Ethical Storytelling and Digital Narratives: Lessons Learned in Student-led Podcasts and Community Radio Partnerships

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Abstract

This paper explores the ethics of digital forms of narratives, storytelling, and relationship-building within social work and educational settings. We discuss the need for social workers to think intentionally about relationship-building, ethics, and informed consent when engaging in digital forms of narrative and storytelling. We draw from a study that engaged entry-level Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students in creating their own podcasts. Although BSW students simultaneously developed social work skills, critical thinking, and an understanding of theory and community engagement, the process raised important questions about establishing relationships. We draw data from: 1) a focus group with our radio station partners, 2) a focus group with BSW students who created their own podcasts, and 3) individual interviews with community partners who worked in collaboration with the students. As authors and researchers, we offer reflections on storytelling within podcasts and important considerations about the ethics of creating and disseminating digital narratives within social work praxis.

Keywords: podcasting, experiential teaching and learning, ethical digital narratives, critical social work

Introduction: Situating Podcasting Within a Genealogy of Digital Narratives in Social Work

Much of our social work practice is centered on how we relate to one another and how we exchange stories. In her work on narrative as

research and praxis, Shaw (2017) argues that social workers ought to engage with narrative inquiry in ways that center people's stories and give them as much control as possible over how their stories are told, cared for, and curated. While there is no one established way to employ a narrative approach, the unifying intent is to understand how storytellers make sense of events and actions in their lives (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Building on various traditions, narrative inquiry focuses on how a person's stories offer meaning and personal interpretations of life experiences. Scholars have identified the strength of narrative methods in granting storytellers authority over the content and presentation of their stories by allowing them to be involved with the subjective accounts, interpretations, and assessments of their own experiences (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004). On an analytical level, narrative inquiry encourages participants to articulate and assess fluid accounts of their experiences (Polkinghorne, 1996) and to situate stories within particular contexts and across time (Randall, 2012).

Certainly, within social work research, an emerging trend is the use of visual and creative modalities in research and practice that complement and enhance people's stories. Researchers have discussed digital storytelling (DST) as a form of narrative where life stories are reconstructed using a combination of text, photos, narration, and music, and are then edited through a computer (Benmayor, 2008; Kajder et al., 2005; Lenette et al., 2015). The outcome is a short multimedia story, designed and created by the storyteller and person producing the digital vignette, that combines a narrated audio story, video, and/or images (Benmayor, 2008; Kajder et al., 2005). Lenette et al. (2015) suggest that a central tenet of DST methodology is that it structures collaborative ethnographic dialogue between researcher and participant. However, it is important to note that DST is a specific research methodology with its own unique design principles. Thus, we use the term *digital narratives* as an umbrella term to include the different visual and oral modalities used to generate narratives for the purposes of research and digital/online dissemination.

A strength of digital narratives is that they allow people to engage with stories through mediums that are more accessible than scholarly journal articles, or other written formats. Of further importance to social work, recent research has also explored and applied visual documentation, such as the use of photovoice (Brotman et al., 2019) and art as catalysts for social change (Wehbi et al., 2017; Wehbi et al., 2018). For instance, Brotman et al. (2019), engaging with theories that integrate intersectionality and life course, utilize photovoice for the purposes of visually showcasing the structural barriers and lived experiences of older racialized immigrants as they settle and integrate into Canadian society. As a form of digital narrative, podcasting allows a storyteller's voice and emotions to be heard, and people can choose to listen to these stories on their own time and in their own way (Ferrer et al., 2019).

The opportunity for social work students, scholars, and practitioners to engage with stories in oral, visual, or written formats is a strength of digital narratives and storytelling, and this opportunity aligns with our desire to increase the accessibility of knowledge in all its forms. Often used in conjunction with liberatory or participatory methodologies (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991), innovative technologies represent exciting and new opportunities and ways in which social work researchers can amplify and co-present people's stories. The rapid acceleration of technology and digital media has meant that there are near-limitless opportunities for people to disseminate their stories. Social work in community development is increasingly relying on media literacy (often centered on client stories of both hardships/challenges and resistance/resilience) in funding strategies. Yet, as social workers (in both profit and non-profit sectors) and researchers make sense of new technology, ethical considerations are often absent from discussions about the creation and dissemination of digital narratives. In the age of digital media, it is imperative that social workers consider the ethics of digital forms of storytelling, especially in a neoliberal context where there are dangers inherent in knowledge (re)production. Social workers and researchers working with

novel methodologies that center on experience and stories should adhere to social work's ethical codes of conduct in both methodological, editorial and dissemination activities, particularly with regard to ownership and control of generated knowledge. Problematically, codes of conduct and ethical guidelines within the profession do not offer clear directives for engaging with novel methodologies such as digital narratives. Where guidelines on digital engagement between social workers and clients do exist, such as those published in the Canadian Association of Social Workers' (2014) *Social Media Use and Social Work Practice*, the focus is largely on negotiating boundaries between connecting with clients over social media and whether or not it is appropriate to write or post client testimonials on agency websites.

Centering the topic of ethical narrative inquiry, this article provides reflections on a pilot project wherein students collaborated with local community partners to create podcasts focused on key issues of social concern (see Ferrer et al., 2019). At its base, podcasting is defined as an audio-centric form of media which can include the processes of uploading digital audio, video, and/or text files to the internet, where they can be played or downloaded (Alam et al., 2016; Brown, 2011; Cartney, 2013). However, the definition of podcasting hides the significant potential it has in relationship-building, storytelling, and knowledge dissemination. In this article, we discuss podcasting as a form of digital narrative. Drawing from a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) grant at the University of Calgary, we offer some learning lessons and potential pitfalls from our own experiences in promoting innovative digital narrative methodologies such as podcasting, paying particular attention to processes of relationship-building and ensuring consent. We also offer conversation about the unlimited potential of engaging social work students with student-created podcasts and also raise important questions about creating digital narratives and ethical storytelling in an increasingly digital age.

The Increasing Presence and Relevance of Podcasts and Podcasting in Social Work

Though podcasting has been identified as a popular storytelling medium, there are limited studies that have examined its use as a pedagogical tool. Within postsecondary contexts, podcasting is most commonly used for course casting, a form of dissemination where instructors record and upload lecture materials for student consumption (Armstrong et al. 2009; Forbes, 2011). A limited number of studies have attempted to explore the potential impact of student-led podcasts on learning. For instance, in a study on the use of podcasting and learning outcomes, Alam et al. (2016) and Forbes (2011) concluded that students gain ethical skills and mastery over self-reflection, problem-solving, and formative assessment skills. Similarly, Armstrong et al. (2009) found that students also learn interpersonal and soft skills such as those related to teamwork, communication, organization, and research activities.

Within the field of social work and education, podcasts and podcasting are slowly gaining recognition and use. Academic and social work podcasting pioneer, Jonathan Singer (2019) wrote about the meaningful learning opportunities of podcasts within social work classrooms. Drawing from a quantitative survey, Singer (2019) found that social work podcast listeners appreciated the accessibility in subscribing to and (re)listening to podcast episodes multiple times. Other studies have highlighted how podcasts convey research and scholarly content in dynamic and nuanced ways (Gachago et al., 2016). As researchers, we have written about the potential of podcasting when students are the creators of their own content (see Ferrer et al., 2019). From 2017–2019 we piloted a project involving Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students, CJSW 90.9 FM (a local campus radio station), and local community partners to develop a 6-episode series on social justice issues. The project sought to guide student learnings of theory and social work practice through the creation

of podcast episodes centered on homelessness, immigration, mental health, poverty, and disability issues. Through this experience, students learned about interviewing, engaging with community stakeholders, and working with the local campus radio station. One of our main findings was that student-led podcasts have considerable potential in developing BSW student capacity and relationship-building within classroom and community settings (Ferrer et al., 2019). Through this collaborative project, students began to develop their professional and generalist social work identities and started to engage critically and reflectively with a social justice issue through interviewing community partners and researching their campaigns and initiatives (Ferrer et al., 2019). Moreover, it was through the podcast creation process that students were able to explicitly connect structural barriers and issues embedded within social policies to the day-to-day experiences of service providers and community members (Ferrer et al., 2019). The pilot study also demonstrated the knowledge-mobilization potential of student-led podcasts, as episodes were shared and made available on our faculty's Soundcloud page. To date, the podcasts have been played over 3,000 times and continue to be used by the research team for knowledge mobilization and teaching activities. Our Soundcloud digital repository can be found at the following link: https://soundcloud.com/ucalgary-social-work.

Despite podcasting's potential for increasing collaboration, skill-building, and understanding of social justice issues, we did encounter ethical dilemmas that required our deeper reflection about the shortfalls of applying digital narratives through modalities like podcasting. Given the burgeoning interest and application in adopting new technologies and digital narratives in social work research and practice, we raise the following questions: *What are the ethical considerations that must be accounted for in digital narratives such as podcasting? How do we diffuse power so that our storytellers become co-producers and co-owners of their stories and digital podcasts?*

Critical Pedagogy Framework and Methodology

Drawing from a critical pedagogy framework, our pilot study sought to develop and foster critical consciousness and expanding worldviews for social change among entry-level social workers (Elias, 1997; Lorenzetti, 2013; Sagris, 2008; Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005). Centering critical consciousness meant challenging students to engage in a process of reflection that asked them to situate themselves, their relative privilege, and their positionality with the ultimate goal of social change (Lorenzetti, 2013). Sagris (2008) noted that this approach calls on students to "question all taken-for-granted values, ideas, norms, beliefs, etc. of [their] experience that are the given presuppositions comprising the dominant social paradigm" (p. 1).

Our engagement with critical pedagogy is centered on people's narratives and stories.

When people offer their stories, they offer a part of themselves, which comes with both potential personal risks and possible benefits. When we engage with people through their stories, we must do so with an ethic of care and responsibility— care for the gift that has been offered, and responsibility to ensure that the ways in which the stories are shared reflect the desires and intentions of the people who have offered to share them with us. This ethic of care extends beyond traditional ethical requirements and is built on what Held (2006) identified as "concern and mutual responsiveness to need on both the personal and wider social level" (p. 28). Our pilot project began with focused engagement with local community partners. This step was important because we wanted to model relationship-building to our students. The community organizations involved in our project included advocacy organizations specializing in 1) (im)migrant rights in Canada, 2) homelessness, 3) disability, 4) social justice among social workers and service providers, and 5) mental health. We then identified and developed a course syllabus for an entry level BSW course where students were taught critical theory and engaged pedagogical approaches (Agger, 1991). During the semester,

the BSW students in the course were introduced to the concept and process of critical reflexivity as it related to their own social locations. Students were also asked to discuss different forms and dynamics of oppression at personal, community, and structural levels, and to apply critical theories, models, and perspectives in social work throughout their work that semester.

CJSW 90.9 FM provided students with training on how to broadcast digital content and how to use podcasting equipment at the station. A dedicated CJSW 90.9 FM staff member was hired to create a digital and printed podcasting manual on how to operate a radio switch board and the editing software, Logic Pro. Students were instructed to visit the radio station and taught proper procedures on how to use station equipment and station protocols and memberships.

During the semester, student activities and assignments were structured so that students could develop their understanding of critical approaches and social work theories. Guest lectures by media literacy experts were also held throughout the semester to focus on 1) the ethics of broadcasting and storytelling, 2) scriptwriting 101, 3) narrative interviewing, and 4) connecting music with storytelling. Given the large class size (31 students), teams of five were created based on areas of interest: disability, aging, child welfare, homelessness, migration, and violence prevention. Once student teams were formed, each team was paired with a local community partner to conduct interviews and help structure their podcast episodes. Throughout the semester, students then began to record, edit and create their podcasts. Students were also encouraged to engage in active member checking, wherein they would meet with their community partners and discuss the production and editing of content. Each week, students were also given opportunities to share their process with the class. At the end of the semester, members of the radio station, our community partners, and the students were asked to participate in focus groups and individual interviews to discuss their process and assessment of the project. The proceeding findings

are drawn from one focus group with students (n=19), one focus group with CJSW staff members (n=4), and individual interviews with community partners (n=5).

Findings

The findings of this paper focus on the ethical concerns of creating and distributing digital narratives in general and podcasts specifically. Themes center on 1) developing relationships as in integral step of ethical storytelling when working with innovative methods and technologies, 2) ensuring a consent that extends past the interview, which includes the negotiation of ownership or co-ownership of stories; and 3) providing adequate resources, compensation, and honoraria for contributions shared by partners and participants.

Developing relationships in a good way

An inherent part of the project was establishing, developing, and maintaining relationships. At the outset, we as researchers had pre-established relationships with our community partners and the members of the radio station. Many relationships had been developed and cultivated over a number of years, and so our partners were willing to take part in the project despite not being familiar with podcasting. Although community partners understood the basic parameters of the project, some felt blindsided by what they perceived to be a "rawness" in some of the students. For instance, a few community partners discussed the challenge of getting students up to speed and modelling professional behavior such as attending meetings on time, valuing the contributions shared, and proper email communications. Some community partners were frustrated that their time was not being respected by the students because students had not prepared for the interviews. The following excerpt provides feedback from our community partners about helping students better recognize and respect their time. The community partner below alludes to the lack of preparation which exacerbated feelings of discomfort.

I would let [students] know that they need to be prepared. … I think it will be better if there is a rough draft or a practice first: [for example] who is expected to ask next, and then … an overview of what's going to happen; who's going to ask what topic. … I think it will be much more lively and much more meaningful for everyone if we're all prepared. … Actually, I was not comfortable [with my experience]. I think because it was new. Anything new, we're not comfortable, right? Maybe that's also part of making people comfortable is if they practice first … I think that will make the discussion even livelier and free flowing because [during my interview] I was not comfortable, and I think the un-comfortability was a barrier for me. (Community Partner 1)

While some community partners felt that some of their assigned students were unprepared, others saw the potential in working collaboratively on a podcasting project and valued the opportunities to develop relationship-building skills.

One benefit and learning for myself… is that experience in speaking and how we talk… in a casual environment versus how we talk in maybe a more structured environment. … How [this project] helped me grow and learn as a community organizer … was having [students] ask questions about [our organization and campaign] and then having to talk about answers. … We got to dig into language and how language can either dissolve stigma or it can increase stigma … and it gave me a really good recognition to go back and [be] cognizant of the language that I'm using.

Anytime that I think anybody in the community, or any organization gets to work with students, we a hundred percent should take that opportunity and do [it]. I think that it's not only a way to support students who are up and coming in the field, but it's also a way for us as organizations [and] professionals to stay engaged with the learning and … continuing to be evaluating our own practice. (Community Partner 2)

Relationship-building was a lesson that students, staff, and community partners collectively discussed as an essential component of the podcasting creation project from the outset. CJSW 90.9 FM members recognized that requiring an entire class to do a podcast meant there would be individuals who were not as invested in the process. For staff members, this represented a challenge given the community-driven approach it takes with its volunteers. One staff member in particular explained how the radio station had a strict policy where incoming volunteers would need to first volunteer at the station before touching or using the station's equipment. This allows the volunteer to learn the culture at the station but to also develop a sense of responsibility and shared capacity when using the equipment.

[The] students … sidestepped some of the regular processes that CJSW does. … In order for a volunteer to get [production and switchboard training], they need to have committed usually around five to seven hours to the station in some other way. … So, with the students coming in … they didn't follow some of the rules. … At one point, some students came in and they threw their coats and bags in our lounge area and then went into the back room, and I had to be like, "Hey, can you not [do that] because

other people use this space." … I found myself getting prickly about it because well I don't know who these people are. I don't even know their names … and they're already having access to these rooms. That kind of bothers me. (CJSW Staff Member 1)

The station membership is built around trust. We get to know each other, we get to love each other, and we teach each other how to use the equipment, and we respect that equipment like it's our own. And there's a real community [relationship] that happens at CJSW that a lot of the students got to just bypass … through the [pilot project]. (CJSW Staff Member 2)

The staff also emphasized the need for developing tighter, more consistent relationships with faculty and departments. The building of relationships may be evidenced in policies or formal agreements, and most of the dialogue around this topic related to the ethics of establishing and maintaining relationships with campus partners. On this topic, staff discussed the fact that they never saw the undergrad students after the podcasting assignment and project was over. Part of ethical relationship-building, according to CJSW staff, is not only developing formalized ways of initiating and engaging in community partnerships, but also ways of terminating relationships. Staff members were aware of the transient nature of student engagement given how the project was tied to the beginning and end of the semester (as well as course assignment deadlines). As such, CJSW staff discussed the need to have explicit conversations about how their relationships with students might end in some way that would give all parties a sense of closure. One staff member noted that, "with the undergrads, I haven't seen them since [the end of the podcast project]."

For their part, students acknowledged the uneasiness of participating in a podcasting project where they are asked to learn a new skillset while navigating the pressures of completing course assignments. The demands of the semester, in addition to assignments from other courses, meant that students could not establish and cultivate the relationships that they normally might have. One student disclosed their group's ongoing discomfort in working to develop a podcast that ethically and accurately represented their community partner, while also dealing with other course assignments:

I know for us we wanted to build really good relationships with the people that we were interviewing, but when we're working with really strict, constricted deadlines it's like: 'We're gonna do our interview and then see you never. We'll let you know when the podcast is done because we don't have time to have a greater relationship with you.' That's very conflicting for us because we feel like we're doing that whole: 'swoop in, gather our information, and then leaving and never coming back.' (Student 1)

What is consent within digital narratives and storytelling? Disjunctures between broadcasting and social work ethics

A major source of frustration from students, staff, and community partners was the lack of an appropriate consent form that outlined 1) expectations of various stakeholders of the project, 2) the approximate time required to participate, and 3) explicit discussion about who would own the podcast content. In social work, students are taught the importance of honoring and respecting a person's story and voice. However, many students and community partners critiqued the generic informed consent and video release form approved by the university's research ethics board. Primarily, the institutional ethics release form did not adequately address some of the ethical dilemmas encountered over the course of interviewing and subsequent

broadcasting. For instance, students openly shared their discomfort in holding extensive conversations with community partners, then to have their podcasts air only portions of those conversations.

> I know one challenge that we had was: …we did two interviews. We discovered that one interview was … better. The information that was discussed was more in line with what we were trying to do within our podcast, and we found that [with] the other interview, we weren't going to use as much. But then we had a bit of an ethical issue: we didn't want to offend the one person that came in and [spent] hours talking with us. (Student 2)

Other students also identified the inaccessibility of language embedded within informed consent forms approved by the university's research ethics board. Some students worked with community partners who felt that the informed consent was unnecessarily focused on institutional responsibilities, and not written in plain languages that partners might engage with. One student in particular spoke about the inaccessibility of the informed consent for partners who had visual or reading disabilities:

> Just to be really honest, it screwed us up a little bit because we were given a community partner that [has membership of people] who experience [disabilities]. … It really threw us for a loop to the point where we spent hours trying to rejig our podcast where we're not telling the stories that aren't our own, but we're still telling the story. We spent a significant amount of time and emotional capacity worrying about this, when this could have been easily resolved by having the plain language consent form in the first place. (Student 3)

Despite the challenges of having a generic informed consent form that was inaccessible and not written in plain language, many students discussed the important learning opportunity of having an ethics protocol that did address reciprocity within an interview setting:

> We've faced some ethical challenges, but maybe one of the learnings or benefits from it [was that] I learned a lot about the consent process … in much greater depth and detail that because I had to apply it and use it rather than just talking about it and learning about it in a lecture. I definitely have more knowledge about that than I did before. (Student 4)

The student emphasis on an informed consent form was an interesting point of disjuncture between social work, journalism, and broadcasting. In the latter fields, appropriate and sufficient consent is secondary to receiving and recording the story. One CJSW 90.9 FM staff member alluded to the fact that the issue of consent was not a central concern for staff:

> One of the things I found so surprising and interesting was the difference in methodology from … communications. …What they get you ready for in the media world … is: shoot first and ask questions later. Formality be damned; consent is out the window. … It's: go in, ask the questions, be brutal, ruthless. And what I saw with the social work stance, it's [a] much more formal accommodation to identity intersections, and I just think there's so much to be gained from that kind of interdisciplinary work. …When you mix the disciplines, you get to take the theory that you've learned, and see it applied on a different angle, so there's a lot of power theory that

crosses over when you're studying media and you're studying social work. But to see that reflected back through a different lens is practical." (CJSW Staff Member 2)

The discussion about informed consent generated important insights about power from staff, students, and community partners. CJSW staff were conscientious about power dynamics between themselves and students, and how projects centered on digital narratives or exchanges of stories need to have clear and explicit boundaries. Staff members also noted how some students felt an unnecessary sense of pressure because of perceptions that their grades were tied to the completion of their podcasts.

> [This project] taught me … a lot about power dynamics, and I think [the students] taught me that, actually. … At the start they referred to me as almost like a boss or something like that and I said, "listen I'm not that." So I learned more how to … be of help or support when needed but really it taught me that allowing people the dignity of their own experience can be both a very great learning experience but also challenging too. (CJSW Staff Member 3)

Resources, honoraria, and compensated labor

Our focus group with CJSW staff brought up the issue of finances, resources, and capacity. As a campus radio station, CJSW has limited funding and staff to run the day-to-day operations of the station. Thus, the podcasting study meant drawing labor and resources away from the station's existing operations.

> When it got super busy, close to the deadline and [students] were just all coming in, suddenly our own volunteers didn't have access to the rooms because they got booked so

quickly. But we were able to quickly think on our feet, create some editing suites in the main office rather than in the production rooms. So, there was more places available for the social work undergrads to do editing. It became a little bit of extra work, but it was re-adjusting our own systems and processes to allow for that increased flow of people, basically. (CJSW Staff Member 1)

Although staff members were provided honoraria for their extra work, many felt that their labor, as well as the labor and contributions of community partners, was not compensated commensurate to the time they contributed to the project. One staff member in particular spoke about the undocumented emotional labor of supporting students going through the process of understanding people's stories.

> [As supervisor] I had a lot of personal conversations with the practicum students, and I'm totally comfortable and okay with that. I really love that I'm a good listener and I think that's one of my best qualities— that I'm really curious about people. But … just be wary … that it's a lot of emotional labor. I talked to folks about some pretty heavy, heavy things. That's **way** outside of my job description. (CJSW Staff Member 3)

Staff also discussed the need to develop relationship and compensation protocols between researcher/educators, CJSW staff, community partners/storytellers, and students, especially knowing that podcast episodes can exist in perpetuity under the ownership of the researcher/university/ institution. One staff member in particular spoke about the importance of honoring Indigenous ways of knowing and approaches to storytelling (whether orally or digitally) and the need to provide proper compensation to the storyteller.

You **have to have honorarium**. If you want to have any Indigenous knowledge and stuff like that, you're going to have to be ready to pay. Even outside of getting a grant to … pay multiple students and multiple Elders to teach. … I'll admit, it'll be pricier … but that's important. … That funding could span two years, and you keep on building on it. (CJSW Staff Member 4)

Discussion

The findings of this paper allude to the ethical concerns of the creation and (re)production of digital narratives in social work classrooms and within the field of social work. Although our discussion centers on podcasting, we raise broader questions about ethical storytelling and the need for relationship-building when engaging with digital narratives. The recent wave of enthusiasm within qualitative social work to engage in visual and creative modalities such as podcasting is on the rise (Ferrer et al., 2019; Singer, 2019). Researchers and practitioners are engaging with digital technologies in ways that center people's stories and experiences in the hopes of unravelling (in)visible social justice issues and amplifying people's experiences. While social work researchers should be encouraged to pursue these novel and innovative methods, we should also be cautioned to think about the ethics and challenges of storytelling in a digital age. In this section, we offer some ethical considerations that we grappled with as we shifted towards integrating podcasting and digital narratives into our pedagogical and research approaches. We frame our discussion in the form of three lessons: 1) building relationships by addressing power, 2) reconceptualizing consent through the creation of an informed consent form that acknowledges the ethical tensions of ownership when producing digital stories and narratives, and 3) committing to appropriate compensation and acknowledging that stories are fluid and warrant constant revisiting.

Lesson 1: Addressing power, the potential for appropriation, and giving up control

One of main lessons from this project centered on recognizing the appropriative nature of research and digital narratives that focus on storytelling. Within a narrative interview setting the storyteller and the person receiving and amplifying the story co-construct the storytelling process. The latter analyzes and co-constructs the story by representing and presenting it through knowledge-dissemination activities (whether creating a podcast or writing a paper). Though member checking should ensure that information is credible, there is no consensus on how to ensure digital stories are accurately (re)produced. The issue of representation and the subsequent danger of appropriation/co-option is extended even further when we consider that digital artifacts can exist in perpetuity online.

Understanding this disparate power imbalance is a critical starting point for ethical storytelling. As researchers and social workers who value people's stories as being intimate parts of themselves, we ought to pause before publishing final research texts or sharing experiences through digital narratives; we ought to carefully consider how we lose control over how the stories are cared for once they are released to the wider public. While we embrace the responsibility of ensuring that the stories being told reflect the experiences and intentions of the storyteller, we are also cognizant that once they are "out there" we cannot control how they are consumed and interpreted. Shaw (2015) described returning to the literature on relational methodologies to help her work through this tension and wrote, "once I accepted that my responsibility was to my research participants, and to presenting their stories in a way that made sense to both them and me, I was able to accept that I did not need to (nor could I) control the ways that our stories might be interpreted by future readers" (p. 264).

The difficulty of giving up control over how stories are interpreted once they are publicly shared reflects both our commitment to honoring experiences that have been shared, and our desire to

uphold the reasons why someone decided to share their story with us in the first place. If research and storytelling is done ethically and well, only the stories that the storyteller desires to share with a wider audience are told, and it becomes the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the ways those stories are shared reflect these desires. To this end, we believe that storytellers must have as much control as possible over reviewing and amending their stories before they are published. During our podcasting project, community members who offered their stories to social work students were given an opportunity to review and comment on the podcasts before they were published. Something we did not spend much time on during our project but intend to focus on more in the future, is ensuring that interviewers and interviewees take time to discuss the implications of making their co-constructed stories publicly available.

We identify two possible concerns that should be discussed with people before their stories are publicly shared in digital mediums. Firstly, once a story is made public, there is little control over how it is copied, saved, and shared. Second, once a story is published, those who engage with it will form their own subjective opinions about the experiences that have been shared and of the person whose story is told. Given that there is little control over how published stories are shared or interpreted, it is important that a conversation occurs about the implications of this loss of control. If a storyteller has any concerns about this loss of control, we support them being able to withdraw their story before it is published, though hopefully these conversations would be had before a story is even shared in an interview. We also acknowledge that there are many reasons why a person may want their stories to be told, and it is through publishing them that we honor their experiences.

Once it is confirmed that a person wants their story to be published, addressing the potential for that story to be misinterpreted or misused is important. Words can be taken out of context and are always interpreted through the subjective viewpoint of the consumer (reader, listener, or viewer). The responsibility of a digital narrative creator or podcast host is to set the context of the story alongside the storyteller's experience. Attending to multiple potential audiences means that the context should be explained as if the host is talking to someone with no knowledge on the topic. For example, in a podcast episode on the stories of temporary foreign workers in Canada, the student podcast host shared the history and racialization of (im)migration in Canada (Ferrer et al., 2019). This information was necessary in order to nuance and contextualize the stories shared by the community partners who disclosed personal stories about their precarity and lived experiences. Of course, even the most thorough background explanation on a topic cannot account for the different ways that an audience might interpret a story, but we see this as a strength rather than as a limitation. Adding multiple layers of understanding to a topic can deepen conversations and create opportunities to engage in dialogue about the complexities of a story. Our responsibility is not always to provide a clear and definitive statement about an experience, but to amplify stories of experiences in ways that resonate with the people who have lived them (Shaw, 2015).

Lesson 2: Creation of a consent form in the absence of institutional templates

Despite the disjunctures that exist between journalism and social work, it is crucial that digital narrative methodologies incorporate a comprehensive informed consent that indicates and establishes the ways in which relationship-building is expected to occur. This includes ways of approaching potential storytellers, and perhaps a discussion about the frequency of engagement, as well as an exchange of relationality where the student learns about the organizational structures and mores of the community partners. This discussion would also promote ways in which students can introduce themselves to their informants and interviewees and establish a starting point for relationship building, relationality, and accountability. The creation of an informed consent process for digital narratives would ideally be established and supported institutionally. Although our study complied and adhered to our institutional research ethics, it focused mainly on

the parameters of our research, and not necessarily the relationship building that exists during and after the creation of our podcasts. In the absence of institutional templates or direction, researchers and social work practitioners are strongly encouraged to implement more robustly empathetic consent processes themselves. We argue that there should be two consent forms based on an ethical storytelling oath: one for the storyteller, and one for the researcher/student.

Lesson 3: Revisiting story and storyteller

One of our major realizations over the course of the study was the static nature of story within podcasts and digital narratives. Once stories are told, exchanged, analyzed, and presented, they are pinned within a particular time frame and are therefore rendered static and fixed. A question that constantly re-emerged was whether digital narratives, especially those created for the purposes of podcast broadcasting and knowledge mobilization, can be later re-told differently or updated. After engaging in numerous knowledge-mobilization activities centered on podcast sharing and broadcasting, we have come to the realization that researchers have tremendous power in updating, adding to, and removing stories once they are made available on the internet (through repositories such as a university-affiliated Soundcloud or via faculty profiles or websites). To circumvent this power differential, we propose some of the following guiding questions that should be considered when working with digital narratives:

1. What is the purpose of the digital narrative?
2. What are my ethical responsibilities in sharing these digital stories?
3. How do I benefit from this sharing? How does my participant and storyteller benefit from this sharing and knowledge mobilization?
4. Who is my intended audience? Who is the intended audience of my participant/storyteller?

5. How long will these stories be made accessible to the broader community (outside of my academic circles)? How long will the digital narratives be available on the internet?
6. How do participants own their stories?
7. Will there be opportunities for participants and collaborators to retell stories, or remove their stories from the internet? How do I ensure that my storytellers can retell or withdraw their stories after one year? Five years? Ten years?

Conclusion

Our podcast project showcased the potential of technology and the emergence of digital narratives and how both can facilitate understanding in social work teaching and learning (Ferrer et al., 2019). Indeed, the proliferation of digital technologies and online dissemination strategies have opened up possibilities for sharing different approaches to clinical, community-based, and critically engaged social work practices in ways that are immediate and readily accessible. Moreover, researchers have begun to consider how digital forms of narratives and storytelling can be used to interpret and make sense of data. For instance, data-driven storytelling has emerged as an approach to present visual data and data visualizations (Lee et al., 2015). In this regard, social workers can certainly draw and learn from disciplines that actively engage with digital media and other forms of digital dissemination. Media activism, for instance, is a form of advocacy that focuses on creating alternative media and technology for purposes of mobilizing social and political movements and redressing forms of inequality and oppression by challenging institutional discourses (Gillett, 2003; Stephansen, 2017). Though digital narratives can be used as tools for the purposes of media activism and structural change, there are considerable ethical questions that arise about podcasting specifically and the uses of innovative technology in general. Reflecting on our pilot project, we offer a number of ethical principles that we commit ourselves to, as social work researchers

and practitioners who desire to engage with the digital world in ways that align with our personal and professional ethics of relational accountability, accessibility of knowledge, and social justice.

Based on the three themes identified in our findings (developing relationships in a good way, reconceptualizing consent, and committing to appropriate compensation), we considered some of the ethical decisions that we encountered, and some of the logistical implications of such decisions. We invite social work scholars who are also committed to critical pedagogies and relational accountability, to comment on, amend, and add to these thoughts. We have numbered the following ethical principles solely to assist in the identification of each, not because we believe that there is an inherent hierarchy in how they are presented.

Research participants and people who share their stories with the public ought to be compensated for their time. Honoraria should never be less than what an aspirational minimum wage is for the region where an interview is conducted and should be more whenever possible.

Regardless of format (written, podcast, photovoice, documentary), participants should be offered the opportunity to review and amend their story before it is published.

Prior to publication, interviewers must facilitate a discussion with the interviewee about how and where their digital narrative will be available, and about what control they will have—if any—over its availability online.

Students who are expected to engage with community partners as a part of a class must be prepared to explicitly indicate expected time commitments and forms of compensation; students should also practice their interviewing and recording techniques to ensure that community partners' time will be honored and respected.

The researcher or student must revisit the story and storyteller (see lesson 3) at regular intervals to seek permission in continuing to broadcast the digital narrative. The researcher and student must be explicit and transparent about where and how the podcast or digital narrative will be shared and disseminated.

Research participants should maintain the right to own, use, and disseminate their stories in any way they see fit. Researchers have access rights only to what is outlined in the consent form. A consent form does not constitute ownership for the researcher.

Although this article provides a starting point for discussion on the ethical parameters of student-led podcasting, one major limitation is its limited engagement and assessment of podcasting and digital forms of narrative within narrative ethics. According to Phelan (2013), narrative ethics examines the interplay between stories, storytelling, and moral values. In writing about narrative care, Baldwin (2015) argues for a narrative ethics that is not only concerned with story and how stories are told, but one that is "personal, experiential, concrete and communicative" (p. 188). As such, narrative ethics requires a higher degree of reflexivity and attention to how stories are shaped by the storyteller's language, themes, tropes, and characterizations (Baldwin, 2015), and by what Jones (2014) calls "meticulous structuring of an argument in its entirety so that competing positions and stories are considered" (p. S33). Future studies might examine more specifically how narrative devices such as emplotment, genre, voice and the relationship between storytellers, readers, and life stories are shaped and mediated by digital modalities.

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