What did People Wear to the March for Science? : Social Change and Design Education

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Keywords: design education, role of dress, social change, march for science

Introduction: How does fashion design reflect on the world and connect with our society? During the March for Science 2017, tens of thousands of people conveyed abundant messages and opinion with diverse expressional methods. People marched on the Earth Day for social, environmental, educational, and political issues. They wanted to humanize science, to respect diversity in our society, and to solve the problems alternatively (CNN, 2017).Their perception of politics, social issues and behavioral attitudes in everyday life were intermingled with scientific knowledge, and expressed visually with dress. It was an emotionally impressive and instructive message to the researcher as a design educator. Therefore, the purpose of the research is to address the value of cross-sectional teaching and researching in fashion design education toward making a better world through reviewing the role of dress in the March for Science. This study will suggest a future direction for design education to integrate diverse issues into fashion design curricula with community-based participatory research (CBPR). The research questions for the study are: 1) What is the role of dress in the March for Science? 2) How can design activities improve society? 3) What is the role of design educators to make a better world?

Background: Dress is important in our everyday lives as a nonverbal communication tool and defining relationships in our society (Damhorst, Miller-Spillman, &Michelman, 2005). In the March for Science, people, as novices on design, expressed their views and celebrated the value of science by expressing dress ensembles with art and design works. It is the evidence of the valuable role dress plays, and of how design educators might expand future directions of design higher education. As Fisher mentioned, the need to make design education more fun is particularly pertinent to the STEAM fields (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) in K-12 education through expanding what works well in higher education to involve the public actively through CBPR (Fisher, 2016).

Methodology: To address the research purpose, qualitative research methodology was used focusing on the following questions: *What are you wearing? Why do you want to express it through dress? Why are you marching?* Upon IRB approval, data were collected from 15 participants in Minnesota on April 22, 2017. Interview questionnaires were semi-structured, and multi-dimensional data such as audio-recorded interviews, field notes, visual images of participants, and video recordings of the atmosphere were analyzed (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Through the grounded theory process, research themes were generated, and the frequency of specific words were checked to classify the relationship between expressional strength on dress and concerning value on diverse issues.

Results & Discussion: Participants' expressional way on dress reflected their perception of diverse issues and engagement attitudes. Data interpretation showed high expressional dressed participants were more concerned about diverse social issues (A) (e.g., social justice, equity, environmental issues, gender issues, future educational issue) rather than direct personal issues (B) (e.g., funding issues, self-pride as a scientist). For example, participant 14 said, *"Our planet is at risk, be destroyed, it's dangerous time in our society…if you're wearing something that supports a cause and it makes it easier to communicate with others, build ideas and organize. It's fun."* The high expressional dressed participants designed dress with recycled materials for sustainability and decorated their ensembles with diverse color variations. Since their main purpose of marching was to share their opinions regarding diverse issues effectively, they used dress as a non-verbal communication tool with creative design. Their attitudes observed in interviewing and marching was highly active with a fun and joyful mood. They actively engaged in creative designing with art works; as a result, the ensembles were effective in gaining the attention of others. On the other hand, low expressional dressed participants were wearing existing representative dress such as a lab coat, Ph.D. robe as shown as Table 1. Without any creative art and design works on dress and low color variation, they wore their own representative dress with a serious mood and negative attitude in interviewing and marching. They recognized dress as a symbolic meaning (who I am, what I do) (Adam & Galinsky, 2012), but mainly concerned about direct personal issues (B) rather than diverse social issues for others (A). For example, participant 6 said, "*I'm marching for funds to science…everybody knows what doctoral robes mean, that you have your Ph.D., and you went through a lot of criticism and works, to earn this."*Due to their negative attitudes on marching and low expressional strength on dress, their dress was getting low attention from others. Therefore, highly creative dress ensembles garnered more attention toward not only themselves but also toward solving the problems that motivated them to march. In other words, people recognized fun art and design activities on dress as problem-solving process to address diverse issues. None of participants in the march raised a disturbance or cause physical damage to express their opinions; rather, they wore creatively designed dress and representative dress with smiling, chanting, and walking to bring awareness to the societal issues they believed needed to be solved.

Conclusion: Through the role of dress in the March for Science, researchers confirmed that the recognition and expression of diverse issues is as a problem-solving process. We, as fashion design educators, should consider how to apply this into fashion design education for expanding our views on diverse issues of our society collaborating with diverse communities. This study showed the possibilities of interdisciplinary teaching and researching in fashion design of higher education and even collaborating with K-12 setting and the public to expand our views. It could be a better way to expand CBPR to make a better world through design education.

Table 1.Relationship between expressional strength and concerning value on diverse issues

Expressional strength	High	Medium	Low
Expression methods	Hand-crafted creative dress with diverse materials	Representative color dress with added items	Representative existing dress like lab coat, PhD robe
Participants	P 3, 5, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15 (7)=**46.7%**	P 1,2, 4, 10, 12 (5)=**33.3%**	P 6, 7, 8 (3)=**20%**
Attitude & Features	1. Active engagement on interviewing & marching 2. Strong concern in diverse social issues (A): Personal issues (B) : Frequency: A>>B) 3. Fun & joyful mood 4. Diverse color variation & decoration 5. High attention from others	1. Neutral engagement on interviewing & marching 2. Strong concern in diverse social issues (A): Personal issues (B): Frequency: A>B 3. Joyful mood 4. Medium color variation & decoration 5. Medium attention	1. Negative engagement on interviewing & marching 2. Strong concern in diverse social issues (A): Personal issues (B): Frequency: A<<B 3. Serious mood 4. Simple color variation, no adding items 5. Low attention
Examples			

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