CHAPTER 2

Empathy for the Digital Age: Using Video Production to Enhance Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Skills

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INTRODUCTION

Valery was a high school student in my media production class 18 years ago. Being a novice teacher, I applied what I learned as a film student and taught Valery and her peers how to make a video following the production steps. Although most of her classmates acted collegially, Valery demonstrated a surprising behavior. During the last class meeting, she abandoned her group and left them to edit the video by themselves. Not only was she unreachable during the postproduction stage, but she also did not show up for the screening night. When I asked her later why she did not return, she explained that she was afraid of being judged by her family and friends. My personal frustration from Valery's behavior put me on a journey to explore what I, as a media literacy teacher, can do to support my students' social, emotional, and cognitive skills. While reflecting on my pedagogy, I realized that her peers, and I did not hear Valery's fears and feelings, which led her to abandon her group members when they needed her most. Moreover, our class environment was not an empathic space for her or for her peers. Gordon (2009) argued that not acknowledging students' feelings in the classroom inhibits learning, whereas fostering empathy allows students to validate each other's state, which develops their social and emotional abilities as well as their cognitive skills. She claimed that because empathy is a contagious practice, students should experience it to develop their social, emotional, and cognitive skills. This chapter is a reflection on my trajectory to find how Gordon's claim can be embedded pedagogically into video production. I had to step out of my comfort zone as a novice teacher who just graduated from film

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studies, to explore how the professional stages of filmmaking can be experienced empathically while promoting students' social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

Valery's experience in my classroom is one example of a growing problem that must be addressed by educators as well as by society as a whole. In his address regarding the social justice challenges at MLK day, then senator Obama (2002) said:

> It seems like we've got an empathy shortage, an empathy deficit. More serious than the federal budget deficit. We've become so cynical that it almost seems naive to believe that we can understand each other across the gulf of race, or class, or region, or religion.

Over the past 15 years, first as senator, and then as president of the United States, Mr. Obama has urged Americans to address this "empathy deficit" (Obama, 2013). Many other individuals in positions of leadership, including religious leaders (Pope Francis, 2013), CEOs (Warren Buffett in Lui, 2013), charity founders (Gates & Gates, 2014; Hawn, 2014), and sport champions (Michael Jordan in Williams, 2004) have similarly advocated for greater empathy, suggesting it contributes to our emotional well-being, cognitive abilities, and social success. There are many reasons why the empathy deficit is growing. One of them, as Rushkoff (2013) argued, is because we have become more dependent on digital devices. Our constant engagement with all things digital appears to distract us from human interaction in ways that affect us emotionally (Han & Johnson, 2012) and cognitively (Carr, 2010).

At the same time, Rushkoff (2013) called on people to rethink the relationship between technology and humans. He stated that technology should support humanity and not the other way around. As a neuroscientist, Marco Iacoboni (2008) showed through the research on mirror neurons how we are wired to empathize with each other. Following that statement, Rifkin (2009) claimed that the media-saturated environment should enhance the bonding and connection between people. He has proposed to address economic, social, and educational issues by cultivating empathy. Consequently, I believe we can incorporate the idea of digital empathy into teaching and learning in ways that help students deal with the social, emotional, and cognitive challenges of living and learning in an increasingly digital world. This chapter explores the opportunities that a video production process offers to educators who are seeking to develop emotional and cognitive empathy in ways that enhance students' learning.

Empathy as a Theoretical Lens

Our goal is to create a quality of empathic connection that allows everyone's needs to be met.

—*Marshall Rosenberg*

Digital empathy is a theory that represents my effort to combine social, emotional, and cognitive skills into a media literacy curriculum. This emerging construct is informed by three theoretical lenses: the empathy phenomena (Batson, 2009), which helps frame a definition of empathy as an ability and process; social information processing theory (Walther, 1992), which outlines the differences between face-to-face (FtF) and computer–mediated communication (CMC); and digital and media literacies (Hobbs, 2010), which highlight how the digital age requires five literacy competencies. Together, these three lenses showcase how empathy is an integral component of social, emotional, and cognitive development in both offline and online spaces.

Empathy has many definitions depending on the discipline or the background of the author. In an effort to consolidate different terms and definitions, social psychologist Batson (2009) described eight distinctive phenomena of empathy, which he explained is a psychological state. Table 2.1 defines the eight phenomena and the scholars associated with each. Batson suggested that each empathy phenomenon could be seen as both a skill and a process at the same time.

A second lens that informed the notion of digital empathy is that of social information processing theory (Walther, 1992). Josef Walther developed social information processing theory as an interpersonal communication theory. He explored the differences between FtF and CMC and found "that CMC operates at a rate different from FtF communication in terms of users' ability to achieve levels of impression and relational definition equivalent to FtF interaction" (Walther, 2011, p. 458). During CMC, participants need to compensate for the lack of personal cues that helps foster the communication process in FtF. Although Walther acknowledged that the current use of digital media is not distinctively FtF or CMC, he focused on the communication process without addressing what skills are needed to overcome the lack of social cues.

Nowadays, digital devices are used for many daily practices in ways that affect our interactions with each other as well as how we learn. Importantly, the nature of literacy has changed as a result of "the multiplicity of communication channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity"

Table 2.1 Eight empathy phenomena

Phenomena	Definition	Scholars
Cognitive empathy	"Empathic accuracy" knowing another person's internal state, including his or her thoughts and feelings	Ickes (1997) and Wispé (1986)
Facial empathy	Adopting the posture or matching the neural responses of an observed other	Gordon (1995) and Meltzoff and Moore (1997)
Affective empathy	"Emotional contagion" coming to feel as another person feels	Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson (1994) and Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, and Emde (1992)
Aesthetic empathy	Intuiting or projecting oneself into another's situation	Wispé (1968)
Psychological empathy	"Perspective taking" or "empathic attention set" Imagining how another is thinking and feeling	Barrett-Lennard (1981), Ruby and Decety (2004), and Stotland (1969)
Projective empathy	"Role taking" imagining how one would think and feel in the other's place	Darwall (1998) and Mead (1962)
Empathic distress	Feeling distress at witnessing another person's suffering	Hoffman (1981)
Empathic concern	"Sympathy" feeling for another person who is suffering	Batson (1991) and Preston and de Waal (2002)

Source: Adapted from Batson, C. D. (2009). These things called empathy: Eight related but distinct phenomena. In J. Decety, & W. Ickes (Eds.), *The social neuroscience of empathy* (pp. 3–16). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

(New London Group, 1996, p. 60). Many scholars have written about the new literacies that emerged from digital use (Gee, 2007; Kress, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Lemke, 2002; Street, 1995, 2003). In her white paper, Hobbs (2010) explained how five digital and media literacy competencies address the need for students' social, emotional, and cognitive learning in a media-saturated environment. Her model defined the educational process and practices to promote students' literacy skills holistically. More specifically, digital empathy seeks to expand our thinking about traditional empathy phenomena into the digital arena.

In summary, the concept of digital empathy emerges from the psychological research of empathy, the communication research of social

information processing theory, and the educational research of new literacies. Yet, each of these areas of work has limitations. Batson (2009) framed empathy as a psychological state of eight distinctive phenomena but did not consider the role of digital interaction. Walther (1992) compared the social interactions differences between FtF and CMC without carefully considering the impact on learning processes. Finally, Hobbs (2010) looked at students' practices of digital and media literacy competencies, but did not specifically address empathic practices. Drawing on these three lenses allows us to more explicitly weave an emerging framework of digital empathy across relevant theories in psychology, communication, and learning.

Previous Research

In the beginning was the relationship.

—*Martin Buber*

Edward B. Titchener coined empathy, as a psychological term, in 1909. He translated the German word "Einfühlungsvermögen" (into feeling) described by philosopher Theodor Lipps as the aesthetic process of appreciating beauty by feeling and understanding an external experience (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014). The concept of digital empathy is an updated version of Lipps's definition. Just as Lipps described the individual experience while looking at a piece of art, I believe there is an aesthetic, psychological, communicative, and educational experience during video production. From my perspective, these human and interpersonal experiences present opportunities that foster empathy.

In this section, I first examine previous research focused on the complexity of empathy and its connection to learning processes. Second, I outline key principles of digital and media literacy that provide a research-based foundation for digital empathy. Toward the end of the chapter, I draw on my experiences with teaching video production to connect each stage of video production to empathy phenomena.

WHAT IS EMPATHY?

Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another.

—*Alfred Adler*

To understand the concepts of empathy, I will review the different definitions of empathy as distinctive phenomena. Following dualism, the

Cartesian split between mind (cognition) and body (physical including emotion), many scholars explored empathy as a process and as a human ability from either the cognitive or affective perspective. Though Shamay-Tsoory, Aharon-Peretz, and Perry (2009) found differences between cognitive and affective neurological systems, they stated that it does not mean that they are separated but that the two systems are able to separate. Although I look at empathy from a holistic perspective, I will first describe the different phenomena of empathy to bring them together into one learning process.

Cognitive empathy is "the attempt of one self-aware self to understand the subjective experiences of another self" (Wispé, 1986, p. 314). In psychiatry, the term *theory of mind* is used to explain the ability to understand, analyze, interpret, and predict other people's thoughts and actions (Baron-Cohen, Lombardo, & Tager-Flusberg, 2013). Theory of own mind relates more to self-awareness (Williams, 2010) meaning the ability to recognize, monitor, and be mindful regarding your own thoughts and actions. Ickes (1997) used the term *empathic accuracy* instead of *cognitive empathy* to explain the level of understanding others by one's own cognition. From an educational point of view, cognitive empathy is the psychological ability to be a critical thinker. Students cannot critically analyze a text if they are not self-aware or if they do not have a high level of empathy accuracy. Accuracy allows them to interpret what the authors meant for them to suggest their own perspective.

In his review, Batson separated psychological empathy (also known as perspective taking or empathic attention set), projective empathy (role taking), and aesthetic empathy from cognitive empathy. Though the four empathic phenomena are cognitive in nature, they are distinctive in their psychological competencies. Cognitive empathy is the ability to interpret others' perspective—for example, the ability of a producer to predict what the director wants to do next and have the set ready in advance. Psychological empathy is the ability to take another's perspective—for example, the director adapted the cinematographer's point of view of the composition though she planned another composition. Projective empathy is the ability to step into others' perspective—for example, the ability of an actor to play a character different than his own. Aesthetic empathy is the ability to put yourself in another situation—for example, the cinematographer imagines herself as the audience who will look at the shot that she is about to shoot as connected to other shots she already filmed. In other words, cognitive empathy is the ability to stand aside from the situation and analyze it. Psychological empathy, projective empathy, and aesthetic empathy—each

capacity and process is valuable not only for developing critical thinking and rhetorical skills, but also for solving math problems, conducting science experiments, and working in a team (Gottesman & Hoskins, 2013; Shamir, Tzuriel, & Rozen, 2006).

Davis (1980) created a dimension of fantasy in his empathy scale. He defined fantasy as "a tendency of the respondent to identify strongly with fictitious characters in books, movies, or plays" (p. 6). By combining psychological empathy, projective empathy, and aesthetic empathy, Davis looked at the power of fiction narrative to provide a cognitive–empathic experience to the audience. At the same time, he did not address the emotional–empathy experience that these fictional narratives evoke.

As human beings, we feel while we are thinking. It is difficult to separate affect from cognition. Nonetheless, many studies have explored affective empathy by itself. According to Zahn-Waxler et al. (1992), affective empathy is the process and the capacity to understand, imagine, and affectively share other's emotional state. Although they connected affective empathy with emphatic distress Batson, Fultz, and Schoenrade (1987) and Hoffman (1981) separated them. Similarly to cognitive empathy, affective empathy has two components: emotional contagion and metamood. Emotional contagion is described as the ability to recognize another person's emotion and feel it as your own emotion (Hatfield et al., 1994), whereas metamood is the ability to be mindful about your own feelings (Goleman, 1995).

It is important to separate affective empathy from empathic concern (sympathy). Many empathy scholars have written about the confusion between sympathy and empathy (see e.g., Batson, 1991; de Waal, 2009; Gerdes, 2011; Preston & de Waal, 2002; Wispé, 1968, 1986). Wispé explained, "In empathy, we substitute ourselves for the others. In sympathy, we substitute others for ourselves" (1986, p. 318). That is to say, whereas affective empathy is our ability to learn and feel others' emotions, empathic concern (sympathy) is being compassionate toward someone else. Both are important in social context and at the same time, they are distinctive abilities that develop emotional intelligence. Goleman (1995) advocates for developing both empathy and sympathy as integral dimensions of emotional intelligence that promote prosocial attitudes and behaviors to better collaborate and engage with different people as well as contribute to society.

Although cognitive empathy has been researched widely, and affective empathy has been explored, it was only after the discovery of mirror neuron (Gallese, Fadiga, Fogassi, & Rizzolatti, 1996) that scholars started to explore the empathy measurement from a neurological perspective. In

the last 20 years, researchers have used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to look at the way that one's neurological system reacts to different stimulations. Many studies found that the subjects who just watched others' behaviors reacted neurologically as if they were actually conducting the observed behavior. If 20 years ago these studies included a simple measurement of facial empathy and its neurological reaction (Gordon, 1995; Meltzoff & Moore, 1997), nowadays, it is expending toward a sophisticated measurement of the neurological effects of social networking (Vitali, Bortolotti, Giovine, & La Forgia, 2014). In his book, *The Empathic Brain*, Keysers (2011) described the effects of the discovery of mirror neuron on our understanding of human development. For example, he described the development of literacy, especially language acquisition, as a process of imitation and empathic abilities of infants. The mirror neuron allows toddlers to experience the world in a holistic way combining the physical, cognitive, and emotional as one experience that they observe, imitate, and adapt.

CAN EMPATHY BE LEARNED?

Empathy grows as we learn.

—*Alice Miller*

Empathy is a process and an inner ability influenced by external interactions (Bohart & Greenberg, 1997). We can identify empathy not because we see empathy, but we infer other's minds from verbal, visual, and social cues related to empathy (Fussell, Kraut, Gergle, & Setlock, 2005). Indeed, Gordon (2009) claimed that empathy cannot be taught extrinsically but needed to be experienced to be developed intrinsically. Baron-Cohen (2011) defined empathy from a psychiatric point of view as the inner personality level of empathy that can be cognitive and affective. Rogers (1975) used empathy as a process to help patients heal themselves by listening and regulating their thoughts and emotions. In his research with apes, de Waal (2009) looked at empathy as a demonstrated behavior when, for example, "chimpanzee contestants kiss and embrace each other after fights" (p. 44). For educational and theoretical purposes, I will refer to the concept of empathy from a holistic concept including affective and cognitive.

If we reject the notion of dualism (the separation of mind and body), cognitive and affective empathy along with physical and neurological empathy can be seen as a holistic ability and process. de Waal (2012) created the Russian doll model of empathy combining cognitive, affective, and

neurological empathy. He described the developmental stages of empathy: Starting from the mirror mimicry initial stage that is based on emotional contagion; then by practicing coordination and shared goals, there is a development of empathic concern and consolation; last, the true imitation and emulation bring to the final development of perspective taking and altruism. He also added that once we developed the empathic ability, we could increase our self–other distinction.

The notion that empathy can actually be developed has important implications for education. Up to this point, education scholars have mainly focused on empathy as part of antibullying interventions (Bowers & Moffett, 2012; Feshbach & Feshbach, 1982; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006) or multicultural education (Boler, 1997; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Skolnick, Dulberg, & Maestre, 2004) or both (Levine, 2005). Noddings (2013) updated her 1984 book that initiated the ethic of care in education from a feminist approach to an inclusive approach. Her updated version looks at relation and empathy practices as part of moral education. Nodding called for all teachers to use emotions and care as well as teach students to care for each other.

Though empathy is not part of many curricula, few educational initiatives, mainly in private schools, use different techniques to teach empathy. For example, the Roots of Empathy (Gordon, 2009) is a Canadian program that brings babies into the classroom for students to learn about the sense of belonging, attachment, and emotional literacy; MindUp (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010) is a curriculum sponsored by the Hawn foundation for preK–8 grade students that "focuses on facilitating the development of social and emotional competence and positive emotions" (p. 137); and Start Empathy (2014), powered by the Ashoka Center, is a platform for educators to exchange materials and get professional development to structure curriculum in ways that foster empathy.

The current standardized tests culture in the American education system limits the possibility to promote empathy-centered curriculum if they are not part of the Common Core State Standards (Ravitch, 2014). In addition, a vast amount of money is being spent on technology to prepare students for these twenty-first-century standards. However, the technological challenges in the classroom prevent educators from implementing it as part of their curriculum (NEA, 2008). Combining the holistic approach to empathy with digital and media literacy can offer a solution to this problem. Digital empathy uses emotional, cognitive, and behavioral learning with digital media.

CAN EMPATHY BE MEDIATED?

> *… despite all the faults of media, empathy is one of their key strengths.*
>
> *—Antonio Lopez*

Adding digital media into the already complex relations of empathy and learning creates additional challenges to consider. From a media studies point of view, we are living in a convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006); mobile devices can stream TV content, computers can videotape conference calls, voice recognition can type your tweet. All media are converging into each other and engaging the user in participatory culture, meaning that you can no longer just sit and watch TV or read a newspaper. You must like, tweet, post, link, upload, and so on. Researchers who study online interactions (e.g., Boyd, 2014; Hargittai, Connell, Klawitter, & Litt, 2014) illustrated the complexities of human relationships when using the Internet. Interactions such as cyberbullying are more difficult to deal with than traditional bullying because of their greater exposer to audience and their permanence on the web (Turkle, 2012). Digital media has changed the way people interact with each other online and offline.

Walther's (1992) social information processing theory tried to explain how digital forms of communication affect human interactions. In one example, Walther (2011) explained that although emails do not include the types of nonverbal cues found in FtF communication, the richness of the CMC medium allows us to adapt and find new ways of using cues like a smiley icon to relay our emotions. The New London Group (1996) argued that the digital era calls to acknowledge new literacies that students need to have to be part of society. They introduced a new framework of multiliteracies to argue for a need of new pedagogy that would address the richness of the digital media that Walther described. As a result, New Literacies Theory (Leu et al., 2013) explained how there are different new literacies that emerge from digital media. Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, and Leu (2008) collected different pedagogical approaches to digital literacies to showcase the broad implications of New Literacies. Their educational approach added to Walther's communication approach by framing the new possibilities that digital media offers to students and educators.

Although most of the discourse of the new literacies focuses on cognitive and social competencies, the affect is usually omitted. To enhance students' cognitive and social skills and at the same time give them the ability to express themselves, digital and media literacy education aim to enhance holistically students' social, emotional, and cognitive skills in the

media-saturated environment (Hobbs, 2010). Media production is one of the best ways to promote students' social, emotional, and cognitive learning by using the five stages of production (Hobbs & Moore, 2013).

CAN MEDIA PRODUCTION FOSTER EMPATHY?

Filmmaking is such a collaborative medium.

—Daryl Hannah

As I will demonstrate in Table 2.2, media production is a process that allows students to practice making media messages collaboratively and empathically. From an educational perspective, media production is a digital interpretation of Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning. Instead of simply analyzing media messages, the production of these messages uses a hands-on pedagogy to teach digital and media literacy (Hobbs & Moore, 2013). First, students access technology and learn to use the hardware and software while validating the credibility of resources looking at the reason to publish them. Second, students analyze professional media messages using critical thinking and problem-solving strategies to learn who the authors are, why the messages were produced, and what they represent. The analysis enables them to enhance cognitive empathy and rationalize as well as critique the media makers' perspectives. Third, they produce their own media message using a creative process while working in a collaborative team to practice social interactions. Fourth, students learn to reflect as they monitor and reorganize their own as well as their peers' work. Fifth, they use their skills in producing media messages to support and help their community by being thoughtful of their society's needs. Through this production process, students are able to contribute to their peer students and community while practicing aspects of social responsibility (Hobbs, 2010).

Table 2.2 Digital and media literacy competencies and empathic practices

Digital and media literacy competencies	Empathic practices
Access	Validating resources' credibility
Analyze	Understanding authors' perspective
Create	Collaborating and compromising
Reflect	Monitoring own and peers' work
Act	Supporting community's needs

Source: Combining Hobbs (2010) and empathic practices.

One of the most popular forms of media production is video production. Video production adds a collaborative component that engages the team members in both FtF and CMC using a project-based learning pedagogy to engage them with their community. This media literacy practice enhances not only cognitive skills related to empathy but social and emotional ones as well (Essex, 2006). Goodman (2003) argued that his at-risk students learned about their culture and engaged in a meaningful experience with their community by producing documentaries about racial inequalities, homophobia, and school dropouts. On one occasion, after a student created a documentary about her neighbors' housing conditions, she and her peers started a protest and eventually managed to change the documented conditions. Individually, adolescents also used the video production process to explore and play with their identity as Halverson (2010) showed by analyzing a short documentary made by Noeman Samdani who created a media representation of Muslim American teenagers as his own social identity. From a social point of view, Vasudevan, Kerr, Hibbert, Fernandez, and Park (2014) explained how the production enhances the sense of belonging among peers who find the alternative space of production welcoming as they learned to negotiate and give feedback to each other. The variety of contexts in which video production enhances social, emotional, and cognitive skills shows the universality of the process.

Video production has five linear and sequential stages: screenplay writing (story-planning), preproduction, production, postproduction, and screening (distribution; Ohler, 2013). It is a group assignment that requires each group member to use her/his social, emotional, and cognitive skills during each stage to perform his or her specific role as an effective production team member. This unique learning experience raises the question of how a group of students engaged in stages of video production might be guided toward developing empathy as part of the process.

DIGITAL EMPATHY

A Great Movie Evolves when Everybody Has the Same Vision in Their Heads.
—Alan Parker

In the last 18 years, as I moved from my filmmaking practice into media literacy education, I have taught video production with various groups of students as part of different media literacy curricula. Although I have modified my curriculum and practice along the way, the process of production has remained the same. Reading Batson's eight phenomena made me realize

Table 2.3 Video production stages, digital and media literacy competencies, and empathy phenomena

Video production stage	Digital and media literacy competencies	Empathy phenomena
Screenplay writing (story-planning)	Access and analyze	Cognitive empathy
Preproduction	Analyze and create	Projective empathy (role taking)
Production	Create	Affective empathy
Postproduction	Analyze and reflect	Psychological empathy (perspective taking)
Screening (distribution)	Reflect and act	Aesthetic empathy

Source: Combining Batson (2009), Hobbs (2010), and Ohler (2013).

that each stage of the video production process refers to a different phenomenon of empathy. The structured process of production fosters empathy by its specific sequence where every stage builds on the previous one. It is almost as if, once a stage is finished and the other starts, the students practice one empathic phenomenon and are ready to practice it while acquiring a new one. By the end of the process at the screening event, most of the students have higher levels of empathy due to their social interactions via the digital tools. Table 2.3 illustrates the overlaps between video production and the various empathic phenomena including the focus of the students' digital and media literacy competencies.

Unlike other pedagogical activities, video production demands constant use of digital devices. If guided properly, I believe this digital engagement throughout the collaborative production process allows students to develop different aspects of empathy and therefore a higher level of empathy. In this section, I provide a series of insights informed by my work with thousands of diverse teenagers who have collaborated on different video genre while being supported with teaching practices designed to develop social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of what might be called digital empathy.

As seen in Table 2.3, I argue that there are connections between the five stages of group video production and the social, emotional, and cognitive skills as defined by the distinctive phenomena of empathy. The model that I propose uses only five of Batson's (2009) eight phenomena. Three distinctive phenomena, facial empathy, empathic distress, and empathic concern were excluded from the model because they are an inherent part of group work and the learning process, thus they are not related to a specific production stage but rather support the whole collaborative process. In particular,

students enhance their empathic concern during every stage as they work collaboratively and interact with each other (Soep, 2006). Consequently, unlike the other five empathy phenomena, empathic concern is not an ability that can be connected directly to one of the production stages, but as a practice of learning to care for each other and their audience.

It does not matter if the group members know each other as they engage in the process of video production. Once the process starts, they need to work together. Students' background, such as historical tension between some group members, might affect their quality of collaboration. However, group dynamics can happen with any mixture of personalities in any given group. This is why the presence of the teacher is crucial from the beginning and at any point of the process. The media literacy teacher is more of a facilitator and mediator rather than a content-knowledge instructor. Teachers can and should contribute from their professional knowledge, but the students ought to lead the production for them to own and undergo a deep experience.

Screenplay Writing (Story-Planning)

Imagination is not only the uniquely human capacity to envision that which is not, and therefore the fount of all invention and innovation. In its arguably most transformative and revelatory capacity, it is the power that enables us to empathize with humans whose experiences we have never shared.

—J. K. Rowling

In the first stage of screenplay writing, the students negotiate their ideas and consolidate them into one coherent narrative agreed on by most of the group. To execute this assignment of brainstorming and formatting the first narrative structure, they must understand not only each other's thoughts, but also their character's (fantasy dimension of Davis, 1980) and audience's (no matter if the character is real as in a documentary, or an imaginary characters as in a fiction movie).

In this initial stage of production, students practice their collaboration skills, as well as their ability to contribute, receive feedback, and compromise. Coming to acknowledge other people's opinions and understanding that the final video will not be the ultimate video each person wanted to make; the process of negotiating, understanding, and acknowledgment is the starting point of enhancing empathy. Practicing empathic feedback (Friesem & Greene, 2013) is one of the ways in which students can construct positive comments and offer suggestions while understanding their peers' perspective and decision-making process. The students practice cognitive

empathy as part of their negotiation by imagining their audience's thoughts about the message, story, and structure. At the same time, they imagine their characters' state and predict their action in the situations they are putting them into.

As the students move along the process, they go into a deeper level of empathy. At the initial stage, they are trying to understand others' personal state. They do not identify with others, but they acknowledge others' thoughts and emotions. Furthermore, they practice empathic concern (sympathy) as part of their constant negotiation and collaboration on the idea and the screenplay writing. You can identify their practice of cognitive empathy, fantasy, and empathic concern once they consolidated the ideas into one agreeable narrative. This is the only stage at which technology is not needed. Optionally, students can watch a video together to be inspired and write the screenplay using word processing software.

Preproduction

If two men on a job agree all the time, then one is useless. If they disagree all the time, then both are useless.

—Daryl F. Zanuck

Once there is a message, a story, and a structure, every group member takes on a professional role in the preproduction stage. The producer is in charge of the logistics; the director is in charge of the actors; the actors are in charge of their performance; the videographer is in charge of the light and composition; the set designer is in charge of the locations and their decoration; the editor is in charge of the structure and continuity of the shots; and the sound manager is in charge of the recording and sound design. There is not always a need for every role, and some roles are combined depending on the context and the number of group members. After deciding who is doing what, each team member must do research on their role to be as professional as they can.

In the next stage, students use projective empathy (role-taking) to step into a professional role and learn to research how an expert in this role would think, feel, and act regarding their project. Each team member will inquire how to get the best results in their role by: watching professional videos, reading about how to design their video in the best way, looking for examples from professional filmmakers, and creating a plan for how they will help the group in their role. Online research involves locating the information, but also analyzing and validating the content of web sources. Once the data is gathered, students will adapt and synthesize it into their own video context.

These digital literacy skills are learned as students go through an inquiry-based learning. This learning develops their role taking expertise. Preproduction is an individual stage. Unlike any other stages, the team members go through an individual research process and come back to the group with their acquired expertise.

Once back in-group, the team members negotiate how they should plan the production. Now that each one has learned their role, the discussion is more professional oriented and less emotional than it was during the screenplay writing. This is due to the fact that now the students practice cognitive empathy, empathic concern, and projective empathy. It allows the teacher to monitor the discussion toward professional terms rather than the team members' unrealistic ambitions for their video. The students show their practice of projective empathy as they research individually and plan the production together. Now the team members can move toward scheduling their production.

Production

No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care
—Theodore Roosevelt

Usually, the production is the most sensitive stage in which many productions have stopped and failed to finish the video. There are three main reasons why this happens. First, the group was not prepared to collaborate and did not allocate time to work specifically on each team member's cognitive empathy, empathic concern, and projective empathy. Here, the teacher did not mediate and support the group collaboration to guide them into the empathic practice. Second, the shooting is the only stage that is irreversible, therefore the recorded material is the footage that is edited. If the camera is out of focus, it will be impossible to fix. If the acting is not persuasive, no editing software can change that. If the setting does not look like a real place, animation will not make it credible. In a short amount of time, the group creates the footage that will determine the quality of their project. It raises the anxiety of engaged students who invested a lot of their time and grit; the anxiety can cause group tension and stop the process. Third, because of unpredictable events during the shootings, the quality of the footage never looks as the students imagine it. The tangible result might be disappointing or frustrating.

Because the production stage is so emotional, students must practice affective empathy to lower their anxiety, disappointment, and frustration.

They must practice cognitive empathy, empathic concern, and projective empathy. As they understand each other better, sympathize, and take on a role, they can open themselves to other people's feelings. While students are on the set in their professional roles, they practice their acquired knowledge and apply it to the process of filming as a group of different experts. For example, the cinematographer might decide to compose the frame differently than the director. They must negotiate and come to an agreement that makes them both feel heard and appreciated. To collaborate and have a successful production, the team must practice both affective and cognitive empathy. You can recognize the empathic practice if students are able to synthesize collaboratively their creativity, imagination, and ambition.

It is also important to point out that the digital equipment of video and audio recording magnifies the different emotions on the set. The digital practice affects the ambience of the video, for example, the angle of the camera, the brightness of the light, and the level of the volume. This digital-affective reflection of the production team's feelings encompasses their deep understanding of others' emotions, for example, the characters, the audience, their team members, and themselves.

Postproduction

The first rule of my speaking is: listen!

—Larry King

The postproduction stage combines video editing, sound design, color correction, titles, and marketing of the screening event. Because only one person at a time can control the keyboard and mouse, the group mutually agrees on a revised structure for the video, and then group members split into smaller teams to manage all the tasks simultaneously. The footage never looks as planned because many unexpected factors interfere with the production process. This is why the initial structure needs to be revised and agreed on. During this fourth stage, students practice one of the most challenging empathy phenomena—psychological empathy. That is, they need to understand their audience perspective as if it was their own. To keep their message clear and coherent, they should acknowledge the audience perspective but not identify with it. They need to edit while focusing on their message and their style in order to be coherent. At the same time they must have a clear sense of agency and not be completely led by other's opinion and emotion as they did in the second stage while practicing role playing of professionals. In this stage, students set their attention toward others to understand their

character, values, and desires while balancing it with their own sense of agency. Similar to their practice of fantasy in the screenplay writing stage, now they have to keep their sense of agency while acknowledging how their audience will react. This is a deeper level of empathy that demands that students learn, understand, and acknowledge not only the state of other team members, characters, and audience (cognitive empathy and affective empathy) but also their grit (psychological empathy). If the students fail to reconstruct the narrative mutually as a group during the editing stage, they jeopardize their audience understanding of the message they worked so hard to produce.

For the purpose of practicing psychological empathy, the computers and editing software are very helpful. The ability to test different options to the millisecond allows the students to practice different emotions, thoughts, actions, and reflections. The digital editing features (nonlinear editing) enable students to change the sequence of their shots or scene, change the soundtrack, reverse action, repeat action, zoom in, zoom out, change colors, and manipulate the pace, rhythm, and density of the footage. The editing room is like an empathy laboratory. Students test digitally how non-verbal cues, gestures, words, interactions, and cause–effect behavior can be interpreted differently as they put the sequence of the footage in different orders. Practicing psychological empathy is the only way students can edit their video in an articulated way.

Screening (Distribution)

Sometimes you can't see yourself clearly until you see yourself through the eyes of others.

—Ellen DeGeneres

The last stage of digital video production involves a reflective closure of the whole experience. First, the team members discussed their ideas and compromises to write a coherent screenplay. Second, they took a role, researched, and planned their part of the production. Third, they collaboratively produced the video. Fourth, they finalized the given materials into their best version of the video. Along these four stages, the students imagined how the audience would react to their video. This stage's process provides an example of Davis's (1980) notion of fantasy. Now, the screening is their test to examine if their empathy practice helped them create an effective media message that is perceived by the audience in the planned way. While screening the video, the reactions of the audience are considered nonfiltered

feedback. The students are sitting with the audience while watching their digital creation and, at the same time, are attentive to the audience reactions. This most complex phenomenon can be described as aesthetic empathy (Wispé, 1968).

Students are projecting themselves into the screen, remembering all their decision-making processes that led to the final version of the screened video. If this is not enough, they are usually making eye contact with their peers to test each other's reaction. Let's not forget that individually, students are also very anxious and excited to see their creation on the big screen. The question-and-answer (Q&A) session after the screening aims to clarify to students and their audience what the process was and what they learned from it. This complex process creates a closure of the production as the students reach the highest level of empathy and are able to articulate it using reflection.

CHALLENGES

> *Empathy is learned, but it can be un-learned as well.*
>
> **—Gary Small and Gigi Vorgan**

Digital empathy is an emerging theory that views video production as a holistic concept in education. It combines three social science disciplines: psychology, education, and media and communication. At the same time, it omits parts of each discipline by creating this interdisciplinary concept. Empathy has many definitions that were omitted (self-empathy and empathic action) once I focused specifically on Batson's psychological definition. My adaptation of Batson's definition as an educator and filmmaker can be perceived as a misinterpretation of his context. By the same token, framing digital and media literacy using psychological terms such as empathy can be seen as a decontextualization.

The use of empathy, in general, has been criticized as immoral, dangerous, and exhausting. From a moral perspective, Bloom (2014) has argued that the increasing use of empathy in the public discourse using different definitions creates a vague understanding of the concept. He called the use of empathy immoral, as he looks at the ethics of judges who should, according to Bloom, judge the facts without empathizing with either side. He framed empathy as a tendency to let emotion influence the rational verdict during a trail. From a protectionist perspective, the neuropsychologists, Gonzalez-Liencres, Shamay-Tsoory, & Brüne (2013) showed that practicing empathy could result in envy and schadenfreude (gloating). They called it the dark

side of empathy, as they explored the effects of early childhood social comparison, competition, and in-group–out-group distinction. From a practical perspective, empathy fatigue is a term used by scholars who examine the exestuation of caregivers to patient suffering from grief, trauma, or disability (Stebnicki, 2008). Empathy fatigue is also known as compassion fatigue or to put it simply: burnout. Practicing empathy toward others can exhaust and create a reversed effect. Nonetheless, each one of these perspectives—moral, protectionist, and practical—acknowledges the importance of empathy as human nature while describing its limitation in different contexts.

Digital empathy reflects my personal exploration as a media literacy teacher. It might not be reproduced in every setting with every teacher. Not all media teachers want to be a mediator of group dynamics nor did they learn it in college. In addition, stories like Valery's where she abandoned her group members to edit and screen the final product by themselves, demonstrate that not all group members experience a positive empathic development. The video production process should allow students who came with a certain level of empathy to develop it even more. The process had different effects on different students and yet some elements such as the professional research process, the final screening, and the Q&A are not widely used among media production teachers (Tyner, 2003). Digital empathy calls for further research to develop a coherent pedagogical approach as well as to validate the connection between each stage and each empathy phenomena. Moreover, future studies should explore whether the phenomena of empathy are as interpersonal as the process continues or the digital devices are responsible for enhancing social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

SIGNIFICANCE

> *The great gift of human beings is that we have the power of empathy, we can all sense a mysterious connection to each other.*
> —*Meryl Streep*

Learning, teaching, studying, and advocating for digital empathy can help many diverse students to acquire twenty-first-century competencies while fostering social, emotional, and cognitive skills. It is not merely an interdisciplinary and up-to-date concept that will fade away because information consumption via digital tools is growing (Duggan & Smith, 2013). We can address the empathy deficit that concerns many politicians, economists, social activists if we implemented a collaborative video production in schools using digital tools and guided media literacy pedagogy. Nowadays,

when video recording and editing can be made on many mobile devices, students can produce media by themselves anywhere. Nonetheless, students need a guided empathic experience led by an experienced teacher. The media literacy teacher can use video production to teach about morality as well as to mediate the envy and schadenfreude. Making it a holistic experience prevents exhaustion and facilitates the digital practice as a social, emotional, and cognitive experience. In the last 18 years, since my experience with Valery, teaching media literacy to diverse students has helped me develop the concept of digital empathy as a theory to explain what specific components of video production enhance empathy as social, emotional, and cognitive skills.

The advantages of digital empathy for education and society call for further investigation of the concept as we continue to explore the effects of the Internet, mobile devices, and educational practices. This pedagogy suggests that students who experience digital empathy will become digitally wise (Prensky, 2012), media literate (Hobbs, 2010), socially engaged, and responsible (Levine, 2008). More interdisciplinary research is needed to combine empathy, social information processing, and digital and media literacy to advance students' social, emotional, and cognitive abilities through a digital and empathic experience.

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