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From Inspired to Inspiring: Community-Based Research, Digital Storytelling, and a Networked Paralympic Movement

Abstract

Digital storytelling was developed in the mid-1990s as a workshop-based practice whereby ‘ordinary’ people were taught skills to tell personal stories through short videos (Hartley & McWilliam, 2009; Lambert, 2013). Originally conceptualised as a form of citizen media, digital storytelling has since been recognised as a powerful tool for doing community-based narrative research (Gubrium, 2009; Gubrium & Turner, 2010). This has led academics to take digital storytelling worldwide in order to explore multiple topics from the perspectives of community members. The popularity of digital storytelling as a research method has grown as Web-based and mobile technologies become increasingly accessible and embedded in everyday practices. Participants in digital storytelling projects now take photos, videos and voice recordings using a single smartphone or tablet, editing these stories using widely available and often free software. While researchers on the ground have been quick to capitalise on these technological advances and integrate them in creative ways in their research processes, the definition of *community* in community-based digital storytelling research has remained remarkably static. Specifically there is a gap in the literature addressing the practicalities and implications of doing digital storytelling with individuals and groups who are embedded in networked societies and who regularly and easily communicate with others using digital platforms. These networks challenge common understandings of communities as spatially and temporally bound and propose instead that communities be understood as networks of individuals who share identities, practices, and extend each other support – whether in ‘real life’ or in ‘virtual’ contexts (Rheingold, 2014).

In this chapter we explore how the rise of the digital age has expanded not only the tools available to scholars doing digital storytelling but also how it can fundamentally challenge how we think of the communities we do research with and how we understand them as part of a larger virtual networks. This chapter is empirically informed by our own experiences of doing narrative-based research with young disabled athletes, coaches, managers and parents from a local ‘inclusive football programme’. We discuss our original intention to use digital storytelling to interrogate popular dialogues of how the Paralympic Games ‘inspire’ young disabled people to pursue sport. We then describe how the individuals involved in the story circle shifted the focus of the research from telling stories of *being inspired* to telling stories *to inspire others*, leveraging their existing online networks to distribute the stories they created. Throughout the discussion, strands of narrative theory are brought together with emerging understandings of how local, offline groups use online spaces to circulate digital content thus participating in globally dispersed virtual networks or communities. In particular, we draw on Frank’s (2010) conceptualization of the agentic potential of stories to act upon others and Richardson’s (1988) writing on ‘collective stories.’ It is our intent that this account of our own forays into digital storytelling, complete with stories of how the project evolved through dialogue with the story circle participants, will provide others with some practical examples of how one might use digital storytelling as a research method and also will encourage further theorising on how digital stories can move from the offline local story circles into online networks to become part of global collective stories.

Andrea's interest in this project stems from her own involvement in the Paralympic Movement. While attempting to recruit members of the Canadian Paralympic Team to participate in her master's research project, Andrea found herself recruited. She was asked by one of the athletes with a visual impairment to temporarily fill in as a para-nordic racing guide (a sighted skier who skis in front of the athlete and guides them around the race course using a two-way radio system). The position became a permanent one and Andrea went on to compete with the athlete at the 2010 Paralympic Games. She has since competed in two Paralympic Games and volunteered and coached for many para-sport programs. Her involvement in para-sport has also shaped her research interests and she has developed and led multiple projects exploring the topics related to the Paralympic Movement with a particular focus on how athletes with disabilities use online tools and online spaces to engage in advocacy projects and address discrimination in the sport system.

Brett has worked with disabled people, including athletes, for over 15 years. His interest in this project was animated by a long standing curiosity about stories and what they might do on, for, and with people. He has a passion for qualitative research and the possibilities of this craft for not just understanding lives but also improving human relations, communities, and challenging social oppression. Working with Andrea, and learning about digital research from an expert, also stirred my interest in the project. Working with her has been a joy. Let's do it again!

Background

Organised disability sport initiatives grew out of many people, communities, countries, and organisations (Anderson, 2003; Brittain, 2009; Howe, 2008). This included sport

organised by deaf communities in Germany in 1888 and, notably, by Sir Ludwig Guttmann and colleagues in England in 1948 for spinal cord injured people. In 1989, the International Paralympic Committee was founded to organise multi-sport competitions for a range of disabled people. Today, we have the Summer and Winter Paralympic Games where athletes in 10 different ‘impairment groups’ from over 150 nations compete in 25 sports.

The International Paralympic Committee calls itself “the global governing body of the Paralympic Movement” (IPC Website, n.d., *Who We Are*). Yet despite this claim, the literature on social movements contends that organisations by definition cannot govern or own a ‘movement.’ According to Melucci (1985), movements are “*action systems*” (p. 793, italics in original) that are constructed in and through ongoing interactions and negotiations between social actors. While these actors might share some values, beliefs and practices and do unite to undertake projects, they negotiate their allegiances on an ongoing basis. Della Port and Diani (2009) further explain that “the existence of a range of possible ways of becoming involved means that the membership of movements can never be reduced to a single act of adherence. It consists, rather, of a series of differentiated acts, which taken together reinforce the feeling of belonging or of identity (p. 26). Thus while the IPC might rightly claim to oversee the Paralympic Games and to govern a multitude of para-sport organisations and National Paralympic Committees, when we discuss the ‘Paralympic Movement’ in this chapter we are speaking much more broadly about the individuals and groups who demonstrate an allegiance to or feel a sense of belonging to a global network of actors who engage in para-sport. This Paralympic Movement includes the IPC and its partners but could also,

for example, extend to the young disabled person learning to play football at a local club, the community coach working with this young person, and the programme manager who watched the London Paralympic Games and was inspired to write the grant application to fund the disability football programme in the first place.

Our interest in exploring how young disabled people engage with and related to the Paralympic Movement stemmed from the motto of the recent London Olympic and Paralympic Games, ‘Inspire a Generation.’ Much of the rhetoric employed when bidding on and preparing for the Games centred around the claim that London 2012 would be used to “reach young people” and “connect them to sport” (London 2012, n.d.) and there was a particular emphasis on reaching disabled young people who are frequently reported to be less active and less frequently engaged in sport than their able-bodied peers. Yet despite these early claims, it was our observation that many of the programmes and policies that were developed in the lead up to London 2012 failed to involve young disabled people directly. For example, the document *London 2012: a legacy for disabled people* (Department Media, Culture and Sport, 2012) emphasised how able-bodied individuals could adopt more inclusive sport practices, rather than specifying how the Paralympics would inspire young disabled people to be more active. This situation, where there is an initial promise that hosting the Paralympic Games will have a direct and positive impact on the sport opportunities available to *disabled people* followed by a post-Games shift to measuring and reporting on the impact the Games has had on changing the perceptions of *able-bodied people towards disability* has been seen before. For example, a report released after Vancouver 2010 focused how awareness of the Paralympic Games had increased among the general Canadian population due to

media coverage of the event (Zimmerman, 2010) but said very little about changes in the sport environment for disabled people themselves. Other literature has explored whether able-bodied children demonstrate more positive attitudes towards peers with disabilities after participating in the Paralympic School Day programme (Klimešová, 2011; Panagiotou et al., 2006; Xafopoulos et al., 2009).

While the literature cited above provides a foundation for understanding *some* of the factors that influence the sport participation of young disabled people (inasmuch as changing the perceptions of able-bodied people is a necessary step in creating a more inclusive sport system), there exists a blatant omission. Rather than asking able-bodied individuals whether or not the Paralympic Games promote more inclusive sport practise, we argue that what is needed are more opportunities for disabled people to share their own stories of how the influence of the Paralympic Movement in their lives. The questions that we were most interested in were: (1) How do young disabled people engage with sport, and (2) What can the stories young disabled people tell of their sport experiences teach us about ‘inspiration’ and the Paralympic Games? To start to answer these questions and to open up spaces for young disabled people to share their experiences of the legacies and impacts of the London 2012 Paralympic Games, we turned to digital storytelling.

Methodology

Digital Storytelling in Community-Based Research

Digital storytelling is a workshop-based practice developed in the mid-1990s by Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert and Dina Mullen, the founders of the Centre for Digital

Storytelling (CDS) in Berkley, California (Lambert, 2013). Through this collaboration of multimedia artists, digital programmers, community activists and educators, the CDS has worked with thousands of organisations and individuals around the world to teach them digital storytelling techniques and to encourage them to create and share their stories (Lambert, 2013). Among the tenets of the CDS, and in line with narrative theories, are the beliefs that everyone has stories to tell and that sharing stories can lead to positive change (Lambert, 2013). Through their work, Atchley and colleagues claim to have “transformed the way that community activists, educators, health and human services agencies, business professionals, and artists think about the power of personal voice in creating change” (Center for Digital Storytelling website, n.d., *How it all began*). The model for digital storytelling outlined by Lambert (2006) includes a specific process for workshops in which community members, along with facilitators, work side-by-side to write story scripts and create the visual and audio content for their stories. The products of these workshops are typically short (3 to 5 minutes) vignettes that use photos, illustrations, videos, voice recordings and music to tell first-person tales created by a single author. A key aspect of the process is the ‘story circle’ where the group comes together and where community members assist in further developing the stories by asking questions of the author, sharing suggestions, or simply showing their support by deeply listening to the what is being shared (Hartley & McWilliams, 2009).

In research settings, digitally storytelling increasingly is being employed in projects using community-based participatory research frameworks (Gubrium, 2009) and it has been used to explore topics including feminist approaches to public health (Gubrium & DiFulvio 2011), peace-building projects (Higgins, 2011) and issues of gender justice (Hill, 2011), among others. In these contexts, digital storytelling practices

are valued for “the grounded way the methods inserts indigenous empirical material into research endeavors” (Gubrium, 2009, p. 186) resulting in findings that “take into account the experience, understandings, and agency of those to whom efforts will be directed” (Gubrium, 2009, p. 186). Furthermore, the actual process of creating the digital stories, has been recognised as a community-building activity with a value independent of the actual stories produced (Gubrium & DiFulvio, 2011).

Our decision to employ digital storytelling in this project was made after considering several factors. First was the age of the participants involved (we were targeting young people aged 12 to 24). In our previous experiences of carrying out qualitative interviews with diverse populations we had both observed that creating rapport with younger participants could be challenging and that the conversations flowed better when there were ‘prompts’ in the room such as photos and videos (see Mills & Hoerber, 2011, for a discussion of using photos in interviews with young people). We hoped that the young people would be more inclined to share their experiences with us if they had a task to perform (creating a story) and physical objects to start the dialogue. Secondly, as previously stated, participation in a movement is not something that happens in isolation but rather through encounters and ongoing interactions with others. For this reason, we felt that digital storytelling, with its emphasis on the co-construction of stories in story circles, was an appropriate methodology.

Design and Process

The research entitled ‘*Are We Inspired Yet? Digital Storytelling with Youth about Sport and Disability in the Wake of the London Paralympic Games*’ was a one-year study

funded by a postdoctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and hosted by the Peter Harrison Centre for Disability Sport at Loughborough University (UK). This project used digital storytelling methods to explore how young disabled people in the UK engage in sport and, in particular, if and how they relate their involvement to London hosting the Games. It started in January 2014 and continued for 12 months during which time the first author held digital storytelling workshops for young disabled people, their able-bodied classmates and teammates, and also some adults working in para-sport as educators, coaches and team staff team. These workshops were held in classrooms and at sport camps and in total 25 youth (and a few adults) participated in digital storytelling workshops with many more taking part in 'taster sessions'. This chapter focuses particularly on storytelling workshops that were held at the clubhouse of a local county football association (FA) with an 'inclusive football programme'.

Meeting the Team

Contact was first made with the county FA by a message sent to the email listed on the association's website for their 'inclusive football programme.' It stated that we (the authors) were researchers exploring the sport practices of young disabled people in the UK following the hosting of the London Paralympic Games in 2012 and were looking for organisations interested in holding digital storytelling workshops where the youth would be asked to discuss their experiences of participating in sport. The programme's manager replied with an invitation to meet with her and two of the coaches from the inclusive football programme. While the manager did not commit immediately to the research, she did schedule the meeting to precede a training session so that there would

be an opportunity, if the meeting went well, to to ‘pitch the workshop idea’ directly to potential participants and their parents later that evening.

The meeting with the team staff started with a casual conversation about their involvement in delivering inclusive football programmes in the region. The staff described how a small initiative to create an opportunity for young disabled people to participate in football had expanded into a much larger project. During the conversation, the team staff stated that they had been intrigued by the concept of digital storytelling as they saw that it had the potential to encourage individual athletes to reflect upon of their own past and future sport pathways. After some discussion, the manager agreed to organise digital storytelling workshops at the club and to invite athletes currently involved in the various inclusive football programmes to attend.

The idea for the digital storytelling workshops was introduced to athletes and parents that evening. A short digital story from an earlier project was shown to familiarise the potential participants with the format and the researcher outlined the steps for creating similar stories. The team manager and coaches explained that they hoped these stories would be an opportunity for the athletes to reflect upon their own sport journeys and would supplement the goal setting activities that the athletes were already doing with their coaches. The athletes asked questions about possible topics for the stories (wanting to know, for example, ‘Can I tell a story about the time we won the award?’) and the technologies involved (‘What will we need for the workshops? Can I bring my own laptop?’). The parents’ questions focused on where and how the stories would be shared (we agreed that this would be discussed further during the workshops and that no stories would be distributed outside the circle without permission). At the end of the evening, all agreed to proceed with the project.

Workshop 1: Choosing Stories and Creating Stories

The group that convened for the workshop, held three weeks after the initial meeting, consisted of the team manager, one coach and five athletes. Three of the athletes were younger (aged 11 to 14) and were involved in the country football association's inclusive player development programme. Collectively they had impairments that affected their hearing and/or vision, muscle strength, or balance. Two of the athletes were young adults who did skill development and trained with the coaches while competing on national blind football development and senior squads. Also present were the parents of the younger participants though they were seated near to the back of the room and not involved at the tables being used by the athletes, team staff and workshop facilitator (the first author).

The evening started with a discussion of the elements of a good story. Lead by the facilitator, the group discussed characters, plot, tone and setting and also different forms of narration and different types of digital media that could be used. The group then talked about the stories they wanted to tell. Although ultimately an individual's choice, this decision making process took place in dialogue with other workshop members, who asked questions and made suggestions. The parents were silent participants, but supported the process as the younger participants frequently turned to them to ask questions or seek confirmation about various aspects of the stories they were proposing. The workshop participants then worked independently to write their story scripts, but frequently turned to each other for assistance. For example, one athlete wanted to know if anyone had copies of the video that was taken of training sessions earlier in the season (yes), and one blind athlete asked the coach to help him select

photographs to accompany his spoken text. By the end of the evening, each participant had a story script, a storyboard and a list of what needed to be done to complete their stories before the next workshop in three weeks. These lists included, for example, tracking down existing photographs or making plans to video an upcoming event. The group also discussed hardware and software that could be used to complete the stories, including free apps to do voice recordings on smartphones and tablets and software such as PowerPoint and iMovie to edit the various digital materials turning them into short video vignettes.

Although the storytelling workshop model outlined by the CDS advises that as much work as possible should be done during the workshops (rather than asking community members to complete tasks on their own time), the facilitator and the participants determined that this would be impractical for numerous reasons. The youth were still in school and most of their weekends were spent at in training camps or at competitions. Moreover, the group came from a relatively large geographic area and travelled quite a distance to the football centre. Due to these constraints, the group agreed that the digital stories would be ‘put together’ outside of the workshop time. The manager and coach supported this arrangement by meeting one-on-one with athletes to record audio files, video training sessions and competitions, and to go through centre’s archive of existing photographs. The facilitator provided technical support by phone and by email and talked participants through the processes of uploading content, editing audio and video files and animating slides. The participants and their parents emailed her digital files that she edited as per their instructions and returned to them.

Workshop 2: Story Circle and Imagined Audiences

The stories were shared at the second workshop in what the group referred to as their 'mini film fest' (referred to in the CDS methodology as a 'story circle'). The same individuals were present but this time everyone, including the parents, was seated in a semi-circle and the stories were projected on a large screen. The first part of the evening consisted of showing the stories in their entirety to the group. Once the stories had been viewed, the first author facilitated a group discussion asking individuals to comment on their own story and asking other group members if they had questions or feedback. Although the participants frequently picked up upon what they saw as 'faults' in their own videos, the story circle was overwhelmingly supportive expressing admiration for the stories created and stating how much they enjoyed learning about the 'sport journeys' of the others in the group.

According to the literature, a core premise of narrative inquiry is that humans are by nature storytellers (Frank, 1995, 2010, 2012). Storytelling is not the same as simply providing a description or an account of event; it is also the act of selecting what to tell and how to tell it (Frank, 2012; Smith & Sparkes, 2012; Tilly, 2006). It is through the process of crafting and sharing stories that individuals make sense of their lives (Smith & Sparkes, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). It was this opportunity to engage in a reflexive exercise with the athletes that first attracted the county FA's staff to the project. At the time we approached them, they were looking for ways to support the athletes as they moved through sport pathways and transitioned between the various programmes offered by the association. They believed that digital storytelling could provide a framework for the athletes to reflect upon how they had developed as athletes. They also hoped that in creating the stories, and listening to the stories of others in the

programme, the young people would consider not only where they had come from, but also where they were going in sport and to think about strategies for achieving their sport aspirations. The team staff also were eager to explore their own pathways in and through sport and to address, for example, how had they, as able-bodied individuals, had become involved in para-sport. Perhaps because so much of the focus had been on the immediate value of storytelling *within* the group, there was little discussion at the onset of the workshops about *audiences* for the finished stories. Nevertheless, every act of communication has an “imagined audience” (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 115), an Other to whom the story is addressed. As the stories were developed, the conversation in the story circle started to turn towards discussions of possible audiences. What would these audiences already know about disability sport? What would they need to be told? What information was important for them to have and what could be left out? What emotions did the athletes want to convey to their audiences? And what reaction were they looking for when they shared their stories? Discussions about the group’s imagined audiences came to the fore during the ‘mini film fest.’ Though the digital stories were very different one from another in form and content, in the conversation that followed the viewing, it became obvious that the creators of the stories had in many cases imagined similar audiences. One emerging evident theme in particular was that the stories had been written and produced for ‘other young disabled people who might want to get involved in sport but did not know how, were unsure they could, or were unaware of the opportunities out there.’

What Next? Digital Distribution of Stories

Once the group determined (or rather acknowledged) that the audience they most wanted to reach was other young disabled people, we started exploring where and how we could reach this group. As was described previously, although digital storytelling has been used in many community-based research projects, the focus to be on sharing the stories within local, geographically constrained communities. However, this group did not feel this would be an effective means of reaching their intended audiences. First, ‘young disabled people’ are not found in any one location and sharing the stories at a school, for example, would likely only reach a small number. Secondly, the county FA already had a presence in the local community, their programmes were well advertised and the teams and players were well-known in the area. Any young disabled person in the region likely had already heard of the programme and had an opportunity to get involved. Instead the group decided to leverage the ‘digital’ aspect of the stories and share them in online networks. Not only did the county FA already have an online presence (webpage and Twitter account) but they had a network of online followers that consisted of coaching organisations, other county FA’s, and various other groups involved in promoting para-sport programmes. Additionally each of the athletes had online networks of their own¹ — ties that linked them to classmates, friends and family but more importantly to disability-specific networks such as: charities that support disabled people, support groups for parents with disabled children, health practitioners working in rehabilitation facilities, teachers who support children in the education system and suppliers of medical devices and adaptive sports equipment. In short, the FA and the story circle participants were integrated in a network of networks (see Bundon

¹ For the younger participants their ties were ‘through’ their parents. They all had their own email accounts and regularly communicated with classmates, teammates, friends and family online but, in most instances, did so using their parents’ social media accounts or with some supervision/oversight from a parent or teacher.

& Hurd Clarke, 2015 for description of virtual networks in para-sport). Most importantly, these networks were all connected online through email groups, websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter and a multitude of other digital platforms. It was via these networked platforms that the story circle decided to share their digital stories.

Following a discussion with the group (and after receiving signed consent from all participants and parents and having a group discussion about online privacy and safety), a YouTube channel was created and the stories were made into a playlist. Individual participants then shared the link to the playlist online through their networks. The link was embedded on the county FA's website and distributed to programme supporters and stakeholders. All of this was made possible because of the functionality of Web 2.0 that supports and encourages user-generated content and makes it easy to share digital content across and between networks (O'Reilly, 2005).

Discussion and Conclusions

The 'Inspired Generation' or the 'Inspiring Generation'?

At the start of the project we wanted to know if and how young disabled people in the UK had benefited from the hosting of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Had they, as Paralympic organisers and stakeholders claimed, been 'inspired'? However, a key precept of community-based research projects is that they must be able to evolve and respond to the needs, interests and desires of the community and it is certainly true that the focus on this project changed over time. In this instance, the athletes and team staff at the county FA did engage with our initial question and many of the stories they created in the story circle started by talking about London 2012. Viewed collectively,

the stories created also illustrated how the many funding initiatives for para-sport programmes implemented in the lead-up to London 2012 had created more opportunities for the young disabled athletes. However, overwhelmingly, the storytellers in the group were less interested in looking backwards and more interested in looking forwards. Their stories started with London 2012 but the focus of the stories was largely on where they were headed next. Additionally, they were interested in what the stories could *do* for the programme moving forwards.

Frank (2010) states that stories are actors, that they do not merely inform but also to act upon individuals and move them to action. In this project, the story circle was interested in exploring how they could use stories to encourage and support new athletes just entering into para-sport. This desire was revealed that the individuals they most wanted to reach with their stories were young disabled people, *people like them*, who might be future ‘disabled footballers’ if only they knew how to get involved and what opportunities were open to them. Secondary audiences discussed were parents, coaches and educators and others in positions to facilitate and support young disabled people’s foray in to disability sport. In this way, the storytelling workshops that started as a means of connecting with the ‘inspired generation’ transformed into a gathering of the ‘inspirational generation’ — a local community committed to leveraging online tools to spread their message and promote disability football specifically and para-sport generally.

The Collective Story and the Paralympic Movement

In addition to inspiring others 'like them', by sharing their stories via website and social network sites, the members of the story circle also were contributing to the 'collective story' of the Paralympic Movement. Richardson (1988) writes that "a collective story tells the experience of a sociologically constructed category of people in the context of larger sociocultural and historical forces" (p. 201). She further explains that most people think about, and make sense of, their lives in terms of specific events significant only to themselves and perhaps a few close others and do not see themselves as "actors on the historical stage" (p. 201). Furthermore, Richardson (1988) contends that it is the role of the sociologist to:

Think of similarly situated individuals who may or may not be aware of their life affinities as coparticipants in a collective story... [and] to help construct a consciousness of kind in the minds of the protagonists, a concrete recognition of sociological bondedness with others, because such consciousness can break down isolation between people, empower them, and lead to collective action on their behalf." (p. 201).

In digital storytelling, there is an opportunity to build upon and contribute to the story of the Paralympic Movement. There is a lot of popular rhetoric about how the Paralympic Games 'inspire' disabled people, particularly disabled young people, yet there is little empirical support for this claim. For us, digital storytelling was a method for directly engaging with young disabled people, the identified beneficiaries of the Paralympic Movement, and for creating a space for them to tell stories about their sport experiences. This was certainly the case for the young people involved in the story circle at the county FA who not only used the workshops to make meaning of their own experiences and to better understand the role of sport in their lives, but also to start to think of their stories in the context of the stories of others. In our initial meeting to discuss the project, the questions the young people asked focused on the individual

stories they were planning to create but during the ‘mini film fest’ the group started to recognise that the assemblage of stories was quite powerful — that the compilation of the stories presented a pluralistic and relational account of the inclusive football programme hosted by the county FA and spoke to the values and mission of the programme as a whole. This is why they made the decision to share the stories through their own individual online networks but also to share them as a collection on the county FA’s website and a purpose-created YouTube channel.

Digital Storytelling in a Networked Society

In designing this project we were very much interested in exploring the local impacts and legacies of London hosting the 2012 Paralympic Games. When a nation undertakes to host a mega-sport event like the Olympic and Paralympic Games, so much of the focus is on proving the event will have major impacts and significant legacies and there is a pressure on stakeholders to provide evidence, usually in the form of statistics. In the case of London 2012, a key claim used to rationalise hosting was that the Games would ‘Inspire a Generation’ and positively impact levels of sport engagement in young disabled people. Our goal with digital storytelling was to start thinking about legacies from the ground-up. Rather than trying to track the impact of particular government or host organisations initiatives from funding to implementation, we wanted to start with the intended beneficiaries of the legacies and see if and how they had been impacted. Our thought was that this would provide an alternative way of thinking about impacts, legacies and the value of hosting mega-sport events and would provide an opportunity to include the voices of young disabled people who are to date absent from this field of research.

The existing literature has many examples of digital storytelling projects that have adopted this approach of using stories to document the effects of an event or policy on a local group. In these projects, digital storytelling is described as a means of capturing the stories of community members and preserving or giving voice to their experiences. Yet while there is undoubtedly value in ‘capturing’ and ‘archiving’ the stories of community members; in conducting this research we were reminded that stories are not static artefacts to be collected and stored away. Stories move. Stories move in the sense that they pass from the person telling the story to the person listening to the story. They also move in the sense that they have the potential to move people — to move them to understanding or to motivate them to act (Frank, 2010). Although there exists a rich literature in the field narrative inquiry and narrative theory exploring the ways in which stories move and move others, there are limited examples of how stories created in community-based research projects using digital storytelling methods are shared, and used once the story circle ends.

In this chapter we have shared our early ventures into this area, exploring how stories created in local story circles might be circulated via online platforms and how, in this way, they might reach and inspire others not directly involved in the research. We contend that, although there is a lot of popular discussion about the ‘rise of the digital age’ and the degree to which the Web has become embedded in everyday lives, as researchers we have been slow to understand the implications and potential for on digital storytelling methodologies. When the CDS first introduced digital storytelling methods as in community-based research practice, few ‘ordinary citizens’ had the resources or skills to create and edit videos on their own. We have rapidly progressed to a stage where many of us take for granted the digital tools that make digital storytelling

possible — digital cameras are affordable, smartphones are ubiquitous and there exists a myriad of free software and apps that can be used to edit and manipulate video. Yet despite this proliferation of digital tools, as academics we have been less proactive in exploring some of the other broader implications of the rise of the digital age. Instead digital storytelling is still largely thought of as a community-based practice where community is used to describe a small group of people in a particular geographical space at a particular time. It is our hope, that by sharing our own experiences of working on the ‘*Are We Inspired Yet?*’ project, we will inspire other researchers to continue to explore ways that digital storytelling methods can be used to connect individuals with similarly situated others who are not physically co-present but who are linked through digital networks. In this way, digital storytelling could be used to develop a better understanding of the societal and historical forces that shape individual and collective experiences, and to provide individuals and communities with an avenue to contribute to (and build upon) their collective story using online tools and online spaces.

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