Art & Design Students’ Experiences of Anxiety in the Classroom

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“…An alarming trend:
college students and young adults are more anxious than ever before.”
- Scheffler, et al. 2018

Research Goal:
To better understand art & design student experiences of anxiety in classroom situations
Research Questions:
How do art & design students experience anxiety in the classroom?
◦ What do they think?
◦ What do they feel?
◦ How would they like professors to respond?

Moore College of Art & Design

Study Population—Gender Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-binary</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other:
- Transgender
- Trans-masc.
- Gender fluid
- Pangender
- Unlabeled
- Cisgender woman
PARTICIPANTS BY YEAR IN SCHOOL

- 45% first-year students
- 16% sophomores
- 21% juniors
- 16% seniors
- 2% graduate students

HAVE YOU EVER HAD DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS AT MOORE?

- 29% Currently
- 8% formerly (not current)
- 63% Never

Live Poll

www.surveymonkey.com/r/BLivePoll

Select the 3 classroom situations that you think make the most students feel anxious:

- Being approached by the instructor to talk
- Approaching the instructor to talk
- Timed tests/quiz
- Getting called on
- Introducing yourself
- Lectures
- Small group work
- Critiques
- Presentations
- Class discussions
Survey completion

SURVEY COMPLETION RATE

- 46% completed
- 54% started but did not complete

Student Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Percent of Participants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being approached by the instructor</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaching the instructor to talk</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timed tests/exams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting called on</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing yourself</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small group work</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiques</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussions</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom situations that cause anxiety, by percent of participants

Q: What thoughts go through your mind when you feel anxious in class?
Response Categories: Thoughts

1. Self doubt
2. What others will think/feel/do
3. Flight/freeze reactions
4. Coping strategies

Q: What sensory feelings, if any, do you experience when you feel anxious in class?

Response Categories: Feelings

1. Sweating/hot
2. Shaking (body and voice)
3. Rapid heartbeat
4. Affected breathing
5. Upset stomach
Q: What do you wish the professor would do or say when you’re feeling anxious in class?

Category 1: Let me avoid it

1. Verbal participation
2. Group critiques

Response Categories: cont’d

1. Let me avoid it
2. Be patient, open-minded, and understanding
3. Let me take a break
4. Add structure to in-class activities
Suggestions for Adding Structure

• Ask guiding questions
• Sign-up list for presentations
• Provide discussion questions in advance
• Schedule frequent breaks
• Provide clear instructions & expectations

Suggestions for future research:

• Contextualize with institutional retention data
• Follow up interviews
• Examine available accommodations and their efficacy

Works Cited:


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