



Expanding Empathic AI 2026 – A Research Roadmap

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Abstract: In this proposal, I seek funding for an interdisciplinary conference on Expanding Empathic AI, to follow up on a successful event I hosted here through the Consortium on Moral Decision-Making in spring 2024. This event will bring together scholars from philosophy, the social sciences (e.g., psychology, political science), and engineering and computer science to discuss descriptive and normative considerations about extending empathy to, and receiving “empathy” from, artificially intelligent interaction partners such as LLM's and robots. The aim will be to use these conversations to refine our understanding of scientific and ethical constructs of empathy in the space of human-AI interactions, and to highlight the value of cross-disciplinary conversation and collaboration. The conference will comprise talks, interdisciplinary panels, early career researcher flash talks, and break-out workgroup discussions meant to encourage new collaborations, and the formation of a “research roadmap” working paper to unite a vision for moving forward in the broader study of empathic AI. Expected outcomes will include the submission of this working paper to an interdisciplinary journal, as well as the formation of a team that will submit for an integrative grant on this topic. The event will be hybrid, in-person and live-streamed online, with recording, production, and dissemination online afterwards. The Empathic AI 2026 event will dovetail with the Rock Ethics Institute's 2025-2026 theme on ethics and human technology, and the College of Liberal Arts' 2025-2026 theme on fragmentations.