

Collaborative Creation: A Reflection on Group Dynamics in Video Production

By Zoe Williams

To aid this reflection I will be using Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988). Gibbs Reflective Cycle is a structured framework designed to guide individuals through reflective practice. Developed by Graham Gibbs in 1988, this model provides a systematic approach for individuals to examine their experiences, identify areas for improvement, and develop action plans for future situations. (The University of Edinburgh 2020) *“Through this framework, individuals can gain deeper insights into their experiences, enhance their learning, and continuously improve their performance in various contexts.”* (Sibson 2008)

The last assignment of my first year of university was to create a group video. As an adult with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) I find group work especially challenging. Group work involves communication and collaborating with others, this has always been a challenge for me. Baron-Cohen’s Theory of Mind hypothesis (1988) suggests that individuals with ASD like myself are unable to understand the mental states of others, this can make group work especially challenging. Initially I felt extremely anxious and overwhelmed by the prospect of participating in a group project, I was uncertain about how to navigate the social dynamics. Greta Thunberg (2019) once referred to her Asperger’s diagnosis as her “superpower” and this was how I was going to view my ASD. This was an opportunity to engage in a collaborative project, and build relationships with my fellow students, and potentially expand my knowledge by working with students with expertise that differ from my own. John Dewey (1938) believed that children learn best when with other people, this is true for adults in higher education. To prevent myself from becoming overwhelmed with the social demands I have associated with group work, I used Self-Monitoring (Simpson & Shogren 2007) which succeeded in alleviating some of the anxiety I felt going into this group project.

We were asked to organize ourselves into groups, this task again involved navigating social dynamics and making decisions about whom to work with. I was filled with the feeling of uncertainty; I did not know my fellow students very well and could not decipher who was a procrastinator and who was an academic high achiever. I quickly become overwhelmed with the

situation and sat quietly listening to everyone talk about what groups they would prefer, hoping not to be noticed. Malcolm Knowles (1988) believed adult learners want to be in control of their learning, that we are goal orientated and are driven by an inner desire to expand our knowledge. Alas no one could make the decision on group members, so the decision was made for us by our tutor. This decision left me feeling relieved, as the burden of decision-making was lifted from me. Our groups were formed with diverse skills, giving everyone a fair opportunity.

Going into the first group session the other members of my group appeared to be reluctant to begin any discussions, I therefore took on the role of group leader and initiated the discussions during the first group session, I felt a mix of responsibility and pressure. On one hand, leading the discussions provided me with a sense of control and accomplishment. On the other hand, I felt frustrated and anxious about the lack of input and engagement from my fellow group members. I decided to use Carol Dweck's Mindset theory (2012) and adopted a "Growth Mindset". This approach enabled me to guide the discussions not dominate them. We marked out the roles and responsibilities of each group member, and established clear roles and expectations, this enabled us to lay a solid foundation for our group project. It was decided that due to all members living so far apart and with childcare responsibilities, a WhatsApp group was to be created in order to communicate via messages and video conferencing calls. This would enable us to have clear communication from the beginning. We made the decision to create the video using Canva, some members of the group were not confident in using the website, it was then determined a tutorial session on how to use Canva was needed, and to be arranged for all members of the group, unfortunately the University's student IT expert was not available at a suitable time for this, It was decided that I, being the most confident and having used Canva in the past would present the tutorial session to the group at a proposed date. We ended the first group session by establishing a regular meeting time to brainstorm ideas. As I reflect on this first group session, it is evident that my ASD influenced my response to the situation, as my difficulties with social interaction and communication can make gauging others' intentions or preferences difficult. What I perceived as reluctance or passive behavior could have been influenced by a range of factors, such as shyness, lack of confidence, or uncertainty about their role in the group. In future group sessions I implemented strategies to encourage participation and collaboration, such as asking open-ended questions, actively soliciting input from quieter members. Fostering a supportive and inclusive

atmosphere where all members feel comfortable to express their ideas and opinions, this fosters effective collaboration and communication within the group.

The Group brainstorming sessions were held via a video conference call; these sessions were aimed at generating ideas for our video. I adopted the role of the facilitator using Carl Rogers' theory for effective learning (1994), guiding the discussions, and encouraging participation from all members. I initially felt anxious and uncertain going into the brainstorming sessions as I did not want to dominate the discussions, however as the session progressed this was replaced with relief, as each member of the group participated in the discussion, I felt more comfortable and was able to become a part of the discussions not just facilitate them. Through these brainstorming sessions we were able to generate a wide range of ideas and establish the individual components each member was to be responsible for. After this was established, each member could then work independently. Each group member could then bring their work back to the group in the next brainstorming session for peer-review. We did encounter some difficulties with hosting the meeting virtually, as most of us have children the discussions would be frequently interrupted by our children, however we were able to quickly resolve this and get the discussions back on track. If asked to complete a group project in the future I would suggest the brainstorming sessions could be hosted face-to-face to avoid the possible distraction that comes with virtual meetings at home.

The final session was held again via a video conference call. As all the information for the video had been finalized, this meeting was to discuss the aesthetic of the video, to ensure that all the information from each member fitted together. To create the video, we agreed as a group to use Canva. Canva has a remarkably simple user-friendly set up. Canva also gave us the opportunity to work as a group together through the collaboration feature. Going into this last element of the group task, my focus was to carefully consider the design element ensuring they were not overwhelming or distracting, as to not overstimulate potential audience members who have ASD (Hanley 2017). Initially I had a sense of excitement, however the challenge of having group members who were not confident using the website despite receiving a tutorial session, proved to be a challenging aspect, I did however meet this challenge with enthusiasm and empathy, providing as much guidance as possible. This was achieved through Canva's user-friendly interface and the platform's accessibility that likely facilitated the engagement and participation of all members, allowing for meaningful contribution from all group members. However, despite

the benefits of Canva's extensive image and animation package, we found that access to this was extremely limited unless a monthly subscription was to be paid, despite this it became evident that Canva served as a valuable resource for enhancing the video production process.

In conclusion, the journey of creating a video through group activities, provided me with invaluable opportunities for personal and professional growth. While ASD presented me with unique challenges, each experience served as a steppingstone towards building confidence, honing communication skills, and fostering resilience in a collaborative setting. In future group projects I will advocate for my needs by openly communicating with my group members about how ASD may impact my ability to understand social interactions and communication. I will utilize supportive strategies to manage my communication difficulties during group interactions, such as using visual aids to facilitate understanding, this will enable me to actively engage in group discussions and contribute my unique perspectives. By implementing these strategies, I aim to maximize my contributions to future group projects while also promoting understanding and acceptance of ASD within the group.

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