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Expanding and Revising “In Sara’s Shoes”

The increased mobility of our technology over time has made it easier to communicate, create, and collaborate. With our phones, we’re able to answer texts, calls, and emails while we’re on the go. We can also record videos and take photos whenever we want, share them with others on social media, and bounce off each other’s ideas to continue creating or critiquing. We do it so often, it’s second nature now to want to pull our phones out and share what we’re seeing when something happens. This isn’t always a good thing, as sometimes it hinders our in-person communication, which can result in a feeling of isolation. As Lee Humphreys states, “social avoidance is a complicated social dance that many engage in while using mobile services without really thinking” (2017, p. 17). Therefore, our social interactions including communicating, creating, and collaborating can be both improved and impaired using mobile technologies, as shown in my final project.

For my final project, I chose to edit my video, *In Sara’s Shoes*, which explores the use of video creation to collaborate in an isolated way. The day-in-the-life format was used to comment on self-expression and connectivity, as well as the idea Marsha Berry discusses of using phones as “portable visual diaries where narratives of everyday life may be collected” (2017, p. 135). The project begins at the very start of my day, with the light turning on and me getting up out of bed. From there, I take the viewers through almost every part of my day such as making coffee, taking care of the dog, sitting on the train to Temple, walking on campus, doing homework, cooking dinner, brushing my teeth, and more. The video then concludes with me getting back

into bed and turning the light off. Most of the transitions for these clips are swish pans that were done by physically moving the camera. I refined and further developed the video for the final project by adding more parts of my day, such as browsing library books, seeing my parents, showering, etc., as well as adding more still shots and different types of transitions, such as matched action. All of this was filmed on my mobile phone and then immediately edited together wherever I was using Adobe Premiere Rush. On this app, I was able to trim videos, add music, adjust coloring, add graphics, and more.

The goal of *In Sara's Shoes* is to collaborate with others by sharing video that shows a consistent isolation from friends, family, and strangers throughout the day of a commuter. The video also displays a form of self-expression using a blog style to show me being myself, looking for books, reading on the train, and staying on top of my schoolwork. The day-in-the-life format is done purposefully to allow the audience to put themselves in my shoes and make them feel as if they were living the day right there with me. I achieved this by filming vertically to make it feel more casual and user friendly, as well as creating transitions using the physical movement of the camera. All the shots were filmed in ways to match up the beginning/end movements to the previous/next shot to create a raw feeling. I wanted there to be very little post-production work because I felt like adding too much after filming would make the audience feel less present. In addition to making them experience what I saw, I also wanted the audience to experience how I felt. I did this through purposeful pacing of the video. The pacing was meant to match how I felt throughout my day. In the morning, the pacing is slower to show I was still waking up. During the day, the pacing is faster and a

little more all over the place to make the audience feel stressed out and on the go. In the middle of the day, the pacing slows down while I browse books to represent a feeling of peace in the middle of a busy day. Then, the pacing slows down again at home, but this time the slowness feels sadder than before, and the audience can see the isolation from my family because of the phones.

In addition to adding more clips and transitions to the original video for the final project, I wanted to strengthen the connection to social interaction. To achieve this, I did two things. First, I focused the video itself more on isolation. I got rid of some of the videos with my friends and replaced them with videos that more accurately show how my family is after work. I focused on using videos that had only me alone in them, or with my parents on their phones. Second, I posted the video on both Tik Tok and Instagram to test how mobile video can also strengthen our connection and collaboration to each other. To do this, I used a short clip from the original piece and changed the audio to match other trending songs on the apps. The video got over 1,000 views and several comments on each platform. I also got a few notifications that others were clicking on the audio and creating videos with the same idea using the same music. While it's only a small reach, this shows one way mobile video can help us more easily communicate and create with each other.

While planning my project, I was inspired by the ideas of a few different authors we read this semester so far. Some of these authors include Marsha Berry and Lee Humphreys. In chapter seven of *Creating with mobile media*, Marsha Berry states, "The low-resolution pixelated aesthetic provided the visual material shown with a sense of urgency and authenticity and placed the viewers at home in their lounge rooms within

the frame rather than as detached observers” (2017, p. 134). I utilized this idea by making my video as unedited as possible. I wanted it to be authentic and raw to help the audience feel more present, so I avoided any crazy effects or overlays. Additionally, in “Connecting, Coordinating, Cataloguing: Communicative Practices on Mobile Social Networks,” Lee Humphreys discusses the idea of “connecting, coordinating, and cataloguing.” She continues to define these as “connecting allows us to manage inner space or social distance with others. Coordinating allows us to manage outer space or our physical distance from others...” (2012, p. 501). For my project, I mainly focused on the idea of “connecting” and our “social distance with others.” Others can see the disconnect and purposeful social distance within the video and connect to the idea by interacting with the video, creating a similar documentation, or even just using it to think about their own lives. Furthermore, in “Involvement Shield or Social Catalyst: Thoughts on Socio Spatial Practice of Pokémon GO,” Lee Humphreys states “Thus people may not mean to distance themselves from others but do when beholden to a buzzing phone or one where creatures pop up on the screen.” I used this idea by showing my parents using their phones to “distance themselves.”

Furthermore, I was also inspired by Bahiyah Omar and Wang Dequan’s work. In “Watch, share or create: The influence of personality traits and user motivation on TikTok mobile video usage,” Omar and Dequan state “Specifically, we found that social media users consume or watch TikTok for escapism, social interaction, and archiving purposes. Meanwhile, they participate in TikTok to express themselves, interact with others, and escape from day-to-day pressure. The motivation to produce TikTok videos, on the other hand, derive from the desire to fulfill their self-expression and archiving

needs” (2020, p. 130). I utilized this idea by creating a video that I then posted to Tik Tok. The video I made helped document my day and was a form of self-expression. It also was a form of escapism for me, and it proved to serve as an escape for others as well. It’s also important to note that my video was inspired by a current trend on Tik Tok. This trend was started by user lleakna and it’s of people showing short clips of what they see or what they’re doing throughout their day. I saw it while I was scrolling through the app and consuming others' creations, and I was inspired to try my own take on the idea. This interaction of my own on Tik Tok proves Omar and Dequan’s findings.

Overall, mobile video is a tool that can be used to both enhance and diminish our social interactions with one another. It allows us to connect with ourselves, share and archive our individual experiences, and use them to collaborate with others online. It also damages in person connections by creating a social distance between family, friends, and strangers. My video project, *In Sara’s Shoes*, explores this connection in an authentic, raw, and relatable way. The ideas of filming in a more casual way (Berry, 2017), connecting and managing our “inner space” (Humphreys, 2012), using phones to socially distance ourselves from others (Humphreys, 2017), and using social media, specifically Tik Tok, as a form of self-expression and as an escape (Omar and Dequan, 2020) all contributed to my take on a “day in the life” video and my comment on how we use mobile video to interact with life. With the help of mobile video, social interaction can continue to improve online, but we must be careful not to let it consume us and take our attention away from the present.

References

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