

Using Design Examples in Arts Courses as On-Going Advocacy for Inclusion in Art and Design Teaching and Projects

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I am Dr. Samantha Goss. I teach art education courses at the University of Northern Iowa, as well as some courses related to research, studio art, and design history. My presentation is “Using Design Examples in Arts Courses as On-Going Advocacy for Inclusion in Art and Design Teaching and Projects”.

I want to start with a disclosure. I am an able bodied person with ADHD and anxiety. I have the least amount of training required to be licensed to teach special education in Illinois. I do not claim expertise. I try to convey information I have learned through readings or relationships as a form of advocacy. I struggle with representing others, but often I feel information won't be shared at all or often enough if I don't in the contexts where I live and work. Therefore, I apologize if my information or perspective is off or out-dated; corrections, updating, and related information is appreciated.

The agenda for this presentation is to, first, provide the context or problem that I saw which informed my pedagogical choices. Second, I will share the goals I had in mind that I could accomplish or at least contribute. Third, I want to focus on possible solutions. The first being a bigger picture solution - shifting mindset and perspective. Lastly, I will share the more practical efforts that were examples used in my course that reflected solutions based on a mindset of possibilities.

As for the problem or context, care and empathy are related to all aspects of my teaching and research, specifically the idea of engrossment. More specifically, I embrace Nel Noddings' views on care. Noddings identified three factors that make up care; commitment, engrossment, and motivational displacement. There are far more nuances and layers to her work. For this presentation, we begin with these factors as a starting point to think about problems and solutions.

I see one of the problems as a lack of the appropriate kind of awareness that allows the privilege of ability to remain an ignorant default. Having awareness or care is a major step towards solutions.

Commitment. What is one's commitment? Where does this commitment come from? That informs the context significantly. I provided my disclosure to also explain my commitment.

Engrossment. Has time been taken to become engrossed? To understand another person's reality? Engrossment does not require stalker level effort, but authentic and beyond the surface level is required. Personally, I believe engrossment and care should be considered on an individual level, and am uneasy connecting these ideas to labeled groups because ethical caring is not always best for each individual. I do feel it is necessary to advocate and make changes in these more overarching ways in order to more successfully support individuals in the future.

Finally, motivational displacement. I can set aside what is best for me, for the good of the cared-for.

Without any commitment and engrossment, motivational displacement is unlikely. We have had a law to force society to care and do this for the past 32-49 years, if you consider section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or when ADA was passed in 1990, and still I notice things that show how much still needs to be done.

Keep these in mind as they are also where I locate my thoughts when thinking about possible solutions.

My goal in my teaching and this presentation is to attempt to advocate for teaching examples of accessible and inclusive design to build more nuanced or additional sources of awareness, to continue, ideally increase, progress. The first goal is my own; making choices and taking actions that contribute to a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable society. I want to select art and design examples to include in my teaching that contribute to that goal. I hope those examples enhance awareness, especially in students without any personal touch points to build their own desire for inclusion or advocacy. I also want my students to cultivate an ability and desire to take on an alternative perspective, which is a very important skill for any designer.

Thinking back to how all this fits in my previous research related to care, awareness feeds engrossment and commitment. Most of my students have a predisposition for noticing and considering unnecessary hurdles, they have a family member or close friends that has allowed them to witness the world in an alternative way. There is their engrossment, it's sustained through their lived experiences and other learning opportunities. Their level of commitment varies, but once the awareness exists, I believe it is always there to some capacity.

Pause for a second to think about the moments and factors in your life that brought you here today. When have you been engrossed? When and where did your commitment begin? When was it reinforced? What does your awareness include or accomplish or inform? Pause the video for a moment to reflect on those questions.

With awareness, students (and ourselves) may have the knowledge to do or to ask the right questions that reflect motivational displacement and will hopefully support actual progress.

Enough ranting about how society isn't doing enough. I am an educator, I find solutions and paths based on where we are and where we need to be. We need a new set of glasses for this, our mindsets and perspectives need to shift. Binary us and them mentalities aren't doing anyone any good. Inclusive artists, designers, and arts educators can embrace research-informed, strategic, design thinking to find solutions.

So in my own class prep, I sought out examples to provide awareness. As I dug into these examples, I realized they would be great for me as well. Even knowing they were design examples for specific populations made me assume they would not meet my own needs. I assumed they might just not create any significant complications for me. I would be on board because of my desire to be an advocate. If I was this ignorant and I had made some effort not to be....

The examples I will share next were created to better specific groups of people's lives, but they would also make my life better. Which allowed me to present them and ask my students - Why not? Why is this groundbreaking? Why hasn't this happened already? How do we make this the default?

So if you remember those moments I made us reflect on? Well, this first example is based on moments in my personal life. I'm not sure why I always saw deafness as less disability and more of just speaking a different language. While I feel that has been a good attitude, I was also totally oblivious that the blinking light next to traffic lights when there are emergency vehicles wasn't invented for when I have my radio too loud. I had a partner at one point who is a CODA. I was able to learn more from his experiences, but his mom taught courses related to ASL and deaf culture. And here I was able to get a better understanding of deaf culture. I took in every bit of information I could. I felt safer sharing deaf perspectives and information for two reasons. One, my proximity to people living the deaf and CODA experience. Two, deaf culture doesn't hide in the shadows. Hearing people just aren't lucky enough to be part of it! We are oblivious most of the time.

Therefore, I included the DeafSpace Project as an example in my Design History course. I provided students with background information about Deafness, Gallaudet University, and the project. Then I jumped into some of the design ideas within the project. I knew these would resonate with my hearing students' reality, and hopefully make them question. Wait, why don't we do this everywhere?

If you need info on Deafness and Deaf culture, for the sake of time, I am sending you to Google.

The two images on this slide are of the Living and Learning Residence Hall 6 at Gallaudet University, which was the first building designed using the DeafSpace framework. They showcase the balance of openness with small recesses for more privacy, as well as the space required to gather when the primary language is ASL.

The ASL Deaf Studies Department at Gallaudet and architect Hansel Bauman established the DeafSpace Project, or DSP, in 2005. Over five years, DSP developed a catalog of 150 plus distinct DeafSpace architectural design elements called the DeafSpace Guidelines. These guidelines reflected the long held tradition and practical ways of making a space work for the deaf experience. The project formalized and therefore brought them into broader architectural design conversation.

On Gallaudet's website, specifically campus design and planning, it states, "The study of DeafSpace offers valuable insights about the interrelationship between the senses, the ways we construct the built environment and cultural identity from which society at large has much to learn".

As I said before, this example stood out to my students. I make that assessment based on the conversation around the topic during and after class as well as how often the example showed up in other classes. Also, I could see them actually listening to me in the lecture hall!

Here are two diagrams from a working draft of DeafSpace guidelines from Gallaudet and Bauman in 2010. While there are five elements leading to 150 examples, I am only touching on two. The sensory reach example on the left depicts two levels of a building without significant architectural features to inhibit lines of sight. The other image on the right speaks to mobility and proximity. Without the sound of shoes, these individuals may not be aware someone is just around the corner in a hallway. But the corner curved or removed, there is an opportunity for sight to prevent running into each other.

Sensory Reach and Mobility and Proximity probably had the best lightbulb moment since so many of my hearing students have their heads buried in their phones with earbuds. They could see how these solutions, specifically designed for Deaf people, would also help them considering how technology often disconnects them from certain sensory experiences.

I believe it is safe to say everyone deserves to be able to engage with the natural environment. I say this as someone who avoids the sun and heat with a passion. There is something that calls us all to nature more often than not. And that universal experience exists in this next project that resonated with my students. And it's the Landscapes of Justice: Redefining the Prison Environment. The project reflects a collaboration between the Iowa Department of Corrections and the Iowa State University's landscape architecture department to change the prison environment for rehabilitation and to change the perception of prisons. The designs were implemented at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women in Mitchellville, Iowa. Sharing this project was enlightening for my students as many have not thought about the disconnect from nature that occurs when someone is incarcerated, as well as the significant benefits of being able to engage with nature that my students enjoy regularly.

On the left we have a schematic of their plans for redesigning the landscape. On the right, we can see offenders walking the paths and sitting in the center classroom with more stadium-like seating.

When the Iowa Department of Corrections first approached them, the request was simple. Please design a planting plan to create a calming environment. With their design and plant knowledge, the students saw greater possibilities and designed something much more impactful. They designed a multi-year master plan. At the time the references I read were written only two of the spaces had been completed; a multi-purpose outdoor classroom and the decompression deck. One aspect that seemed to really strike my students and myself was the reality that the offenders were not allowed to walk on the grass. Think of being so close to grass and not being able to touch it in the spring or summer. This also seemed cruel to the design students. They worked with a professor that had knowledge in turf grass. They developed a mixture that would withstand excessive use - no muddy shoes! Now the lawn mound is the only space where offenders are allowed to sit in the grass.

Finally, I tried to speak to our desire for things to be easier or function better as our tasks and world is evolving. Tools: Extending Our Reach was an exhibition at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum from December 12th 2014 to May 25th

2015. I selected several items from the exhibit to share with my students within the theme of collaborating with tools or technology. This supports a mindset of possibility especially when considering life challenges and how to support better function through design. Here I have pulled images of two of the designed objects included in the exhibit that relate to this conference and audience: the running blade and autofold can. These objects were presented with a wide variety of others including stick maps, drones, and cameras in the shape of pills for endoscopies to name a few. I am able to show how new challenges and solutions happen throughout time for large or specific groups of people. But everyone is trying to find solutions to function better.

Now, I started with the most pertinent example to this conference, and the one I find to be the biggest No Duh! We Need That moment. But I actually teach these in the opposite order. I present the tools lecture first. After that I hope we all can agree that design is interested in embracing new technologies and materials to find better ways to function without forgetting about form. Then we jump into socially conscious design where I include the Landscapes of Justice project. My intention is to make them think about quality of life through design. I hope they feel we all deserve access to life's pleasures like nature. Finally, I lecture on inclusive and accessible design and spend time sharing DeafSpace guidelines. At this point, I hope they are open minded enough to take in the information and realize how the guidelines would also benefit them as hearing individuals.

I thank you for listening to my process to address the ongoing problems related to inclusion and access. I hope the examples I shared show my desire to create awareness and a mindset of possibilities not through token examples of design connected to disability, but good design that improves life for specific groups and probably everyone else at the same time.