The Impact of Peer Influence on Apparel Design Students in a Studio Format Classes

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Introduction. While one's family impacts them in their formative years, research has shown that adolescents are more likely to be impacted by peers of the same age, including their mental health, behavior, self-esteem, and educational success (Cheng, 2020; Harris, 1998; Hasan & Bagde, 2013; Oranye et al., 2017). This proves even more apparent in college, where students are often removed from their family setting for the first time (Cheng, 2020; Hasan & Bagde, 2013). Despite the research conducted on social network impacts, there is a gap in research regarding the impacts of college students' networks, specifically the impact of peer critiques in an apparel design studio class.

Literature. Studio format classes rely heavily on instructor demonstrations and comprehensive critiques of the student's work (McDonald et al., 2019). Critiques can be formal, with a set of judges, or informal peer discussions (McDonald et al., 2019). While critiques help expand student career readiness specifically related to intangible skills, there is a juxtaposition that critiques can be hard on students' well-being (McDonald et al., 2019). Peer critiques have become a mainstay in studio classes to avoid unwarranted stress on students as there is a bond between students (McDonald et al., 2019). Research has concluded that peer critiques positively impact communication skills, motivation, and confidence (Hwang et al., 2018). While peer critiques are very beneficial, instructors must be aware that people often form relationships with similar individuals, limiting their social network (Cheng, 2020). For students to receive peer feedback that is not biased, course instructors may pair them with a classmate they do not frequently work with. Drawbacks of peer critiques include being too nice, lack of useful information, and low participation (Hwang et al., 2018).

Instructors can attempt to overcome the drawbacks of peer critiques by having students take a personality preference assessment like Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (Moline, 2012). The MBTI examines traits like introverted/extroverted and judging/perceiving (Moline, 2012). Although the literature has suggested pairing students with peers with similar personalities, no research has been conducted on how the different personalities are impacted by their social networks, specifically in apparel design studio format classes (Moline, 2012).

Theoretical Framework. The peer social capital model will be utilized to examine the impacts that one's social environment has on them in a studio format class. The peer social

capital model was first introduced by Coleman, which analyzes the social network (i.e., friends, family, and community) that one is encapsulated in to understand the impacts on their human capital (Cheng, 2020; Coleman, 1988; Hasan & Bagde, 2013; Oranye et al., 2017). Human capital is the skills and knowledge one possesses, whereas social capital is the furtherance one receives from their social network (Coleman, 1988; Hasan & Bagde, 2013). Human capital is often acquired through educational programs, like university courses (Hasan & Bagde, 2013). Research has studied the impact of social capital on academic achievement by separating the impacts into indirect and direct effects (Cheng, 2020). Direct effects refer to using their social network as a resource (i.e., asking a classmate for help when confused about an assignment) (Cheng, 2020). Whereas indirect effects refer to how one's social network impacts their behavior and values (i.e., seeing a classmate's work and being motivated to have a better assignment than theirs) (Cheng, 2020). This model will guide the assessment of peer influence on apparel design students' in a studio format class.

Methods. Students enrolled in an entry-level fashion design studio at a Mid-Western University were offered the opportunity to participate in the study. The course consisted of lectures, demonstrations, and presentation boards that covered various topics such as target markets, technical flats, and fashion illustrations. To examine the impact of the study, a quasi-experiment was employed where participants were asked to complete a pre- and post-survey before and after intervention along with the MBTI. The survey aimed to find how one is impacted by their peers. Participants were asked if they compare their work to their peers and if they ask their peers questions, to name a few. Before the intervention, students were allowed to sit where they chose and met one-on-one with the instructor during project development to get feedback. After the pre-test, student grades were recorded, and a new seating chart was developed to move individuals with a lower grade next to a peer with a higher grade. Instead of having a one-on-one critique session with the instructor, students were directed to work with the peer sitting next to them to obtain feedback on elements that could be improved before the final turn-in. The instructor also encouraged them to exchange contact information with their peer to allow them to obtain more feedback outside of the class period. After the students turned in the project, they were provided with the post-test.

Results. Due to the small studio class size, seven out of the fourteen students participated in the pre- and post-tests along with the MBTI in the spring of 2022. The survey results brought forth pertinent results. While the pre- and post-tests results were not substantially different, observations on what effects seem to impact students the most and how different personality types are impacted can be made by comparing the scores of each subset from the MBTI. Overall,

it was determined that students strongly agree that seeing their classmates' projects motivates them to perform better. Extroverted students were more impacted by the direct effects (i.e., getting feedback from a classmate), whereas introverted students were more impacted by indirect effects (i.e., comparing their work to their classmates). After engaging in the informal peer critique, students also reported that they felt less embarrassed asking their classmates questions when they were confused. One negative effect of the informal peer critique was that students disagreed more with "peer critiques help me know what to improve on" compared to before the informal peer critique, suggesting that their peers may not have provided the most fruitful feedback.

Discussion and Limitations. Based on the results, instructors should have their students take a personality assessment at the beginning of the year to allow them to adjust their curriculum to initiate indirect and direct effects occurring between the appropriate personality types. Instructors should also supervise informal peer critiques to ensure meaningful responses are habituated. Furthermore, future research should employ a large sample size and a different personality survey, as MBTI can yield inconsistent results (Boyle, 1995).

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