

CAN STUDENT EMPATHY IMPROVE MOTIVATION?

A User Experience (UX) Approach to the Introduction to Graphic Design Classroom.

"I am double majoring in graphic design and marketing because I hope it will help me stand out from my peers, enhance my marketing skills—to land my dream job."



POLLY "the planner"

driven organized perfectionist

MAJOR: Marketing/Design
CAREER GOALS: work at an Advertising Agency
COURSE PURPOSE: added design to make a double major.

LIKES:
• Her bullet planner.
• Experiences that look good on her resume such as traveling, clubs and volunteering.
• Finding escaped with an occasional Netflix binge.

STRESSES/PAIN POINTS:
• The struggle to be perfect can be draining.
• Drawing and creative skills can be challenging for Polly.

MOTIVATION MINDSET: highly driven for grades and to be a success, but hasn't fully tapped into her intrinsic motivation.

motivation

GRADES AND CAREER

BE A BETTER PERSON

GROWTH, PASSION/PURPOSE

BIO: Polly is a planner. She uses her bullet planner as a way to manage all of her commitments on and off campus. She is determined to have a successful career in the marketing and advertising industry. She is setting her sights on landing an internship at a Minneapolis agency.

INSTRUCTIONAL CONCERNS: Polly can be a bit overly focused on extrinsic goals such as grades.

INSTRUCTOR INSIGHT: Polly is a goal oriented student. She can lose sight of the present goals, and has trouble focusing on skill development that might not directly be graded. Instructional techniques that include an understanding on mindset, developing creative techniques, and exposure to humanitarian concerns with help Polly understand design on a deeper level.

"Being able to express myself creatively is important to me. I want to use my love of art to make a living."



DANA "the creative"

creative artsy open-minded

MAJOR: Graphic Design/Photography
CAREER GOALS: be employed at a creative career.

LIKES:
• Anything artsy. Taking photos, sketching, art, dogs, pop culture.
• hanging out with artsy friends.

STRESSES/PAIN POINTS:
• Dana has been reflecting on their fluid sexuality, they have decided for now not to put a label on their sexuality. This can be challenging with their family and high school friends. Dana feels that their family loves them and will come around.
• Some design feels too commercialized.
• Paying for school can be stressful, especially with the current lack of support from her family. She is determined to make college work by working lots of various jobs.

MOTIVATION MINDSET: Dana is primarily focused on becoming a better artist and tapping into their creativity.

motivation

GRADES AND CAREER

BE A BETTER PERSON

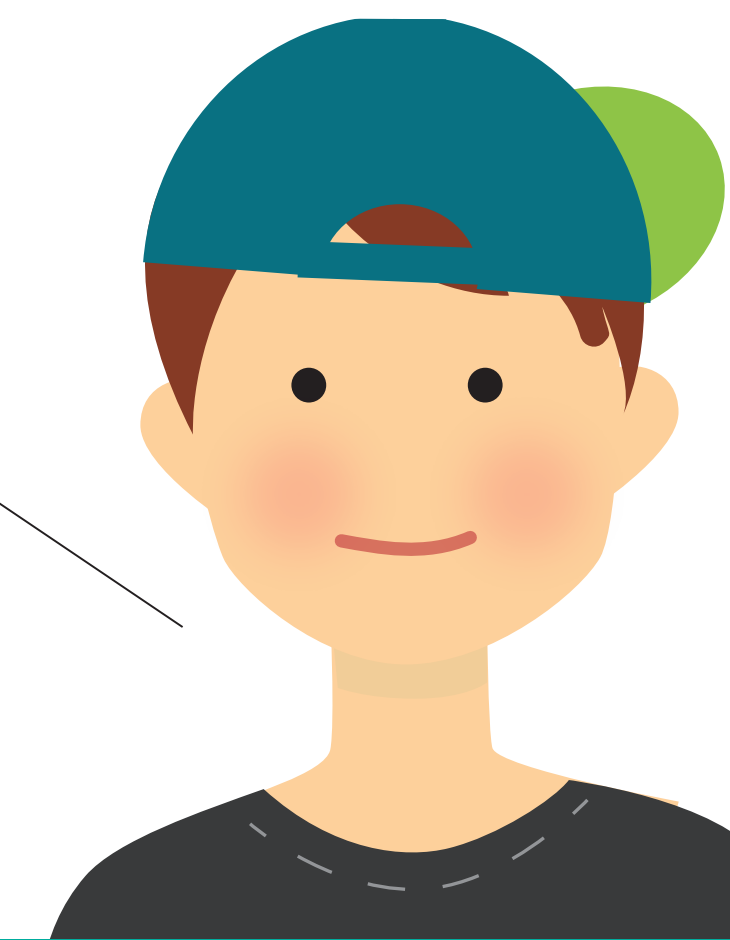
GROWTH, PASSION/PURPOSE

BIO: Dana is an artsy creative. Dana will be happy if they can support themselves in a creative, artistic career. Dana is taking Introduction to Graphic Design as part of their major. Dana recently added Photography as a minor and this class will be their first exposure to design. She's concerned whether or not graphic design is right for her. She loves everything artsy and creative, and wants a job to go to everyday versus the potential instability, and self-employment of being a studio artist.

INSTRUCTIONAL CONCERNS: Dana can sometimes suffer from anxiety and stress out. They are a good student and they don't have to stay on top of assignments and continues to work towards managing their anxiety and stressors with depression.

INSTRUCTOR INSIGHT: Dana is a positive addition to the class. They challenge the peers with during critiques and is always willing to help others with insight to make their work better. Dana has asked me about career options, such as being a professional illustrator. Dana has some reservations whether graphic design is right for them, but for now they are committed to graphic design.

"I'm not sure what I want to do...but I'm taking graphic design to check it out, (and make my parents happy)."



DYLAN "the distracted"

gamer comic fan distracted

MAJOR: Art Major with undecided concentration.
COURSE PURPOSE: Dylan is trying out design to please his parents.

LIKES:
• Gaming, Fantasy Novels and Comics.
• Drawing
• Music

STRESSES/PAIN POINTS:
• Dylan likes to draw and paint, but really hasn't thought too much about how he might have a career.
• Getting to classes and managing his sleep schedule has been a challenge for Dylan since coming to college.

MOTIVATION MINDSET: Dylan is hard to motivate (intrinsically or extrinsically)

motivation

GRADES AND CAREER

BE A BETTER PERSON

GROWTH, PASSION/PURPOSE

BIO: Dylan is often distracted. He has a hard time getting to class and when he does make it, he is often thinking about gaming and chatting with his online friends. Dylan is really unsure if college is the place for him right now, but doesn't know what else to do. He loves the idea of creating games and comics with his drawing skills, but lacks the follow through and dedication. As soon as he gets motivated, he has the talent and ability to accomplish these goals.

INSTRUCTIONAL CONCERNS: Dylan has talent in and enjoys sketches his comic ideas. He often misses class and is often unsure what is due and when. For the most part, he is able to stay on track and keep up with major assignments. However, Dylan misses the insight on skill and process developed through the day-to-day exercises and peer critique. He often dismisses daily assignments and is observed game playing with headphones on during studio time.

INSTRUCTOR INSIGHT: Every instructor struggles with reaching low motivation students like Dylan. Projects that allow Dylan to make them his own, and have a pop culture connection is key.

SYNOPSIS: Can designing classroom projects through an empathetic lens of our students increase intrinsic motivation? The aim of this research project is to provide a theoretical framework to incorporate a user-experience (UX) approach to improve intrinsic motivation. This research explored UX, an empathy based design process, as a pedagogical intervention. Using this design process as a way to reflect and gain student perspective, projects were redesigned.

The end goal of this experimental classroom research is to increase intrinsic motivation. By increasing intrinsic motivation, the goal is to increase creative output, student engagement, and program retention. The project re-design reflected the students interests and goals, while maintaining course objectives.

A persona is a way to analyze, and then create archetypical "users" (Van Rooij, 2012), the "user" is in this case students in an Introduction to Design class. Personas are intended to make the user "real", so that the designer (in this case instructor) can develop empathy for them, and that empathetic connection helps improve design (Van Rooij, 2012). While personas might sound like stereotyping, it is in fact an amalgamation of key qualities that many users possess. It is a way to design for all, while still being personal, empathetic and engaging. It is intended to avoid the "watered-down" design for all approach that range and demographics create.

PROJECT DESIGN: MASTERY, AUTONOMY, PURPOSE.
How do you increase intrinsic motivation specifically critical for creative output? This idea is explored in the book, Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, by Daniel Pink. His theory on motivation, based on behavioral scientific findings published by researchers over the course of fifty years are categorized in three distinct parts: Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose (Pink, 2009).

These ideas were applied to project development using the following considerations:
Mastery is based on perceived and actual skill development. Is the student learning a skill, ideally one that is desired for their future goals (see purpose).
- multiple, pre-project exercises.
- skill development was supported by stating verbally, and on questionnaires the connection between these beginning tasks and their professional purpose.
Autonomy focuses on whether or not the student feels they can customize the project based on their personal interests and goals. Pink (2009) theorizes that by having autonomy, people will push themselves further creatively than whether they were given a more specific task without personalization.
- allowing choices where ever possible
- in this introductory class, students need specific parameters and scaffolding in order to successfully complete the course goals.
Purpose develops a practical use for this project in their future goals professionally and personally. It can also aligns with students ideas about a meaningful life. (i.e., Does this project or skill make me a better person, or the world a better place?)

- use projects that students find "cool": animal icons (with options), t-shirt design for chosen persona, and coffee cup design.
- highlighting the students interests is key.
- introduce how design and business can give back, and is not solely a tool of business and commercialization.

DATA COLLECTION: To collect data on projects effectiveness, pre/post survey reflections were administered at the start and the end of the semester. Additionally, survey reflections were administered at the start and the end of each of three key projects. The surveys focus on three key interconnected qualities related to intrinsic motivation: purpose, autonomy, and mastery.

The Data included quantitative ratings and qualitative reflections. For the purpose of this research poster analysis, only three surveys were analyzed. The post-project reflections on Project 2 (T-shirt Design) and Project 3 (Coffee Cup Series). Also the results of the quantitative data and some student quotes on the Course Exist Survey are also included.

PARTICIPANTS: 7 students opted to participate in the data collection.

LIMITATIONS: The primary limitation was there was no data on the effectiveness of previous semester projects. Small sample (of 7 students)

also provided a limitation in evaluating overall effectiveness of redesigned projects.

THEORETICAL REFERENCE:
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END OF CLASS SURVEY

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	Average
Purpose (does this help me in future goals, and be a better person.)								
Q1: (abilities)	7	5	5	2	6	6	6	5.3
Q2: (interest)	6	5	6	3	5	6	4	5
Q3: (endeavors)	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	5.3
Autonomy (express voice/opinion, make choices and personal responsibility.)								
Q4: (per. voice)	7	6	6	6	5	6	5	5.8
Q5: (responsibility)	7	6	7	6	4	7	7	6.2
Q6: (proj. choice)	7	7	6	2	4	5	6	5.3
Mastery (learning the skills, overcoming challenges, and perseverance.)								
Q7: (skill dev.)	7	5	6	1	6	5	6	5.1
Q8: (challenge)	7	4	6	7	3	7	2	5.1
Q9: (perseverance)	7	7	6	1	6	7	6	5.7

"The projects were great and really helped me understand graphic design."

"[I am] So much more confident! I feel like I gained so many skills, and that I can take these skills into my future classes and jobs."

Final note on program retention: of the 7 participants, 6 plan on pursuing GD classes; one is graduating.

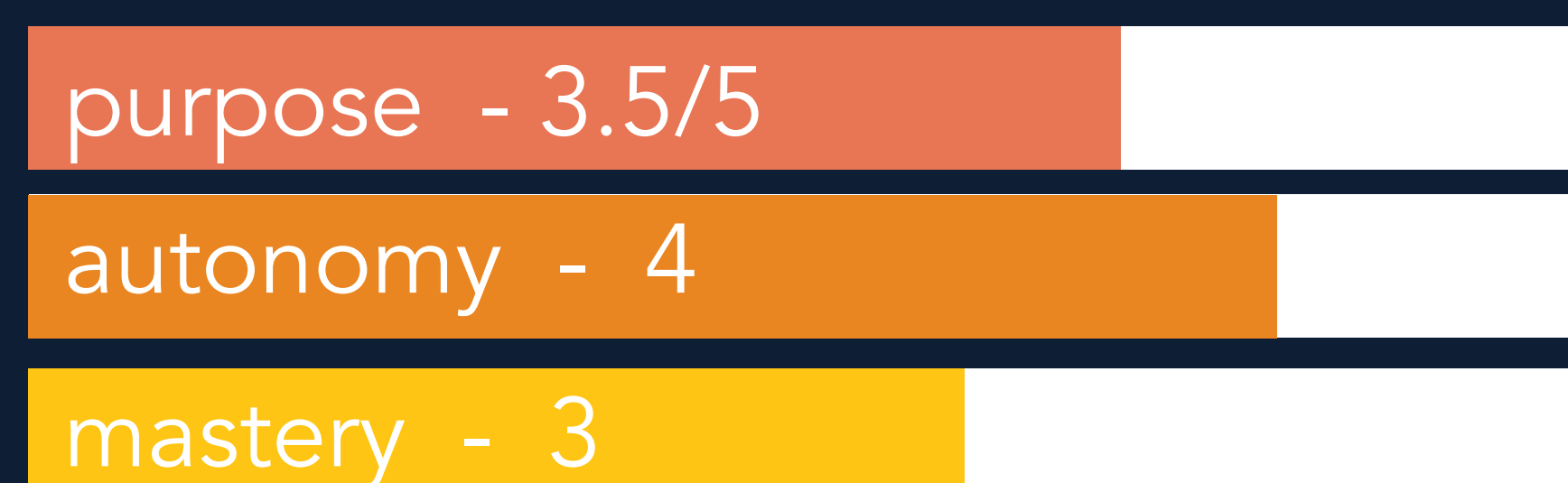
T-shirt Design Project



(n=7, T-shirt design, post-project survey results)



Coffee Cup Design Project



(n=7, average of result of Coffee Cup post-project survey results)



"Coming up with an idea at the beginning was very difficult for me."

"[I wish I would have] Started earlier! I assumed I could do it in a couple of days. Wrong!"

Ask me if project design from an empathetic perspective increased motivation.



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