

# Creating and Sustaining an All-Collaborative Practice

A Design Experience

Tracey, M. W. & Baaki, J.

Instructional Design

*Design is a social process where designers must interact with and consider other's ideas, skills, experiences, and opinions. We reflect on the collaborative efforts in two client design projects: the first lacking a designer-client collaborative relationship, resulting in a failed design, and the second, creating and sustaining an all-collaborative practice, resulting in a successful design. We realized the success of the second project was driven by a design environment that included an all-collaborative practice. We describe the evolution of our all-collaborative practice and how we now create and sustain the practice throughout the life of a design project.*

## Introduction

Design is a social process (Dorst, 2003) where designers must interact with and consider other's ideas, skills, experiences, and opinions to truly collaborate. Reflecting on two recent design projects, what emerged was an all-collaborative practice which drives exciting, stimulating and practical design experiences.

In March of 2022, we were hired as design consultants to redesign a state's child welfare specialists Pre-Service Institute (PSI) in the United States. Our role was to conduct a needs assessment and analysis, facilitate focus groups with current child welfare specialists and supervisors, provide an overall design concept, and develop design plans for segments of the PSI. Not only was the scope of the project a challenge, our designer-client relationship was fraught from the beginning. We did not experience an emerging designer-client collaborative relationship, which ultimately resulted in a design that did not meet the intended goals (see Baaki & Tracey, under review for specific details). Reflecting on this experience, we realized how important it is to sustain a deep all-collaborative practice with the client group.

In June 2023, we began design work with the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania (USA) to revive the dormant Lenape language. Sustaining an all-collaborative practice, we successfully designed seven learning experiences ranging from vocabulary with context, to conversation with prayers, and stories to story learning. From beginning to end, the designer-client relationship was significantly different than the PSI designer-client relationship. Reflecting on both projects, we realized the success of the Lenape project was driven by a design environment that included an all-collaborative practice. Taking a conceptual approach, we describe the evolution of our all-collaborative practice and how we created and sustained the practice throughout the life of a design project.

## Background

### Client Group

We define a client group as a singular form used to represent all clients involved in one project (Siva & London, 2011 as cited in Baaki & Tracey, under review). The client group may include more than one person, all of whom interact with the design team through one designer-client group relationship. At certain moments during a design process, one, some, or all individuals of the client group may interact with the design team. Even though a client group tends to imply persons who act as a single entity, individuals in a client group may have conflicting values, interests, and time perspectives (Bertelsen & Emmitt, 2005; Siva & London, 2011).

During the PSI project, our client group consisted of a steering committee, executive working group, project manager team, workshop group, subject matter experts, and current specialists. Our client group for the Lenape Project consisted of representative members of the Lenape Nation, an anthropology associate professor, a linguistics associate professor, and a school district coordinator of teaching and learning. What was common between the PSI client group and the Lenape client group was that all members within the groups interacted with us in one designer-client relationship (Siva & London, 2011). In sum, our client group was not defined by the number of client members, but the designer-client relationship with the client members.

### Design Teams

A design team can be made up of one designer or a group of designers who play different roles, using different tools and methods to achieve a final design. The number of designers on a design team can vary from one to several, with work distributed accordingly, from a senior or lead designer, who may design while managing the project, to an instructional designer or technologist assigned specific tasks. Team members will vary depending on the audience, the type of technology used for delivery and the scope of the project (Baaki & Tracey, under review). For our design projects, we were the lead designers, and we worked with instructional design graduate students who worked in design teams of three to four.

Design teams can include clients, including the person who hired the instructional designers, other stakeholders, and the audience. Traditionally, identifying one or more subject-matter experts (SMEs) who provide the necessary content for the team to design and develop the instructional intervention are also needed. Ideally, the SMEs are ongoing members of the design team. Throughout the PSI design project, we worked with child welfare trainers, experienced specialists and child welfare supervisors, medical doctors, and legal experts. The PSI audience included child welfare specialists, child welfare supervisors, and child welfare specialist trainers. Throughout the Lenape project we worked with a Lenape Clan Mother and Chief, a linguist, an anthropologist, and a member of the local school district. The audience were those in the Lenape nation, and those who are interested in learning the Lenape language including school children, neighbors, scholars and others we termed 'friends of the Lenape'.

Instructional designers may also serve as project managers, interfacing with the client and team members to make sure information is communicated and the project is continuing to move forward. We served as project managers in both design projects. Other members of the design team may include an editor, graphic designer, media specialist, and developer, who all work on the product development. In both cases, our instructional design graduate student design teams served in these roles.

## The Design Studio

For both projects, instead of a graduate classroom, we invited instructional design graduate students to a design studio environment. Not a physical studio, our design studio met weekly, as a synchronous space, via Zoom. The focus of our design studio was to have student design teams work collaboratively to design the instructional experiences for the PSI and Lenape projects. Each week, we provided opportunities for our designers to participate in design jams where they envisaged one or more aspects of the design challenge. The design jams provided the environment for the designers to make complex judgments while creating design solutions. Through the design studio, our designers learned about design while engaging in design. The studio experience, specifically the design jams and critiques, enabled our design students to shift their design knowledge from theory to practice. For the PSI project, we found success with the studio environment and continued working in the studio when our designers took on the Lenape language design project one year later.

## Moment of Use Approach for Design

The moment of use (MOU) approach for design emphasizes specific moments where context is scaled back to what is needed in a situation or moment (Baaki & Tracey, 2019, Baaki, et al., 2022, Tracey & Baaki, 2023). When designing for a MOU approach, designers design for a specific moment which provides the audience (e.g., learners) what they need, to do what they need to do, when they need to do it.

A MOU example for the PSI project is when a child welfare specialist walks into a foster care home to visit a child client. What do they need to successfully complete this client visit? One side of a MOU approach emphasizes a personal side of context (Meloncon, 2017) where a designer reflects on their context and the context of the audience (Baaki & Tracey 2019; Baaki et al., 2022; Tracey & Baaki, 2023). In the home visit example, designers design to support the child welfare specialist's empathy, understanding, and communication skills and reflect on how these will impact the visit. The designers must ensure the child welfare specialist understands the circumstances of the client and the foster care home environment and how it impacts the child. The other side of a MOU emphasizes action where designers act by designing with introspection, interaction, and intention (Herman et al., 2022). When designing a learning experience for the child welfare specialist, designers must reflect on what the specialist needs in terms of emotional and physical requirements to successfully complete this visit. Using this information, designers design a learning experience teaching specialists how to reflect on their thoughts and judgments, how to interact with the foster family and the child client, and how to gather the information needed from the visit. This involves designers designing beyond the child welfare specialist's required data gathering procedures, and forces designers to paint a complete picture of the specific foster care home, the child client, their current well-being, and their needs in an effort for a meaningful specialist visit. The MOU, therefore, is focused on the specialist, and the moments when the specialist enters a home, and needs to apply everything they have learned to perform their job.

A design studio environment breathes life and energy into a MOU approach for design. In a design jam and critique, designers ideate the MOU and explore possible design options. During a design critique, designers present prototypes to fellow designers and the client group who both provide feedback which moves the design forward to new possibility spaces.

## The Evolution of All-Collaborative Practice Design

Clients participating in the design process is not a new practice, but one which has been evolving over the last 50 years. Although there are numerous approaches to client participation, we highlight two approaches we have implemented which support the all-collaborative practice we use today. We begin with participatory design, followed by empathic design, and illustrate how they influenced the evolution of our all-collaborative practice design.

### Participatory Design

Participatory design is an approach in information systems with its roots in Scandinavia in the 1970s and 1980s. It includes the elements of cooperation, curiosity, creativity, empowerment and reflexivity (Steen, 2013). Considered a user-centered design approach, clients are actively involved in a design process which addresses their specific needs. There are weak participatory design approaches, where design decision making is mainly undertaken by the designers themselves, even though client inputs are solicited, and strong participatory design where clients' full participation is utilized throughout the entire design process (Baek, et. al, 2008). In participatory design, designers are required to take clients' work practices and needs seriously. Participating clients must have access to relevant information and have some way of participating in the process of decision making (Baek, et. al, 2008).

### Empathic Design

Empathic design is a process that calls on designers' observational skills to learn about their audience and their context with the goal of understanding their experience. Every design decision is made with the audience in the forefront throughout the entire design process. One of the design teams working on the Lenape project was charged with designing a learning experience to teach language for Lenape spirituality and prayers. When trying to collect Lenape prayers, the team learned that Lenape prayers are personal to each individual and often not written down. Rather than try to teach existing prayers, it was therefore important to create a learning experience where the learner could create their own individual prayers. Keeping the learner in the forefront through the design altered the design.

Designers attempt to reflect, interact, and act on their audience's behavior during design. Kouprie & Visser (2009) established four phases in empathic design: 1) discovery: entering the audience's world, 2) immersion: wandering around in the audience's world taking the audience's point of reference, 3) connection: resonating with the audience, achieving emotional resonance and finding meaning, and 4) detachment: leaving the audience's world. Empathic design does not replace instructional design; rather it enhances it as it seeks to get closer to the lives and experiences of the audience (Baaki & Tracey, 2019). Embracing empathic design allows a designer to develop products which are both innovative and responsive to the actual audience's needs and desires (Battarbee et al., 2015). The goal as a designer is to engage in empathy and empathic design to create a meaningful design, resulting in a deliverable which answers the audiences' needs.

### All-Collaborative Practice Design

Incorporating participatory and empathic design when working with clients has been a strategy of ours for years (Baaki et. al, 2022; Baaki et. al, 2023; Tracey & Baaki, 2023; Tracey & Unger, 2011). While researching the integration of empathic design in our design practice, we realized our designers showed great empathy toward their audience, their fellow designers, and themselves, but that empathy did not necessarily result in meaningful, innovative designs (Tracey & Baaki, 2023). Although we

engaged in participatory and empathic design, something was missing in our design efforts. Even though we filled this gap through a design studio environment with our design teams, when working with clients, a gap still existed. We therefore broadened our reflective lens by analyzing our designer-client experience.

Regarding the PSI and Lenape design projects, we documented our experience working with these two client groups in weekly reflective journals shared only with each other, had weekly debrief meetings, and kept written notes on our efforts. We analyzed the differences in each designer-client experience and what we did and did not do to improve our designer-client collaborative practice. We concluded the MOU approach we use with our design teams can and should be used to create an all-collaborative practice with our clients.

## The All-Collaborative Practice Design Experience

The all-collaborative practice emerged from reflecting on successful and, at times, unsuccessful design efforts with clients. In conducting project debriefs, we question our process, and honestly documented what went right, what went wrong, and why. The results of these efforts have culminated in the all-collaborative practice, which we document here, beginning with the project, the team, and our approach.

### The Project

The people of the Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania are the indigenous people of the land now called Pennsylvania. The Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania is active in the revival of tradition and community, encouraging partnerships among people and organizations to foster cultural, historical, and environmental education and preservation. For decades, the Lenape have been teaching in Pennsylvania public and private school systems and continue to offer a unique and insightful view on the culture and history of Pennsylvania to all age groups and audiences (Lenape Nation, 2024).

The Lenape language is dormant and part of the effort to revive the Lenape tradition and community is to revive the understanding and use of the language. During our initial client meeting, the group identified three overarching goals: (a) use of the language [The Lenape are a dispersed people where it is hard to get the people together to keep the language in use], (b) preservation of the language [A portal to the accurate history of a people], and (c) revival of the language [Come up with words that enable speakers to communicate in today's society].

### The Team

There were multiple smaller teams within the umbrella 'team' on this project. Team members also played multiple roles. Although we identify the multiple teams, there are overlapping members and activities. Each served in several roles including subject matter expert, educator, evaluator and designer.

*Working Team.* The working team met monthly and included a Lenape Chief and Clan Mother. Other members of the Lenape Nation were called on when needed and served as subject matter experts and content providers. Additional members of the working team were an associate professor of anthropology, an associate professor of linguistics, and a school district coordinator of teaching and learning. We served as design consultants with an additional doctoral student providing design support. This working team also functioned as the project management team, keeping the project moving forward.

*Design Consultant Team.* We were the design consultants, introducing and guiding the teams in the all-collaborative practice. As experts in design, the MOU approach, along with facilitating the design studio, we navigated the design project and served as the bridge between the client group and the instructional design teams.

*Instructional Design Teams.* There were six design teams with each team having two to three designers. Designers were graduate instructional design students working towards doctorate or master's degrees. All teams met once a week in a design studio and then each team met separately in their own design studio environments. Design teams interacted with the Lenape Chief and Clan Mother during design studio jams and critiques as well as outside of the weekly design studio.

## Our Approach

Our research on design teams indicates there are four critical design elements which work together to ensure a design team is not only functioning, but creating meaningful, effective learning experiences; 1) empathy, 2) creativity, 3) collaboration, and 4) recognizing and living in (embracing) uncertainty. We created a designer-client working environment incorporating opportunities where these elements could thrive as we moved forward with the design project. Below, we define each design element and in the following section provide specific actions and examples that showed an emerging all-collaborative practice.

*Empathy with the Working Team.* For the purposes of this project and this manuscript, we define empathy as the ability to 'be' as the other, while remaining your whole self, or the ability to stand in someone else's shadow while standing in your own (Tracey & Baaki, 2023). When designers are empathic, designers open themselves in a responsive way to the feelings and the experience of the audience. When we employ empathic design, we call on our observational skills to learn about our audience and their context as part of the design process with the goal of understanding their moment of use (MOU) or what they need in the moment to do what they need to do. We had previously used the MOU approach for design with our design teams to help them understand their audience but had not used it with a client team. For the Lenape project, we decided to take a deep dive to learn about our working team members by helping them identify their MOU on this project. When involving people in design, Brown (2009) contends that everyone's journey will be unique and it is more effective to engage individuals as, "active participants in their own story," (p. 136.) Brown concludes involving people in design means thinking of them as living and growing people who can write their own stories. To do this effectively, we had to engage in profound and ongoing empathy toward the working team members.

In the initial meetings with the Lenape Project working team, we taught the group the MOU approach with the goal of having them articulate and communicate their individual MOU for the project. We transformed our monthly working team meetings into design jam sessions where we encouraged each person on the team to identify and articulate their MOU as it related to the project. For example, Clan Mother is the keeper of the language and as she prepares to retire from that role, she wanted to ensure the Lenape language would continue on a revival road. Clan Mother has many responsibilities, but she had her own story – revive the language. What was critical for the design project was Clan Mother's MOU for the project. We had to have empathy for what the client group members were individually experiencing while also trying to move the team forward. We also realized each member had their own MOU (story) and we had to somehow incorporate these individual MOUs to create one working team goal.

*Collaboration in the Working Team.* Design is fundamentally a collaborative effort; the best design ideas often occur from a collaborative creative process rather than from a single designer (Lawson & Dorst, 2009). Collaboration nurtures relationships, inspires teams, and is a necessary design skill when working with ill-structured problems (Buchanan et al., 2013). It provides an opportunity for designers to work with each other, and with stakeholders and the audience, instead of for them (Brown & Katz, 2011). Collaborative teams, which included the client, found that with the right mix of people, they could address difficult challenges with greater agility and speed up decision-making. This is significant for project momentum and team focus (Steane et al., 2020). As we indicated, we worked with each member of the Lenape team to identify their own MOU, but we realized we needed to incorporate the individual working teams' MOUs to agree on the common goal, a requirement for team collaboration.

*Creativity in the Working Team.* For the purpose of this project and this manuscript, we define creativity as the ability to look at the world in new ways and turn imaginative ideas into reality (Tracey & Baaki, 2023). We engage in creativity when something

new and valuable is produced; it may be a physical product or an original idea. However, if we have ideas and don't act on them, we may be visionaries but not necessarily creators. Creating with the client working team meant putting all the imaginative ideas discussed into action, producing a product resulting from those creative thoughts (Plucker & Makel, 2010).

*Uncertainty in the Working Team.* Uncertainty is the quality or state of being uncertain, having doubt, or not having adequate knowledge about events that are happening or will happen. Most people experience uncertainty negatively, so they are motivated to reduce or eliminate it (Bar-Anan et al., 2009). In design, embracing uncertainty is important since design always involves new and novel challenges. In other words, uncertainty is natural in design. Although it may feel uncomfortable, the joy of designing lies in embracing uncertainty (Cross, 1982) and being comfortable with not knowing as you begin a new design journey. The members of the Lenape client working team, however, were not trained designers and we had to acknowledge their uncertainty in the design journey we were about to embark on. Just as the client working team was uncertain about the MOU approach for design, we were uncertain about the interrelated connection between the Lenape language and culture. We taught our working team how to follow a MOU approach, and the working team taught us about the Lenape language and culture.

## Emergence of an All-Collaborative Practice

Whether we acknowledge it or not, every designer facilitates the designer-client working relationship through their preconceived perceptions, values, and actions. In our design debriefs, we attempt to have honest reflections and discussions while having empathy for our client, the context, and ourselves. Through a deliberate process where nothing is predetermined, we coordinate things which are changing all the time and undergo the emergence of an all-collaborative practice for design.

### Be Deliberate

Designers need to determine when to insert their expertise and when to let the client group take the lead. A mistake that we made during the PSI project was, as the design consultants, we too quickly and clearly ideated the design solution. While we are expert designers, in retrospect, we pushed our design solution on the client group. Even though we maintain our PSI design was the best approach, we didn't take the time needed to listen, teach, and have everyone commit on all levels to the proposed PSI design. We learned the importance of having our clients truly be a part of the all-collaborative practice. In contrast, our Lenape client regularly attended our design team's jams and critiques. In week 20 of the design project, the Spirituality and Prayer Team was presenting their design during a design critique. When finished with their presentation, the Chief asked, "What about if we have them create a prayer?" We stepped back and watched as the Chief was leading the design! The Chief and the team revised the design to include the building of a prayer experience, one of the most successful activities in the finalized design.

A common goal is a key element to collaboration. In fact, collaboration only exists when there is a common goal (Constantino & Cho, 2015). With the Lenape project, through teaching the MOU approach for design and being empathetic in understanding each client group member's MOU, our collaborative goal was refined from our initial client meeting (three goals stated above) during the design studios: to design and develop learning activities and experiences that help Lenape and friends of Lenape use the Lenape language.

Working with the Lenape Nation, we took the time to appreciate how the Lenape culture impacted the design process and explored how the Lenape culture impacted our designer-client relationship. In our reflection journal, the first author wrote:

*I want to explore culture. It isn't limited to this (Lenape) project as I reflect on it, it could be one of the things we missed with our last client (the PSI project). It is easier for us to think about culture with the Lenape client... but as I think about culture, I want to reflect on the PSI project for a few minutes. What was their culture? What did we miss? It is a top-down organization, we missed that in the beginning, and it haunted us throughout the entire project. It was*

*also a culture of “we can’t”. I think we tried to fight this but in retrospect did we need to approach this differently? Their culture was challenging, and maybe we could have addressed it better if we took the time to identify what the elements of it were. What other things about their culture did we miss?*

Working deliberately with the Chief and Clan Mother on the Lenape project, we experienced how the Lenape language and culture are intimately interrelated. The second author noted in a journal reflection: “I am so impressed how [Chief] and [Clan Mother] live the way of the Lenape. Example, [Clan Mother] always respects elders. This is so real in our collaborations.” In working with the Lenape where culture was in the forefront, we concluded we need to do a deep dive into every client’s culture and learn how to design within said culture.

As difficult as it is, we have learned the importance of slowing down the MOU approach for design. With the Lenape client group, we made a conscious decision to be deliberate in our design studio experiences, in our monthly client collaborations, and ultimately in our design decision-making. We believe taking the time up front to learn how the culture and the language were intimately interrelated not only produced exceptional learning experiences but also ensured client group enthusiasm and commitment for the MOU approach. When we reflected on the results of the PSI project and the Lenape project, the failure of the first and the success of the second, we proved how slowing it down allows us to teach while we are designing; to teach our student designers, but also to teach our client.

## Nothing is Predetermined

A benefit of slowing down is the opportunity to be deliberate with client group interactions which are not predetermined. In one of our early client group collaborations, there was a lot of talk around content for the individual learning experiences. When we introduce the MOU approach to our designers, we make a conscious decision not to give our designers content up front. Whatever the design project is, the content doesn’t change; it is what it is. When designers and client groups focus on content, they tend to design strictly to the content. When you hold the content back, designers and client groups are given permission to first focus on the audience’s MOU. Content does not have possibilities. Rather, content is something dropped in once we have explored and heightened all our design possibilities. After the content-focused client group collaboration, the first author texted the second author stating: “Next meeting we will explain how once we get going, content will be de-emphasized for a while.”

Although we had a purpose (be deliberate) for each monthly client group collaboration and each weekly design studio, nothing was predetermined regarding where the purpose would take us. Once the MOU was established – help Lenape and friends of Lenape use the Lenape language– in each design studio and interaction with the client, we took the time to explore what it means to use the Lenape language and then heighten the possibilities of using Lenape. For example, one learning experience was focused on the language of spirituality and prayer. Exploring prayer is critical to the Lenape culture, and prayers are rarely written down. The design team heightened the possibility of using Lenape for prayer by creating an experience where Lenape may create their own prayer of gratitude for loved ones, necessities, nature, health and wellness, and success.

## Coordinate Things that are Changing all the Time

Being deliberate and embracing that nothing is predetermined is best described in how Wynton Marsalis (Marsalis & Ward, 2008) describes jazz swing, “...constant coordination with things that are changing all the time,” (p. 93). In our post PSI project reflection, we realized how important it is to teach the client group the MOU approach for design. In our shared journal, the second author stated: “Our PSI project did not move forward because the client would not embrace a MOU approach [to design training for the child welfare specialists’ MOU].” The first author responded: “Is there something we can do in the beginning to change this? Is there more we have to teach/explain/show in order to get on the same page?” The second author noted: “Tying projects back to the audience is really important.” With the Lenape client working team, we focused on coordinating the MOU approach by realizing each team member had their own MOU. Two members of the team were professors who had different goals than the Chief and the Clan Mother, who is retiring from her duties as the keeper of the

Lenape language. The professors had an interest in research, the Chief is interested in linguistics, while the Clan Mother wanted peace of mind that the Lenape language would thrive.

Where we coordinate things which are changing all the time, is just as important as how we coordinate. We taught the Lenape client group the MOU approach by having them design. For our monthly client working team collaborations, we created a design studio environment where design jams drove the ideas for the learning experiences. Here is where an individual MOU emerged and the MOU – use the Lenape language – emerged to drive the seven learning experiences. During an early project design jam, one Lenape working team member presented their MOU by sharing an article where they reflected on how an anthropologist can contribute to the revitalization of a dormant language. The Lenape Chief and Clan Mother's individual MOU revolved around the relationship between the Lenape culture and the Lenape language. Knowing each team member's MOU aided in our insight into their individual contribution and motivation to succeed in reviving the Lenape language.

Coordinating things which change all the time requires design studio rules. When we were in a design studio environment, we encouraged the client team members to let go, to get out of their heads, and to create. We shared the five design studio rules that we ensure our designers embrace during weekly design studio sessions. First, "yes add". Affirm what a fellow designer establishes and then "add" to it or move it forward to new possibilities. Always, make your fellow designer look good. Listen to your fellow designer. The only way you can "yes add" is when you listen. Show what your design does, not what it is. What will the learning experiences do to help Lenape and friends of Lenape use the Lenape language? Finally, share the context.

In one of our design jam sessions with the client group, we asked, in the summer of 2025 [one year after the roll out of our designed experiences], what does reviving the language look like among the Lenape and friends of the Lenape? Each member of the client working team reflected on this question, then envisioned what it would be like. Their responses included:

*"For friends, more people coming to classes. People advancing from advanced learning experiences to instructors."  
"Inspire more people, especially the youth." "Immerse them in the language." "Hear much more Lenape which radiates through the community." "No expectations of proficiency or fluency." "From youth to elders, I am engaged in Lenape because learning experiences are exciting." "Use the language: need to use prayer terms, address my elders, just ask for food." "Use Lenape culturally, spiritually, and have fun with Lenape."*

In one of our journal reflections, the second author noted:

*"The power of collaboration is real. A design studio that allows vulnerability, 'yes add', listening, sharing what designs do rather than what they are, sharing stories is how collaboration happens. How about [linguist professor] discovering his design MOU? Scope and sequence. Big picture. Where does the language book go, rather than what the language book is. He wondered why he did not think of it earlier. The design studio environment allowed it to happen."*

The second author also noted, "The collaborations are genuine, raw, and people are not afraid to be vulnerable. We have been designing, jamming. Inviting Chief and Clan Mother to clarify, dream, think big while grounded in MOU."

The design studio environment provided a space for us to teach design while immersing our client working team in design. They began to understand the focus on the audience and their MOU, the design process, and how the studio structure and rules supported that process. This gave the client working team permission to contribute meaningful feedback when they later participated in the design studio with the design teams. Chief and Clan Mother were invited to participate in the design studio every time designers participated in design jams and design critiques.

During design critiques, design teams shared a prototype and Chief and Clan Mother, along with fellow design teams, provided ongoing, meaningful critiques, resulting in significant alterations of the design products. After one of the many design critiques, the second author wrote:

*I really appreciate Clan Mother sharing her practical enthusiasm regarding the design ideas. Team Freedom [the name of one of the design teams] which has Conversation [one of the design projects] wants to video Lenape conversing. This is a big request. How can this be managed? Clan Mother noted that there is an event coming up February 2-3 where many elders will be present. Now, the elders need coaching to sharpen their Lenape. This can happen with assistance from Chief and Clan Mother. There is balance in what [we] can and cannot do. Yes add and [being] practical can hold hands. Clan Mother continues with yes add and yet is practical to what can and cannot be done because she knows what can and cannot be done. Respecting this goes a long way in nurturing the client-designer relationship.*

In other words, Clan Mother responded as part of the design team not as the distant client. The second author continued:

*"Another example of wanting to be part of the design team. [The linguist professor] wants to know where he can help. Chief needs him as part of the Language Book and the [professor] adds so much to storytelling as it was his initial ideas with the animated videos that Team Ara is producing. [The professor] is finding his moment of use for the project."*

Letting Chief and Clan Mother in during designer critiques initially caused us and the designers to experience uncertainty. Because of the all-collaborative practice and everything the client working team experienced in their own design jams, they were prepared to be empathic toward the designers and their efforts while providing critical critique to the products. The all-collaborative practice resulted in a successful design experience.

## Ideas for Future Research

Reflecting on our Lenape client and the all-collaborative practice we ask ourselves, "when do people feel comfortable with the MOU approach?" By designing in the all-collaborative practice space, we want to understand what the client easily grasps and what is more difficult for them to grasp. For example, when we tried to design for experiences, our PSI client struggled with the MOU because they took the perspective of "this is what they need to know" versus "this is what they need to do their job". Their focus was on the content, not the MOU for the learner. We know the emphasis on experiences can be difficult because clients get caught up with content. We took this learning and changed how we approached the Lenape client. We focused on the MOU first and often until they understood and began to design with us for the learner's moment of use.

We also realize the importance of having the client comfortable with design jams and design critiques. Is this difficult for them? What elements of the approach are challenging and what can we do to help them understand and use the design jams and critiques to realize their vision? As we look more deeply into the all-collaborative practice, we want to identify what is more challenging in terms of the whole approach, then isolate and track those challenges while creating ways to help clients overcome them.

## Conclusion

The most significant difference between working with the PSI client group and the Lenape client group was the all-collaborative practice. The PSI client valued control over everything else, putting us at opposite sides of the designer-client relationship right from the start. Since the PSI client's sole focus was on content, they were at odds with us as the design consultants. We kept asking, "What do the specialists need to perform their jobs?" The client kept focusing on the information they believed the specialists needed to know, adding content weekly instead of stepping back and asking, "What do they need?" During one of our meetings, the client told us we had to include a one-day training on the software repository system they used. When we asked them why, they said, "This is what they do." They did not see that the case workers actually

managed cases (that is what they do), and the repository system was a tool they used to log the case. Their focus was on the software, not the actual management of a child's case.

In our reflection on the PSI design project, we analyzed what we could change and designed our all-collaborative practice, then implemented it with the Lenape client. The Lenape client valued collaboration, making it easier for us to keep our focus on the MOU. We helped them quickly shift away from the focus on content to "this is what they need to use the Lenape language!" Since the Lenape client and the design teams grasped the MOU for the Lenape learner, the teams were beginning to design experiences where the learner had control and the ability to use the content in ways they wanted to. The Lenape client not only supported the design teams but also designed with the teams.

Cross (2002) contends that clients want designers to transcend the obvious and the mundane and produce design ideas that are exciting and stimulating as well as practical. Cross continues that design is not a search for the optimum solution to the problem. Rather, design is exploratory as the designer interprets a design brief as a starting point of the exploration journey. Designers explore to discover something new rather than provide another example of the familiar. For the client, this can be difficult as they do not know what they do not know. Nurturing the designer-client relationship requires designers to be proactive in guiding the client through creative design ideas. We proved this is possible with our all-collaborative practice for design.

## References

- Baaki, J. & Tracey, M.W. (under review). A narrative on a client group's impact on a Moment of Use approach to design. *International Journal of Change Management*.
- Baaki, J., & Tracey, M. W. (2019). Weaving a localized context of use: What it means for instructional design. *Journal of Applied Instructional Design*, 8(1), 2–13.
- Baaki, J., Tracey, M.W. & Bailey, B. (2023). Exploring the two sides of a moment of use to design. *Tech Trends*, 67, 572-582. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-022-00828-4>
- Baaki, J., Tracey, M. W., Bailey, E., & Shah, S. J. (2022). Graduate instructional design students using empathy as a means to an end. *Journal of Design Research*, 19, 290. <https://doi.org/10.1504/JDR.2021.124217>
- Baek, E.O., Cagiltay, K., Boling, E., & Frick, T. (2008). User-centered design and development. *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology*, 1, 660-668.
- Bar-Anan, Y., Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, D. T. (2009). The feeling of uncertainty intensifies affective reactions. *Emotion*, 9(1), 123–127. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014607>
- Battarbee, K., Suri, J. F., & Howard, S. G. (2015). Empathy on the edge: Scaling and sustaining a human-centred approach to innovation. *Harvard Business Review*.
- Bertelsen, S. & Emmitt, S. (2005). Getting to grips with client complexity. In Emmitt, S. & Prins, M. (Eds.) *CIB W096 Architectural Management Designing Value, New Directions in Architectural Management*, 61-68. Lyngby, Denmark.
- Brown, T. (2009). *Change by design*. Harper Collins.
- Brown, T., & Katz, B. (2011). Change by design. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 28(3), 381–383. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5885.2011.00806.x>

- Buchanan, R., Cross, N., Durling, D., Nelson, H., Owen, C., Valtonen, A., Bowling, E., Gibbons, A., Visscher-Voerman, I., (2013). Design. *Educational Technology* 53(3), 25-41.
- Constantino, B., & Cho, J. Y. (2015). Calibrating collaboration: Strategies for creative output. *The International Journal of Design Management and Professional Practice*, 9(3), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2325-162X/CGP/v09i03/38631>
- Cross, N. (1982). Designerly ways of knowing. *Design Studies*, 3(4), 221–227. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0142-694X\(82\)90040-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0142-694X(82)90040-0)
- Dorst, K. (2003). Exploring the structure of design problems. *International Conference on Engineering Design, ICED 03*, Stockholm, August 19 – 21, 2003.
- Herman, K., Baaki, J., & Tracey, M. W. (2022). "Faced with given circumstances": A localized context of use approach. In B. Hokanson, M. Exter, M. Schmidt, & A. Tawfik (Eds.), *Toward inclusive learning design: Social justice, equity, and community*. Springer.
- Kouprie, M. & Visser, F.S. (2009). A framework for empathy in design: stepping into and out of the user's life. *Journal of Engineering Design*, 20(5), 437-448. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09544820902875033>
- Lawson, K. & Dorst, K. (2009). *Design expertise*. Elsevier.
- Marsalis, W. & Ward, G. C. (2008). *Moving to higher ground: How jazz can change your life*. Random House.
- Lenape Nation of Pennsylvania. (2024, December 18). [lenape-nation.org](https://www.lenape-nation.org/). Retrieved from <https://www.lenape-nation.org/>.
- Meloncon, L. K. (2017). Patient experience design: Expanding usability methodologies for healthcare. *Communication Design Quarterly* 5(2), 20-28. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3131201.3131203>
- Plucker, J. A., & Makel, M. C. (2010). Assessment of creativity. In J. C. Kaufman & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity*, 48–73. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511763205.005>
- Siva, J. & London, K. (2011). Investigating the role of client learning for successful architect client relationship on single dwelling projects. *Architectural Engineering and Design Management*, 7, 199-189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17452007.2011.594570>
- Steane, J., Briggs, J., & Yee, J. (2020). T-shifting identities and practices: Interaction designers in the fourth industrial age. *International Journal of Design*, 14(3), 85–96.
- Steen, M. (2013). Virtues in participatory design: Cooperation, curiosity, creativity, empowerment and reflexivity. *Science Engineering Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-012-9380-9>
- Tracey, M.W. & Baaki, J. (2023). *Cultivating designer professional identity in design: Empathy, creativity, collaboration & seven more cross-disciplinary skills*. NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Tracey, M.W., & Unger, K.L., (2011). A design-based research case study documenting a constructivist ID process and instructional solution for a cross-cultural workforce. *Instructional Science*, 40(3), 461-476.



This work is released under a CC BY license, which means that you are free to do with it as you please as long as you properly attribute it.

