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More Than a Field Trip: Using Point of View Action Cameras in Online Courses

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Before describing my idea, I must confess that it developed after a late-night grading break watching roller-coaster videos on YouTube. As a coaster aficionado, I discovered the most thrilling videos used point-of-view action cameras (e.g., GoPro). With their a wide-angled perspective and high-definition image quality, point-of-view (POV) action cameras immersed viewers into the overall coaster riding experience. After watching several, an idea hit me. Could a similar immersive video experience be provided to enliven and stimulate my online students' learning?

In my master's level course on leadership in higher education, I took upon this challenge to develop an online lesson module that addressed culturally relevant concepts on the topic using a planned approach to motivate and engage my online learners (Carwile, 2007). The idea to use POV action cameras was also influenced by several studies examining their effect on learning. For example, GoPro cameras have been found to increase student motivation in engineering student laboratories (McCaslin and Young, 2015) and as helpful research tools to examine instructional experiences of students (French, 2016; Maltese, Danish, Bouldin, Harsh, and Bryan, 2016). Reflecting on my YouTube viewing experiences, understanding of the literature, and pedagogical practices, I collaborated with my campus's online education support center to use a GoPro camera to visit a nearby Historically Black College and University (HBCU). In addition to assigned readings on the HBCU, I planned to provide visual examples of multicultural leadership in action. The HBCU was chosen for its rich history, community advocacy, and innovative leadership. My goal was to use the camera much the same way as the rollercoaster videos: to provide an immersive experience in which viewers felt they were actual participants in the campus visit.

The virtual field trip

At the HBCU, I recorded a campus and neighborhood tour, spoke with student leaders, and interviewed the college president using the POV action camera. In my first attempt at using this device for teaching purposes, I noticed some pedagogical strategies that enhanced the online learning experience. First, students compared and contrasted readings describing impoverished areas surrounding the campus with videos I took driving around these same neighborhoods. By clipping the small camera easily to my driver's side window, footage of my tour generated online discussions on how minority communities are depicted in media. The POV footage did not show extreme poverty; instead, it revealed working-class neighborhoods benefitting from partnerships with the HBCU leadership to improve conditions.

In my interviews with student leaders and the college president, the camera served as a virtual stand-in for my students. Using questions provided by my students, the unobtrusiveness of the small-sized device was advantageous in creating relaxed and engaged interviews with campus members on leadership. For the campus tour, the POV action camera's 140- to 170-degree field of vision surrounded viewers in places where leadership occurred (e.g., administrative offices, residence halls, student centers, etc.). By using a flexible hand-held tripod, the action camera also allowed easy maneuverability to capture details of campus artifacts up close like pictures, murals, and plaques to provide rich visualizations of the HBCU's history and culture. Footage was saved as files for easy editing, uploading, and embedding onto learning management system (LMS) platforms or media sharing locations such as YouTube, where closed-captioning could be added. To respect privacy, it should be noted that only those who agreed to be interviewed were shown

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A point-of-view action camera (e.g. GoPro) was used to provide a "virtual field trip" to students in an online graduate-level course. This article describes the development of an idea to use GoPro video footage within an online lesson module on multicultural leadership. Examples of types of footage used and the resulting student experiences are described. Recommendations for further use of action cameras in online learning is offered and encouraged for online instructors.

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on the class videos. Footage showing any other individuals on campus or elsewhere were edited out of the final videos placed in the online lesson module.

POV action cameras as teaching tools

Zimmerman (2012) reminds online instructors to consider not only how our students and instructors interact with each other, but also how they interact with the online learning interface. My students commented that the action camera's POV perspective made it feel as if they were conversing with the campus leaders themselves and touring the campus alongside with me. The GoPro video placed in the lesson module also followed a narrative matching the trip's schedule: from the moment I left my home residence, upon my arrival at the president's office, throughout the campus tour, and ending with parting words from a campus student leader. Students not only received a POV perspective but also followed a real-time account of the HBCU visit. From this experiment, I discovered that using a POV action camera enhances the interaction one has with the online learning platform by providing an immersive experience akin to taking a class field trip. My advice for anyone interested in using this tool is to be creative and think outside the box. Consider ways in which action cameras can be incorporated in lesson modules. When the opportunity exists, use the camera as a way to increase student engagement with the learning management system (e.g. Blackboard, Moodle, and others).

At the end of the semester, positive course evaluations and requests on these evaluations for continued use of POV action cameras in future online classes were

encouraging outcomes. Some of the most beneficial teaching assets of these cameras are their small size (dimensions 41 × 59 × 21/30 mm) and easy mobility. The cameras provide high-resolution, high-definition video despite their small size and the increased popularity of their use have kept prices reasonable with starter models costing less than \$300. These qualities allowed me to capture rich contextual information for my online course that would lacking if I only used slide show-based audio presentations with static photographic images. Thus, online courses are ideal opportunities for instructors to try out innovative approaches in delivering course content, especially POV action camera video.

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