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A Fashion Paradox: Reflective Thinking for Fashion Forecasting

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New approach/Purpose of strategy. With the competitive nature of the fashion industry, professors strive to prepare their students for successful career paths. It is important that an undergraduate curriculum be designed so that students' work reflects high standards and incorporates critical thinking skills. Critical thinking analyses are often difficult for students who are stressed, short-on-time, and may be utilizing the Internet as their primary source of information.

The best teaching practice to be shared in this presentation is the application of John Dewey's *Reflection as a Meaning Process* (1933) in a Fashion Forecasting course. Dewey's ideas' concerning reflective thinking (1933) provides a method to move students beyond rote memorization, a summation of information, or a simple rewording of an author's ideas. Fashion Forecasting is an ideal context to develop reflective thinking as it requires students to think beyond a tangible time and predict future fashion in a systematic way based on environmental, social, and political criteria.

Roger's (2002) treatment of Dewey's (1933) critical thinking and reflection ideas provided four criteria that were integrated with Brannon's (2010) steps in predicting fashion trends to produce a learning experience that developed students' critical thinking.

Roger's (2002) criteria	Brannon's steps in fashion forecasting	Adomaitis' (2013) mini lessons
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflection is a meaning-like process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships and connections to other experiences and ideas. 2. Reflection is systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking with its roots in scientific inquiry. 3. Reflection needs to happen in a community; in interaction with others. 4. Reflection requires an attitude that values the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify basic facts about past trends 2. Determine the causes of change in the past 3. Determine differences between past forecasts and actual behavior 4. Apply forecasting tools and techniques 5. Determine the factors likely to affect trends in the future 6. Follow the forecast and look for deviations 7. Revise forecast when necessary 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify causal relationships between fashion and society. 2. Research historical continuity among fashion trends using forecasting jargon 3. Fashion in the global stage 4. Critical thinking and reflecting upon the forecast

Implementation of strategy/practice. Students are assigned a two-year (short-term) forecast to make in a specific category (e.g., dresses, suits). Students begin the forecast by searching for current fashion trends at different levels of the market, such as high fashion or mass fashion. Students at this stage learn that fashion forecasting is a causal relationship between the specific style and the social

realms of a society. Recognizing this relationship moves the student through the first two forecasting steps (i.e., Adomaitis' (2013) mini lesson 1 or Roger's step 1 and Brannon's step 1 and 2) as it entails the identification of trends and their relationship to economic, social, political, and cultural events. For example, students recalled the dominating colors red, white, and blue used in fashion during the Obama–Romney election campaign of 2012.

The second step in Adomaitis' (2013) outline coincides with Rogers' second step in critical thinking and Brannon's third and fifth steps in conducting a forecast. There is historical information about past trends and actual events that shape both fashion fads and flops. By researching fashion history, researching timelines of fashion change, and studying designer interpretation of fashion trends, students are guided through a step-by-step research approach about fashion and how to forecast fashion trends for upcoming seasons by identifying repeating waves, pendulum swings, and cycles that re-occur in fashion.

The third step in Adomaitis' (2013) mini lesson places fashion in a global context. Fashion is group behavior, a form of social copying (Stone, 2010). Thus, fashion exists in a social context. Students begin to think beyond their personal experience of fashion and reflect on how fashion is interpreted by different people, cultures, and regions of the world. By using Stylesight, students research urban street fashions in cities such as Tokyo, New York, England, and Milan.

The fourth step in Adomaitis' (2013) mini lesson fosters critical thinking and reflection on the forecast. Keeping a journal about fashion predictions and having students consider them twice a week is one way to indicate their personal skills of reflection and research and whether it be they are on track with the actual assignment of predicting fashion trends.

Description of effectiveness. When outlining forecasting using these steps as guidance, students began to engage in actual forecasting rather than simply searching for others' forecasts. Students used critical thinking skills to move through a forecast with an understanding that fashion connects with the recent past (i.e.; movies, music, celebrity), reflects current events, such as economic downturns, cultural impacts (i.e.; immigration reform), and political influences (i.e.; presidential race) that continually shape trends, as well as, the fact that trends are adapted and modified by all types of consumers. In addition, using this approach, students had an easier time forecasting global trends as well as (in addition to) trends for non-western cultures.

Indication of plans for continuation, revision, or follow-up. Lecturing on the forecast topic so it coincides with the forecast assignment provided a context for each step of the forecast/critical thinking. Breaking the actual assignment down as mini assignments provides a scaffolding for the students can be time consuming yet it was worthwhile as students "got it." Each semester, having critical thinking as a guideline along with the fashion forecasting text, students of varied academic abilities were able to complete a forecast trend book.

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