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Authorities/Knowledge/Beliefs/Outcomes:
'Governing' in the Profession of Graphic Design in the US

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Abstract

This exploratory research examines an under-evaluated aspect of graphic design in the United States: the nature of the profession. Discourse analysis that applies the theory of governmentality is used to assess previously collected, open-ended interviews with graphic designers, as well as other source material. Based on the late work of Michel Foucault, governmentality considers how authorities govern through the creation and dissemination of knowledge, which works through individuals' desires and beliefs and leads to unpredictable outcomes. In this research, two 'authorities' within the graphic design profession are identified and considered – design competitions and graphic design higher education. Both authorities are loose and heterogeneous, spread across many organizations, locations, and individuals. These authorities govern through the creation and production of knowledge about what graphic design is and how to practice it. Governing is evidenced in documents, on Web sites, in education accreditation materials, and via practitioners' and educators' discourse. Governing works through practitioners', educators', and students' desires to have their work validated by their peers, instructors, critics, judges, and the profession. The outcomes of this governing are varied. Practitioners accepted the awards, found external venues for validation, and questioned the structure and nature of the competitions. Educators questioned the composition and premise of graphic design education and shared knowledge about classroom policies. Practitioners questioned the definition of graphic design and its practice learned during schooling. Thus, the theory of governmentality is a tool for illuminating how the graphic design profession in the US governs. This exploratory analysis opens up new questions for graphic design research, education, and practice.

Keywords

Graphic Design, Governmentality, Governing, Profession, Design Competitions,

Education

The profession of graphic design is young. With roots in early twentieth century printing, typesetting, and advertising; graphic design in the United States emerged as a professional activity in the twentieth century (Meggs & Purvis, 2005; Thomson, 1997). Yet with less than a century as a cohesive discipline, discourse about graphic design in the early twenty-first century is plentiful. As

dialogue thrives in blogs, trade magazines, and academic journals; rigorous scholarly[1] analysis of the graphic design profession that is not focused on artefacts and the practice of design is limited. While some academics have engaged this topic as a research focus (e.g. Bukoski, 2006; Soar, 2002), enquiries into the profession are largely absent from design research. This preliminary exploratory paper is a step toward filling this gap and developing new understandings of the graphic design profession.

Using the theory of governmentality, this study explores 'governing' within the graphic design profession. This theory is frequently applied to the evaluation of governments, such as Titchkosky's (2003) analysis of Canadian governmental documents about how people with disabilities are defined. In contrast, research such as Cheong and Miller's (2000) analysis of the discipline of tourism and Hull's (2000) evaluation of the popular American cartoon *The Simpsons* use Foucauldian theory to critique modern power. In this paper Foucauldian theory is applied in a similar vein – as a lens through which to consider and evaluate the contemporary profession of graphics design.[2] It is the goal of this research to begin illuminating the inner dynamics of the graphic design profession to open up new areas for design research. To this end, nine open-ended ethnographic interviews[3] with graphic design practitioners in the United States previously collected for the author's dissertation (Bukoski, 2006) and source material gathered from mailing lists, Web sites, and other resources are evaluated using discourse analysis and the theory of governmentality to consider how 'authorities' within graphic design 'govern' the profession.

Governmentality and Governing: Working Definitions

Derived from the late work of Michel Foucault, the concept of governmentality has emerged as a tool for understanding how institutions govern (e.g. Dean 1999; Mitchell, 2002). Foucault (1982; Gordon, 1991) defines governing as the 'conduct of conduct.' Dean goes further, defining governing as any more or less rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge that seek to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable outcomes (Dean, 1999, p. 11). Dean (1999) defines 'rational' activity as attempts to bring about any forms of thinking that seek to be clear. According to Foucault (1982), and in keeping with Dean, there are multiple rationalities; one rational activity does not preclude nor limit other rational activities. Thus, governing "involves some sort of attempt to deliberate on and to direct human conduct" that can be guided toward specific purposes (Dean, 1999, p. 11).

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[1] A distinction is made here between work published in peer-reviewed academic journals and that published in graphic design's many professional trade publications.
[2] This research assumes that graphic design is a profession.
[3] The interviews were conducted with graphic design professionals at various levels within the profession – from well-known figures with national reputations to relatively unknown designers – residing on the East Coast or in the Midwest of the United States.

Within the framework of this theory, governing is not the enforcement of one's will over another's, nor the subversive use of knowledge to enact a hidden agenda. Rather, in the Foucauldian sense 'governing' is the production and dissemination of knowledge by an authority. The purpose of governing is not to dominate, but rather to influence actions. Within the context of this research, an 'authority' is a loosely-defined group of ideas, individuals, documents, et cetera, that undertakes governing.[4] Governing therefore is not limited to commonly defined authorities, such as legislatures, but occurs as knowledge is produced and disseminated with the intention of shaping outcomes for specific but shifting ends.

For example, governing can occur through magazines, books, and television programming about what it means and how to parent a child; through popular women's magazines that define beauty and how to be beautiful; and even through design competitions and graphic design higher education that define graphic design and how to practice it. Governing works through the desires, aspirations and beliefs of those governed: the desire to be a 'good' parent; the aspiration to be perceived as beautiful; the desire to be a successful designer.

Those that are governed are not powerless; however, they are empowered agents that are loci of freedom (Dean, 1999). Those that are governed are engaged in relations in which "power and knowledge are *bound together* in a relationship in which one is interwoven with the other in a never-ending cycle" (Bukoski, 2006, p.159). These relations are the product of governing, in which actions, not people, are acted upon. Thus, those involved in governing are agents of knowledge production; they may produce knowledge counter to the governing knowledge, accept the knowledge produced via governing, or even ignore governing. Governing is not top-down, nor bottom-up, but a multi-nodal network of relations in which authorities produce and disseminate knowledge to direct conduct. While the purpose of governing may be fairly specific, the outcomes of governing are scattered. This does not make governing any less calculated or rational. Indeed, consequences, effects, and outcomes must be examined both holistically and individually to develop a sense of governing at work in the graphic design profession.

Methods Overview

Proceeding from this definition, this preliminary exploratory investigation is concerned with authorities that govern via the production of knowledge that shapes the conduct of those involved in the graphic design profession – designers, students, educators, critics, writers, and more – by working through desires, aspirations, interests, and beliefs for specific ends. This investigation is delimited to the analysis of two preliminarily defined 'authorities' in the

[4] In this research the term 'authority' is not used in the colloquial sense (e.g. referring to a governmental agency or corporation).

graphic design profession: design competitions and graphic design higher education.[5]

In keeping with the work of Michel Foucault, this research engages discourse analysis to explore governing in the graphic design profession. Graphic design discourse – interviews with graphic designers and relevant source material – were used as evidence. Previously collected open-ended, ethnographic interviews (Bukoski, 2006)[6] were paired with new source materials to loosely define two authorities within the graphic design profession in the United States as authorities that govern. First, the two authorities – design competitions and graphic design higher education in the US – were defined by evaluating graphic design discourse to identify the knowledge they produce, how they produce it, how it is disseminated, and its potential ends. Then, the data were evaluated to identify the beliefs and aspirations through which the authorities' governing worked, and the outcomes of governing – the participants' reactions to and perceptions of the authorities and any actions (cognitive or physical) made in response. Thus, the governing of these two authorities within the graphic design profession was located.

Design Competitions as an Authority that Governs

Within the profession of graphic design in the United States, various awards are given by trade publications (e.g. *Print*, *How*, *Graphic Design USA*) as well as by organizations, such as the AIGA, the professional association for design. These competitions honour graphic design submitted to the competitions based on evaluations by judges. Competitions can be delimited by region, by the nature of the artefacts judged, or other criteria. The competitions rank and hierarchize graphic design that is juried into the competition(s), those designers that jury the competition(s), those that commissioned the graphic design, the graphic designers honoured in the competition(s), and those that appreciate the work honoured.

Knowledge Production and its Purposes

The AIGA is the most prominent professional organization for graphic design in the United States and administers two annual design competitions, *365* and *50 Books / 50 Covers*. These two competitions are widely considered the premiere awards within the profession in the US and are emphasized in this analysis. As an example of design competitions, the AIGA's competitions *365* and *50 Books / 50 Covers* produce knowledge about what is good graphic design and who makes good graphic design. This authority disseminates knowledge through the AIGA's Web site via an online gallery of past and current winners[7], through exhibitions of the artwork in its New York office (the AIGA National Design Center (AIGA, 2008b)), through a catalogue

[5] There are likely a variety of other governing authorities in the graphic design profession, which may become the subject of future research but are beyond the purview of this study.
[6] For a full discussion of the data collection methods, interview questions, and Institutional Review Board procedures and approval please see Bukoski (2006).
[7] See the AIGA Design Archives at http://designarchives.aiga.org/

documenting the winners of the competitions that is distributed to AIGA members, and through other communications about the competitions.

Competitions govern by selection, ranking, and hierarchizing designs (entries), which in turn produces knowledge about what good graphic design is and who practices it. This authority governs through visual communications produced about the competitions, through the media selected to communicate, and the language used to describe the competitions. The design competitions, as a venue for rewarding design work, their resultant events and ephemera (e.g. award ceremonies), and the communications produced about and for the competitions comprise a symphony of rational activities. This governing is not, however, homogenous, centralized, or unified; it is disparate and heterogeneous, spread across the United States via organizing bodies (e.g. the AIGA or *Print Magazine*), differing between judges and entrants, differing between awards conferred, changing across and through time.

To define the purpose of the design competitions' governing, it is relevant to examine the mission of the over-arching bodies that administer the awards. The AIGA, which administers *365* and *50 Books / 50 Covers*, defines its mission as, "…the place design professionals turn to first to exchange ideas and information, participate in critical analysis and research and advance education and ethical practice. AIGA sets the national agenda for the role of design in its economic, social, political, cultural and creative contexts" (2008a, Para. 1). The AIGA further states the organization's goal is to, "communicat(e) the value of design to audiences outside the profession" (AIGA, 2008a, Para. 6). The AIGA's design competitions, *365* and *50 Books / 50 Covers*, extend the mission of the organization. The call for entries for the *365* competition states, "By means of the competitions, AIGA creates an authoritative chronicle of outstanding design solutions, each demonstrating the process of designing, the role of the designer and the value of design" (AIGA, 2008b, p. 1). The purpose of these design competitions governing are to establish and reinforce the competitions' status as the premiere graphic design competitions and reinforce the value of the activities and products of graphic design.

This purpose is also apparent in the materials produced for *Print Magazine's* Regional Design Annual. A statement about an issue dedicated to the competition says,

> *This issue...is the most comprehensive survey of graphic design in the United States – and one of the biggest issues to hit the graphic design industry each year…We received more than 20,000 individual entries for the 2007 Regional Annual, from almost every state. The process of selection in all regions of the country was as stringent as ever, and, as always, we feel that the work we chose is first-rate, and that it represents the best design, illustrations, and photography being produced throughout the United States. (Print, 2008).*

The language used to describe the competition demonstrates the importance of the competition – a comprehensive survey of graphic design in the United States with over 20,000 entries. Communications produced about the competition demonstrate that the purpose of its governing is to reinforce the competition (and its organizing body) as the (or a) premiere competition, as

well as reinforce the value of graphic design. The authority of design competitions does result in a variety of disparate outcomes that are illustrated through the reactions, opinions, and language of practicing graphic designers from across the spectrum of the profession.

Beliefs and Outcomes

In the nine interviews re-evaluated and analyzed for this study, the graphic designers spoke generally about design competitions, rarely identifying specific competitions. The issue of competitions oftentimes emerged as the interviews focused on how the designers measured the efficacy of their work. Marie,[8] a freelance designer in the Midwest said, "…we got a best of show award from *How* design for this one identity we worked on. Great. That's really validating." Marie clearly viewed this award as a mechanism for reinforcing her hard work as a graphic designer. She was, however, unsure of the value of the award due to the client's financial status. She continued,

> *The luggage company did not do particularly well that year. It's like, well, was our work not that good for them? Was it good for the design community? Did I meet their needs? Did I do a good job for them? Was it just a down year – it was 2000/2001, a down year in the travel industry? Trying to sort that stuff out is really hard because I think everybody in the design world wants to know, did design make a difference?*

In response to winning an award, Marie was uncertain of its validity while also valuing how it reinforced and defined her work as an example of good graphic design. The governing of the design competition produced the predictable outcome of acceptance of the award and the status conferred to Marie and her work. It also produced the unpredictable result of Marie's questioning the value of the award as a mechanism for defining good graphic design. The authority's governing influenced Marie's conduct, which resulted in a conflicting outcome. Marie's actions, as an autonomous individual, were in response to the governing of the authority, and worked through her aspiration to succeed as a "good" graphic designer by being validated as such.

Simon, owner of a small design firm in the Midwest, had a similarly conflicted perspective on design competitions. He said,

> *…you know I've been in those magazines. One of the things that I did in the early part of my career was, I was always submitting stuff to the magazines and hoping of getting things in. You know you'd spend, three, four, five, six hundred bucks pulling entries together to get in to shows and then you never got to explain the story behind it.*

Simon critiqued the design competitions in response to governing. He questioned the method of knowledge production; knowledge produced about what good graphic design is that is not focused on the design process

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[8] The names of the participants have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

was not valuable to Simon. His statements demonstrate that he valued the process of design as much as the artefacts of design.

Simon also critiqued the design competitions' emphasis on beauty and aesthetics over function. He cited evidence of this, a beautifully designed brochure for a Boy Scout council that was expensive to print and an unusual size but won a prestigious graphic design award. He said, "…most graphic designers, and most people frankly, (think) this is cool, all this great stuff about what it means to grow up. And it's provocative and it's beautiful, and yet you can't put it in an envelope and mail it to someone. That's a problem." Thus, while the brochure was beautiful, it could not easily be delivered to its audience, which Simon identified as a fatal flaw in the design. This criterion – how well the artefact's design met the needs of the client – was not evaluated in the design competition. Simon summed up his critique of this system as emphasizing aesthetics over process and function when he said, "The design magazines tend to focus more on the frosting and less on the cake."

In response to the position he formed about design competitions, Simon found an alternate form of validation for his work. While speaking about a calendar his firm produced for the local Boy Scout Council he said, "…this one won the best of show national award by the Boy Scouts – National Boy Scouts." Simon's unpredictable response to the design competitions' governing was to find external validation, an award administered by another organization. Simon also identified returning clients as a method of validation, "Another way that we know we've done a good job is repeat work. We get people coming back year after year." Simon defined good graphic design work as work done for clients that return to seek additional design services. The outcomes of design competitions' governing include Simon's creation of knowledge about what constitutes good graphic design: repeat clients, design that meets the needs of the client, design that is validated through other organizations outside the profession, and design that uses the design process successfully.

Frank, a senior-level designer in the Midwest, was also unsure about the validity of awards, but acknowledged their prominence in the profession, "It's a pat on the back, your peers saying they like what you've done. It's always a tip of the hat. Can't hurt, but I've had enough of it in the early years that it doesn't really mean that much." Frank's comment illustrates the desires and beliefs that design competitions work through – graphic designers' desires to be validated and reaffirmed for their work. This comment also indicates that at one point in his career Frank valued highly the accolades administered through design competitions, but that now he seeks other forms of validation.

Frank also critiqued design competitions. When asked about how he evaluates his work, Frank said, "You can also look at the awards, and that's a little bit lop-sided, too. They (the judges) can only look at something for two seconds and make a judgment." Similar to Simon's critique, Frank cited the nature of the competition as essentially problematic in accepting the outcome of the contest. Frank dissected the governing that occurs through design competitions and came to the conclusion that he would acknowledge but not accept this knowledge. Frank's reactions and responses demonstrate that design competitions' governing works through designers' desires to have their work acknowledged and validated.

When asked to further discuss evaluating his work Frank said, "It's not the awards, it's not the money, it's not the fame. It's basically feeling good about yourself and the work you do, and having happy clients, or whoever's buying it. Or if you're doing a book, magazine…happy consumers." Once a designer has been validated through the design competition – subject to governing – a potential reaction is to seek validation in other areas of their work and from other systems. Frank, like Simon, created new knowledge about what it means to be a successful graphic designer – meeting the needs of the client and the consumers.

Frank, Simon, and Marie sought alternate venues for validation and affirmation, defining and creating knowledge about what it means to practice and create good graphic design in response to the governing of design competitions. As evidenced in interviews with Marie, Simon, and Frank, awards are an authority that works through graphic designers' beliefs about what constitutes 'good' graphic design and designers' desires to be recognized and validated. Winning an award reinforces the skill or aptitude of the designer or design firm. Governing works through designers' desires to be successful, their desires to be recognized by their peers, their desires to be publicly recognized for their work, their beliefs in the overarching bodies as authorities on what constitutes good graphic design, their beliefs in the awards as a mechanism for validation and recognition, and their beliefs in the value of knowledge produced via the awards about what constitutes good graphic design.

Graphic Design Higher Education as an Authority that Governs

The second authority, graphic design higher education in the United States, is spread across many organizations. It governs through networks of groups, individuals, ideas, and knowledge spread geographically across the United States – accreditation organizations, colleges, universities, educators, students, practitioners, even the AIGA. To locate this authority, this research begins with the accreditation body that confers credentials upon US colleges, universities, and programs that teach graphic design, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

Knowledge Production and its Purposes

According to its Web site (2003), "(NASAD) is the national accrediting agency for art and design and art and design-related disciplines. The Association also provides information to the public. It produces statistical research, provides professional development for leaders of art and design schools, and engages in policy analysis." This organization creates information through the production of statistical data; it disseminates information to the public about art and design higher education; and it works with governmental organizations to examine, advocate, change, and create policy related to art and design higher education. NASAD governs through the production of knowledge about what types of learning, course work, materials knowledge, and content are appropriate for entry to the profession; it governs through the production of criteria for accreditation.

The authority of graphic design higher education stems from NASAD, linking to institutions of higher learning, to administrators at colleges, schools, and programs, to educators, to students, and to professionals. Graphic design higher education governs through the ways graphic design is taught, the rubrics and standards used to evaluate student work, the ways in which the graphic design profession and the practice of graphic design are defined and discussed. It works through the standards used to admit students into graphic design programs.

Upon examination of the language used by NASAD, the AIGA, and some design educators, the purpose of graphic design higher education governing becomes clearer. A brochure jointly produced by the AIGA and NASAD (n.d.) describes the various types of degree programs about or related to graphic design. The document states, "While no single curriculum structure is preferred by the graphic design profession, there is a minimum threshold of competency for practice that generally can be acquired only within a four-year undergraduate professional degree program that provides a comprehensive education in the discipline" (AIGA & NASAD, n.d., p. 2). This document illustrates that there are perceived minimum standards for practice that accreditation standards – graphic design higher education – seek to identify, uphold, and maintain.

To further illustrate this purpose, in a discussion thread about late assignments on the Yahoo group for AIGA design educators[9], a list member asked how other educators deal with late assignments (Brenner-Shaevitz, 2007). The responses to this question reveal why the educators create and administer particular policies – the purpose of graphic design higher education governing. One educator said,

> *I can assure you, I ACCEPT NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS! Hard-nosed? Why? Because Graphic Design is a deadline-driven profession. Blow off a deadline and it costs your client money, your reputation suffers and the design industry takes a stability hit. It's just good practice to start in school with meeting deadlines or suffering consequences that are far less painful then "real world" penalties. (Betts, 2007)*

Another member of the mailing list said,

> *My students who after graduation have a chance to live in the real world of design, often email me with the comment, "thanks for giving me a taste of what it's really like out here, before I got out here." And I sleep at night better knowing the kids know what to expect, that way the client isn't let down and the student shines. (Hively, 2007)*

Taken together, the purpose of higher education governing is to develop future design professionals that meet the perceived standards of practice. Betts' (2007) and Hively's (2007) comments specifically identify the purpose of maintaining, and perhaps establishing, the reputation of the design industry. Betts overtly identifies this goal, while Hively comments about not disappointing clients and preparing students to succeed. The brochure

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[9] See http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aiga-education/

produced by the AIGA and NASAD also reveals this purpose to graphic design higher education governing.

Beliefs and Outcomes

To further analyze graphic design higher education governing, comments made by the nine graphic designers interviewed by the author and comments made by graphic design educators on a Yahoo group for design educators mailing list are evaluated.

A prominent theme that emerged in the interviews was the difference between how graphic design is defined through the evaluation of student work during schooling versus the perceived reality of practicing graphic design. Max articulated this issue when he said, "When you're in design school, sort of the unspoken premise of all the work you're doing is that you're creating heroic individual artefacts." He continued, "…You graduate and go out into the world and you find that the world sort of doesn't really want that… But then you realize that, like, the world actually doesn't run on this endless, non-stop, diet of originality and endless kind of differentiation for its own sake." Graphic design higher education governs through the knowledge it produces about what constitutes good graphic design. By Max's definition, this governing produces knowledge through grading and critiques that reward graphic design that is "heroic." This governing produces knowledge about how to practice graphic design and what constitutes good graphic design; a graphic designer should always strive to produce work that is originality and innovative in its form and function as well as creative in its concept.

Graphic design higher education governing works through students' desires to succeed in school by achieving high grades, to receive accolades and recognition for their work from peers and instructors, and to produce work that will lead to employment when they graduate. This governing also works through educators' desires to teach students that produce excellent work that will be recognized and praised by fellow educators, accrediting bodies, and the profession.

An unintended consequence of this governing is that educators and graduates of design programs question the criteria used to evaluate student work and define graphic design. The graphic designers interviewed for the study identified the belief that graphic design must all be 'heroic' and that graphic design practice is primarily about the creation of these types of artefacts as a misconception among young designers. Indeed much graphic design does not fall into this broad category.

Comments made by educators on the Yahoo design educators mailing list further illustrate an unintended outcome of higher education governing. The list members questioned their roles as educators in a discussion thread about policies for late assignments (Brenner-Shaevitz, 2007). The conversation that ensued included 28 messages from list members discussing policies, practices, and procedures for late work. The discussion shifted noticeably with a message that questioned the thread and its focus. Davis (2007) said,

> *I've watched with interest the back and forth on the issue of late student work. Quite honestly, I'm astounded that this topic has generated so*

much commentary as it is only one of many classroom management issues that faculty deal with and wouldn't be high on my own list of national problems… (Para. 1)

What I think is below the water level of this iceberg, however, is the larger issue of the culture we establish in design schools. Design faculty point with great pride to the long hours and last minute rushes of adrenalin that characterize student performance in design… (Para. 2)

The expectations that we put on students carry over into the workplace and before long many designers burn out by promising unrealistic turnaround on projects, working young designers at levels that don't accommodate a balanced life, and closing down any time for reflection on the work they're doing and on the world around them... (Para. 3)

Davis' comments continued, focusing on exploring how policies about late work and expectations for work that lead to late-nights and long hours might be relevant to doctors or plumbers, but not graphic designers. This discussion is evidence of governing that happens in graphic design higher education among educators. The educators that responded to Brenner-Shaevitz's original post created and shaped knowledge about how to teach graphic design – they were involved in governing. The conversation was relatively homogenous, even if comments and ideas were not identical.

Both the long conversation about 'Late Assignments' and Davis' response ('Symptoms') are examples of governing. Those that posted to either thread were engaged with the creation and production of knowledge about graphic design education. The unexpected consequence of this governing was a shift in the focus from policy making, to questioning the premise of policies. While Davis' post essentially halted the thread, it raised concerns about how graphic design educators define graphic design and what it means to practice graphic design. Those list members involved in the discussion perhaps participated out of their desires to share their experiences publicly, to assist other educators, to engage in dialog about graphic design education, and their desires to have their experiences and beliefs reinforced via other members' posts.

Governing in graphic design higher education is, perhaps, more dispersed than design competitions' governing. Graphic design higher education governing works through educators' and students' desires to have their work valued and validated; it works through their desires to find and maintain employment. The varied forms and techniques of knowledge preliminarily identified here – definitions of graphic design, how to practice graphic design, and how to teach graphic design – work through similar beliefs, aspirations, and values.

Concluding Thoughts

Design competitions and graphic design higher education are authorities that govern within the profession in the US. Both authorities are heterogeneous, spread across individuals, groups, and geography, but are nonetheless intricately engaged in governing through the creation and production of knowledge about graphic design. Design competitions govern by producing and disseminating knowledge about 'what graphic design is' via calls for

entries, judging of graphic design artefacts, and the publication and exhibition of 'award winning' graphic design. The purposes of this governing are to establish and reinforce the competitions' status as the best graphic design competitions and reinforce the value of the activities and products of graphic design. Practicing designers question the knowledge produced by design competitions; they seek other forms of validation via repeat work from clients and awards from outside the profession.

Graphic design higher education governs through the creation and dissemination of knowledge about what graphic design is and how to prepare for practice through the creation of accreditation standards, curricula, grading rubrics, and classroom management policies. The purposes of this governing are to create, reinforce, and uphold standards of graphic design practice – to reinforce the stature of the profession. Graphic designers, students, and educators are governed by this authority, which works through their desires and beliefs. As students mature they question and redefine what graphic design is and how it is practiced. Educators respond by both reinforcing and questioning the policies used to evaluate students, and the resultant definitions of graphic design and its practice.

These preliminary findings demonstrate that the Foucauldian theory of governmentality can be applied to less formalized notions of governing, such as that which occurs in the profession of graphic design. This exploratory research is a step toward broadening understandings about the profession of graphic design and offers new questions that must be further explored and validated. For example, what other authorities govern in the graphic design profession in the US? Are the authorities identified herein defined in their entirety? What other individuals, groups, documents, artefacts, and ideas are involved in governing? The next step for this research is to collect data from the AIGA, NASAD, educators, students, and practitioners to validate these preliminary findings, delving deeper by detailing and defining authorities in the graphic design profession, the knowledge they produce and disseminate, their purposes, the desires they work through, and the outcomes of governing.

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