Exploring Apparel Design Students' Perception on Creativity
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Introduction: The term "creativity" is used broadly throughout the literature and in the field of apparel design education. However, students often understand the term in unexpected ways, and this can cause a disjunction between the teacher's intention for the learning/teaching activity and the students' perceptions of it (Reid & Solomonides, 2007). In this regard, the researchers explored how apparel design students perceive and describe the term "creativity" in the educational setting. Considering the fact that little research has been conducted regarding apparel design students' perceptions of creativity, it would be worthwhile to conduct this research. The results will help apparel design educators to develop effective teaching strategies in the classroom and to encourage a creative atmosphere.

Literature Review: 1) Perceptions of Creativity in Apparel Design: Gustina and Sweet (2014) indicated that one of the primary roles of education is to inculcate creativity in upcoming generations in order to prepare them for the challenges they will face in the future. When looking into how to accomplish this, Klimenko (2008) argued that a clear vision of creativity would make it possible for everyone to develop creative capabilities, despite the tremendous challenge this poses in higher education. However, in the field of design education, it is difficult to discern whether creativity is an attribute of a person, an object, a process, or an idea, and this causes problems for both educators and students (Reid & Solomonides, 2007). Through an understanding of students' perceptions of creativity, educators will be better able to communicate creativity-related teaching materials and assignments to students.

2) Attributes of Creativity: A number of researchers have explored the attributes of creativity. One study proposes three dimensions of creativity (novelty, appropriateness, and impact) that constitute a framework for defining and measuring creativity (Piffer, 2012). Another study focuses on the factors influencing creativity in design education by exploring 210 designed artifacts and concluding three main factors: (1) the novelty and affective characteristics that are associated with the product shape, (2) elaboration characteristics and the harmony among the design elements, and (3) the rhythm, repetition, unity, order, and number of design elements (Demirkan & Afacan, 2012). Another researcher also indicated that the design process is the most relevant in the generation of creative ideas (Heylighen, Deisz, & Verstijnen, 2007, p. 499). Since the attributes of creativity have been identified according to various dimensions, it would therefore be necessary to explore how apparel design students understand creativity.

Method: A phenomenological research method is used in this study. The procedure involves in-depth interviews with 12 students who are taking a senior-level Apparel Design Studio from a Midwestern university in the United States. The researcher visited a senior-level apparel design studio to recruit participants. All participants were engaged in creating a collection consisting of 4-5 garments for a senior fashion show. To achieve the research purpose, the following two research questions were addressed: (1) How do apparel design students define creativity based on their own experiences? and (2) How do apparel design students perceive creativity when

describing their own collections? The participants were asked to bring images of their senior collection to the interview. Compensation of 20 dollars was provided to each participant. Interview questions regarding the research questions were asked. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. For data analysis, the researchers conducted analytical coding.

Results & Discussion: The findings are as follows, with numbers indicating the research questions being addressed. (1) The most common definitions of creativity reported by students were "an activity of thinking outside the box and creating something different that people have never thought of before" and "an original activity of creating something surprising from basic elements." The results indicate that students perceive creativity in terms of novelty and affective characteristics when defining it based on their own experiences. (2) Students described that the most creative pieces in the collections as experimental, successful, satisfying, and as their most favorite. They also indicated that the most creative pieces were the most successful visually and they represented the overall image of each collection. On the other hand, participants indicated that the least creative pieces were their least favorite and the least successful pieces among their collections. Three participants explained that they regarded certain pieces as the least creative because they were made in simple blocks without any functional or decorative details. The results indicate that based on their design preference and aesthetics, students perceive creative design in terms of visual design elements. The results indicate that there is a distinction between students' definition of creativity and the perception of creativity in their collections.

Conclusion: The research explored apparel design students' perceptions of creativity. The distinction between students' definition of creativity and the perception of creativity in their collections can cause miscommunication with creativity-related materials and assignments between an educator and students. Understanding this difference as identified by the research will help educators to better communicate with students when it comes to creativity. The term "creativity" is often intertwined between person, process, and product, thus creativity should be understood as a complex attribute that contributes to the quality of students' learning experience.

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