodology, Data collection methods
- User-centered
- Information seeking and use
  - a means, not an end
- Manner of asking questions
- Self-reflexive tools used by participant
- Informed by Freire's "dialogue"

Sense-Making
METHODOLOGY
Reader

SELECTED WRITINGS OF BRENDA DERVIN

Brenda Dervin
and Lois Foreman-Wernet
with Eric Lauterbach

Sense-Making Methodology

- Practical means to implement critical pedagogy in classroom;
- In particular, theoretic guiding questioning
  - used to promote analytical, critical, self-reflexive thought

S-M-M in the Classroom

- Sense-Making Methodology helps identify Freire's "limit situation" and "empowering moment"
- Better understanding of mechanisms of "culture of silence"
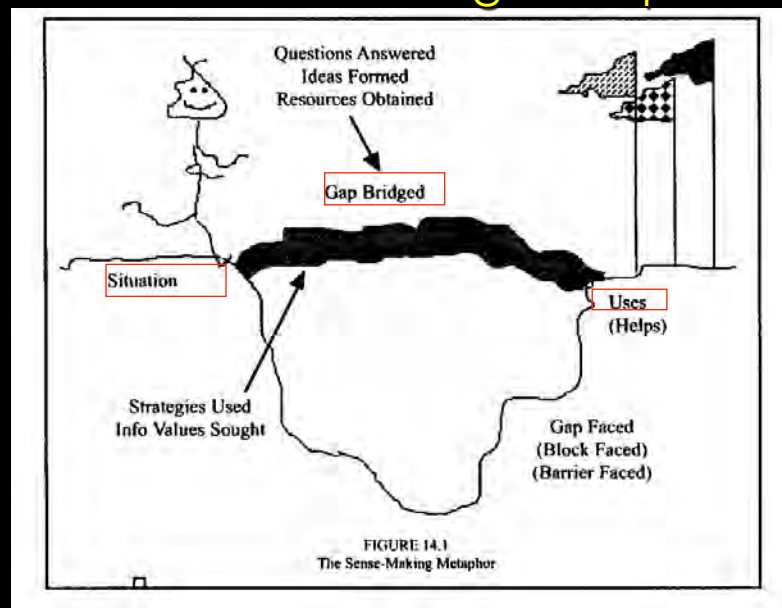- Better understanding/appreciation of students

Basic Concepts

SENSE-MAKING METHODOLOGY

Sense-Making Methodology

- Posits:
  - Nature of reality is discontinuous
  - People experience "gaps" as move through life
  - Process used to bridge "gaps"

The Sense-Making Metaphor

FIGURE 14.1
The Sense-Making Metaphor

Sense-Making Methodology

- Methodologically:
  - Focuses attention on
    - >situation involved
    - >gap encountered
    - >bridge constructed
  - Data collection:
    - >includes structured, open-ended "Time Line" interview

Possible Reflexive Questions, using S-M-M

- What happened that brought you here?
- What question are you trying to answer?
- What help would you like?
- If I was able to help, what would you do with it?

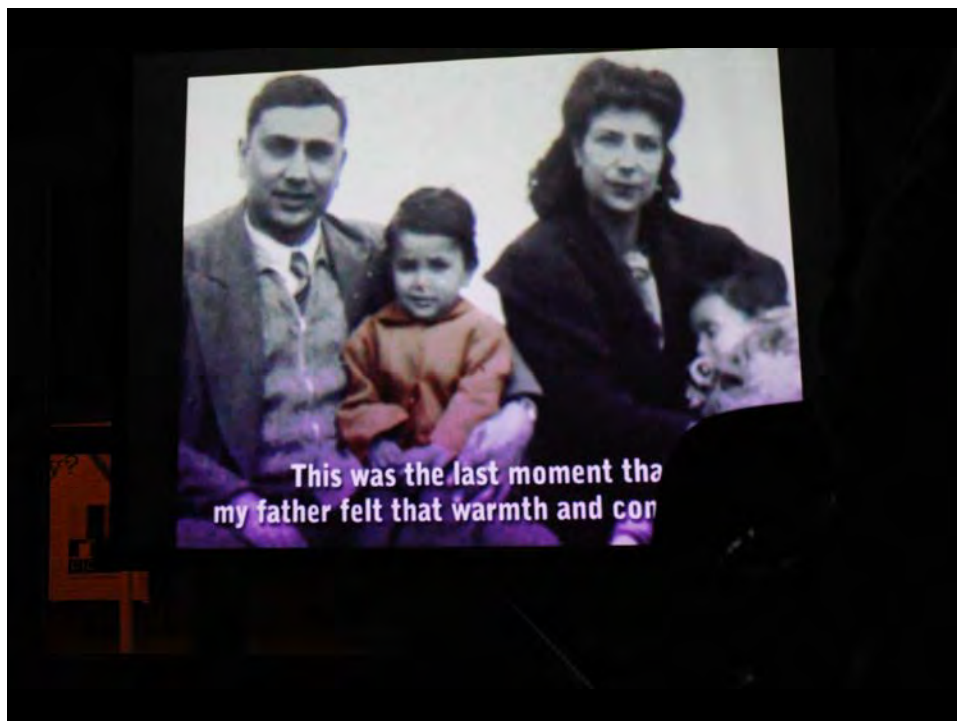## Possible Reflexive Questions, using S-M-M

- Focusing on a Moment of Information Sought:
  - What question did you have?
  - What led to the question?
  - How did it connect with your life?
  - How did it connect to authority/power/history?
  - Did you get an answer?
  - Did the answer help and/or hinder?
  - How?
  - Was the answer complete?
  - What leads you to say that?

Possible Reflexive Questions, using S-M-M

- What helped?
- What hindered?
- What are the barriers?
- What do you conclude?
- What emotions/feelings relate?
- What would help?
- What things need to be discussed here that aren't being discussed?
- Whose voice needs to be heard that isn't being heard?

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