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## Empathizing with “the other”: Visualization and perspective taking

Lisa Spitz

Lesley University, lspitz@lesley.edu

Liv Cummins

Lesley University, lcummin2@lesley.edu

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# Empathizing with “the other”: Visualization and perspective taking

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Lisa Spitz (LA+D) & Liv Cummins (CLAS)

March 2018

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## Presentation Goals

- Discuss connections between empathy and perspective taking
- Present two approaches to use in your classroom, across disciplines and formats:
  1. Visualization of written text - for analyzing/connecting with content
  2. Empathy mapping - for connecting with people

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## Audience Self-Reflection

Reflect on a moment in your teaching when...

- you've witnessed a lack of understanding or empathy between students;
- you wished for more understanding of, or empathy for a student yourself; OR
- you desired deeper analysis of, or connection to course content from students.

Describe that moment on your index card, including the specific course.

# Empathy & Perspective Taking

RSA

SHORT

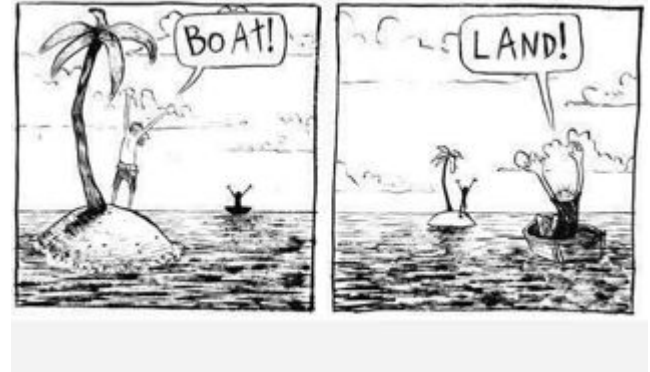


<https://youtu.be/1Ewgu369Jw>

## What is perspective taking?

Perspective-taking—viewing the world from something other than one’s vantage point—covers a broad range from the literal to metaphorical.

- “Stand here and you can see the tower between the hills”
- “These steps must look very tall to someone as short as a toddler
- “Let’s see ... facing east, I can see the house, so if I were to face west, I would see the street”
- “Imagine what the rabbi must have thought when the caterers brought out all those trays of ham!”



## To take another’s perspective...

- Understand your own perspective
- Recognize reaction of “other”
- Describe “other” perspective
- Imagine world from “other” point of view
- Understand how self/other overlap and not
- Make connections and link to productive actions



## Classroom connections: Empathy through visualization

### **Visualization of written text:**

for analyzing/connecting with content

#### *Liv's Class*

CLITR 3250.80 World Drama II  
8-Week, Online Course

### **Empathy mapping:**

for connecting with people

#### *Lisa's Class*

IAHIS 1190 Design Thinking & Research  
15-Week, In-Person Course

## Visual Sensemaking is...

*“Visual SenseMaking is the activity of making sense of ambiguous complex situation, through visual methods and tools including words, images drawings, diagrams, charts, and graphs.”*

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# Case Study: **Liv's Class**

CLITR 3250.80 World Drama II  
8-Week, Online Course

## Visual Project & Presentation

Create a visual project which reflects your close analysis of a character, scene, or moment within a play we read this term. By approaching the world of an author or work from a visual perspective, one comes to “see” a written work in a new way.

Present your project to the class in a 1.5 – 4-minute narrated Voicethread presentation of at least 2-4 panels in which you describe your project, the choices you made, and, most importantly, what your project says about the play’s theme, style(s), period, and/or playwright, using course concepts and terms.

**This project has two primary goals:**

1. to closely analyze a work from a visual perspective, yielding new insight into the work;
2. to coherently explain each visual design choice made in terms of what it says about the play’s theme, style(s), period, etc., referring to course texts and terms.

## Assignment Fulfills These Course Goals:

- Enhanced critical thinking
- Ability to “see” characters, conflicts, or scenes *through* a visual
- Connecting written texts a) with each other, and b) *through* and *to* a visual
- Oral presentation skills

# Examples of Student Visual Projects

- PLAY: Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck* (1836)
- A lower-class barber, who begins to hear voices, eventually kills his wife.
- Other characters, including a Doctor and a Captain, exploit and/or harm *Woyzeck*, raising questions about the influence of class and other aspects of society on one's actions and agency (or lack thereof).

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## Audience Q&A

- Is there a course you teach in which most course content is written text, and students are mostly reading and then writing or discussing written text?
- How might a Visual Project & Presentation (like this one) enhance students' empathy toward people or characters they read about OR their analysis of / connection to course content?

# Case Study: **Lisa's Class**

IAHIS 1190 Design Thinking & Research  
15-Week, In-Person Course



A photograph of a workshop or meeting. In the foreground, a man with grey hair, wearing a red and black plaid shirt, is seen in profile, looking at a smartphone. He has a hearing aid in his left ear. In the background, three other people are seated at a long table, working on laptops. The table is covered with yellow sticky notes and a black object. The setting appears to be a collaborative workspace.

**“Design a new product or service that enhances social activity (e.g. travel, mobility, wayfinding, social networking, or neighborliness) on a day-to-day basis for people over the age of 65.”**

## User Experts

A user/expert is a person who has developed expertise by means of their lived experience in dealing with the challenges of the environment due to a physical, sensory or cognitive functional limitation.



Steve



Jeffrey



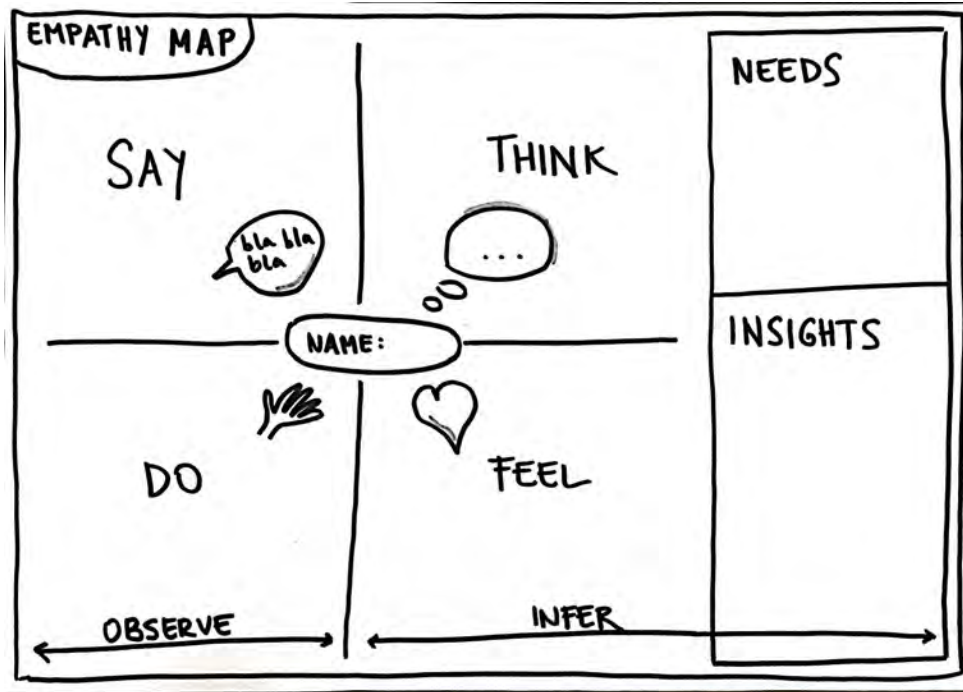
Joan

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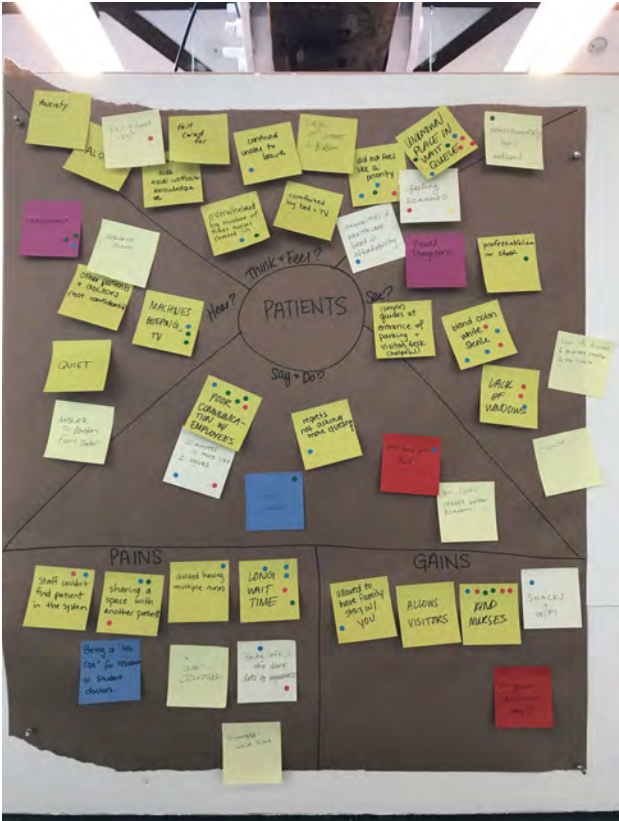
## Phase 1 Outcomes

- **See and Relate:** Evidence of relating to multiple individuals, their lives, and contexts.
- **Making Distinctions:** Numerous distinctions being made regarding individuals attitudes and beliefs. Distinctions are defining, have explanative powers, and clarify our understanding of people.
- **Communicating:** Phase 1 presentation clearly articulates your research process and uses stories to capture the problems and opportunities surrounding day-to-day life for individuals over the age of 65.

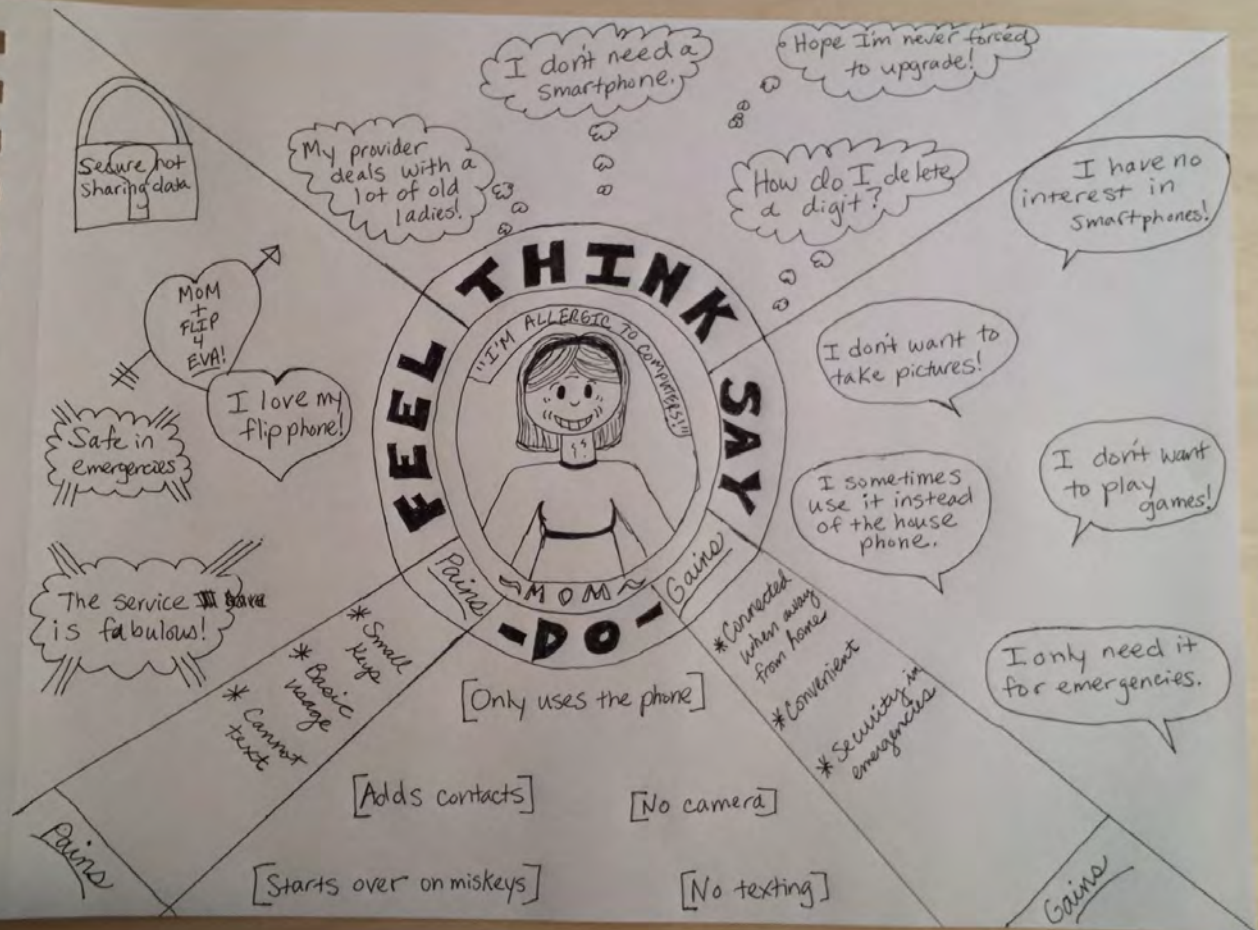
# What is an Empathy Map?

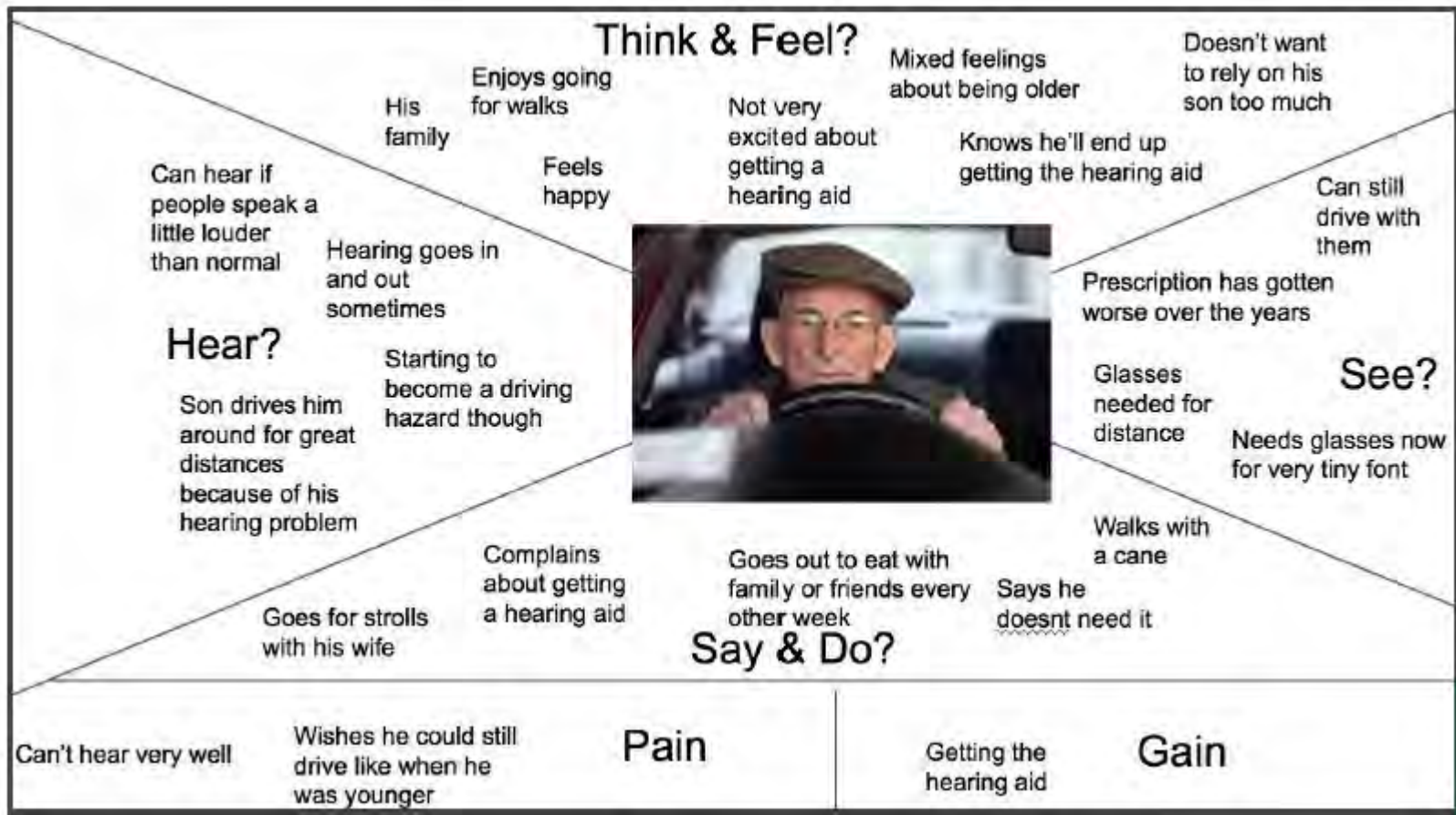


**Empathy maps**  
Imagine/document the world from someone else's perspective, including what is observed and inferred through research and connections.











# JANE

young people are too fast

wishes she exercised more

(feels) behind, left out (feels) pain

be careful!

speed up!

move faster!

keep up

do you need help?

**THINK&FEEL**



not many people

strangers

lots of tv news

**HEAR**

**SEE**

**SAY AND DO**

I miss the old times

back in my day...

let's make America great again!

**PAIN**

arthritis

feels tricked by the media

behind in using technology

**GAIN**

technology easier to use

reconnect with old friends

## Why use an Empathy Map?

### Empathy maps are useful for...

- Immersing yourself into your user’s environment
- Discovering the underlying motives behind people's’ actions, choices and decisions so we can proactively design for their real needs.
- Identifying gaps in your research/knowledge
- Synthesizing research and drawing out insights across a variety of user groups.

**“I soon realized that to empathize is absolutely paramount in the design process. One has to know so much about a person; understand them; to be able to fully empathize with them.”**

– Joe DeSouza

## Audience Q&A

- Is there a course you teach in which students are required to conduct interviews and/or share their understanding of a people group?
- How might an empathy map (like this one) enhance students' capacity for perspective taking?

**Followup**

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## Audience Self-Reflection

Return to your index cards:

- Would one of these visual sensemaking tools help with your original challenge?
- If not, what might be some remaining questions or concerns?

Share your thoughts on your index cards.

# References

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