

Y-We Fashion Camp Report

foundry10

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Highlights

- The reported self-efficacy of participants in the fashion camp towards pursuing a design-oriented career increased during the program.
- Perceived ability to overcome barriers when pursuing a design-oriented career increased during the program.
- Results suggest that a one week fashion camp can improve young women's perceptions that they can pursue a design-oriented career although it may not increase the likelihood that they pursue that type of career.

1. Program Overview

In this pilot program, the result of a partnership between foundry10 and Y-We, young women who were part of the Y-We organization were selected to take part in a 1-week course to expand their understanding of fashion as an industry. A total of 13 young women participated in the program. Girls and Y-We mentors met from 10am - 4pm each day during the camp and discussed the fashion industry, ideals of beauty and identity, and created a fashion piece from scratch. The program culminated in a public fashion show where the women modeled the fashion piece they created during the program.

2. Measures of Attitudes Towards Design-Oriented Careers

Near the end of the fashion camp, foundry10 staff presented the participants with a set of questionnaires. The questionnaires consisted of three measures that focused on perceptions of self-efficacy and design-oriented careers. These careers were defined as ones that require professionals to generate, create, and refine products and services (e.g., fashion, architect, artist, jeweler). The questionnaires were as follows:

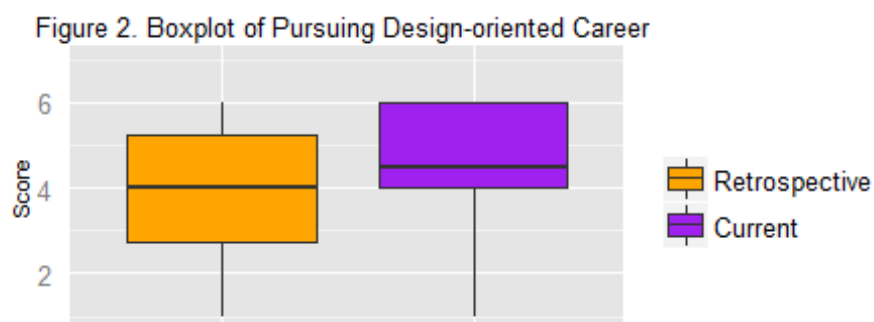
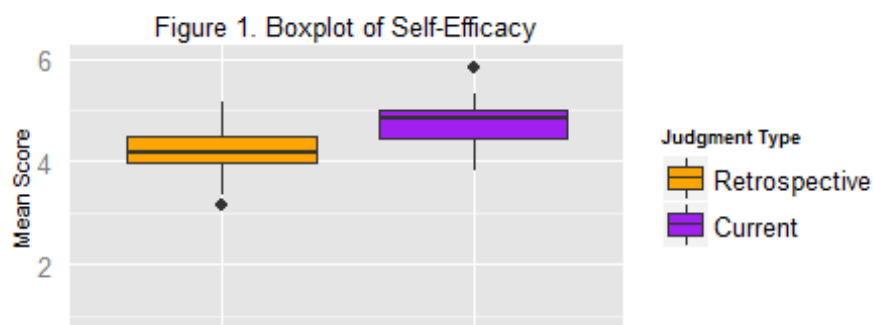
- **Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy (Self-Efficacy):** This measure was adapted from Wilson, Kickul, and Marlino (2008, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*) to assess the entrepreneurial aptitudes by asking participants to rate the degree to which they find certain skills challenging or easy compared to their peers (e.g., being able to solve problems). The measure contained six Likert-type questions with a six point scale. The mean response for the questions was used as the final score (higher scores indicate higher self-efficacy).

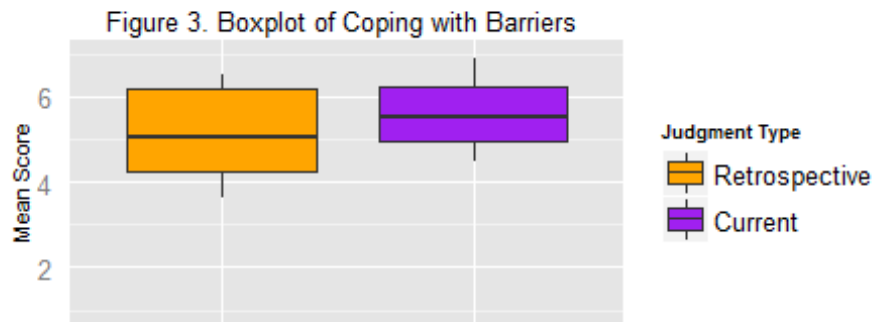
- Pursuing a design-oriented career: This measure contained a 7-point Likert-type scale where participants indicated the likelihood of them pursuing a design oriented career (ranged from 1 = very unlikely to 7 = very likely).
- Perceived ability to cope with design-oriented career barriers (Coping with Barriers): Adapted from Luzzo and McWhirter (2001, *Journal of Counseling and Development*), this measure assessed participants' perceived ability to overcome barrier to pursuing a design-oriented career. The measure consisted of 8 Likert-type questions that asked participants to rate the extent to which a barrier (e.g., "Having the skills required to do my job") will challenge their pursuit of a design-oriented career (1 = will be a challenge, 7 = will not be a challenge). The mean response to these questions was used as the final score (higher scores indicates higher perceived coping ability).

Participants completed two forms for each measure focusing on their judgments at different time points; one asking participants to rate how they felt at the beginning of the program (retrospective) and another to rate how they felt at the end of the program (current).

3. Results

Of the 13 participants, 12 provided a complete set of responses whereas 1 provided partial responses. The 12 complete responses were included in subsequent analyses. Due to the small sample size, only descriptive statistics are provided (see Figures 1 through 3).





For the self-efficacy scale, 11 out of 12 participants had higher scores for the current compared to retrospective judgments. For the likelihood to pursue a design-oriented career scale, 5 out of 12 participants had higher scores for the current compared to retrospective judgments. For the coping with barriers scale, 9 out of 12 participants had higher scores for the current compared to retrospective judgments.

4. Quantitative Findings

Based on the results, the following conclusions can be made regarding the impact of the Y-We fashion camp on young women's perceptions of design-oriented careers. Across all participants scores were higher for the current versus retrospective judgments for all three measures. However, only self-efficacy and coping with barriers scales had a majority of participants for which scores were higher for the current versus retrospective judgments. This suggests that a one-week fashion camp can improve young women's perceptions that they can be successful pursuing design-oriented careers although it may not change their interest in pursuing said type of career.

5. Qualitative Findings

Individual qualitative interviews were conducted before the program started and after it had concluded with the young women who participated. The pre and post interviews consisted of 11 and 15 open ended questions, respectively and took 10-30 minutes to complete. The goal was to gain insight into the participant's experience by having them reflect on what they learned and whether or not that had any impact on the ideas and beliefs they held regarding beauty and fashion prior to participating in the camp. The interview results helped to identify which themes had made the greatest impression on most of the young women. The following four themes were commonly mentioned among the participants:

Increased awareness of sustainability and ethical consumption

The harm of rapid clothing consumption and disposable "fast fashion" seemed to become apparent to the participants and have a lasting effect. One young woman put disposable fashion this way, "That it comes at a cost when you buy everything, no matter how cheap it

is it comes at a huge cost and you're affecting someone else." Many participants offered alternate solutions, "I don't want to go to stores like Hollister or Abercrombie anymore and I think I am going to thrift shop a lot more than I used to. Take old clothes that I don't wear very much and make them into something I will wear."

Ethical treatment and fair wages for those in the fashion manufacturing industry was a common theme; as one young women said, "I learned about sustainability and the true cost of clothing and the people that work behind the scenes to make clothes and how little they are paid." Another reflected on the vast disparity of wages between retailers and manufacturers, "'I never really thought about how people would make the clothes for very little and the people who sell it get paid a lot more; that opened my eyes.'" However, the ability to influence change in this realm was articulated; "I learned a lot more about how we can help stop the bad things that are happening. Like how bad the workers in the factory are treated. If you buy used clothes instead, it stops the companies from making more clothes." One young women was confident that she could change her buying habits to create more awareness around her consumption, "I feel like there's more weight to what I buy and what I wear. They were talking about voting with your dollar and that stuck with me. I feel like slowly my habits can change and I will know when I am buying something what is happening."

Sense of creative resistance and individual definition of beauty

Resisting trends to follow your own authentic style and fashion as a means of expressing your unique style was an idea that resonated with many of the participants; "I don't want a bunch of stuff that everyone else has because then it's not unique or different." One young women thought different styles should be celebrated, "I think I have more of an appreciation for everyone's individual style. It makes it more fun when you create your own style because you notice it more and it is unique to you." For one participant, this idea was especially apparent during the fashion show, "I can see how other types of girls; all of us were different sizes and shapes and we were all in a fashion show together. To see all of us be different and have our own fashion show changed my idea of beauty."

Beauty was also determined to be defined on an individual basis for most; as one participant said "Everyone can be beautiful as long as you stay true to yourself." It seemed to be understood that definitions of beauty would often differ between people. As another young woman put it, "I don't say something is ugly, because in someone else's eyes it is beautiful."

View themselves as artists or creators

Another impact the program had was that it transformed the participants from consumers to creators and artists. All of the participants viewed themselves as either an artist or a creator after participating in the camp. Some comments said during interviews were, "I think I'm more of an artist because I'd rather design that actually make it because the making it is really hard.", "People always tell me I am creative and artistic but I never really see it, I was definitely artistic during the week of camp though.", and "I think everyone is an artist in their own way. We create things everyday using our own minds." Another

participant realized how artistic components related to her other interests, “I want to be a freelance makeup artist and I love pairing colors together and that kind of thing so I feel like an artist. With clothing too; combining textures and colors.”

Empowered to continue creating

Most of the young women expressed that they wanted to continue designing and sewing. Whether through classes, “I will take more sewing classes when I get back home and also work on my design skills.” or at home, “I will definitely continue sewing after this. I am working on a skirt right now.” Upcycling and customizing thrift store items was another way participants planned to expand on their skills. One young woman mentioned, “I got this basket at home and I put a bunch of stuff prepared I want to change. Like another dress into a romper. Back to school shopping is going to be very different. Because I was planning to go to forever 21 or something, but now I will go to value village or change clothes I already have.” Another said, “I want to start going to more thrift stores and make and revamp clothes from thrift stores instead of buying clothing all the time. I have a sewing machine at home.”

Creation was seen as a way to avoid over-consumption as well; “I feel like I don’t have to consume as much anymore. I have a sewing machine at my house, I’ve never touched it. I can save up for things I really want and I can make the other things that I would normally buy from Ross, or Kmart.” Empowerment was a byproduct of these new-found sewing skills for many of the participants. A young woman articulated how sewing made her feel, “It’s nice to learn how to do things yourself and use those outlets. You can be proud of what you made and also you are not feeding into the system. When we get to our apartment I will be sewing with my mom because she has sewing machines. The basics I learned during the work definitely have sparked my interest.” Another one summed it up by saying, “We all can be fashion designers and our own fashion designers.”