A Cross-Case Analysis of Disciplinary Identities Communicated Through Design Reviews

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Ask ourselves....

- What are the disciplinary identities we WANT to communicate to our students?
Research Purpose

• WHAT? Revealing disciplinary identities and how they are conveyed and negotiated during interactions between design students and project reviewers

• WHY?
  – Discourse is a mechanism by which students develop occupational identities as they engage in a community that communicates attributes of their prospective profession.
  – Design reviews involve rich discourse
Theoretical Framework

• James Gee’s (2000) identity lens

• We focused on **institutional identity** (I-identity) in specific among a network of four identities (natural, discursive, institutional, and affinity)

“A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a **member of a socially meaningful group** or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'.”
Data Sets

Choreography

Industrial Design

Mechanical Engineering
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Aspect</th>
<th>Choreography</th>
<th>Industrial Design</th>
<th>Mechanical Engineering</th>
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</table>
| Speech          | – “I” language  
– Most speech directed at student from instructor  
– Positive  
– Emotive and descriptive language | – “They” language  
– Conversational and interactive  
– Encouraging, expressing possible future challenges | – “We” language  
– Most speech directed from student group to instructor  
– Concise, direct and clear language |
| Actions         | – Profuse, individual feedback | – Guides student to solution with questions  
– Instructor actively listens and provides specific suggestions | – Outlines specific expectations in list format |
| Gestures        | – Emotive and demonstrative hand and arm gestures  
– Head nodding as others share opinions  
– Gestures illustrated moments in the dance that are difficult to conceptualize in words  
– Demonstrated how an element could be altered | – Limited hand gestures  
– Used to indicate elements of design | – Some hand gestures during speech |
| Values          | – Multiple, diverse perspectives  
– Engagement and personal connection with audience  
– Originality and individuality  
– Intention/storyline evident in design | – Balancing designer’s vision with client’s input  
– Duality of form and function (“cosmetic” and “structural”)  
– Time management and deadlines  
– Simplicity and neatness | – Emphasis on performance  
– Encourages efficient use of time  
– Well thought out and clear rationale behind decisions  
– Uniform requirements for evaluating success (grading algorithm) |
| Attire          | – Casual  
– Dark, muted colors | – Casual | – Casual |
| Use of Artifacts| – Paper and pencils for notetaking  
– Some instructors have laptops (not used for demonstrating dances) | – Dual-screen desktop computers  
– Sketches  
– Computer drawings  
– Miniature mockups of designs | – Video footage of design prototype in use  
– Prototype of design  
– Pen and paper for notetaking |
| Environment     | – Circular arrangement of tables in a classroom-type setting  
– Comfortable  
– Personalized space | – One-on-one discussion in a crowded computer lab-type setting  
– Personalized space  
– Cluttered workspaces, chaotic and noisy | – Students positioned across work-table from instructor in a lab-type setting  
– Sparse and drab space |
Choreography

creativity was expected in all elements

emphasized individuals who can think outside-of-the-box

attention to detail

subjective and detailed feedback

“I” language
Industrial Design

Flexibility (balancing creativity, user needs, and structure) functionality was not a priority

Vision of the product (material, structural elements, aesthetics)

Creativity was expected in association with aesthetics and form

Interacting with both people and thing

“They” language, referring to the user or client
Mechanical Engineering

“efficiency and clarity”

“succinct and clear”

The review process was short

Feedback was objective

“We” language, referring to the student team

Creativity was needed when troubleshooting unexpected problems
I-language, they-language, we-language

Who does design serve?

• Claire: It’s the partner leap. I would love for you to find something more original than that. I feel everything else is but that is kind of a standard. [choreography]

• Gary: It's really a little mixing of last Friday by saying they, some people, they wanted to make it more like a “looks like”, but that's not what everyone agreed to, and you don't have a great amount of time to do that. So this is just a, a full-size form model, and use the materials, inexpensive materials. I mean obviously, if you want to add some color that, you could do that. [industrial design]

• Nelson: Why were we trying to get 'em last night as opposed to in the last three months? [mechanical engineering]
When Creativity Occurred/Expected?

In all elements (moves, hand gestures, costumes, etc)

As part of aesthetics and form

When troubleshooting an unexpected problem
Theoretical Contributions

• Instructors modeled institutional identities implicitly or explicitly

• There were epistemological differences in how disciplinary identities were presented
Practical Contributions

- Can design disciplines learn from one another?

- Is this why inter-disciplinary collaborations so difficult-working with people with different epistemological perspectives?

- What are we gaining/loosing when we value functionality over novelty when designing?
Understanding the Students

• How do students **personally connect** with their design especially in team settings?

• What do students **do with feedback**? Do they process feedback through abductive reasoning?
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