

# Unraveling Culture through Digital Storytelling

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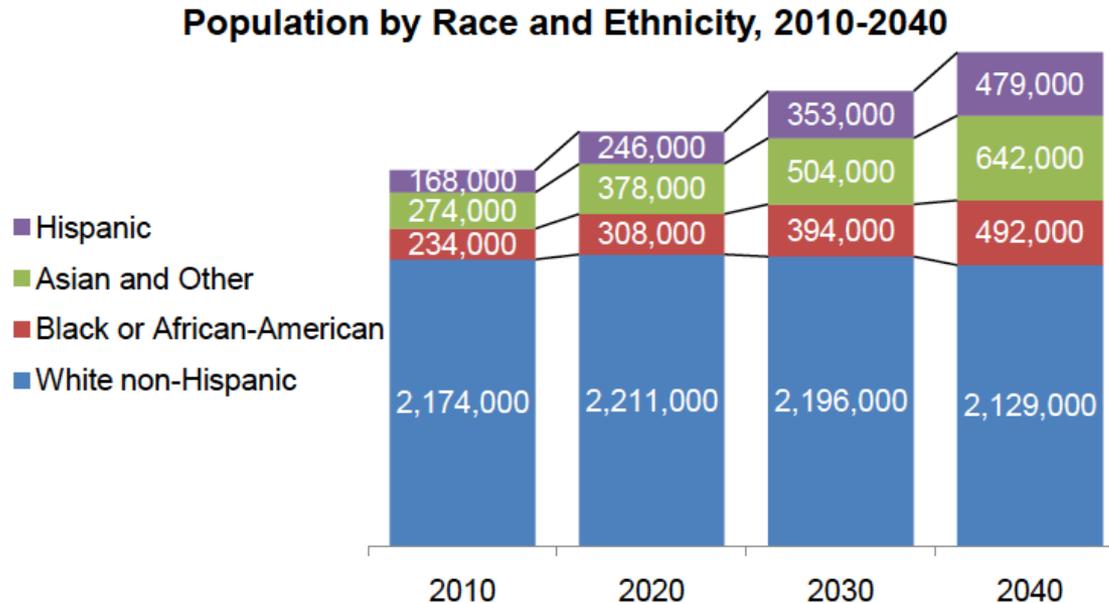
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# MN's changing demographics



Metropolitan Council (2012). *What lies ahead – Population, household, and employment forecasts to 2040*. Greater MSP report. Available at [www.metrocouncil.org](http://www.metrocouncil.org).

Projections show that by 2040, 40% of Minnesota's population will be people of color and much of that growth is expected to come from international immigrants.

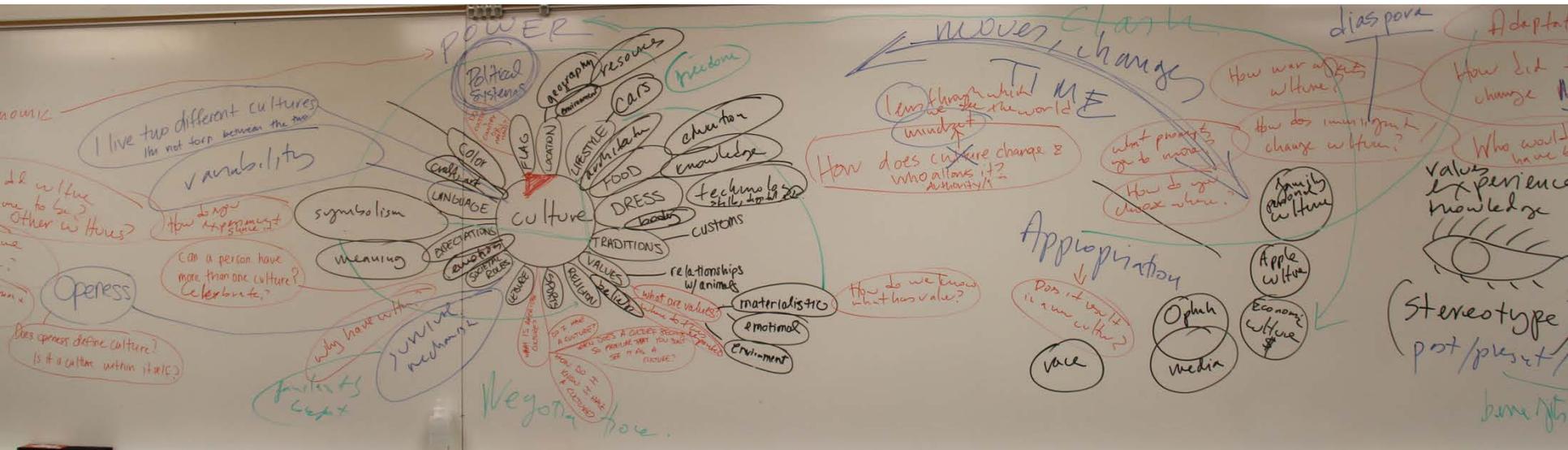
# Digital storytelling

- It can reveal knowledge and insights that could remain hidden through conventional approaches.
- It is an alternative mode of representation, one that is flexible and adaptable.
- It allows for the lived experiences of immigrants and minorities to be given a voice, exposing differences and biases and translating into mediums for dialogues around the role interior designers can play in combatting marginalization and inequality.

# DES 4165-5165 - Design and Globalization

The purpose of this course is to unravel concepts such as culture, identity, and difference and explore the questions of:

- How are culture, identity, and difference defined and produced? And,
- What role does design play in the production of difference, inequality, and marginalization?



Breaking down the concept of culture

# Teaching culture through community immersion

- **Semester-long project**
  - **Literature Review**
    - An interdisciplinary literature review on the history and issues faced by a cultural group in our area sets the stage for the digital story.
  - **Urban Exploration Digital Story**
    - Digital storytelling brings students in the community, pushing their knowledge and comfort levels.
  - **Design Proposal**
    - The first two steps inform the development of a design intervention that responds to an issue or concern identified through the digital story explorations.

Bringing students and viewers closer to understanding the lived experiences of “the other” and informing design solutions to problems identified.

*Using interviews with community members, video, photography, historical archives, sound, music, graphic design, and script writing, students transform into storytellers who use interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks to unravel place-making processes.*

# Examples

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[Fort Snelling - The Native American experience](#) (4 mins)

[Red Sea Restaurant - The East African experience](#) (3.49 mins)

[The Hmong Marketplace](#) (3.45 mins)

[The Mercado Central - The Mexican experience](#) (5.27 mins)

[The Polish experience](#) (5.42 mins)

# Digital storytelling - Benefits

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- **Students**
  - Strengthen their confidence in their ability to become leaders who problem-solve, have a willingness to listen, and are critical of their own perceptions, assumptions, and reactions.
- **Instructor**
  - Assessment of students' understanding of complexity behind how places came to be.
    - Do students account for variability and change? Do they move beyond stereotyping? Do they capture contradictions and tensions? Do the stories expose the political, cultural, religious, historical, and ramifications of interiors?
- **Community**
  - Digital stories can be a way to “give back” to diverse communities as they can easily be shared.
  - Expanding perspectives and experiences featured on [LIVEMSP.com](http://LIVEMSP.com), a web site that showcases the neighborhoods of the Greater Minneapolis-St Paul region.

# Challenges

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- Students learning the technology
- Crafting a storyline
  - What does the team want to highlight? Why it matters?
- Faculty need training to move beyond using familiar and comfortable tools in the teaching of culture
  - Support groups
  - Digital Story Master classes

*Digital storytelling is a medium for transforming students into global citizens*

**Thank you** for the opportunity to share  
this teaching pedagogy with you!

For more information email:

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