

602: Capstone

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The Road Taken: Navigating Pathways and Outcomes of Engaged, Multimodal, Digital Storytelling

How might a digital, multimodal story encourage us to solve a problem? More specifically, one expressed as a follow your own path mystery. What real-world implications might this capacity of storytelling have?

Throughout all my interests, the overarching commonality is stories and storytelling. As my concentration is in Digital Media Strategies, I want to further explore digital storytelling. I thoroughly enjoyed the Digital Storytelling course and thought that my capstone could be informed by the seven steps of digital storytelling as described in *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (Lambert, 2018). Another aspect of the course that I appreciated was navigating storytelling through different mediums. Combined with the Content Creation and Strategy course, I want my artifact to be multi-modal with video, photo, audio, and text based elements. Another concept that stood out to me in my Digital Media Analysis and Advanced Digital Media Analysis courses was the value in creating an engaging experience which led me to brainstorm ideas for how to create an interactive story through digital means. All of these points led me to how, for my artifact, I would like to create a digital choose your own adventure story.

I was further drawn to the idea of a choose your own adventure story because of the decision-making process and ethical implications based on the choices made and the genre of mystery with its innate capacity towards problem-solving and decision-making. When considering the story, I intend to be informed by the Communication and Leadership Ethics course and the corresponding *Organizational Ethics: A Practical Approach* (Johnson, 2022).

This also means recognizing inclusion and accessibility as integral to the story itself and creation of it.

The extent of the content in the story must also be considered in terms of what can feasibly be completed within the duration of this course. Hosting this story on either my website or on social media would accommodate this multimodal format and allow respective ways of evaluating the impact of the story. An exit response survey that users could opt into could further aid in gauging the role of the seven steps and overall outcomes.

Stories can be powerful and digital technologies have brought new dimensions to how stories are created, cultivated, shared, and engaged with so I am excited to see what emerges from this endeavor.

Disciplinary Grounding

Logos, Pathos, & Ethos

Logos, pathos, and ethos originally derive from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and are termed as the modes of persuasion. Logos is the logical appeal and often consists of facts, figures, and other data. Pathos is the emotional appeal and focuses on connecting with the feelings of the audience. Ethos is the credibility appeal and looks at whether the person attempting to persuade has adequate knowledge to support their claims. When combined, these three modes contribute to an author's ability to properly appeal to their audience. Further, as addressed in Bitzer's (1968) article, "The Rhetorical Situation",

Since rhetorical discourse produces change by influencing the decision and action of persons who function as mediators of change, it follows that rhetoric always requires an audience—even in those cases when a person engages himself or ideal mind as audience. It is clear also that a rhetorical audience must be distinguished from a body of mere

hearers or readers: properly speaking, a rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change. (pp. 7-8)

It is vital to recognize the active role of the audience in this relationship and especially what the impact of the story may inspire.

Narrative Paradigm

“Narrative paradigm is a concept in communication theory and was developed by Walter Fisher. The concept is adopted from the oldest form of communication – storytelling. He stated that all meaningful communication is in the form of storytelling [...] The concept upholds the idea that communication happens between a narrator and the listener in the form of a story.” (The Narrative Paradigm, n.d.). Fisher further underscored the importance of narrative paradigm in how it,

Can be considered a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary academic theme. As will be seen, the narrative paradigm insists that human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and as inevitably moral inducements. (Fisher, 1984, p. 2)

Ultimately, the narrative paradigm grounds storytelling as a distinct form of communication with its own implications and outcomes. While the coming artifact does delve into fictional components (usually not considered under narrative paradigm), it would be remiss to not include this prominent communications theory for reference in how it recognizes the influence and power of storytelling and the impact it can have on the viewer/reader/listener/user.

Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling

The primary framing for how to create a successful digital story comes from *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (Lambert, 2018). These steps will heavily inform the process of creating the artifact and determining its' effectiveness. Below is a sampling of the key components of each area.

Step 1: Owning Your Insights

“For each and every storyteller, we are focused on creating a story that feels unique and powerful” (Lambert, 2018, p. 54). The story I chose will need to be authentic to who I am as a creator. As I have selected a mystery for the genre of this story, I need to consider my experiences that can contribute to this area.

Step 2: Owning Your Emotions

“When we reflect on the emotions within our stories, we realize that they can be complex, and with this realization we oftentimes discover deeper layers of a story’s meaning” (Lambert, 2018, p. 58). As this story will offer the user different options to choose from, I have to be aware and intentional of the emotional stake I acknowledge in each.

Step 3: Finding the Moment

“Compelling stories reproduce the events in an immersive way. They prompt the audience to ask questions about their own experiences and look for larger truths” (Lambert, 2018, p. 60). Regardless of which path users choose, each needs to feel complete and whole and have a “moment.”

Step 4: Seeing Your Story

“Well-chosen images act as mediators between the narrative and the audience [...] Images have the power to reveal something to the audience that words just can’t say” (Lambert, 2018, p.

63). I have decided to employ both videos and photos and will need to make sure they have quality, clarity, and cohesion.

Step 5: Hearing Your Story

“The more the spoken voice is inserted into the written script, the more the qualities of a person will come across and pull the audience into the story” (Lambert, 2018, p. 64). I am planning on narrating the story for this personal connection.

Step 6: Assembling Your Story

“The joy of storytelling comes in determining how much to tell them and at what point” (Lambert, 2018, p. 66). Mysteries especially benefit by having the user know just enough that they want to learn more and keep going. In previous endeavors with mysteries, I have found that starting at the end of the story and assembling backwards is particularly helpful.

Step 7: Sharing Your Story

“Being clear about your purpose in creating the story and how it may have shifted during the process of creating the piece will help you determine how you present and share your story” (Lambert, 2018, p. 69). This story is meant to allow for an engaging experience while also exploring the role of the story and medium on the decision-making process.

Storytelling and Problem Solving

In addition to grounding this exploration in communication theory, there are also relevant psychological perspectives that further expand the connection between storytelling and decision-making, including those that describe the way humans categorize information. The first perspective offered how audience members can be influenced by a story in the way they relate to the characters from Paliwal’s (2021) journal article, “Analytical and Gestalt Perspectives: Crux of Effective Storytelling and Visuals,”

The analytical perspective teaches us the importance of archetypes in stories and these archetypes in the form of characters have an innate capacity to alter the thought processes and persuade an individual to make decisions and take actions [...] Research suggests that storytelling should meet audiences' unconscious desires and create an archetype that reflects their self. (p. 167)

A second perspective honed in on how the constructed elements of the story also impact the audiences' connection to the story.

From proper use of contrast to positioning and alignment of text, from the elimination of unnecessary elements that increase cognitive overload to clever use of space to indicate when things are related and when different, gestalt principles help us make sense and create sense in the world and analytical principles make it more meaningful. (Paliwal, 2021, pp. 167-168)

A separate study by Trzebiński et al. (2021) entitled “The Impact of Narrative Mindset on Effectivity in Social Problem Solving” evaluated the narrative mindset and social problem solving.

The narrative mindset is a tendency to interpret social information in the frame of stories. Two experiments were conducted to determine if and why the narrative mindset increases social problem-solving [...] The results indicate that the narrative mindset increases empathy, supported by the co-occurring increase in the problem's personalization, which leads to higher effectivity. The results reveal the positive real-life implications of structuring social information within a story frame. (Trzebiński et al., 2021)

This study contextualizes how even narrative framing in the mind can contribute to real-world outcomes.

Storytelling in Practice

One area of real-world outcomes is in the realm of treatment/therapy. One study by Emda (2007) called “Engaging Imagination and the Future: Frontiers for Clinical Work” reflected on how,

Reported studies involve young children with internalizing and externalizing symptoms, with depression and other mood disturbances, and with disruptive behavior disorders [...]
The research shows us conclusively that SSN [Story Stem Narratives] can be applied usefully in young children who are troubled. Performance and content features of narrative completions are both found to be connected meaningfully with child symptoms.
(p. 295)

Another real-world impact can be through social justice as shown through an article that addressed how “using storytelling to provoke critical awareness of others’ positions offered a way to engage young children as active citizens” (Philips, 2010, p. 373). While the benefits of storytelling are applicable to any age, these two examples recognize these impacts in relation to children. This seems especially worthwhile when preparing children for their futures and the leadership roles they may one day assume.

An additional study by Butcher (2006) labeled “Narrative as a Teaching Strategy” correspondingly evaluated the impact of narrative as a teaching strategy at a correctional facility and found,

Storytelling validates student experience, particularly in adult education. Stories are beneficial in relation to what is going on in the students’ lives. They allow students to take ownership of their behavior, actions, and thoughts. Stories allow change and growth [...] Stories can change a student’s perspective. There are often implicit morals to stories

[...] Inquiry into the effectiveness of storytelling, in adult learning within the Department of Corrections, appears to show that it is a creative and valuable teaching strategy. (p. 206).

While these examples are by no means exhaustive, they offer a glimpse into the direct, measured impact of narrative. The forthcoming artifact, as a digital narrative, may offer yet another option of integrating these storytelling methodologies.

Significance/Rationale

The rhetorical modes of persuasion and narrative paradigm link communication theory into practice through the artifact. The Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling act as a formula to ensure the story incorporates all the elements of a successful story. The psychology based contributions help situate how humans process decisions with regards to storytelling. The addition of storytelling in practice offers a brief look into potential contexts where the findings of the artifact could be applied. These materials collectively situate the artifact firmly in the realm of digital storytelling and applications of storytelling as the artifact endeavors to hone in on the relationship between multimodal, interactive digital storytelling and decision-making.

Ethics

The goal of this artifact is to serve the wider community as an engaging, interactive, multimodal mystery as well as a way to recognize the impact of storytelling on decision-making. The artifact will be an introductory exploration into these topics, though could be expanded upon further in the future for more specific purposes and/or communities. Overall, this artifact intends to expand on the understanding of storytelling as a tool for informing decision-making. This has particular repercussions for ethical decision-making. As described in *Organization Ethics: A Practical Approach*, one key component of personal ethical development (of the five recognized)

is that of character development. An indirect approach to character development is stories.

“Narrative is one of humankind’s primary tools for understanding and experiencing the world.

We tell stories, read stories, watch stories, think in story form, and star in our dream stories.

Narratives not only help us make sense of the world but also promote desired behavior”

(Johnson, 2022, p. 87). Further, the way stories are told impacts their influence on the reader/viewer/listener/etc. As an interactive multimodal mystery, the coming artifact offers the opportunity to intimately lean into this process. Along a similar line, Johnson (2022) recognized that,

When it comes to moral development, the best narratives are both vivid and vexing. Vivid stories, whether in literature, film, television, or video games, introduce characters we care about; vexing stories place characters in ethical situations that are difficult and challenging. These narratives provide us with opportunities to practice moral reflection and judgment in complex settings before we encounter them in life, much as simulators prepare pilots for flight emergencies. They help us understand our possibilities and limits while escaping our old ways of thinking and acting. (p. 88)

Correspondingly, the findings of the optional survey taken after navigating through the story will illuminate how to effectively or ineffectively generate storytelling that presents outcomes of actions taken (or not taken) when arriving at a given ending.

Personal and social hurdles may include a limit on the array of characters presented, a minimal amount of design elements, and the extent of accessibility that can be represented due to current connections, time, and resources. For example, I am planning to narrate the story myself in English and provide either captions or a narration transcript in English and the characters will likely be sourced from my existing personal community with design elements (physical and

digital) that I already own. Potential objections may fall in line with these limits. Ideally, this artifact would be localized to different regions and amongst many varied identities to better inform how these factors have an overall impact on the effectiveness of the storytelling and the outcomes of decision-making. Still, in keeping with existing decision-making guidelines/formats/procedures, the results still have the opportunity to offer insights amongst multi-faceted worldviews. Johnson's (2022) book recognizes the value in decision-making such as Aristotle's Rules of Deliberation, The Lonergan/Baird Method, The Moral Compass, The Foursquare Protocol, and The Five "I Format" in noting,

Decision-making guidelines can help us make better moral choices both individually and as part of a group or organization. Formats incorporate elements that enhance ethical performance while helping us avoid blunders. Step-by-step procedures ensure that we identify and carefully define ethical issues, resist time pressures, acknowledge our emotions, investigate options, think about the implications of choices, and apply key ethical principles. (p. 57)

Additionally, Schwartz's (2012) journal article "An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values" discovered,

An astonishing finding of the cross-cultural research is the high level of consensus regarding the relative importance of the ten values [universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction] across societies. In the vast majority of nations studied, benevolence, universalism, and self-discretion values appear at the top of the hierarchy and power, tradition, and stimulation values appear at the bottom. This implies that the aspects of human nature

and of social functioning that shape individual priorities are widely shared across cultures. (p. 17)

This is highly relevant when applying the alignment chart, as employed in the role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons, to the story outcomes as the chart orients the nine alignments based on scales of good to evil and law to chaos. Collectively, these guidelines/formats/procedures serve as keen ethical checkpoints on how the story is told and the implications of the story and the findings across distinctions.

The primary ethical problem to resolve for the design is that I have a moral responsibility to tell an ethical story while also recognizing that no single story can represent every story and that the story cannot provide a solution for every nuanced problem. I found inspiration in the phrase, “even when their initial steps go well, the competently courageous continue to advocate, reach out to secure resources, and make sure others deliver on promises. And when things don’t go well, they take it in stride, viewing setbacks as learning opportunities rather than hiding from the fallout of giving up” (Detert, 2018).

Intercultural Communication/Leadership and Diversity

Elements of diversity, equity, and inclusion are important to consider in the creation of the artifact, the dissemination of the artifact, and the implication of its findings. One helpful tool of analysis at all stages is intersectionality. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, “Intersectionality is the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.” When considering all of these dynamics, I must also be aware of and address the identities I hold that are dominant and those that are not. The story the artifact is centered around will be authored from the perspective of a white,

straight, cisgendered, middle-class, college-educated, American young adult woman who was raised Catholic, is able-bodied with a tall slim frame and who values compassion and diligence. Even with the limited perspective of being one person, the pursuits of listening to others and having accountability, and humility can allow for an environment where other perspectives are able to attend authentically. Allen's (2011) book *Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity* noted,

Through various means and modes, we communicate to produce, interpret, and share meaning about diverse groups of people. We develop and disseminate classifications and hierarchies of gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and age. We create labels, ascribe meaning to them, and use them to refer to one another. And, we co-create and re-create our identities as we interact with one another [...] Even as communication reinforces dominant meanings of difference, communication facilitates social change [...] I encourage you to appreciate and value difference, to contest and re-imagine conceptions of social identities, to realize the power of power and to empower yourself, and to acknowledge and use the power of communication. (p. 185)

Correspondingly, Bordas's (2012) book *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age* acknowledged,

Multicultural leadership principles reflect humanistic values that promote justice and equality and integrate spiritual responsibility and social accountability [...] Like the radiant and multicolored flowers in a garden or the prolific rainforest, diversity represents life's vigor, variety, and unending beauty. To craft our global future, this must be our vision. Multicultural leaders must anchor our future in our most noble aspirations. This

shared and inspiring vision will foster a sense of our collective human destiny—one that transcends cultural differences and builds an intergenerational circle (208).

Taken as a whole these insights recognize that storytelling, as a means of diverse communication, is essential. They call for an environment where equity and inclusion are paramount. Thereby, the ability to hone in on storytelling and its role in decision-making is ever-crucial to the wider community.

As mentioned previously, limitations of time and resources do curtail the capacity for a full-scale production of the story, such as being fully localized for respective audiences. This perhaps alludes to a larger complication in the ability for independent creators to produce a truly overarchingly diverse and accessible story without some combination of the aforementioned commodities. Still, what can be accomplished in the creation and dissemination stages of the artifact, to name a few, are aspects such as making this digitally-hosted story publicly available, adding audio narration and captioning and/or transcripts, employing best practices for design, and incorporating characters with different identities.

The implications for the findings will rely largely on which conclusion the respective audience members arrive at after navigating this interactive story. These findings will largely be based on those in my personal network endeavoring the story. Future replications could explore how these findings do or not vary across different groups (outside of my network). One particular future application that could be intriguing to explore, especially when contemplating ways to navigate an increasingly globalized world, is having the story told through a bilingual/multilingual format. A case study centered on Turkish-English bilingual students in a Turkish classroom revealed the benefits of translanguage practices in that, “the findings demonstrate how storytelling activities can serve as a platform for epistemic diversity by

allowing students to access and express knowledge through their full linguistic repertoire. The study highlights that translanguage practices during storytelling not only facilitate language learning but also promote diverse ways of knowing and understanding (Irgin, 2025, p. 1).

Ultimately, stories have the innate possibility to connect us on a global level in ways we are still continuing to comprehend the depth of.

Design Prospectus/Description

The proposed artifact will be a follow your own path, multimodal mystery story created on Canva and hosted on my personal website. The audience member will take on the role of the protagonist in the story and must choose from several sets of choices that, when combined, lead to corresponding outcomes and consequences. The genre of mystery further provides a conducive setting for this interactive story and the ultimate problem that must be solved.

Objectives/Intended Outcomes

After going through the story, users will be invited to take a short survey form that will focus on if/how the story was effective. The effectiveness of the story will be rated based on the Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling and the persuasiveness by the modes of persuasion (logos, pathos, ethos) as well as their overall connection of communication and storytelling through the narrative paradigm. They will also be asked which ending they arrived at and these endings will be coded by utilizing the alignment chart (as used in the role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons) to further articulate these outcomes. The chart offers a way of breaking down character choices into nine dimensions—lawful good, neutral good, chaotic good, lawful neutral, true neutral, chaotic neutral, lawful evil, neutral evil, and chaotic evil—and has been applied and exemplified by a variety of existing fictional characters (*The D&D Alignment Chart*, n.d.). These

results will inform early insights on how digital storytelling—especially multimodal storytelling—impacts decision-making and problem-solving.

Project Outline

Context

This project will be hosted on my personal website and will be shared with my own network and the network of my network by those willing to share further. Results will also be added to the website and shared once complete.

Participants

I will have three friends/family members serve as the face models for the characters in the story. The audience members will also have an active role as they navigate the story as the protagonist and provide feedback in the post-story survey form.

Design

The interactive, multimodal digital story will be broken down into a series of parts plus a post-story survey form. The first part will be the introduction of the story where the audience member enters into the story and becomes the protagonist and picks the setting of the story. This will be a video (made up of a combo of moving and still images, some of which also have text) with narration. The next part will be to go to the setting of choice where the audience member then learns of the murder and meets the murder victim through a series of slides before making their first choice and then continuing on to learn about the suspects. This first choice consists of three options which are coded good, neutral, evil in correspondence to the alignment chart. The choices will each have a code title, 1, 2, or 3 for the first choice, that the protagonist/audience member remembers and records for the future. This will also be a video with narration, still images, and text. The protagonist will then meet the three suspects in a slideshow (with images,

text, and narration) and make their second choice from three options that are coded lawful, neutral, and chaotic/unlawful in correspondence to the alignment chart and code titles of A, B, or C. After, the protagonist will pick which piece of evidence they want to review based on which suspect they think is the murderer. Each piece of evidence is designed for one of the suspects though mirrors the others in content. The evidence slideshows (with images, text, and narration) culminate in choice number three with nine options that are coded lawful good, neutral good, chaotic good, lawful neutral, true neutral, chaotic neutral, lawful evil, neutral evil, or chaotic evil. These code titles vary between evidence but are functionally the same. For illustrative purposes, if I were a protagonist who picked Evidence #1 and made the choice corresponding to “Periwinkle” that is the “true neutral” equivalent. The protagonist then heads to a final video setting up the resolution with narration. The protagonist concludes at the resolution document that consists of all possible endings. If I had picked 1-C-Periwinkle that would be the good-chaotic/unlawful-true neutral ending.

The protagonist turned back into audience member/user will then have the option to fill out the post-story survey form with a yes/no plus a why/why not question for each of the components of ethos, pathos, and logos as well as a likert scale for the narrative paradigm and Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling. There will also be a free response to report which ending they ended up with. There will further be a yes/no plus why/why not for the question of “Would you make different choices in real life?” Finally, there will be a free response for any additional comments/feedback/thoughts.

For results, the ethos, pathos, and logos yes/no will be illustrated as a pie chart with the addition of short responses from the why/why not. Narrative paradigm and The Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling will also be visually displayed as a bar chart. Each ending will be broken

down into its three parts/charts and applied as a color-coded plot by respondent that will be compared against the alignment chart to determine which types of choices the protagonists selected at each decision-point and how they compare as a whole. The final yes/no question will also be represented as a pie chart with the addition of short responses from the why/why not and may help offer glimpses into the relationship between decision-making in digital storytelling and real-world implications. The comments/feedback/thoughts free response will also be included.

Process

I plan to have the story completed and uploaded to my website to be able to share the story and gather responses before taking the post-story form survey results and creating the data charts prior to the submission deadline. To stay on track, I have to maintain writing at least ten endings per day as well as completing one of each of the videos every half of a week until the artifact is fully uploaded. Some of the photos and video clips will be sourced from existing media in my personal archive. I will then share the link on my personal social media and through word of mouth. Anyone is also welcome to share it further to their own networks as well. After the response deadline, I will finalize a set of survey results graphics before submitting the entire artifact.

Summaries and Conclusions

Results

Please view the “Survey Results” document on the website for a full breakdown of responses to the artifact.

Examination of the Application of the Theoretical Grounding

The first area of theoretical grounding was the modes of persuasion with ethos, logos, and pathos. In all three areas the majority of respondents could identify the respective appeal. The

respondents did vary in the ways in which they connected to the appeals with 72.7% recognizing ethos, 90.9% recognizing pathos, and 100% recognizing logos. The respondents also varied in the ways they identified the appeals. For example, for pathos, one respondent noted, “lovely people and a crime injured their world” whereas another noted, “It didn’t really affect me, but I can see how the specific facts about the characters could appeal to someone’s emotions.” While the respondents had a varying understanding of the modes of persuasion, responses did overall reveal how the respondents related or did not relate to the story.

The next theoretical grounding was the narrative paradigm. The question aligned with this perspective asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being false and 5 being true, “I view storytelling as a form of meaningful communication.” All respondents indicated a 4 or 5 indicating mostly true and true. This further illuminates the recognition of storytelling within the umbrella of communication and its overall power within this sphere.

An additional theoretical grounding focused on the Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling. The steps were each coded according to a statement and a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being false and 5 being true.

1. *Step 1: Owning Your Insights* - “I could tell this story was created by Clara”

Responses varied from false, neutral, mostly true, and true which may have been impacted by whether the respondents knew me personally or not.

2. *Step 2: Owning Your Emotions* - “I was emotionally drawn to the story”

Responses varied from 2-5 indicating a little emotional connection to a strong emotional connection.

3. *Step 3: Finding the Moment* - “A key moment in the story compelled me to think about my experiences”

Responses varied across all responses illustrating a highly unique way of connecting to the story personally or not.

4. *Step 4: Seeing Your Story* - “The use of visuals was effective in conveying the story”

Responses varied from neutral to true with a stronger emphasis on true.

5. *Step 5: Hearing Your Story* - “The use of audio was effective in conveying the story”

Responses varied from mostly true to true with a stronger emphasis on true.

6. *Step 6: Assembling Your Story* - “I could follow all parts of the story”

Responses varied from neutral to true with a relatively even distribution on neutral and true and lower responses on mostly true.

7. *Step 7: Sharing Your Story* - “I would share this story with others”

Responses varied from 2-5 indicating a range of unlikely to share and likely to share.

The remaining theoretical frameworks connected storytelling, decision-making, and problem-solving as well as real world applications. It was especially important to consider the ways that humans categorize information in addition to the ways they navigate decisions with various possible outcomes. I utilized the alignment chart and three choices to do so. The first choice had three options which corresponded to “good”, “neutral”, and “evil”. The second choice had three options which corresponded to “lawful”, “neutral”, and “unlawful/chaotic”. The third choice utilized nine options which corresponded to the whole alignment chart “lawful good”, “neutral good”, “chaotic good”, “lawful neutral”, “true neutral”, “chaotic neutral”, “lawful evil”, “neutral evil”, and “chaotic evil”. When discerning the combinations of the three choices in the context of the story, for a total of 243 possible endings, all respondents picked a different ending

with the majority picking endings that were a blend of good and/or neutral and/or lawful in varying orders across their choices with only one respondent picking a single choice with the “evil” code and one other respondent picking a single choice with an “unlawful/chaotic” code. Respondents also had the option to answer yes or no to “If given the same options as provided throughout the story, would you make different choices as yourself in real life?” with 63.6% responding yes and 36.4% responding no. Respondents also got to further justify this answer in noting answers such as, “It is easier to make decisions logically when we do not know the people involved in the story,” “I’d likely try to stay out of it if I were caught up in such a scenario in real life!”, and “No real consequences in the story, but there are in real life.”

Ethical Impact

Navigating this story encouraged people to interrogate choices and outcomes in a digital setting. While there were no consequences for this digital outcome, it does reflect on the connection to or disparity from our decisions in the digital space versus in person. For those who connected closely with the story, this may be more ethically impactful through the outcome of their decisions and reflective of their more consequentially motivated actions.

Lessons Learned

I learned that nuance can be difficult to account for in such a finite amount of time, but it is worth the pursuit to try. I also learned that, when it comes to human decision-making, there is always room to learn something new and to be surprised.

Limitations

The biggest limitation for this artifact was the duration for creation and obtaining result responses. I was also limited by my ability to utilize modes of interactivity within my digital skills on my website and with Canva for video and audio.

Key Takeaways

A key takeaway of this research was that storytelling is viewed as a meaningful form of communication and that digital storytelling has the potential to impact an individual and motivate them to action—and in this case to solve the murder in the way beholden to their choices along the way. This, however, can vary greatly between individuals when it comes to real-world implications as individuals connect to the story with different levels of personal proximity.

Another key takeaway is that, while respondents took a variety of different paths to reach the resolution, most arrived at outcomes derived from acting good, lawful, and/or neutral. While this may be a result of the population of respondents themselves, it also offers the possibility of delving further into the “consequences” or “morals” based criteria that many respondents alluded to in their responses as being a motivation behind their decision-making.

Future Iterations

Future iterations would allow for an expanded timeline to incur an increased amount of responses and increasingly rich data set. Additional instructions for navigating the overall flow of the story would also be beneficial. Further context on the definition of the modes of persuasion would clarify confusion that arose in this initial round of responses. Future research could also code more specifically along the lines of individual responses in addition to the collective responses to determine even more patterns or lack thereof. Additional feedback from the open free response question for respondents (comments/feedback/thoughts) could also be incorporated into future iterations. A more expansive iteration could also go so far as to create a short film navigating the story with actors, costumes, setting, props, etc. to generate an even more nuanced digital, multimodal display and capacity for interaction. The real-world

implications could be explored through various settings, as noted in the storytelling in practice, such as in therapeutic, teaching, and/or cross-cultural contexts too. This capstone is just the tip of the bud when it comes to what can be investigated next.

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