Forming Futures Through Narrative Identity in Fashion Design Fundamentals: We know what we are - Delineation and Connection in Archetypal Narrative

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INTRODUCTION

As artificial intelligence (AI) rapidly advances in the fields of creation and design, human-AI collaboration has become a phenomenon that cannot be ignored. However, this situation also prompts deeper reflection on the positioning of humans within creative and design education. In this era of technological innovation, we recognize that "we know what we are," and this exploration and understanding of our own unique qualities is an irreplaceable core value in human-driven design and creation.

This workshop will share how "self-exploration" serves as the focal point of our teaching and research, examining how design education can guide students to discover their personal characteristics and transform them into uniqueness and irreplaceability in their creative work.

This teaching research employs "narrative therapy" from psychology as a theoretical basis, reviewing and reorganizing the significance of the "self-exploration" stage in the Design Fundamentals course. According to psychologist Brian R. Little (2018), our innate qualities, the environment we inhabit, and our behaviors shape our personality traits. Our life environment, socialization processes, and other rich backgrounds overlap to form our life trajectory, and these unique experiences and life histories forge the creator's personal qualities. These qualities give the work uniqueness and identifiable characteristics. The word "personality" can be traced back to around 1500, deriving from the Latin "persona," referring to the masks actors wore in theatrical performances (Schultz & Schultz, 2017). These "masks" represent the demeanor and outward appearance we present, which then shape others' impressions of us. Personality can be viewed as the masks or roles we assume when interacting with others.

People's life experiences are far richer than their narrated life stories. Narrative therapy helps individuals uncover events that have not yet formed into stories and re-tell them, thus creating new narratives.

This research is based on the psychological concept of narrative therapy, using it as a foundation for narrative methods. It places "self-exploration" in the creative process as a self-healing experience. In narrative therapy, "unique outcomes" emerge by objectifying problems and then focusing on one's problematic stories. Through reflecting on these problems, one seeks alternative narratives. This concept forms the core theoretical basis of our teaching research.

METHODS

Narrative Thanking

In the course of Design Fundamentals, freshmen in design departments experience the three steps of design: idea leading, method transformation, and design application. According to my past experience, the preliminary "self-exploration" may make students anxious and take a long time to open up. The instructor will simulate an environment for narrative therapy, encouraging students to focus on one piece of memory in their own life. By reiterating the memory and modifying the perspective, students will gradually find out their own emotional connection to the memory. The instructor may assist them to create unique ideas, discover their personality, and thus develop their own design language.

1. Leading Ideas: This research is based on the psychological concept of narrative therapy. It situates the creators' self-exploration as a self-curation process. It emphasizes on the unique outcome of their own questions and explore the possibility of each story. The reflective process on each story can lead to alternative expression.

2. Transforming methods: Video and image experiment will facilitate students to discover their vocabulary before design. They will be encouraged to use multi-media apps and software to discover emotional connections.

3. Applying to design: While digital media apps and software are easy to access and use, how to use the aesthetics of digital media is a focus in class. It is important to train students to actively manipulate media, rather than be restrained by media. Digital media that fits students' competencies and live experience will be used. Several reflective discussions about their drafts will be conducted at various stages to reflect on what has been learned.

Design Presentation

The purpose of design education is to inspire students to discover their own creative characteristics, from generating ideas, connecting thoughts, transforming concepts, and constructing works. How to induce the design process is the foundation of design education; it is also the core of Design Fundamentals for freshman in the design department. This research is based on the course framework, incorporating the structure of the psyche and the process of post-modernist narrative therapy to encourage students' self-exploration.

Through the teaching philosophy and methods described above, we aim to establish a clear developmental pathway within the course implementation. Starting from "self-exploration" and guided by principles from psychology and postmodern narrative therapy, students gradually transform their individual traits and life experiences into creative energy, thereby enhancing the uniqueness and value of their design concepts. By undergoing this process, students will be better equipped with a distinct personal identity in their future creations, ultimately endowing their works with a clear and impactful narrative context.

1. Students will discover their creative characteristics after this module.
2. They will encourage to discover their unique life experience and follow the module design to transform into their design styles.
3. They will form a complete concept and narration for their works.

CONCLUSION

In teaching, we attempt to enhance the efficiency and precision of creative expression through technological tools. Yet, this also challenges human creators to reconsider the essence of "creativity." We believe that humans hold incomparable advantages in terms of emotion, values, and cultural depth—areas AI cannot possess.

To consolidate the human role in creation, our teaching approach suggests three key focuses:
1. Emphasize personal narrative ability, nurturing sensitivity and reflective thinking on life experiences.
2. Use diverse media to encourage students to integrate various techniques to express their personal characteristics.
3. Encourage creators to embrace uncertainty, incorporating an experimental spirit into the creative process, thereby building confidence in future design endeavors.

This workshop provides not only theoretical insights but also concrete

educational practice cases, illustrating how to strengthen human creators' core competitiveness amidst rapid AI evolution. We believe that when creation is regarded as a journey of "self-exploration," humanity can find its own firm foothold in the new AI era and continue to lead the development of creative design.

Practical Value of the Research
Academic or Practical Value of the Research:
Exploring the internal psychological expression in creation courses, narrative therapy focuses on discovering and rewriting the diversity and richness of life, akin to unearthing life's treasures. Narrative therapy emphasizes the stories we live through; these stories represent life itself. We understand and organize events based on time, sequence, and content, weaving them into a life story with a central theme. This constructs our understanding and interpretation of the self (including self-concept, self-ability, and interpersonal relationships), which in turn critically influences the future development of our stories.

Main findings
Narrative therapy does not aim to establish universal truths but rather to link events from different times. Its approach is not about certainty; it is about broadening perspectives. White and Epston (2018) liken narrative therapy to "telling stories" and "re-telling stories." Through narration, deconstruction, and reconstruction, people reorganize the meaning and events in their life stories, creating new narratives that are closer to their hopes, dreams, commitments, and purposes.

The concept and spirit of narrative therapy suggests that we understand our lives through stories. By separating problems from the individual, people can find their own voices and uncover overlooked significant events, rewriting their life stories to live anew. Narrative therapy's dynamic ideas can be applied in teaching, especially in foundational fashion design education. By understanding their own life stories, creators can construct the uniqueness of their initial creative journey.

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Relevance to Forming Futures:
This workshop aligns closely with the theme of "Forming Futures" by placing narrative identity at its core. Drawing on psychology and postmodern narrative therapy, it addresses the challenges posed by the AI era to design education. By guiding students to deeply explore their personal qualities and transform them into design creations endowed with unique narratives and value, the workshop emphasizes the core principle of "we know what we are." In doing so, it aims to shape a more human-centered, profound, and diverse future in fashion education.

Workshop Objectives:
- Share how to guide students in discovering their own personality traits by leveraging the core values of foundational creative courses.
- Encourage students to identify unique life experiences and transform them through the curriculum to establish their individual creative style.
- Endow their creative works with a complete conceptual narrative, enhancing uniqueness and recognition.

Workshop Description:
This workshop centers on "self-exploration" as its research focus, employing the theory of narrative therapy from psychology and reviewing the importance of self-exploration in the Design Fundamentals curriculum. By integrating students' life experiences, innate qualities, and environmental factors into the creative process, their works gain greater distinctiveness and narrative value. Amidst the tech-driven AI revolution, the workshop highlights the irreplaceable core value of human creators and, through creative teaching guidance, nurtures students' personal identity and design language. Through case studies, video documentation, and discussions, participants will be led to reflect on the future directions of foundational fashion design education.

Workshop Structure:
Introduction: Introduce the Forming Futures theme and workshop objectives, and explain the roles of self-exploration and narrative therapy in creative education.

Narrative Thinking: Explore the application of self-narration in foundational fashion design courses, sharing the process by which students move from self-exploration to design application.

Methods in Practice:
1. Leading Creation (self-exploration and alternative narratives for problematic stories)
2. Transforming Techniques (conveying emotions and concepts through video experiments and multimedia tools)
3. Design Application (balancing digital software and hands-on thinking to cultivate aesthetic competence)

- Case Studies & Work Presentation: Showcase teaching outcomes and practical experiences via student works and recorded teaching sessions.

- Discussion & Reflection: Engage participants in discussing the challenges and possibilities for future fashion design education, as well as the value of narrative identity in shaping future creative thinking.

Workshop Deliverables:
- A reference framework and training curriculum outline (from self-exploration →
- technique transformation → design application).
- A collection of teaching cases and student works, serving as a resource for incorporating narrative thinking into foundational fashion design education.
- A record of participants discussions and feedback to inform future teaching research and development.

Workshop Activities:
- Video Introduction: Present teaching documentary footage that illustrates practical examples of self-exploration and the creative process.
- Group Discussion & Sharing: Participants break into groups to discuss how narrative identity can be integrated into their own educational contexts to guide students in discovering personal qualities.
- Synthesis & Analysis: Review and provide feedback on group discussion results to identify areas for improvement and extension.

Expected Outcomes:
- Participants will understand the impact and value of narrative identity on creative education.
- They will gain practical operations and teaching examples to apply narrative methods in guiding students.

- Participants will help establish a more in-depth and recognizable model for creative teaching, laying the foundation for future fashion design education.

Keywords: Narrative identity, self-exploration, fashion design education, Design Fundamentals

Visual Aids and Supplementary Materials:
- Presentation slides (course structure, case studies)
- Recorded teaching videos
- Image documentation of student works

Duration:
60 minutes (5 minutes introduction, 25 minutes for Case Studies & Work Presentation, 20 minutes group discussion and practical exercise, 10 minutes activity discussion and reflection)

Seminar Room:
The typical seminar room

Facilitator:
Co-facilitator: Yu-Sheng Cheng (Esther) / Luke Cheng
Master's degree student / Shih-Chien University