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Fashioning a Better Future: Why Educating Young People about the Impact of their Clothing Choices Matters

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Fashioning a Better Future:
Why Educating Young People about the Impact of their Clothing Choices
Matters

by

Andrea B. Neiman

FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES

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**MASTER OF ARTS IN LIBERAL STUDIES
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores who and what is harmed by the production and consumption of clothing. The research investigates the roots of today's slow fashion phenomenon. The evolution of anti-consumerism, do-it-yourself culture and "upcycling" is critically examined. In the twenty-first century, various options exist for individuals looking to shop and dress in a way that is reflective of their personal ideals about social justice, animal rights and environmental protection. Since young people are so receptive to fashion trends and spend their disposable income on clothing, educating them about the impact of their choices is imperative. The appendix contains a high school unit plan demonstrating how this information may be applied in the classroom through team-building exercises and group projects.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Zoe Weil, president and co-founder of the Institute for Humane Education, often plays a game called “True Price,” with her audience at her speaking engagements. “True Price” involves thinking critically about an everyday object’s impact personally, socially, environmentally and on animals. Weil’s most frequently used everyday objects include such items as bottled water and a fast food hamburger. For this National Honor Society Induction, however, she chose a red T-shirt.

Weil began by sharing the information printed on the item’s label: made in China, exclusively of cotton, machine washable and dry cleanable. From the label’s information alone, Weil guided the attendees through the positive and negative impacts of the T-shirt. As the game unfolded, Weil and the attendees noted that conventional cotton is grown with the use of toxic pesticides. Inhumane testing on animals has revealed just how potent these pesticides truly are; ultimately, these toxins, along with the red dye, contaminate waterways and soil. One third of the cotton produced worldwide is grown in Uzbekistan and the cotton industry there relies heavily on child labor. Chinese garment workers may have fabricated the T-shirt in sub-standard, or sweatshop, conditions where they were not protected by worker safety laws or paid a fair wage by United States or global standards. Fossil fuels were burned as the T-shirt made its long journey from China to the United States. In addition to experimentation in product testing and pesticide exposure, animals were potentially harmed by habitat loss and in the transportation process as large ships and trucks kill numerous animals annually. This part of Weil’s talk helped students to see how the simple

choice of buying a T-shirt can have certain unintended impacts on human rights, animal protection and environmental degradation.

The positive impacts of the T-shirt included the cotton profits, the employment of the garment workers and those involved in the transportation, distribution and sale of the T-shirt. Weil also elicited other positive impacts from her audience members, some of whom mentioned that because T-shirts are a relatively inexpensive item, consumers often have the ability to purchase many of them in a wide array of colors. A particularly flattering T-shirt has the potential to make a purchaser feel good personally. It was clear to the inductees that the negative impacts outweighed the positive impacts. Weil concluded the game that evening, as she does each time, by asking these high school students what, if any, alternatives they could think of to this T-shirt that would be more beneficial and less harmful to our fellow humans, other species and the environment. She then asked what systems must be amended in order to bring these alternatives into existence. A lively conversation among attendees ensued.

At the end of the National Honor Society ceremony, a new inductee was asked what she thought about Weil's speech and the "True Price" game. She responded that it made her angry. When pressed further about her response, she admitted: "We should have been learning this since Kindergarten!" ("World Becomes").

It is easy to empathize with how the young woman felt at the end of Weil's address. Learning about the harmful effects of our own choices, clothing production and over-consumption can be quite alarming at first, especially when one is unaware that other options to the traditional way of obtaining clothing exist. It is easy to adopt a negative tone and curse

the fashion industry and the consumers who support it for their wide-scale wastefulness and seemingly sheer disregard for the environment, animals and fellow human beings.

Lasting change does not come from pointing fingers at an industry or the individuals who support it. Instead, effective activism comes from learning how to refine one's approach so that sharing information and knowledge may be done in a warm, inviting way. With new knowledge comes a new array of choices, and with these new choices come opportunities to live an informed life that is in line with one's core values. The time for mass-produced, cheaply made often-disposable fashion must give way to a sustainable model tailor-made for the ethical and environmental concerns of the twenty-first century.

Many individuals are unaware that the way clothing is currently manufactured, consumed and ultimately disposed of is wholly unsustainable. Consumers receive most of their information about clothing through profit-driven media messages in the form of fashion and retail advertising. Few individuals are compelled to look beyond this into what they are supporting when they make a purchase. In recent years, there has been an explosion of documentaries and books that expose the truth about what we eat and the problems associated with the way conventional food is grown and manufactured. Farmers markets are once again popular as consumers seek meat and produce that has been raised and grown organically, locally and in a more humane and sustainable way. The same cannot be said for the way that Americans dress.

Cheap Fashion

According to Elizabeth L. Cline, author of *Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion*, Americans spent less than three percent of their household budget on clothing in 2009 compared to the fifteen percent that was allotted for clothing in 1900 (12).

One might conclude that consumers have suddenly lost interest in buying clothing. This could not be further from the truth. While the cost of health care, food, and gasoline has spiked in recent years, the cost of clothing is at an all time low (20).

Fashionable items are now so inexpensive that purchasers can indulge their ever-growing clothing habit without feeling the repercussion in their wallet. The uber-trendy, Forever 21, keeps the average cost of clothing hovering just around fifteen dollars (13). “A recent *Vogue* article asked, in light of a \$4.95 dress for sale at H&M: ‘Do I Get a Coffee? A Snack? Or Something to Wear?’ Indeed, clothes are so cheap today that buying them often feels inconsequential” (qtd. in Cline 22). In the past, inexpensive clothing was poorly designed and discordant with what was considered stylish at the time. By the early Nineties Gap, Inc. changed all of that. “...Gap ...convinced us through advertising in upscale magazines, celebrity branding, and ubiquitous placement of its stores, that buying generic T-shirts and jeans was our key to the fashion castle” (17). Enticed by the low prices and encouraged to return frequently to scope out the same styles but in a hot, new color each month, Gap had created the recipe for retail success. In 1991, Gap’s profits soared to nearly two billion dollars. The brand held strong and by the end of the decade, they were renowned for opening at least one store a day (17-18).

Gap paid their way into high-end fashion magazines and found a few celebrities to slip on their items for photo shoots, but did the wealthy really accept Gap’s clothing as fashionable?

The Gap revolution culminated in Sharon Stone’s making fashion history by wearing a charcoal Gap turtleneck with a Valentino skirt to the Oscars in 1996. The media celebrated Stone’s outfit as groundbreaking for pairing

relatively low-cost clothing with designer duds. [...] it was a historic moment, signaling that low priced fashion was being accepted across all class lines. (Cline 19)

Cline observes that “Even the wealthy supplement their wardrobes with cheap fashion, and hold it up as a symbol of our consumer democracy” (33). As a society, Americans have grown used to getting more for their money and often feel “cheated” when there are no bargains to be had (29). To stay competitive, today’s retailers must deliver clothing at the lowest prices possible and keep their customers coming back for more. These stores have learned to adapt to consumer demand by taking a meager profit on a massive volume of goods (96).

Fast-Fashion

How do retailers manage to sell the huge volume of inexpensive goods necessary to make a profit? Enter the world of “fast-fashion”. Fast-fashion necessitates well-designed, trendy clothing made quickly and cheaply, then sold at such low prices that it is bought up in large quantities. Fashion magazines further propel fast-fashion by encouraging readers to stock up on the specific items that are “all the rage” for that particular season (Claudio A449). In the world of fashion today, “season” no longer refers to spring, summer, autumn, winter and vacation. In 2008, when I began my research, it was commonplace for retailers to introduce ten to twelve seasons (“A to Z”). Today, some retailers introduce as many as twenty-six seasons in an effort to increase sales. This marketing strategy amounts to a new season every two weeks (Leonard and Conrad 117). Cline believes “seasons” is an outmoded way to describe today’s production cycle; instead, she refers to the fast-fashion compelled phenomenon as “continuous consumption” (99).

Owning a fashionable wardrobe is no longer reserved for the very wealthy. Luxury brands such as Prada, Marc Jacobs, Fendi, Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent will always be held in high esteem by fashion-savvy individuals, yet fast-fashion has actually leveled the playing field. Now, even those individuals with only a few extra dollars in their pocket can keep up with the trends because cheap clothing has become chic clothing. The designs are well executed and stylish enough that the poor quality and craftsmanship can be overlooked (Cline 2). After all, the piece is intended to be worn only once or twice before a new trend hits the scene. Furthermore, the exclusive price of designer clothing has made the low cost of fast-fashion more attractive to the public and has even earned consumers “bragging rights” for paying less (69). Actress Sarah Jessica Parker recalls the response she received at a party when she complimented a woman on her pair of pants: “Fourteen dollars! H&M!” (33). Clearly, individuals are not ashamed to buy low priced items and are more than happy to share how little they had to pay for them (even with a fashionista like Parker).

H&M, the world’s third largest retailer, just behind Gap, Inc. and Spain’s Inditex group, is a leader in the fast-fashion sector. The Swedish company is renowned for bringing fashion designs into existence and to the store in just twenty days’ time. Annually, H&M sells as many as five hundred million articles of clothing, knowing what consumers want: exceptionally stylish clothes at bottom line prices (Leonard and Conrad 116). Cline says, “Fast-fashion retailers have almost twice the average profit margin of their more traditional competitors” (96). Moreover, the profits individual retailers such as Forever 21, H&M and Gap see today surpass the entire American clothing industry’s profits in 1962 (23). As profits abound for fast-fashion retailers and American consumers find themselves awash in cheap

yet trendy finds the planet and the majority of its inhabitants must shoulder the burden of the way clothing is produced, manufactured and consumed.

CHAPTER 2

The Impact of Clothing Production and Consumption on the Environment

Climate Change

The production of clothing contributes to one of the largest challenges currently facing the human race: global climate change. The cultivation of fiber such as cotton relies heavily on the use of man-made fertilizers, which release greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide. The release of carbon dioxide from fertilizer is greater than that of any other aspect of farming, while the release of nitrous oxide from fertilizer is greater than in any other industry (“A to Z”). Greenhouse gases are also released during the energy intensive construction of textiles and through the extensive transportation necessary for bringing fibers from the field to the factory and finally to retail. High school students may have learned about climate change in a biology class but as they exit Forever 21 with a plastic bag full of stylish clothes, they may never wear more than twice, they are often oblivious to their contribution to the collective carbon footprint. Perhaps, their only concerns were the price and the fit of the clothing.

Fashion shows are yet another way in which the industry leaves behind an extensive trail of greenhouse gas emissions. Behind the glittering public image of Hong Kong Fashion week is a carbon footprint estimated at forty-nine million pounds of carbon. This figure can be likened to the amount of carbon generated by twelve hundred average Americans over the course of a year. The estimated carbon footprint includes the transportation and accommodations for the buyers and exhibitors who attend the four-day event, but disregards the energy expended in the manufacture of the garments at the show as well as the

infrastructure needed to support the affair (King). Leslie Hoffman, executive director of Earth Pledge observes the potential for change:

A lot of fashion shows actually use materials only once. When you think about the fact that the show itself is happening for a short period of time, it really does make sense to think about where materials are being sourced from, how they can be put to use again instead of thrown away and left behind.

(qtd. in King)

Clearly, the fashion industry's carbon footprint is quite substantial, but that is not all. As Hoffman has observed, the fashion industry and the consumers who support it also contribute to massive accumulations of cast-off clothing.

Textile Waste

In 2010, Cline recalls defining the biggest fashion trends of the past three decades with a group of friends. While it was easy to pin down the trends of the Eighties and Nineties, the friends struggled to identify the trends over the course of the last ten years.

We went back and forth for an hour trying to come up with the defining trend of the 2000s – skinny jeans, knee-high boots, oversize sunglasses were all suggested – before deciding the biggest style trend of that decade was trends themselves – too many to count, changing ever-faster, challenging us to keep up. (102)

The extreme trendiness of today's clothes combined with the fact that they were never intended to last means that the creation of waste is inevitable. Thanks in part to fast-fashion; Americans are not only buying huge amounts of clothing each year (approximately twenty billion garments, or one item per person per week) so too are they throwing them away (3).

Boston College professor Juliet Schor laments: “Excessive accumulation is characterized by high rates of discard, low rates of utilization of existing inventories of garments, rapid fashion cycles and a failure to wear garments through their useful life cycles” (qtd. in Cox). According to the Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Solid Waste, Americans throw away more than sixty-eight pounds of clothing and textiles per person per year (Claudio A451). This amounts to more than twelve million tons of unwanted textiles clogging up landfills across the United States (Cline 122).

In the five boroughs of New York City alone, at least one hundred ninety-three thousand tons of textiles are disposed of on a yearly basis. Almost six percent of New York City’s residential waste is comprised of clothing and linens. The large-scale textile waste comes at a cost to taxpayers and the health of the planet (“Material Mondays”).

In addition to the twelve million tons of clothing that the public discards each year there is also the huge quantity of clothing donated to charities. Cline used to believe: “...for every garment I grew bored of and donated, there was either some poor, shivering person in need of it or a thrifty woman out there thrilled to give it a second life” (127). Cline was forced to face her own naïveté upon learning that the Quincy Street Salvation Army in Brooklyn, alone, processes five tons of donated clothes each *day* and even more during the Holiday season (120). Even before World War II, charities have been inundated with more items than they could ever possibly sell. Less than twenty percent of the donated clothing charities receive is sold through the charity’s thrift store (128). The majority of textiles that the thrift stores cannot resell are exported to African countries such as Zambia and Tanzania where they are purchased as one hundred pound bales. According to the International Trade Commission, between 1989 and 2003 America’s export of post-consumer textiles tripled to

seven billion pounds per year (Claudio A452). Post-consumer clothing deemed unfit for resale overseas is often downcycled into industrial wiping rags (Cline 135).

Africa's acceptance of America's unwanted clothing appears to be a win-win situation for now; however, some are beginning to wonder how long this symbiotic relationship will last. With instances of unethical textile recyclers stuffing irreparable clothing deep inside bales, the low quality of even the best post-consumer items and the fact that African incomes are on the rise, it is becoming evident that Americans may soon have to face the consequences of their own overconsumption (Cline 136).

Polluted Soil and Waterways

Although it seems reasonable to assume that textiles, being fibrous in nature should easily decompose in our landfills, this is not the case for synthetics such as polyester. Polyester, like many other synthetic materials, does not easily biodegrade. Theoretically, polyester can last for at least two hundred years in a landfill ("A to Z").

Consumers may decide whether they will recycle a garment or throw it away, typically, before the item has been worn through its useful life cycle; yet the impact of creating that item is all too often ignored. Cline points out: "Even though plastic can be reused, making it is not environmentally benign. Disturbingly, about half our wardrobe is now made of plastic, in the form of polyester" (123). The production of polyester causes severe environmental damage. An estimated twenty-three thousand barrels of oil a day is required for the manufacture of polyester worldwide (Kruger 63). "Producing polyester leads to emissions of heavy metals, cobalt and manganese salts, sodium bromide, titanium dioxide, antimony oxide and acetaldehyde" ("A to Z").

Synthetic fabrics are not the only materials that lead to the emission of toxins during production; indeed, the customary farming practices of wool and cotton pose serious risks to humans and the environment as well. According to the Sustainable Cotton Project,

A third of a pound of pesticides, which contain known and suspected carcinogens, are used to make a simple cotton T-shirt. And a disproportionate 25 percent of all pesticides and fertilizers are used on cotton. Conventional wool comes from sheep that are plunged into a pool of pesticides, often containing organophosphates to kill lice and parasites. After the wool is sheared and scoured, pesticide residue in the sludge is prone to pollute waterways downstream from the farms and processing plants. (qtd. in Gershon)

Rayon, another renewable resource, like cotton, is also an environmental hazard. Wood pulp from mature forests and/or bamboo is pushed through a solution of carbon disulfide; the most commonly used solvent, and is a substance known to cause reproductive problems in humans. There is only a fifty percent recovery rate of carbon disulfide, which means the remaining fifty percent is released into the air and water. Sodium hydroxide and sulfuric acid, two additional suspected toxins, are also necessary in the production of rayon (“On Bamboo” 1). The manufacture of leather, also considered a natural and renewable resource by many, is very energy intensive, requires copious amounts of water and the use of toxic chemicals and heavy metals (Cox). Vegetable tanned leather does not require the use of chromium, a known carcinogen, yet the other two hundred and forty-nine chemicals routinely used in the tanning process are still employed. Such chemicals include cadmium, cobalt, copper, antimony, cyanide, barium, lead, selenium, mercury, zinc, polychlorinated

biphenyls (PCBs), nickel, and formaldehyde (Grossman and Van Dusen). Without this cocktail of toxic chemicals, leather would begin to biodegrade, therefore making it worthless to the fashion industry and consumers alike.

Organic fibers have drawbacks too. Crop yields tend to be lower when pesticides are not used. Therefore, if organic cotton were to replace conventionally grown cotton on a global scale additional ecosystems would be destroyed in an effort to dedicate more land to farming. More water would be needed in order to grow the organic version of this notoriously thirsty plant and that would leave many natural water sources depleted and further ruin soils through salinization (Cox).

The toll on the environment does not stop at the production of fibers. The dyeing process yields the most damage. Dye effluents include dangerous heavy metals such as copper, cobalt, zinc, lead, antimony, silver, nickel, chromium, cadmium or mercury. While these dyes have been known to pass through wastewater treatment systems undetected, the brightly colored drinking water flowing from the taps of Indian villages near dyeing plants is hard to miss (Cox).

Preparing fibers—even natural, renewable ones—into wearable textiles results in the average release of over eight thousand different chemicals. Many of these chemicals erode soil, reduce soil fertility and pollute run-off water for miles around. The buildup of pollution in bodies of water harms or destroys aquatic life and birds and leads to a reduction in biodiversity (“A to Z”).

A real world example of environmental degradation caused by fiber production is the plight of the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan. While the situation there does not receive the attention an oil spill or nuclear meltdown would, the accruing devastation is noteworthy. From 1960

to 2000, state-run cotton farms just about depleted the rivers that flow into the Aral Sea, the fourth-largest inland sea in the world. With the water volume diminished by nearly eighty percent, a host of environmental problems has occurred. What was once a lush and productive region has become dry and desert-like. Moreover, the reduction in water from the Aral Sea has caused a change in the local climate. The area now experiences shorter, hotter summers, colder winters, less rainfall and massive dust storms that churn up and spread pesticides and other agricultural chemicals. As these toxins enter the air and contaminate the soil, and what little water is left, a slew of public health problems have ensued (Leonard and Conrad 46).

CHAPTER 3

The Impact of Clothing Production and Consumption on Animals

While the harm done to aquatic creatures is an indirect consequence of clothing production, the clothing industry directly and adversely affects the lives of billions of additional animals annually. These unlucky beings possess fibers that are sought after by the clothing industry and individuals alike. Marc Ian Barasch, author of *Field Notes on the Compassionate Life – a Search for the Soul of Kindness*, reflects upon the revelation he had when he first considered the animal behind the product:

My girlfriend...occasionally springs her own pop-quiz experiments on me. Driving around in her car one mid-December day, she playfully told me, “Okay, one of your really big Christmas presents is in the trunk. If you can guess what it is, I’ll give it to you right now.” [...] A picture immediately rose in my mind: a dead, gutted, still bloody sheep carcass lying crossways in the car’s trunk. I was baffled. “You got me, uh...a year’s supply of *mutton*?” She pulled the car over, opened the trunk. In it lay a nylon garment bag. She unzipped it to reveal an ankle-length, fleece-lined coat. “Sheepskin,” she said. “Do you *love* it?” [...] I asked apologetically if she could return the coat; I just couldn’t strut around wrapped in a dead sheep. Though it had never bothered me before, the idea of turning living beings into fashion statements now seemed a little barbarous. (321)

Why is such an epiphany so uncommon in mainstream society? The answer can be summarized by a quote from the article, “What Humans Owe to Animals”, published in *The Economist*: “It is all very well to say that individuals must wrestle with their consciences-

but only if their consciences are awake and informed. Industrial society, alas, hides animals' suffering" (qtd. in Sunstein 217). Behind the closed doors of industry, billions of non-human animals are subjected to physical and psychological pain and death during the process of collecting their fibers for production. The multibillion-dollar meat industry receives financial backing from the skins it sells. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' 2002 database, ten percent of the slaughtered animal's value is in the processing of hides as leather. Most leather comes from cows, pigs, goats and sheep in developing nations such as India and China. Animal welfare laws are either non-existent or not enforced in these countries ("Leather"). The United States has an Animal Welfare Act, yet the estimated ten billion American farm animals that go to slaughter each year are excluded from the protections the act enforces (Baur 187). A citizen could be arrested for doing to a dog or cat what slaughterhouses routinely do to cows, pigs and chickens.

The only law that applies to farm animals (excluding rabbits and poultry) is the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, which states that cattle, pigs and most other mammals must be rendered unconscious and incapable of feeling pain prior to slaughter (Baur 187). In theory, this law intends to make the death of farm animals more civilized; however, the law is often violated when slaughterhouse workers, struggling to keep up with the rapid pace of animals moving through their production line (approximately one pig every three to four seconds) fail to successfully stun the animal (Baur 134). When slaughterhouse employees do not effectively pierce the animal's brain with a captive bullet, the animal is dismembered while still conscious. *Washington Post* reported on April 10, 2001 a gruesome scene: "Hogs...are dunked in tanks of hot water after they are stunned to soften the hides for skinning. As a result, a botched stunning condemns some hogs to being scalded and

drowned. Secret videotape from an Iowa pork plant shows hogs squealing and kicking as they are lowered into the water” (Warrick). While farm animals often suffer miserable deaths, their lives are often equally unpleasant.

The traditional manner of animal husbandry, in which farm animals lived in the company of their own kind in big, open pastures, is no longer profitable. To stay competitive, farmers frequently resort to cramming thousands of animals into large, windowless, metal sheds or feedlots devoid of grass. According to veterinarian, Dr. Michael Fox, the farm animals that have it the worst are the breeding sows. He says:

When they are ready to give birth, they are put into metal farrowing crates that similarly restrict almost all activities: They can only stand up, lie down with difficulty, eat, drink and evacuate. Such conditions would shock muckrakers like Upton Sinclair far more than anything they actually envisioned at the Chicago abattoirs in the early 1900s. [...] Sows normally make a nest before they give birth. Frustration or privation of this and other basic instincts can cause stress and abnormal “neurotic” behavior patterns: excessive chewing or chomping on the bars of the crate or pen, for example. (30)

The scale of utilizing animals for food and clothing manufacturing has grown exponentially since the time Sinclair wrote *The Jungle*. As demand for these goods has increased, the care and treatment of these sentient beings has declined.

Few employees are needed to run even the largest of operations because the whole process of feeding, watering, and cleaning can be done mechanically (Baur 92). Modern agricultural equipment allows farmers to maximize output while keeping operational costs low. Animals increasingly pay the price for today’s efficiency in agribusiness. Factory

farms tend to be loud, filthy places that reek of ammonia from the build up of animal excrements. Without exercise and the ability to socialize and exhibit species-specific behaviors the animals may become aggressive. In an effort to inhibit the animals from harming one another (which could cause a loss in revenue) cattle and goats are de-horned and swine may have their tails docked and the ends of their teeth removed to keep other pigs from biting them. Again, because the general well-being of the animal is not a priority, these procedures, along with castration, are done without the use of painkillers (Sunstein 109).

Thanks in part to genetic engineering, today's sheep produce more wool than if they lived in the wild. In fact, feral sheep only produce enough wool to survive in their natural habitat. Shearing sheep has become necessary because domesticated sheep have been bred to produce more wool; therefore, leading to larger profits for farmers.

Sheep are shorn in the early spring, which can put the animals at risk if temperatures unexpectedly plummet. Their wool is shorn off forcefully and with great speed, oftentimes resulting in injury to the animal. Further injury occurs from a practice popular in Australia where half of all the merino wool in the world is produced. "Mulesing", as it is called, involves cutting off the wrinkled flesh around the hindquarters of lambs, in an effort to keep parasites from settling and laying eggs in the folds of skin. Like most other modern day farm practices, mulesing, is done without the use of anesthesia (Wells). The extensive research that has enabled mass production of wool comes at the expense of the treatment of the animal.

In *Cruelty-Free Consumption in New Zealand: A National Report on the Perspectives and Experiences of Vegetarians & Other Ethical Consumers*, one citizen made reference to the rough treatment of sheep during the shearing process: "I was shocked at times by the

brutality of farming. I used to help in the woolshed and was sickened if there was a rough shearer who cut the sheep.” Another participant in this study spoke of the unsettling dichotomy of how the media presents the unusual deaths of thousands of lambs in New Zealand and the way new farming practices may actually be contributing to these deaths:

I see New Zealand as a country that severely exploits animals. Every year the news reporters speak of the uncharacteristic freezing weather that has contributed to the deaths of thousands of lambs. We are told how badly this affects the farmers’ incomes and the economy of our country. Sympathy is ladled on the farmers who could avoid this annual tragedy by providing adequate care and shelter or not artificially inducing two lambing productions in one season[...] (Potts and White)

Sheep that no longer produce the highest quality wool are typically sent to slaughter. In the case of shearling, young sheep are sent to slaughter soon after their wool has been shorn off for the first time. Oftentimes consumers are misinformed about what shearling actually is (“Shearling”). During a discussion I had with high school students about factory farming, one student mentioned that no matter how fashionable and practical “Ugg” boots may be, she will never wear them because they are made from sheepskin. A number of girls, shocked by the statement, looked down at their beloved boots. They knew the soft fleece inside the boots came from sheep, but they assumed it was wool that had been shorn off. They did not realize, however, the sheep had been skinned for the sake of fashionable footwear.

Down comes from fowl typically raised on factory farms. The soft, fuzzy feathers from the breasts of geese and ducks are forcibly removed, beginning at ten weeks old. Live

geese and ducks must be restrained during this stressful and painful procedure. The process can be repeated every six weeks and will, therefore, occur three to five times over the bird's unnaturally short lifespan. Down can be collected one last time after the bird has been slaughtered for meat or *fois gras* ("Down and Feathers").

Like the farm animal industry, the fur industry has found it more profitable to house and "care" for their animals in a mechanized system. The fur industry slaughters more than fifty million animals each year. Minks, foxes, rabbits, chinchillas, raccoon dogs, lynxes and other undomesticated animals are now raised on factory farms where they live out their traumatized existence in small, wire cages. Their nutritional needs are rarely met and they suffer from a lack of clean water, fear and illness. With great emphasis placed on keeping the animal skins, known as pelts, intact for production, fur farmers kill their animals by gassing, suffocating, poisoning and electrocuting them.

Fifteen percent of the animals utilized by the fur industry are wild animals caught in body-crushing steel traps. Frantic and in extreme pain, these animals struggle to free themselves by gnawing off their own limbs. Trappers do not typically check their traps daily; leaving the catch to suffer for several days at a time. The traps cannot distinguish between animals prized by the fur industry and "non-target animals" such as dogs, cats and endangered species. Therefore, many of the millions of animals caught by traps were never intended to be caught in the first place. All too often the catch includes household pets such as dogs and cats ("Fur Production").

Angora rabbits, though not killed for their fur, live out a lonely and painful existence confined to small wire cages. Bone deformities and injured footpads are common ailments that result from living in cramped cages with wire mesh floors. Injury and severe distress

often occur while these sensitive creatures are forcibly restrained during the fur shaving process. Male angora rabbits are culled from the production line soon after birth because they are poor fur producers (“Cruel Wears”). The term cull, when used in reference to farm animals, is a synonym for kill. Using industrial words such as “cull” perpetuates society’s blindness to the suffering of animals.

In addition to the well-documented, systematic, wide-scale cruelty endured by animals on factory farms, and the fact that these farms also degrade the environment by polluting waterways with antibiotics, hormones, pesticides and fecal matter a United Nations report suggests that utilizing animals in this way (for food or fiber) is not sustainable. The report, published evidence in 2006 that the livestock sector releases more greenhouse gas emissions than those of all of the cars and trucks in the world combined (Steinfeld et al xxi).

The most prevalent animal fibers worn by my students include wool, sheepskin and leather; however, fur appears to be making a comeback after being shunned throughout the Nineties. According to Anne De Courcy, in an online Daily Mail article, “All the signs are that whatever the protesters say - farmed fur - is back, heralding a change in ethos [...] perhaps, it is because young people are reacting against the political correctness of the Nineties and are tired of being told what to do” (“Fur Claws”). Adroitly, De Courcy reminds us that consumers do not readily condemn items just because they are told they should. Taking a stand against a product is something individuals have to come to on their own.

Personal Reflection

During the cold winter months in upstate, New York, the young people I work with wear coats insulated with down and occasionally trimmed with fur. This past winter, I found it nearly impossible to avoid down in my search for a heavy coat. Skirting a raccoon or

rabbit fur trimmed hood was somewhat easier to do, but it was readily available to anyone who may have been tempted by its soft, luxurious feel.

Determined to find a coat that reflected my morals and values, I decided the coat had to be devoid of animal fibers, made of sustainable materials and sweatshop free. Ultimately, locating such a coat at a consignment shop would have been the best solution. In my way of thinking, purchasing a second-hand item negates anything unsustainable about the way it was originally created. After about five unsuccessful visits to several local consignments shops, I determined I would have to buy a brand new coat.

After much searching online, I finally found a thick coat made of hemp and fully lined with “faux fur” created from recycled soda bottles. I called the retailer to find out where the coat was made and was assured that because the tag said designed in Holland it must have been made there too. Still skeptical, I went back to the internet, but still could not find any more information about the country of origin. Nearly four hundred dollars later (exorbitantly more than I ever would have paid prior to writing this thesis) and I had a sustainable, not to mention beautifully designed winter coat. I was thrilled...until the coat arrived and I had the opportunity to read the tags and label myself: made in China. The designer of this coat clearly cared about the environment and animals but overlooked the treatment of their fellow human beings in an effort to keep the cost of labor down.

CHAPTER 4

The Impact of Clothing Production and Consumption on Human Beings

This we know – the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. All life on Earth is connected. – Chief Seattle

(qtd. in Fox 136)

Labor Force

When we, as a society, harm the environment and animals, we inevitably harm ourselves, too. While many individuals may be able to admire a handsome pair of leather shoes or a warm, down coat without thinking about the death of the animal, the same cannot be said for slaughterhouse workers. The work is intense and dangerous, both physically and psychologically. The pay is meager considering what the employees do on a daily basis coupled with the fact that the rate of meat production has increased over the years. Traditionally, slaughterhouse employees benefitted from higher salaries than those employed by manufacturing companies. By 1983, this was no longer the case and salaries have only continued to plummet. By 2006, the average slaughterhouse worker made \$10.43 per hour (\$21,690 per year) (Dillard 2).

In her 1997 expose *Slaughterhouse*, Gail Eisnitz interviewed dozens of slaughterhouse workers about their experiences. An employee of Morrell hog slaughterhouse confessed: “People go into Morrell expecting respect and good working conditions. They come out with carpal tunnel, tendinitis, alcoholism, you name it, because they’re under

incredible pressure and they're expected to perform under intolerable conditions. Or they develop a sadistic sense of reality" (94). The "incredible pressure" the employee refers to is directly related to keeping up with the feverish pace on the kill floor. *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert wrote the following after his visit at Smithfield's Tar Heel, North Carolina pork processing plant where thirty-two thousand hogs are killed daily: "The work is brutal beyond imagining. Company officials will tell you everything is fine, but serious injuries abound...the processing line on the kill floor moves hogs past the workers at the dizzying rate of one every three or four seconds" (qtd. in Baur 134).

In such a grueling industry, the turnover rate of employees is exceedingly high. One slaughterhouse worker had this to say:

....The past month, two workers made a mess in their pants because they were not allowed to use the bathroom even on an emergency basis. We have been told that if we use the bathroom outside of the break time, that the plant doors are open and we can leave because other workers can be hired in our place right away. Sometimes it's worse than being a slave. (Eisnitz 275)

At the time of this investigation the employees at Smithfield's had no union protection and were dismissed from the job if they became injured or could no longer keep up with the fast pace (Baur 134). Each year, twenty-five percent of slaughterhouse employees must leave their jobs due to illness and injury (Dillard 3). With extremely high turnover rates, the workforce is often not highly trained. Language barriers may further impede the quality of training new employees receive since a great many slaughterhouse workers are immigrants and/or undocumented workers (Baur 134). When Eisnitz asked a slaughterhouse employee about the training involved in learning to stun a hog, he replied: "Training? Someone tells

the stun operator, ‘You put the stunner on the hog.’ End of training.” Not surprisingly, these employees endure the sight of numerous animals that begin the slaughter process while still alive (83).

Individuals who bear witness to such daily brutality in the work place often become desensitized to violence and may, over time, lose the ability to empathize with weaker beings. Sociology student Amy J. Fitzgerald presented a link between counties with slaughterhouses and elevated crime rates in her dissertation. While some may argue that slaughterhouses are generally found in low income, crime-ridden, urban areas to begin with, Fitzgerald discovered that when compared with other industries, the slaughterhouse industry had a greater effect on community crime rates (Shapiro). Clearly, slaughterhouses have a negative impact on the health and psychological well-being of their employees and there is growing evidence to suggest that their very existence has the ability to cast a pall over entire communities.

Agriculture workers who toil in the fields face occupational risks as well. The greatest threat to their health is pesticide poisoning. Conventional cotton farmers in the United States apply close to “one third of a pound of fertilizers and pesticides for every pound of cotton actually harvested” (Leonard and Conrad 46). The pesticides are often a mix of toxins created specifically to kill unwanted plants, insects and fungi. These poisons are commonly regarded as the most toxic chemicals and cancer-causing substances found today. Eerily, the original function of these toxins was as nerve agents and insecticides during times of war. Not surprisingly, cotton farmers frequently complain of neurological and vision problems.

Outside of the United States, agricultural workers suffer from unregulated pesticide use. In developing nations, spills and poisonings occur even more frequently because workers are forced to use archaic, often precarious equipment (Leonard and Conrad 47). According to the World Health Organization, between two and five million agricultural workers are poisoned annually with forty thousand cases proving fatal (Forastieri).

The exposure to toxins goes beyond the fields. Factory workers who process the raw materials into fabrics and textiles come into contact with sodium hydroxide, benzene, chlorine, heavy metals, formaldehyde, fixing agents, sulfuric acid, urea resins, bromines, sulfonamides and halogens in an effort to keep the fabric soft, fireproof and resistant to stains, odors and excessive wrinkling. These chemicals have been associated with cancer, memory loss and difficulty sleeping and concentrating (Leonard and Conrad 48). The majority of factory workers are women of reproductive age. According to Bayard Roberts, author of “Reproductive Health Services for Garment Factory Workers in Bangladesh”:

Over the last decade, the number of garment factories in Bangladesh has increased rapidly in response to foreign demand for cheap labour and materials. The factories employ around 1.5 million workers, most of them young women of reproductive age. Many of these women suffer from chronic ill health. (qtd. in Leonard)

Leather workers are exposed to numerous toxins and heavy metals through the chrome-tanning process. Not surprisingly, high cancer rates among leather industry employees abound (“A to Z”). Chromium is so dangerous in fact, that when Michael Braungart, co-author of *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way we Make Things*, visited a European chromium extraction factory he learned that the factory only employed men over the age of

fifty because of the likelihood of their developing cancer after twenty years of frequent chromium exposure (13).

Of all the segments of the clothing industry, the plight of the garment worker receives the most media attention. The awareness however, has done little to improve the circumstances of these young women often from China and Bangladesh. For example, garment workers typically work long hours under appalling conditions for as little as 12-18 cents per hour (Claudio A450). This exploitation amounts to a mere one-half percent of the retail value of a particular article of clothing (“Eco Fashion”). A War on Want report found that the garment workers of Bangladesh frequently spend eighty hours a week carrying out repetitive, menial labor in factories where they are exposed to various poisons, excessive heat and noise levels, and violence. Trade unions are a rarity, and short-term contracts are all too common (“A to Z”).

Annie Leonard and Ariane Conrad, authors of *The Story of Stuff*, interviewed Haitian women, employed by Disney who, despite the sexual harassment, exhausting pressure and unsafe work environments feared losing their jobs above all else. Other opportunities just did not exist for these women. In 2009, \$3.75 per day was enough to guarantee the employees and their families a slow starvation rather than a quick one (49-50).

Cline visited the garment industry in China and was surprised by the modern, organized and clean factories. After years of hearing how bad the conditions were for Chinese garment workers, she was left wondering if Westerners, like herself, are afforded a glimpse into only the pristine factories (150). Lest one mistakenly believe that sweatshop conditions in China are obsolete, labor unions are prohibited which in essence guarantees that

wages will not rise. Many Chinese garment workers live in dorms provided by the factory because of the disparity between housing costs and what they earn. A number of these factories even charge their employees for food and a bed. Chinese garment workers begin their day at 7:45 a.m. and work until 9:30 p.m. or later if it happens to be their busy season. When it was discovered that factory employees were working nearly one hundred hours a month over China's legal limit, factories were forced to give their employees one day off a week instead (178-179).

American clothing companies who send their clothing orders overseas do not actually own the factories producing the clothing. Therefore, they do not feel they can be held accountable for the way garment workers are exploited. American Apparel, a United States clothing retailer that prides itself on hiring domestic labor, owning its own factories, providing employees with health insurance and even stock options, still finds ways to get around paying workers a fair wage. In fact, one employee admitted to Cline that to make minimum wage she works six ten-hour days a week and still cannot afford the retailer's price for the clothing she creates (47).

Cheap clothing cannot be created without cheap labor. The demand for inexpensively manufactured apparel by American retailers and consumers fuels the rise in Asian imports. As fast-fashion continues, so too will the practice of paying employees a wage they can barely survive on. This is especially true in the era of globalization.

Globalization

Why are those, who are involved in the production and manufacture of clothing, paid such meager salaries for the repetitive, tedious, oftentimes dangerous work they do? A brief look at the history of the American textile industry during the twentieth century brings the

answer to light. In the early twentieth century, the garment industry employed more New York City residents than any other business sector. Most employees were young women who earned six dollars a week after working seven thirteen hour days in a row. In 1909, twenty thousand garment workers took to the New York City streets and insisted on better pay and working conditions. The “Strike of 20,000” followed by the reprehensible Triangle garment factory fire, two years later, prompted the writing and passing of more than two dozen workplace safety and employment laws (Cline 142).

By the Thirties and Forties, the fashion industry began to spread down into the Southern states and out to the West Coast where employees were willing to work for lower wages. Those willing to work for the lowest wages of all, however, were outside of the United States where labor laws were non-existent. Cotton clothing from Japan began to trickle in during the Fifties. By the Sixties America was importing clothing from Hong Kong, Pakistan and India. Communication barriers made it difficult to control the quality of imported garments early on, which limited the quantity of imported garments coming into the United States. By the mid Sixties, only five percent of all clothing sold in the United States was made overseas (Cline 41-42).

As the twentieth century ended, the sale of imported garments had skyrocketed. Andy Ward, born into a family of American clothing factory owners, believes: “When everybody went offshore to the Orient, we opened Pandora’s box. After that, you couldn’t manufacture clothing without being in Asia...” (qtd. in Cline 41). While fifty percent of American clothing was still made domestically during the mid-Nineties, large clothing companies such as Gap and Nike were reconfiguring themselves as solely the designers and marketers of their products. Realizing it was no longer competitive to manufacture their own

goods, they willingly contracted out their production to factories overseas where labor costs were less than one percent of the retail price of the finished clothes (53).

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 further pushed the manufacture of clothing outside of the United States. The removal of duties on exports caused entire American clothing factories to move their businesses to Mexico where employees willingly accepted lower wages than those in Los Angeles. Garment workers in Los Angeles paid the price for NAFTA. Tens of thousands of employees were forced out of work and those who were able to hold onto their jobs had to accept pay cuts. The American garment industry was devastated yet again in 1995 when the World Trade Organization announced that developed countries benefitted from the quotas established by the Multi Fibre Arrangement (MFA). A decade-long phasing out of the MFA ensued. In 2005, because of the termination of the MFA, China's exportation of cotton pants and shirts to the United States grew by over one thousand percent. As a result, additional American garment factories were forced to close and nearly sixteen thousand jobs were lost (Cline 54-55).

According to Cline:

The United States now makes two percent of the clothing its consumers purchase [...] We have chosen low-priced clothes made in other countries, and the loss of our garment trades has contributed to a decline in domestic wages, the loss of the middle class, and the problem of unemployment, especially for those at the bottom of the economic ladder. (5)

In theory, economic globalization sounds like a positive system in which all nations have the opportunity to prosper. Clearly, the attempt to remove obstacles in trade, communication and cultural exchange has not led to the wealth of all nations. Instead, corporations, whose

priority is to build bigger profits, have done just that at the expense of human beings, animals and the environment. In hindsight, the early twentieth century New York City garment industry was a microcosm of what is now happening on a global scale.

The Role of the Media in Consumerism

Those involved in the production and manufacture of clothing are not the only individuals whose health and well-being are negatively impacted by the traditional fashion industry. The consumers, oftentimes unknowingly, suffer as well. Very few people are immune to the onslaught of media and cultural messages received on a daily basis. These messages, created to drive up profits in America's free-market society, offer consumers products that make them feel better about themselves, their lives and their choices. These messages generate feelings of self-doubt and a sense of false need amongst consumers as they set out to convince us that we can meet immaterial needs (such as acceptance, love, belonging) with material goods (such as clothing and accessories). Leonard and Conrad explain:

While consumption means acquiring and using goods and services to meet one's needs, consumerism is the particular relationship to consumption in which we seek to meet our emotional and social needs through shopping, and we define and demonstrate our self-worth through the Stuff we own. And overconsumption is when we take far more resources than we need and then the planet can sustain, as is the case in most of the United States as well as a growing number of other countries. Consumerism is about excess, about losing sight of what's important in the quest for Stuff. (145)

Shopping is considered a form of entertainment for a great many Americans, especially women and teenage girls. According to the New Roadmap Foundation, an organization working to decrease consumption in the United States, over ninety percent of teenage girls consider shopping their favorite activity (Andrews 16). Consumers have many different reasons. Some see shopping as a temporary escape from reality; others attempt to satiate feelings of emptiness, or rely on their purchases to serve as symbols of personal success (57-58).

With fast-fashion on the rise, high-class status is now achievable by those who purchase the largest *volume* of clothing and change their outfits most often. Today's trendsetters aspire never to repeat an outfit. Cline observes, "Fashion is publicly expressed. Everyone can see who is out of step. And keeping up with the latest styles now demands that we shop constantly" (7-8). Retailers have learned they can increase revenue by frequently changing the look and style of clothing. This strategy is referred to as "perceived obsolescence" by marketers. The ever-changing pant-leg styles (i.e.: wide, flared, skinny), heel styles and fashionable colors of items entice consumers to throw away last week's styles and stock up on what is popular today. Leonard and Conrad have found that: "Retailers and producers want you to believe that you can't wear the same color or cut from one week to the next and that you'll be less cool, less savvy, and less desirable if you do" (163). This sort of manipulation affects consumers psychologically and creates a fixation with buying new products.

Unfortunately, America's consumerist tendencies will never give the lasting contentment many individuals are seeking. Lasting happiness comes from within, not from

luxuries, lavish items, or bags full of bargains scored at a clearance sale. Dr. Tal Ben – Shahar, Harvard Professor and author of *Happier* explains:

While levels of material prosperity are on the rise, so are levels of depression. Even though our generation – in most Western countries as well as in an increasing number of places in the East – is wealthier than previous generations, we are not happier for it. (Preface x)

The temporary pleasure that shopping brings to individuals has caused an obsession with, and in some cases, even an addiction to consumption.

Consumerism is not new. The conservation efforts of textiles by both manufacturers and individuals during World War I waned during the 1920s. As the United States prepared for World War II, industrialization and employment rose; the production and consumption of clothing grew by almost fifteen percent and to this day continues to climb (Claudio A451).

Today, the deftness and speed of technology along with the unprecedented world population growth, are a cause for alarm. Evidence is growing that we cannot continue to run a linear system of production, consumption and disposal on a planet with limited resources. Consider this scenerio: according to Sal Giardina, adjunct professor at the Fashion Institute of Technology and director of luxury custom men’s suit company called Nantsun America, “If every man, woman and child in China bought two pairs of wool socks, there would be no more wool left in the world” (qtd. in Cline 173). As China’s consumer class grows and those living in developing nations get a taste of the Western lifestyle, the environmental and social impacts of the fashion industry will undoubtedly rise. Now more than ever, a paradigm shift in the way individuals view their clothing is needed. In forging

ahead, society could benefit by reflecting on the way members of the counter-culture movement of the early twentieth century obtained their clothing.

CHAPTER 5

The Bohemian Perspective

From a historical perspective, we can see that these problems transcend our time. At the end of the nineteenth century, agrarian culture was being stamped out by the emergence of industrial corporations and urban life - this period in America's history was coined the "Gilded Age." Beneath the dazzling surface of modernization was a time of greed, overconsumption, political scandal, questionable business practices and dangerous working conditions for factory employees (Mintz and McNeil). The industrialization of the 1890s introduced ready-made clothing to the market place in department stores, specialty shops and mail order catalogs. Individuals no longer relied on custom tailoring, dressmaking and home sewing to acquire clothing (Farrell-Beck and Parsons 2).

Not everyone was thrilled with the so-called "conveniences" that industrialization had to offer to Americans. Artists and intellectuals looking to escape the confines of traditional society settled in Greenwich Village, a small, low rent district below 14th Street in lower Manhattan, New York (Welters and Cunningham 33-34). These "Bohemians" perceived technology and science as agents of unstoppable change and enemies of nature. They feared the loss of self and identity to machines (Arnold 26-27).

The non-conformist women of Greenwich Village denounced censorship, societal morals and customary dress. They chose garments that hung free from the waist such as the sack and the smock and turned to the art of China and Japan for inspiration ("From the Archives"). Two distinct Bohemian styles for women emerged: artistic dress and the emancipated sacks worn by the more politically charged feminists.

The artistic Bohemian sect wore tunics, ornately embroidered peasant tops, colorful smocks, batiks, and long robes of silk. According to Saville, “The idea of the body as a shrine and expressing oneself through art, dance movement and sensuality facilitated the use of scarves, beads, robes, cropped hair and cosmetics”. Some of the artistic Bohemian women used lipstick and eyeliner in an attempt to look vampy and exotic. They also preferred large earrings and thick headbands. The fashion choices of the artistic dressing Bohemians echoed the avant-garde styles of the time including Fortuny fashions, Eastern harem dress and medieval styles.

The radical feminists preferred drab colored jumpers, and ankle-skimming sacks made from natural fibers (Saville). Raymond Duncan, a rebellious, eccentric artist and feminist was known for dressing in this manner. He created clothing for himself and his sister Isadora, the “Mother of Modern Dance”. Duncan was obsessed with Greek dress and had an immense appreciation for nature and the handmade alternatives to products that were mass produced. He was known for creating clothing from the wool he spun from his own sheep. Bohemians like Raymond Duncan are considered the precursors of the ethical approaches to fashion taking place today (Herman).

In addition to seeking liberation from restrictive clothing, Bohemian women sought to demonstrate their distaste for capitalism and industrialism through their fashion choices. The artistic smock quickly became a Greenwich Village staple. The smock came in bold, appealing colors, was relatively inexpensive and, like all other garments worn by the Bohemians, it was made by hand by craftsmen (Saville). As the cost of materials rose in World War I, local artisans and craftsmen, who created the hand-made clothing worn by the Bohemians of Greenwich Village, could not compete with the big industries. Therefore,

World War I arguably brought about the end of artistic dress in the early twentieth century (“Aesthetes”).

Yet Bohemian culture persists in many pockets throughout the world today. A way of life and a state of mind, Bohemianism is about being unrestricted, creative and free while protecting the disenfranchised and eschewing the mass-market consumerist culture that has had a dominant presence in the western world since the late nineteenth century (Stover 12-13). With such values, it is not hard to see why members of today’s slow fashion movement, anti-consumer movement and do-it-yourself (DIY) culture are considered modern day Bohemians.

CHAPTER 6

The Slow Fashion Movement

The slow fashion movement is a sustainable and ethical approach to creating and consuming clothing and is based on the ideals of the slow food movement, initiated in Bra, Italy in 1986. Founder Carlo Petrini's slow food motto: "Good, clean, and fair" offered another approach to thoughtlessly consuming massive amounts of corn syrup and unconsciously supporting agribusiness (Mayor). Both the slow food movement and slow fashion movement value quality over quantity, transparent, fair production systems and the use of local resources. According to eco-designer, Kate Fletcher, "Slow fashion is about designing, producing, consuming and living better." Furthermore, "Slow fashion is about choice, information, cultural diversity, and identity" (61). When clothing is applied to the slow movement model, pleasure and fashion are united with awareness and responsibility. High quality garments created in a transparent production system are without a doubt more expensive than cheap, disposable ones, but the idea is that they will be treasured for years to come (Clark 436-437).

Retailers

According to Paul Hawken, "The future belongs to those who understand that doing more with less is compassionate, prosperous, and enduring, and thus more intelligent, even competitive" (qtd. in Romig). Environmental degradation costs businesses more money in the end.

Beyond the lofty talk, reducing a company's output of greenhouse gases and encouraging "responsible" use of resources can also mean cutting waste and saving money. Whether it's discouraging the use of plastic bags in a

supermarket or switching off a law firm's computers at night, there are plenty of quick wins for most companies. This is doubly satisfying – doing well and doing good – and therefore extremely popular. (“Change in Climate” 14)

Recently, more producers within the fashion industry are becoming interested in the benefits of sustainable development and environmental and social responsibility.

Many manufacturers are looking into ways to create clothing lines that are eco-friendly and better for the human race in general (King). One way in which the fashion industry has evolved is by putting high-quality products before profits. In interviews with the creators of ten well-respected and highly successful niche design brands, author and CEO of Social Objects Ltd., Ulla-Maaria Engstrom, found that in every instance, a company's yearly income never rose above three million dollars. This was not coincidental, nor did it mean that the demand for their products had reached a plateau. Instead, the highly effective owner-CEOs were purposely making the decision to keep their businesses small. Without having to compete on price, the ten companies could keep their commitment to creating superior items (22).

Creating quality products that do not enter the waste-stream so quickly is just one of the many ways that the fashion industry can be more environmentally responsible. Companies who use ethical trade practices are actually helping the earth at the same time. Sophie Uliano, author of *Gorgeously Green: 8 Simple Steps to an Earth-Friendly Life*, makes a valid observation: “Taking care of our environment means the planet *and* its inhabitants. The wonderful thing about going green is that we become aware of the well-being of every living thing” (100). Organizations working with suppliers and producers, who care for their workforce, make every effort to ensure that laborers are of age, have access to

unions, receive fair wages, and are free from exposure to toxins (Jeffery, Grosvenor, and Barclay 217).

Some manufacturers have become interested in “eco-fashions.” The International Standards Organization (ISO) describes eco-fashions as: “identifying the general environmental performance of a product within a product group based on its whole life-cycle in order to contribute to improvements in key environmental measures and to support sustainable consumption patterns” (Claudio A453). Manufacturers can create eco-fashions in several ways. Sustainable fibers such as linen, cotton, hemp and bamboo are considered green choices because they can be produced without the use of pesticides (Jeffery, Grosvenor, and Barclay 171). Currently, these options can be more expensive than their non-organic counterparts, but as awareness and demand increases, the cost gap will narrow. Environmentally friendly alternatives to synthetic materials typically used by the fashion industry are available and come from such natural sources as eucalyptus trees, beech trees, and corn (“Eco fashion”). In addition to fabric choices, companies interested in going green have the option of abstaining from harmful dyes and finishes. Biodegradable, all natural dyes from plants, berries, and clay exist and are accessible to manufacturers (“A to Z”). Manufacturers who care about the health and well-being of their workforce and the consumers of their products can select alternative methods to the fibers, dyes and finishes typically used by the industry.

The popular outdoors company, Patagonia, known for its commitment to the environment, has entered the eco-friendly fashion playing field with its clothing manufactured from recycled polyethylene terephthalate or PET. PET comes from most water, soda and juice bottles. The process of recycling PET into fiber costs more than using

virgin polyester, but manufacturers such as Patagonia are willing to pay the price to prove to consumers that they are an environmentally conscious company (Valigra 17).

Not everyone feels enthralled by Patagonia's PET recycling program, however. While most would agree that finding a new purpose for the excessive amount of soda bottles that exist is a good thing, William McDonough and Michael Braungart, authors of *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, have expressed their concerns.

The creative use for downcycled materials for new products can be misguided despite good intentions. For example, people may feel they are making an ecologically sound choice by buying and wearing clothing made of fibers from recycled plastic bottles. But the fibers from plastic bottles contain toxins such as antimony, catalytic residues, ultraviolet stabilizers, plasticizers, and antioxidants, which were never designed to lie next to human skin. (58)

McDonough and Braungart – architect and chemist – advocate developing materials that are actually good for the planet when they are discarded rather than relying on recycling which they believe requires too much water and energy to ultimately be sustainable. Some may argue that if the plastic bottles contain so many toxins then we should not be drinking from them either. Given the information available, consumers will have to choose for themselves what is more important to them: purchasing clothing made from non-toxic fibers only or participating in the act of recycling until industry adopts more sustainable options for dealing with waste.

While sectors of the fashion industry work to create and test eco-friendly materials and manufacturing systems, Hsiou-Lien Chen and Leslie Davis Burns of the Design and Human Environment Department at Oregon State University have come to a frightening

conclusion. According to their research, in one way or another nearly all textile products, even those touted as being “green” or “environmentally responsible” harm the environment. Simply put “making a shirt – any kind of shirt – can never be as ecologically benign as not making a shirt” (qtd. in Cox). Disturbing as their findings are, their research is beneficial in promoting the idea of reusing, reclaiming and repurposing clothing.

A number of designers and companies have already begun to create new clothing from the great surplus of unwanted textiles that already exist. According to anti-consumer and clothing swap hostess, Wendy Tremayne, the surplus textiles we see today exceed the levels past generations saw. She acknowledges that working with surplus materials is a temporary solution but an important one. Until new clothing can be manufactured without taking such a huge toll on the Earth and its inhabitants, finding ways to reuse unwanted clothing or extend the life of clothing is the best solution for our time (“Credo”).

Several fashion companies, looking to go green, use reclaimed clothing as the source of their creations. These companies understand the importance of conserving natural resources by repurposing unwanted garments into unique pieces. Companies involved in the reclaimed clothing business not only feel good about what they are creating, but are finding it a lucrative endeavor. Reclaim companies are enjoying the benefits of selling one of a kind, ethically and environmentally sound items that fetch high price tags, while simultaneously saving money during the manufacturing process. Fiber from used clothing can be obtained through donations or purchased in bulk. The post consumer textiles require no chemicals and use only minimal energy to carry out the transformation process (“Welcome to E Ko Logic”). According to the *Resources, Conservation and Recycling Journal*:

The reuse of 1 tonne of polyester garments only uses 1.8% of the energy required for manufacture of these goods from virgin materials and the reuse of 1 tonne of cotton clothing only uses 2.6% of the energy required to manufacture those from virgin materials. (qtd. in Watson)

In addition to creating outdoor gear from recycled soda bottles, Patagonia has begun reclaiming clothing as well. Through its “Common Threads Garment Recycling Program”, Patagonia invites customers to return their old clothing back to the company for recycling. The program helps to keep the garments out of the landfills and ensures that less virgin resources are needed in the production of new products (“Environmentalism”).

Colleges with fashion design programs realize that to stay current they must teach their students about ethical and environmental issues related to the clothing industry. In the fall of 2005, the fashion studies department at Cazenovia College in Central New York created the “Look Again” project. Through the project, students create a line of clothing made from post-consumer textiles. Local businesses allow the students to sell creations from the “Look Again” clothing line at their shops (“About Look Again”). Schools such as Cazenovia understand that the future of sustainable fashion will be determined by the impact they make on today’s fashion and textile students. With an increase in students weaving ethical and environmental issues into their projects, the outlook for the future of green fashion is promising.

Natalie Chanin, founder of the company Alabama Chanin is a leader in the slow fashion movement. Her garments are hand-sewn by local artisans near her home in Florence, Alabama. Her clothing lines, made predominantly from recycled and/or organic materials, are not only distinctively beautiful but easily can be layered with other garments to create

more variety and visual interest. The garments created by Alabama Chanin are known for their quality of cut, craftsmanship, detail and style as well as their hefty price tags. Buying clothing from companies who promote the ideals of the slow fashion movement can certainly be an investment; however, the garments Alabama Chanin creates are made to last, to be cherished and to build their own cultural memories (Clark 437).

While taking part in the slow fashion movement may seem cost prohibitive one must remain conscious of the fact that there is a price to pay for durable, high quality clothing created from environmentally friendly sources by employees who can make a living. Just like fast food, fast fashion has driven the prices on clothing down, to such an extreme, that society has grown accustomed to purchasing trendy pieces of clothing far below the item's true cost. Leslie Garrett, author of *The Virtuous Consumer*, explains how our whole conception of what clothing costs is skewed:

...one day, as I looked at baby clothes at a store that shall remain nameless, I held up a t-shirt that retailed for \$4.99. Call it my *aha!* moment. I may not have known the actual conditions under which that T-shirt was made, but I did know that something was wrong in the state of Bangladesh. Quite simply, I didn't want my children wearing clothes that some other child or mother had made without being paid fairly or being given safe, healthy, conditions in which to work. An activist was born right then and there among the cheap T-shirts and bright yellow smiley faces. (26-27)

As Garrett observes, the real cost of production is often not reflected in the item's price. Economists refer to this concept as externalized or hidden costs. When companies do not pay for the loss of natural resources, the pollution of water and air, the health care and fair

wages of factory workers and salespeople, they are externalizing costs (Leonard and Conrad xxxii).

Consumers like Garrett are beginning to pay closer attention to the companies they support with their dollars. Rather than buy inexpensive items frequently, these individuals are slowing down and saving up to purchase quality items whose costs reflect the work that went into producing them. Cline reminds us: “Well into the twentieth century, clothes were pricey and precious enough that they were mended and cared for and re-imagined countless times, and most people had a few outfits that they wore until they wore them out” (4). Walmart CEO Lee Scott, however, does not believe his customers can afford anything other than cheap clothes: “Our customers simply don’t have the money to buy basic necessities between paychecks” (qtd. in Cox). Schor, an expert on consumerism counters Lee’s argument: “Maintaining a regime of ecologically, unsustainable, but low prices in order to sustain purchasing power for the poor solves a problem for a subset of the population but reproduces another one for the entire planet” (qtd. in Cox).

Consumers

Kathy Child, senior retail analyst at Mintel, a company that specializes in acquiring and analyzing market information, has found that customers are becoming more environmentally and ethically aware (“A to Z”). This heightened consciousness amongst consumers has led to an increase in environmentally and ethically sound purchases. In 2005, two Harvard researchers conducted an experiment involving two sets of towels. One set had a tag that read: “These towels have been made under fair labour conditions, in a safe and healthy environment which is free of discrimination, and where management has committed to respecting the rights and dignity of the workers” (“Good Consumer” 16). Over the course

of five months, the researchers observed the actions of consumers as the tag was switched to the other set of towels and the price was raised. To their surprise, the research team found that towel sales increased amongst the set that carried the fair trade tag regardless of all price increases (16).

Those who consider how their purchases impact the environment, animals and the quality of life of individuals involved in the clothing supply chain, are not only supporting worthy causes with their purchases, they are also educating others on the benefits of thinking more, buying less, and taking care of what they already have. Cecile Andrews, author of *The Circle of Simplicity: Return to the Good Life*, offers a list of questions people can ask themselves before feeling tempted to make a purchase:

1. Do I really need this? Is there anything I can use instead?
2. How will this item affect the quality of my life?
3. Is the cost of this item worth the amount of time it takes to earn the money to buy it?
4. Could you buy it used? Borrow it? Rent it? Share the purchase with someone else?
5. Where should you buy it?
6. How will this item affect the environment?
7. How were the people who made it treated? (63)

Consumers may also want to take into account if animal cruelty was involved in the creation of the item in question. A “bunny” icon is now printed on cosmetics and household products that were made without harming animals. Perhaps a similar icon could be added to clothing tags, too. The “Alternative Shopping List” is not the only method that can help citizens cut

back on thoughtless and incessant consumption. Sophie Uliano, author of *Gorgeously Green*, recounts the way her environmentally conscious friend takes at least ten trips (by bicycle) to a store where she has found a particular item of clothing that she likes. She tries the piece on each time she goes back to see how it looks with her own outfits as well as to gauge whether or not she still feels enamored by it. If that item is purchased by someone else during the course of her lengthy decision making process, then she rationalizes that it was not meant to be (94). Contemplating the necessity of certain items often leads to a reduction in consumption and therefore plays a crucial role in the slow fashion movement.

Individuals who are willing to slow down and refer to a list of questions before purchasing an article of clothing or who go back multiple times to see if they really *must* have a particular piece are less likely to experience shopper's remorse. The objects they do finally decide to purchase are clearly items they will take care of and enjoy for years to come.

Another way for individuals to keep cherished items around longer is to create new ways to wear them. Replacing a button or sewing in a patch can prolong the existence of a treasured article of clothing as well (Fletcher 61). Engaging the services of a tailor to update or alter a garment are slow fashion options as well.

When consumers take the time to choose quality items and are mindful of the way they care for those items over the years, clothing can last for generations to come. If over the course of the garment's lengthy lifecycle it is no longer desired by the owner, it is likely that it may bring enjoyment to someone else or serve a new purpose entirely. Purchasing used clothing from a vintage or consignment shop is not only an eco-friendly option for consumers it is typically a cost-saving strategy as well. Author of *Green Chic – Saving the Earth in Style*, Christie Matheson describes the environmental benefits of second-hand clothing:

...a piece of clothing that was crafted long ago costs nothing to the environment today. No pesticides sprayed to grow fibers for the new fabric. No energy used or chemicals released in the making of a new synthetic material. No material or chemical waste. No plastic, cardboard, or other new packaging – and quite possibly no energy used in shipping... What's more, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency requires that the packaging materials for *any* garment or fabric made overseas be either heat treated to a core temperature of over 130 degrees for thirty minutes or sprayed with methyl bromide, a Class 1 ozone depleting substance (fifty times stronger than CFCs) that's toxic and potentially deadly to humans. Because the heat treatment is time-consuming (not to mention expensive in terms of energy expenditure), methyl bromide is the prevailing procedure. Again, don't need to worry about that with vintage. (130)

The public appears to be catching on to the benefits of purchasing used items. In 2006, a group of professionals from San Francisco, concerned about America's unrelenting consumption problem, challenged themselves to avoid buying anything new for the duration of a year. They called themselves "The Compact" and scoured thrift shops, Craigslist and freecycle.org instead of heading to the nearest Target or Wal-Mart whenever they needed something (Uliano 98). Groups such as "The Compact" are not the only ones purchasing second-hand items. According to the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops, sales have been increasing by five percent each year (Claudio A 451). Goodwill Industries, in particular, watched sales climb sixty-seven percent from 2001 to 2006 at its own thrift shops (Hamilton 85).

These days there are many avenues for finding used clothing. The nonprofits Goodwill and Salvation Army have been providing the public with cast-off clothing and household items at bargain prices for many years. Independently owned consignment shops provide another option, giving consumers an experience similar to what they would find at a boutique. Typically, the garments for sale have been carefully selected and may be worth more money. Recently, several new consignment chain stores have entered the playing field. These stores go by the names of Buffalo Exchange, Plato's Closet, and Crossroads Trading, Co. Catering to individuals who are looking for reduced prices on items that are currently en vogue, these fast fashion resale shops, as they are called, benefit from the way consumers are hastily blowing through moderately priced clothing. Many of the garments, which are considered barely worn, are sold for one third of the price they went for at the mall just one month earlier. During these difficult economic times, the resale business seems to be booming. Buffalo Exchange and Crossroads Trading, Co. plan to open three more shops each within the next year and Plato's Closet, which saw one hundred million dollars in sales in 2006, anticipates the opening of another thirty-five stores (Hamilton 85-86).

Those looking for second-hand clothing do not even have to leave home to do their shopping. The worldwide web is home to many sources of vintage and used clothing: eBay and ETSY have a large selection of second-hand garments. According to Matheson and most environmentalists, however, buying local is always better. Shipping involves the use of energy for transportation and creates waste from the packaging (131).

A modern day Bohemian, who is a perfect example of a "Slow Fashionista", whether or not she is aware of it, is Iris Barrel Apfel. This lively octogenarian has been considered an artist, when in fact; she is the work of art! Fashion is Apfel's medium; indeed, she is a

master at working with color, line, and texture in a refined yet playful way. Despite the fact that Apfel's unique fashion sense has inspired fashion designers, she is not interested in what is considered trendy or in style. Instead, Apfel focuses on expressing herself through her way of dress and creating unique and architectural silhouettes (Boman 8-9). Apfel's esteemed clothing collection has been displayed across the country at such notable establishments as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Apfel has a knack for creating outfits that are outrageous yet sophisticated. She is known for assembling outfits that are comprised of a mix of couture items (often given to her by friends from the fashion industry) flea market-finds, street style and tribal dress. She uses scarves, cropped jackets and huge tribal jewelry to create layers of visual interest. She is very selective about her purchases and claims to buy only clothing that really speaks to her. She has a way of making vintage outfits from previous decades still look current and chic (Lenander 44). While there does not seem to be any information about Apfel's opinion on the Slow Fashion Movement, Apfel deserves credit for being discerning about her purchases and avoiding items that are overly trendy. Lastly, unlike some of her contemporaries who also have extensive clothing collections, Apfel actually wears what she owns ("Style Icon").

The latest poster child for the Slow Fashion Movement is Sheena Matheiken, a young designer who grew tired of "manipulating people into wanting things they didn't need" ("Uniform Project") through her New York City based advertising job. In May 2009, she decided to change the course of her life by inventing a challenge for herself. For one year, Matheiken, would don the same little black dress (a simple and versatile dress created by slow fashion designer Eliza Starbuck) and post a photo of herself on her website. To make the challenge especially interesting, Matheiken would have to re-invent the way she wore the

dress each day: wearing the dress over pants, under shirts, buttoned up, unbuttoned, forwards and backwards. To add even more visual interest and excitement to her daily outfits Matheiken wore second-hand and handmade accessories donated to her by individuals following the challenge. Matheiken's quest not only served as a commentary on the problems of overconsumption and unethical production, but also raised one hundred thousand dollars in donations for an educational organization in India (Uniform Project).

In taking on the Little Black Dress challenge, Matheiken emphasized the importance of having a style of one's own. Like Apfel, she proves that she is not one to become preoccupied with trends. Her daily outfits were expressive, creative, and artistic. She freely experimented with unique textures, architectural silhouettes and appealing color combinations. Both Apfel and Matheiken provide inspiration to anyone looking to enter into the slow fashion lifestyle. The message both women model with their fashion choices has the potential to start a widespread slow, fair and sustainable fashion movement.

The Anti-Consumer Movement

Americans have been so programmed to shop for clothing that they often forget other options for obtaining garments exist. The anti-consumer movement, a branch of the slow fashion movement, relies on the sharing and swapping of post-consumer clothing. Andrews recalls a conversation she had with a woman about sharing: "One woman told me that the happiest time of her life had been during the Depression, because everyone shared everything and helped each other out" (55).

Vintage dealer Sara Bereket not only sells upcycled second hand clothes, she has a collection of vintage dresses available for rent on her website, Sarazcloset.com. In her words: "Part of eliminating waste is sharing what you have. I don't think we need to own

anything anymore because we don't wear party dresses more than once" (qtd. in Cline 202). Renting an item that is only going to be worn once is a way to save money (renting a dress from Sara costs fifty dollars) and natural resources. Clothing swaps are another way for citizens to share what they have. Swapping is not a new concept. In ancient civilizations such as Egypt, individuals bartered to attain the goods they needed. During the 20th century, the war restrictions brought about by World War II led to the emergence of clothing swaps in the United Kingdom. Swapping resurfaced during the environmentalism movement of the Sixties and then again in the Eighties, as an alternative to consumer culture. Many women entering the workforce for the first time found clothing swaps to be a good source for office attire (Vaughan).

Suzanne Agasi, a professional "swap hostess", began holding clothing swaps in her San Francisco apartment in 1996. Within a decade, her swaps became so well attended that she had to find new locations that were big enough to host them. She was able to quit her job in sales and host clothing swaps full time. According to Melena Ryzik, author of the July 9, 2006 New York Times article, "Walk a Mile in My Shoes (and My Shirt)", Agasi has since held over 100 swaps.

Today, clothing swaps are again growing in popularity as individuals seek out ways to break the cycle of overconsumption and live in harmony with the environment. Websites such as: clothingswap.org, visaswap.com and swaporamarama.org advertise upcoming events. "The people attending these fashion free-for-all are not just the young starving artists, hipster students and fashionistas-on-a-budget who first made them popular, but women – and men – of all ages and income levels" (Ryzik). Those who participated in the event were asked to donate their unwanted items at collection locations over a period of six

weeks. Participants received points on a swipe card for every item they contributed (Vaughan).

Not all clothing swaps use a point system. Some clothing swaps are more like a “free for all.” In early 2007, nearly two dozen cities across America held large-scale clothing swaps with sewing stations and do-it-yourself workshops led by artists (Hattam 29). These massive clothing swaps, which continue to take place across the U.S. and in several other countries, go by the name of Swap-O-Rama-Rama (SORR). SORR was the brainchild of artist, yoga instructor and self-proclaimed “anti-consumer” Wendy Tremayne. For a ten-dollar donation and a bag of unwanted clothing, the public is free to take any items they wish. Sewing machines, silkscreen stations, iron-on stations (with internet access and Photoshop) are available at no cost. Artists are on hand to help individuals modify their “new” garments. Unlike a craft fair or flea market, nothing is for sale at SORR events. The idea is to get together with the community, be creative and refrain from consuming. Mirrors are not permitted at the events. Participants must rely on their neighbors to help them choose the garments that look best on them. Tremayne hopes that the positive experience of interacting with others during the swap will encourage participants to forgo the isolation of shopping at the mall. At the conclusion of each swap, the leftover clothing is gathered and donated to a local shelter (“Swap”).

Friends and family have begun to hold their own clothing swap parties. Participants bring a few items as their “right of entry” to the event. Either the swap can be informal, in that, individuals simply choose what they would like at leisure or it can be more structured and require everyone to take turns (MacEachern 220). Future First Lady Michelle Obama held a clothing swap in New York City in July 2008. The swap was a fundraising event for

Barack Obama's campaign and had a "go green theme". Participants were asked to bring a piece of designer clothing and make a \$10 donation (Hepp).

Clothing exchanges can even take place in the form of "free" boxes. Evergreen State College in Washington encourages its students to leave their unwanted garments in "free" boxes around campus for their peers to peruse. This method of reusing also helps to build community. As Andrews says: "It's a great way to meet people. You see someone walking by and you stop them and say, 'That used to be my blouse!'" (38).

The Do-it-Yourself Movement

The emergence of do-it-yourself (DIY) culture, yet another component of the slow fashion movement, has provided an additional outlet for the recycling and reuse of fabrics while still refraining from consumerism. Books such as *99 Ways to Cut, Sew & Deck Out Your Denim* and *99 Ways to Cut, Sew, Trim & Tie Your T-Shirt Into Something Special* encourage individuals to be creative and use fashion as a tool for self-expression. The books also promote in-house production and the importance of recycling (Blakeney et al, "Note from Authors"). Other DIY manuals include: *49 Sensational Skirts* by Allison Willoughby and *Generation T: 108 Ways to Transform a T-Shirt* by Megan Nicolay. There are even DIY magazines available. Deftly, *DIY City Mag* and *Craft: Transforming Traditional Crafts* explore the DIY movement. In addition to books and magazines, workshops are also available for those interested in getting involved in the DIY movement. In January 2008, The Fuller Craft Museum of Brockton, Massachusetts offered a class, "Old is New: Sweaters Recycled." Participants were asked to bring hand-me-down or accidentally felted sweaters to the one-day class. The instructor helped the students revamp their sweaters into unique pieces ("Saturday"). When individuals involve themselves in DIY activities, where they

breathe new life into ragged, worn out textiles, they are not just recycling, they are “upcycling”, deconstructing post-consumer goods and reconstructing them into something of equal or greater quality than the original item (“A to Z”).

When a textile cannot be upcycled, downcycling is the next best option. Individuals looking to downcycle their unwanted garments have numerous options to choose from. Tattered items can become the foundation for a Halloween costume, can be reduced to rags or even placed in the compost pile (provided they came from organic sources and were not dyed) where they will give nutrients back to the Earth (Jeffery, Grosvenor, and Barclay 227). “In nature, there is no waste, everything is recycled, and so we learn that we too must recycle” (Andrews 159).

Individuals who take the time to repurpose post-consumer clothing inevitably gain an appreciation for the energy and resources that were involved in the production of the original garment. Furthermore, it is likely they have grappled with the injustices inherent in the conventional approach to clothing manufacturing. Consumers turned creators and/or conscientious choice-makers speak of living a more meaningful life devoid of the insipidness of industry and rampant greed of corporations. To them, the slow fashion movement is a promise that the renewal of community, a healthy planet and happiness are within reach (“Credo”).

New York City’s textile waste is abundant and comes at a cost to taxpayers and the planet. In an effort to curb the one hundred and ninety-three tons of cast off clothing and linens generated by residents annually, the non-profit organization GrowNYC, created a clothing-recycling program to empower New Yorkers. In the spirit of community, New York City residents come together to improve the environment by participating in swaps and

depositing unwanted textiles at drop-off locations around the city. Since 2007, more than eighty thousand individuals have participated in the program diverting nearly one and a half million pounds of textiles from the waste stream. Imagine the benefits of an initiative such as this on a global scale (GrowNYC).

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

The majority of American consumers behave as if they have no choice but to buy what clothing retailers make available to them at their local mall. Those who have grown tired of keeping up with the frenetically paced trends, or cannot afford a steady stream of new outfits, may feel as if they have nowhere else to turn. Serendipitously, just a few hours before writing this conclusion, a friend posted this message on *Facebook*: “Retail therapy makes me feel old when I don't get/like the styles anymore [...] how is some of this stuff even cute?!?!” At twenty-eight years old, my friend is certainly not “old”. Bored, uninspired, weary of the simple process of selection that retailers offer her is more likely the case.

My friend and most of mainstream America could learn a great deal from the Bohemian women of Greenwich Village. They, too, felt oppressed by the popular fashions of their time. While they were supposed to don the stiff corsets and narrow-bottomed, restrictive hobble skirts to avoid being thought of as “loose” and lacking morals (Farrell-Beck and Parsons 24), today’s American consumers are supposed to wear whatever the media and retailers dictate without question. It is in the best interest of retailers that citizens just accept their role as naïve purchasers of pre-determined trends and keep coming back for more.

Did the Bohemian women just wallow in their oppression and decide there was nothing they could do? No, they rejected the S-curved corseted silhouette and the hobble skirt, claiming that these forms of fashion were yet another way in which men tried to confine women and impose their dominance. Bohemian feminist Nina Wilcox Putnam was

quoted as saying: “I had abandoned all the nonsensical claptrap of dress with which women unconsciously symbolized their bondage” (qtd. in Welters and Cunningham 48). These brazen and outspoken women employed dress as a means to express their counter-cultural ideas (Saville). Consumers of the twenty-first century also have the opportunity to “wear their ideas”. Selecting clothing does not have to be a dull and mindless activity; in fact, it should be just the opposite.

Donna Oakes, owner of Cow Jones Industrials, a vegan boutique in Chatham, New York observes, “What we wear is not trivial – we express ourselves through our clothing – it is body art. Adorning ourselves with eco and animal friendly products which have been ethically produced is a celebration of kindness” (“Welcome to Cow Jones”). Her words echo the great Mahatma Gandhi, who when asked by a reporter if he could sum up his message, replied: “My life is my message.” Similarly, Zoe Weil encouraged her audience at her most recent TED Talk to model their message by doing what they love and using their gifts to work for change (“Solutionaries”). The choices one makes, the products one endorses and the way one lives her or his life matters. No one lives in a vacuum; an individual’s actions reverberate out into the world. Through high-speed media, citizens can learn the negative impact of their clothing purchases, if they are motivated to do so. They can seek out individuals and communities who can offer them support and advice as they take steps to live a life in line with their morals and values. With all this information just a mouse click away, consumers are better prepared to purchase (or obtain in some other way) garments that will add quality rather than quantity to their lives. After all, spending money is, in a sense, casting a vote: what we pay for, we support – every dollar we spend is a vote that says, “Do it again” and helps perpetuate a system. Whether citizens support fair, equitable, sustainable

systems with their clothing purchases or not, is up to them. Purchasing an item signals to the retailer that the individual accepts how the product was made and by whom.

As socially conscious individuals strive to model their message of fairness and sustainability, it is of utmost importance that they make sure their message can be heard by younger generations. Fashion plays an influential role in American culture, especially during the teenage years. As Weil points out in the game “True Price”, there is much young people can learn about their world just by looking at the positive and negative effects of a simple, red T-shirt. By nature, teenagers are fashion-conscious; it would not take much effort to make them fashion-conscientious.

Epilogue

By understanding where our clothing comes from, how it was produced and by whom, consumers can learn how to combine satisfaction and conscientiousness in daily choices and value the cultural and social importance of the way they dress. How does this message reach the public? Educators (especially those who incorporate a humane education approach to their lessons) may hold the key to making slow, sustainable fashion the wave of the future. By encouraging students to think critically, ask questions and take action, teachers can transform society one student at a time. When students are made aware of the plight of the oppressed, the environment and many species of animals, as well as those working hard to reverse these problems, they are equipped with the tools to become the next great “change-makers”.

I once imagined myself living the high profile life of a fashion designer. As I matured and evolved and became more aware of myself and the world around me, I came to the realization that I am a spiritual person who wants to connect with something greater than

myself. I want to exist in harmony with nature and be part of the effort to establish a healthy and sustainable future for generations to come. My ideals did not seem to jive with my teenage vision of working in the highly competitive fashion industry.

While my dreams of being a conventional fashion designer dissipated and I established myself as a high school art teacher, my desire to work with fashion and textiles remained important. In choosing a Master's program, I decided on the MALS Program at Skidmore because I would have opportunity to investigate the role of fashion in maintaining a healthy and sustainable society. In conjunction with the start date of my graduate program, I committed to purchasing only second-hand clothing or clothing made from sustainable, organic or recycled sources. As I have continued in my studies I have limited my shopping habits further by making sure the item was produced using fair labor practices and manufactured in a way that caused no harm to animals. My carefree days of shopping at the mall, with the only criteria being that I got a good deal, are long gone. So too is my desire to keep up with the latest fads. It can be a challenge to disconnect oneself from the pressures of culture and the media, but as a professional educator, I eagerly accept the opportunity to model a lifestyle that is in line with my core values and ideals.

In my experiences with students, I have found that they consider the way they dress to be a form of "self-expression" and to look "unique"; however, their clothing typically comes from all the same stores at the same local mall. While their shoe colors may vary and their shirts may have a different embellishment here or there, when it comes down to it, they really just let retailers dictate the styles. It probably has never occurred to them that they could obtain their clothing from anywhere but the mall. Nor would they think to revamp the clothing they already have. Furthermore, they probably do not realize the negative impacts

their purchases have made on the environment, their fellow human beings and animals. This is certainly not their fault. Not until I was twenty-four years old, purposefully selecting multi-disciplinary courses through the MALS Program, did I gain an understanding of the negative effects of the fashion industry and the ethical approaches that exist. I realize access to this information may not change my students' shopping habits, but I believe it is my obligation as an educator to provide my students with knowledge and skills so that they can make reasoned decisions of their own.

Having gained new knowledge and life experiences, I have begun to develop a teaching methodology that focuses on fashion in terms of sustainability and social justice. It has become a tradition in my Studio Art classes to end the year with a sustainable fashion unit. My students fell in love with Iris Apfel and her incredible outfits, so I just know they are going to find Sheena Matheiken and her yearlong fashion challenge fascinating and inspiring. My students are always impressed with the "treasures" I obtained from the Swap-o-rama-rama event I attended in Philadelphia in the fall of 2008; the conclusion of this unit plan always elicits an enthusiastic response. Much in the style of the *Project Runway* television show, the students get into groups of three or four and upcycle a big, old T-shirt into a piece of wearable art. The students create hats, scarves, dresses, vests and skirts out of the T-shirts and adorn their new designs with buttons and trimmings from home. After doing the T-shirt reconstruction challenge for the first time, several students sought me out during the first week of school the following year. They could not wait to show me the T-shirts they were wearing that had been reconstructed over the summer. Another student, who had been very conscious of the trends and "popular" brands, stopped by my art room to show me her

outfit. Standing before me, dressed from head to toe in garments from Goodwill, she could not have been more proud!

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APPENDIX

Unit Plan for a High School Art Curriculum:

Clothing: A Means for Teaching Young People about Sustainability and Social Justice

Unit Description: This unit will encourage high school studio art students (grades 9-12) to be creative in their pursuit of fashion. Students will learn why it is important for the fashion industry to become more environmentally friendly and socially responsible. Students will also learn how to be more educated consumers and effective activists. This unit will give students the opportunity to deconstruct and reconstruct post-consumer textiles into ropes using traditional, handmade rope making methods. They will also participate in a T-shirt reconstruction “challenge” in the style of a *Project Runway* television episode. Both lessons make connections between art of the past and present, provide meaningful understanding of culture and self and will emphasize the importance of recycling and reusing materials.

Unit Rationale: This unit will make students aware of the ways in which the “Western” lifestyle negatively impacts the Earth and many of its inhabitants. In addition, this unit will encourage the students to think of alternatives to the way they currently obtain and consume clothing. Students will be encouraged to reflect upon the idea that by spending money on a particular item they are casting a vote for that item, regardless of the environmental degradation, human rights violations and harm to animals that may have occurred during the process of production. Furthermore, students will be encouraged to consider the inevitable waste created by participating in the conventional approach to consuming clothing.

This unit serves as an introduction to rope making (one of humanity’s oldest and most important technologies) and the history of Bohemian dress in Western culture. Additionally, the unit will teach students about contemporary artists and contemporary themes in art, such as concern for the environment and social justice issues.

This lesson also caters to Principle 2 of the *12 Mind/Brain Learning Principles*: “The brain is a social brain”. Research has shown that students learn best when they are given opportunities to work together towards a common goal. Throughout the unit activities, students will work in groups to brainstorm and prepare materials for the rope making and T-shirt reconstruction projects.

The goal of this unit will be to influence young people to break free from the homogeneity of the way they dress. The activities planned for this unit will give young people an opportunity to demonstrate resourcefulness and ingenuity while they learn the importance of “green philosophy” and social justice.

Standards Addressed

New York State Visual Arts Standards:

#1 Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts

(a) Create a collection of artwork, in a variety of mediums, based on instructional assignments and individual and collective experiences to explore perceptions, ideas and viewpoints

(b) Create art works in which they use and evaluate different kinds of mediums, subjects, themes symbols, metaphors and images

#3 Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

(b) Explain the visual and other sensory qualities in art and nature and their relation to the social environment

(d) Develop connections between the ways that ideas, themes, and concepts, are expressed through the visual arts and other disciplines in everyday life.

#4 Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

(c) Create art works that reflect a variety of cultural influences

Objectives *Cognitive-*

- 1) Students will learn the history of rope making.
- 2) Students will learn the history behind Bohemian dress in Western Culture.
- 3) Students will learn about the slow fashion movement, anti-consumer movement and do-it-yourself (DIY) movement.
- 4) Students will learn that by spending money on a particular item they are casting a vote for that item, regardless of the environmental degradation, human rights violations and harm to animals that may have occurred during the process of production.
- 5) Students will learn that they can dress in a way that is in line with their morals and values if they choose to do so.
- 6) Students will learn how their lifestyle impacts the environment by taking the ecological footprint quiz.
- 7) Students will learn about the impact of a red T-shirt personally, socially, environmentally and on animals.

Affective-

- 1) Students will appreciate the medium of post-consumer clothing as a way to describe and represent ideas.
- 2) Students will be able to appreciate the efforts of individuals who model their message by doing what they love and using their gifts to work for change.

Psychomotor-

- 1) Students will take an interactive, online ecological footprint quiz.
- 2) Students will work in a small group and brainstorm easy solutions to curb wasteful behavior.
- 3) Students will work together as a class to create a handmade rope from post-consumer textiles.
- 4) Students will work in groups of three to create a piece of wearable art from a reconstructed T-shirt and embellishments.

Lesson #1: Creating Rope from Post-Consumer Textiles

Description: This lesson begins with a brief discussion about *Ecological Footprints*. An Ecological Footprint estimates how much productive land and water is needed to support all that an individual, community or country uses and disposes. Students will take an interactive, online ecological footprint quiz (www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/) in the computer lab. Back in the classroom, the students will compare their scores and brainstorm easy solutions to curb wasteful behavior, with their peers. The instructor will then engage the class in the “True Price” game. “True Price” involves thinking critically about an everyday object’s impact personally, socially, environmentally and on animals. For this lesson, the chosen object will be a red T-shirt.

On the second day of this lesson the students will watch a clip from the *Art: 21* series about the contemporary artist, Janine Antoni, who creates ropes from post-consumer materials given to her by her loved ones. The teacher will also talk to the students about a community art project she took part in at Skidmore College called *The Rag and Bone Project*. Artists Susie Brandt and Kristin Woods began *The Rag and Bone Project* to address the problem of massive accumulations of textile waste in our landfills. The artists process their clothing, linens, and other textiles and memorabilia into linear raw material, walking the ropewalk and twisting the textiles into lengths of rope. Creating rope from post-consumer textiles is a beautiful form of recycling, a reflection on disposability and consumerism, and a reminder about the history of one of humanity's oldest and most important technologies. The next two days are spent cutting the post-consumer textiles and preparing them for the rope making process. On the fifth day the class works together to twist the fibers into rope.

This lesson connects rope making, a craft from ancient times, to contemporary artists who are creating ropes by hand today. These contemporary artists create ropes because they want others to embrace and appreciate the handmade. They also do so to expose the problem of the large scale accumulation of textile waste worldwide.

Hook: The anticipatory set for this lesson includes an “Ecological Footprint” Quiz to determine how each student’s lifestyle affects the planet. Students will compare their scores and brainstorm solutions to curb wasteful behavior. The instructor will then engage the students in the “True Price” game where they will note the positive and negative impacts of a red T-shirt. They will then consider what, if any, alternatives to the T-shirt would be more beneficial and less harmful to our fellow humans, other species and the environment. Lastly, the instructor will ask what systems must be amended in order to bring these alternatives into existence. This lesson emphasizes the importance of being an educated consumer and recycling clothing.

Foundation:

Day 1 (Introduction to Eco-Fashion)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will begin the lesson with some questions while showing the students an Ecological Footprint Quiz on the overhead projector. Ask students, “What is an *Ecological Footprint*?” “Has anyone ever taken an ecological footprint quiz before, and if so how many acres of productive land does your lifestyle require?” [entire group] [auditory, visual]

2. Activity/processes

- The instructor will then bring the students to the computer lab so that each student has the opportunity to take the Ecological Footprint quiz.
- Back in the classroom, the instructor will ask the students to share their results with their peers and brainstorm ways in which they can reduce their personal Ecological Footprint.
- The instructor will then engage the students in a game of “True Price” using a red T-shirt as the everyday object in question. The instructor will begin the game by sharing the information printed on the item’s label: made in China, exclusively of cotton, machine washable and dry cleanable. From the label’s information alone, the instructor will guide the class through the positive and negative impacts of the T-shirt. This game will help the students to see how the simple choice of buying a T-shirt can have certain unintended impacts on

human rights, animal protection and environmental degradation. It will be clear to the students that the negative impacts outweigh the positive impacts. The instructor will conclude the game by asking the students what, if any, alternatives they can think of to this T-shirt that would be more beneficial and less harmful to our fellow humans, other species and the environment. The instructor will then ask what systems must be amended in order to bring these alternatives into existence. [entire group] [auditory, visual, kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 27 minutes

Independent Practice: 15 minutes

3. Cleanup: None needed.

4. Closure/Discussion: Ask students, “What did you learn today?” “How might you be able to reduce your Ecological Footprint?” (4 minutes)

Day 2 (The History of Rope Making and Rope Making Demonstration)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will ask the students what they remember from the lesson introduction yesterday. [entire group] [auditory]
- The instructor will then distribute a handout about the history of rope making and *The Rag and Bone Project* that Kristin Woods and Susie Brandt performed with various communities around the country.
- The instructor will show a clip from the *Art:21* series that shows Janine Antoni creating her handmade rope entitled: *Moore*.
- The instructor will give a demonstration on how to deconstruct clothing into “yarn”.
- The teacher will encourage the students to ask their friends and family for donations of post-consumer clothing to bring in for the project. [entire group] [visual, auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The students will have 5 minutes to write on a piece of paper why they think contemporary artists like Janine Antoni, Susie Brandt and Kristin Woods create rope. They should also explain what they think the rope symbolizes. They will hand this piece of paper to the teacher on the way out the door at the end of the period. Their statements will help the instructor check for comprehension and will serve as their “pass out of class”. [individual] [kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 37 minutes

Independent Practice: 5 minutes

3. Cleanup: None needed.

4. Closure/Discussion: “What might you bring in for the rope making project?” “Do you have any questions for me?” (4 minutes)

Day 3 and 4 (Rope Making Preparation)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will show a diagram, from the day before about how to deconstruct a T-shirt and create yarn from it.
- The instructor will ask a student to explain the steps of the deconstruction process to the class. [entire group] [visual, auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The students will have the remainder of the period to begin cutting the post-consumer textiles into balls of yarn.
- Students may work with a partner and begin measuring finished balls of yarn to make sure they are all the same length. Small sections of yarn should have material sewn to them while longer sections of yarn should be cut to keep the length consistent.

[individual and small groups] [auditory, visual, kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 5 minutes

Independent Practice: 32 minutes

3. Cleanup: Students should place the balls of yarn into a bag. Small scraps can be thrown away. Scissors should be returned to the back counter. (7 minutes)

4. Closure/Discussion: “Do you have any questions for me?” (2 minutes)

Day 5 (Rope Making as a Class)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will ask the class to choose the 18 pieces of yarn they would like to see incorporated into their class rope.

[entire group] [auditory, visual, kinesthetic]

2. Activity/processes

- Teacher will ask for several students to volunteer to firmly hold the drying rack, which the yarns are attached to, in place once the yarns begin to be pulled.
- The teacher will help the students create a “ropewalk” by encouraging the students to line up and take hold of a section of yarn. The yarns should be held off the ground, kept separate and pulled taut.
- The class will then be ready to complete the rope making process (see rope making handout for precise instructions).

[entire group] [auditory, visual, kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 37 minutes

Independent Practice: N/A (We will all work together.)

3. Cleanup: The finished rope will be removed from the drying rack. All scraps will be thrown away and scissors will be returned to the back counter. (5 minutes)

4. Closure/Discussion: The teacher will ask the students, “What was your favorite part about the rope making process?” “In what ways was this activity different from the way you expected it to be?”(4 minutes)

Reflective Action: The students will work together as a class to create a hand made rope from post-consumer textiles. Every student will be expected to participate in the rope-making process. Students will be graded on their participation in the rope making project.

Lesson #2 T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge

Description: This lesson begins with a PowerPoint Presentation about Bohemian Dress in Greenwich Village, New York during the 20th Century. The presentation will provide the students with background information about the Industrial Revolution. Students will realize that not everyone was thrilled with the conveniences industrialism had to offer. The Bohemians created a counter-culture movement that embraced the handmade and less restrictive styles of dress. The presentation will also highlight contemporary Bohemians

such as Iris Apfel, Sheena Matheiken and participants in today's slow fashion movement, anti-consumer movement and do-it-yourself movement.

On the third and final day of this lesson, the students will form groups of three and work together to create a piece of wearable art from an old T-shirt. All team members must collaborate on the piece including the member who will model it. The teams will have thirty minutes to complete the challenge and will be encouraged to avoid racy and revealing garments. Instead, the students should consider the way Bohemians incorporate accessories and layers.

This lesson connects the counter-culture dress movement of the 20th Century to the slow fashion movement occurring today. Just as the rope-making lesson encouraged the students to appreciate the handmade and reflect upon the harmful effects of industry and consumption, so too does the T-shirt reconstruction lesson.

Hook: The anticipatory set for this lesson includes a PowerPoint Presentation about Bohemian Dress in Greenwich Village during the 20th Century. The presentation will inform students about the Bohemian lifestyle and culture. Students will have an opportunity to choose the Bohemian "mind-set/style" that is most like their own. They will also create a Bohemian name for themselves. They will share their new name along with their chosen style with a partner. The students will take turns introducing each other to the class.

Foundation:

Day 1 (Introduction to Bohemian Dress in Greenwich Village)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will begin the lesson with some questions. Ask students, "What does the Bohemian culture value?" "Where did American Bohemians of the twentieth century settle?" [entire group] [auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The instructor will show a PowerPoint Presentation about Bohemian culture and dress in Greenwich Village. [entire group] [auditory, visual]
- Upon the completion of the first half of the PowerPoint Presentation, the students will choose a partner and tell them what their "Bohemian Style" is as well as their Bohemian name. The students will take turns introducing each other to the class. [entire group] [auditory]

Guided Practice: 42 minutes

Independent Practice: N/A

3. Cleanup: None needed.

4. Closure/Discussion: Ask students, "What did you learn today?" "What injustices or problems do you want to take a stand against?" (4 minutes)

Day 2 (Slow Fashion Movement and T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge Introduction)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will begin the lesson with some questions. Ask students, "Can you think of any modern day Bohemians?" "What were the Bohemians reacting against?" "What is the Slow Fashion movement about?" [entire group] [auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The instructor will continue the PowerPoint Presentation from the day before. This portion of the PowerPoint will connect Bohemian dress of the twentieth century to modern day Bohemians (participants in the slow fashion

movement, anti-consumer movement, and do-it-yourself movement). The presentation includes brief films about “Slow Fashionistas:” Iris Apfel and Sheena Matheiken. The presentation concludes with hints and tips for reconstructing a T-shirt along with many examples of wearable art made from reconstructed T-shirts.

[entire group] [visual, auditory]

Guided Practice: 42 minutes

Independent Practice: N/A

3. Cleanup: None needed.

4. Closure/Discussion: The students will get into groups of three and quickly brainstorm ideas for the T-shirt reconstruction challenge. The students will ask each other to bring in embellishments from home. (4 minutes)

Day 3 (T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will answer any questions the students may have about the T-shirt reconstruction challenge. The instructor will remind the students that their grade will be based on participation and the creation of a wearable piece of art. [entire group] [visual, auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The students will have 30 minutes to get into groups of three and reconstruct a T-shirt into a wearable piece of art.
[entire group] [visual, auditory, kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 5 minutes

Independent Practice: 30 minutes

3. Cleanup: Embellishments and supplies should be put away neatly. Small scraps of fabric can be thrown away. Scissors should be returned to the back counter. (7 minutes)

4. Closure/Discussion: The students wearing the reconstructed T-shirts will model the finished pieces for the class. (4 minutes)

Reflective Action: The students will work together in groups of three to create a wearable piece of art from an old T-shirt. Every student will be expected to participate in the T-shirt reconstruction process. Students will be graded on their participation throughout the duration of the project.

Creating Rope from Post-Consumer Textiles Rubric

Name: _____

Period: _____

Craftsmanship and Technique- 20 points _____

The **rope** is strong and tight and does not sag in the middle.

Effort, Participation and Cleanup - 40 points _____

Effort- Worked on the project consistently and enthusiastically (**20 points**)

Participation- Brought in post-consumer textiles from home (**5 points**)

Cleanup- Helped put away scissors and other supplies and threw away all scraps left on the tables and floor (**15 points**)

Reflection and Written Response - 40 points _____

Please write at least two paragraphs about your experience making handmade rope. In your response please include answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What did you learn from this project?
- ❖ What was it like to work together with your classmates to create the rope (enjoyable, frustrating etc.)? Do you prefer to work independently or as part of a group and why?
- ❖ Please explain why making handmade rope from post-consumer textiles is considered “Art” (think about why the contemporary artists Janine Antoni, Kristin Woods and Susie Brandt create ropes)?

Student Comments: _____

Teacher Comments:

T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge Rubric

Name: _____

Period: _____

Craftsmanship and Technique- 20 points _____

The new **garment** is well-crafted, wearable and exemplifies a high level of creativity.

Effort, Participation and Cleanup - 40 points _____

Effort- Worked on the project consistently and enthusiastically **(20 points)**

Participation- Brought in embellishments (i.e.: lace, buttons, fabric paint, textile scraps) from home **(5 points)**

Cleanup- Helped put away scissors and other supplies and threw away all scraps left on the tables and floor **(15 points)**

Reflection and Written Response - 40 points _____

Please write at least two paragraphs about your experience reconstructing a T-shirt. In your response please include answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What did you like most about participating in the T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge? What suggestions do you have that could make this activity better in the future?
- ❖ How has this unit (the Rope-making Lesson and Clothing Reconstruction Challenge) changed your way of thinking about how we obtain clothes?
- ❖ In what ways have the Bohemians of Greenwich Village inspired you to live a more unrestricted and creative life? What injustices or problems will you speak out about or take a stand against? What unconventional endeavors will you pursue in the future?

Student Comments: _____

Teacher Comments:

APPENDIX

Unit Plan for a High School Art Curriculum:

Clothing: A Means for Teaching Young People about Sustainability and Social Justice

Unit Description: This unit will encourage high school studio art students (grades 9-12) to be creative in their pursuit of fashion. Students will learn why it is important for the fashion industry to become more environmentally friendly and socially responsible. Students will also learn how to be more educated consumers and effective activists. This unit will give students the opportunity to deconstruct and reconstruct post-consumer textiles into ropes using traditional, handmade rope making methods. They will also participate in a T-shirt reconstruction “challenge” in the style of a *Project Runway* television episode. Both lessons make connections between art of the past and present, provide meaningful understanding of culture and self and will emphasize the importance of recycling and reusing materials.

Unit Rationale: This unit will make students aware of the ways in which the “Western” lifestyle negatively impacts the Earth and many of its inhabitants. In addition, this unit will encourage the students to think of alternatives to the way they currently obtain and consume clothing. Students will be encouraged to reflect upon the idea that by spending money on a particular item they are casting a vote for that item, regardless of the environmental degradation, human rights violations and harm to animals that may have occurred during the process of production. Furthermore, students will be encouraged to consider the inevitable waste created by participating in the conventional approach to consuming clothing.

This unit serves as an introduction to rope making (one of humanity’s oldest and most important technologies) and the history of Bohemian dress in Western culture. Additionally, the unit will teach students about contemporary artists and contemporary themes in art, such as concern for the environment and social justice issues.

This lesson also caters to Principle 2 of the *12 Mind/Brain Learning Principles*: “The brain is a social brain”. Research has shown that students learn best when they are given opportunities to work together towards a common goal. Throughout the unit activities, students will work in groups to brainstorm and prepare materials for the rope making and T-shirt reconstruction projects.

The goal of this unit will be to influence young people to break free from the homogeneity of the way they dress. The activities planned for this unit will give young people an opportunity to demonstrate resourcefulness and ingenuity while they learn the importance of “green philosophy” and social justice.

Standards Addressed

New York State Visual Arts Standards:

#1 Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts

(a) Create a collection of artwork, in a variety of mediums, based on instructional assignments and individual and collective experiences to explore perceptions, ideas and viewpoints

(b) Create art works in which they use and evaluate different kinds of mediums, subjects, themes symbols, metaphors and images

#3 Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

(b) Explain the visual and other sensory qualities in art and nature and their relation to the social environment

(d) Develop connections between the ways that ideas, themes, and concepts, are expressed through the visual arts and other disciplines in everyday life.

#4 Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts

(c) Create art works that reflect a variety of cultural influences

Objectives *Cognitive-*

- 1) Students will learn the history of rope making.
- 2) Students will learn the history behind Bohemian dress in Western Culture.
- 3) Students will learn about the slow fashion movement, anti-consumer movement and do-it-yourself (DIY) movement.
- 4) Students will learn that by spending money on a particular item they are casting a vote for that item, regardless of the environmental degradation, human rights violations and harm to animals that may have occurred during the process of production.
- 5) Students will learn that they can dress in a way that is in line with their morals and values if they choose to do so.
- 6) Students will learn how their lifestyle impacts the environment by taking the ecological footprint quiz.
- 7) Students will learn about the impact of a red T-shirt personally, socially, environmentally and on animals.

Affective-

- 1) Students will appreciate the medium of post-consumer clothing as a way to describe and represent ideas.
- 2) Students will be able to appreciate the efforts of individuals who model their message by doing what they love and using their gifts to work for change.

Psychomotor-

- 1) Students will take an interactive, online ecological footprint quiz.
- 2) Students will work in a small group and brainstorm easy solutions to curb wasteful behavior.
- 3) Students will work together as a class to create a handmade rope from post-consumer textiles.
- 4) Students will work in groups of three to create a piece of wearable art from a reconstructed T-shirt and embellishments.

Lesson #1: Creating Rope from Post-Consumer Textiles

Description: This lesson begins with a brief discussion about *Ecological Footprints*. An Ecological Footprint estimates how much productive land and water is needed to support all that an individual, community or country uses and disposes. Students will take an interactive, online ecological footprint quiz

(www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/) in the computer lab. Back in the classroom, the students will compare their scores and brainstorm easy

solutions to curb wasteful behavior, with their peers. The instructor will then engage the class in the “True Price” game. “True Price” involves thinking critically about an everyday object’s impact personally, socially, environmentally and on animals. For this lesson, the chosen object will be a red T-shirt.

On the second day of this lesson the students will watch a clip from the *Art: 21* series about the contemporary artist, Janine Antoni, who creates ropes from post-consumer materials given to her by her loved ones. The teacher will also talk to the students about a community art project she took part in at Skidmore College called *The Rag and Bone Project*. Artists Susie Brandt and Kristin Woods began *The Rag and Bone Project* to address the problem of massive accumulations of textile waste in our landfills. The artists process their clothing, linens, and other textiles and memorabilia into linear raw material, walking the ropewalk and twisting the textiles into lengths of rope. Creating rope from post-consumer textiles is a beautiful form of recycling, a reflection on disposability and consumerism, and a reminder about the history of one of humanity’s oldest and most important technologies. The next two days are spent cutting the post-consumer textiles and preparing them for the rope making process. On the fifth day the class works together to twist the fibers into rope.

This lesson connects rope making, a craft from ancient times, to contemporary artists who are creating ropes by hand today. These contemporary artists create ropes because they want others to embrace and appreciate the handmade. They also do so to expose the problem of the large scale accumulation of textile waste worldwide.

Hook: The anticipatory set for this lesson includes an “Ecological Footprint” Quiz to determine how each student’s lifestyle affects the planet. Students will compare their scores and brainstorm solutions to curb wasteful behavior. The instructor will then engage the students in the “True Price” game where they will note the positive and negative impacts of a red T-shirt. They will then consider what, if any, alternatives to the T-shirt would be more beneficial and less harmful to our fellow humans, other species and the environment. Lastly, the instructor will ask what systems must be amended in order to bring these alternatives into existence. This lesson emphasizes the importance of being an educated consumer and recycling clothing.

Foundation:

Day 1 (Introduction to Eco-Fashion)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will begin the lesson with some questions while showing the students an Ecological Footprint Quiz on the overhead projector. Ask students, “What is an *Ecological Footprint*?” “Has anyone ever taken an ecological footprint quiz before, and if so how many acres of productive land does your lifestyle require?” [entire group] [auditory, visual]

2. Activity/processes

- The instructor will then bring the students to the computer lab so that each student has the opportunity to take the Ecological Footprint quiz.
- Back in the classroom, the instructor will ask the students to share their results with their peers and brainstorm ways in which they can reduce their personal Ecological Footprint.
- The instructor will then engage the students in a game of “True Price” using a red T-shirt as the everyday object in question. The instructor will

begin the game by sharing the information printed on the item's label: made in China, exclusively of cotton, machine washable and dry cleanable. From the label's information alone, the instructor will guide the class through the positive and negative impacts of the T-shirt. This game will help the students to see how the simple choice of buying a T-shirt can have certain unintended impacts on human rights, animal protection and environmental degradation. It will be clear to the students that the negative impacts outweigh the positive impacts. The instructor will conclude the game by asking the students what, if any, alternatives they can think of to this T-shirt that would be more beneficial and less harmful to our fellow humans, other species and the environment. The instructor will then ask what systems must be amended in order to bring these alternatives into existence. [entire group] [auditory, visual, kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 27 minutes

Independent Practice: 15 minutes

3. Cleanup: None needed.

4. Closure/Discussion: Ask students, "What did you learn today?" "How might you be able to reduce your Ecological Footprint?" (4 minutes)

Day 2 (The History of Rope Making and Rope Making Demonstration)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will ask the students what they remember from the lesson introduction yesterday. [entire group] [auditory]
- The instructor will then distribute a handout about the history of rope making and *The Rag and Bone Project* that Kristin Woods and Susie Brandt performed with various communities around the country.
- The instructor will show a clip from the *Art:21* series that shows Janine Antoni creating her handmade rope entitled: *Moore*.
- The instructor will give a demonstration on how to deconstruct clothing into "yarn".
- The teacher will encourage the students to ask their friends and family for donations of post-consumer clothing to bring in for the project. [entire group] [visual, auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The students will have 5 minutes to write on a piece of paper why they think contemporary artists like Janine Antoni, Susie Brandt and Kristin Woods create rope. They should also explain what they think the rope symbolizes. They will hand this piece of paper to the teacher on the way out the door at the end of the period. Their statements will help the instructor check for comprehension and will serve as their "pass out of class". [individual] [kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 37 minutes

Independent Practice: 5 minutes

3. Cleanup: None needed.

4. Closure/Discussion: "What might you bring in for the rope making project?" "Do you have any questions for me?" (4 minutes)

Day 3 and 4 (Rope Making Preparation)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will show a diagram, from the day before about how to deconstruct a T-shirt and create yarn from it.
- The instructor will ask a student to explain the steps of the deconstruction process to the class. [entire group] [visual, auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The students will have the remainder of the period to begin cutting the post-consumer textiles into balls of yarn.
- Students may work with a partner and begin measuring finished balls of yarn to make sure they are all the same length. Small sections of yarn should have material sewn to them while longer sections of yarn should be cut to keep the length consistent.
[individual and small groups] [auditory, visual, kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 5 minutes

Independent Practice: 32 minutes

3. Cleanup: Students should place the balls of yarn into a bag. Small scraps can be thrown away. Scissors should be returned to the back counter. (7 minutes)

4. Closure/Discussion: "Do you have any questions for me?" (2 minutes)

Day 5 (Rope Making as a Class)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will ask the class to choose the 18 pieces of yarn they would like to see incorporated into their class rope.
[entire group] [auditory, visual, kinesthetic]

2. Activity/processes

- Teacher will ask for several students to volunteer to firmly hold the drying rack, which the yarns are attached to, in place once the yarns begin to be pulled.
- The teacher will help the students create a "ropewalk" by encouraging the students to line up and take hold of a section of yarn. The yarns should be held off the ground, kept separate and pulled taut.
- The class will then be ready to complete the rope making process (see rope making handout for precise instructions).
[entire group] [auditory, visual, kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 37 minutes

Independent Practice: N/A (We will all work together.)

3. Cleanup: The finished rope will be removed from the drying rack. All scraps will be thrown away and scissors will be returned to the back counter. (5 minutes)

4. Closure/Discussion: The teacher will ask the students, "What was your favorite part about the rope making process?" "In what ways was this activity different from the way you expected it to be?" (4 minutes)

Reflective Action: The students will work together as a class to create a hand made rope from post-consumer textiles. Every student will be expected to participate in the rope-making process. Students will be graded on their participation in the rope making project.

Materials

- Scissors
- Needle and thread
- Something to attach the yarns to (we'll be using a drying rack)
- A minimum of 2 clamps
- Post consumer textile waste (old t-shirts, jeans, dresses etc.)



Process

1. Use scissors to cut all post-consumer textiles. To get the most length, cut the textiles in a continuous **spiral**.
2. Roll the cut textiles into a ball of "yarn".
3. We will use **6** yarns to make one strand. Since we will be making the standard **3** stranded rope we must measure **18** yarns of the same length (either cut the yarns shorter, or sew them together to create more length).
4. Tie the **6** yarns closely together onto one, horizontal bar of the drying rack.
5. Assign a student to firmly hold the rack in place once the yarns begin to be pulled.
6. Create a ropewalk by lining the students up and giving them a section of yarn to hold onto. The yarns should be held off the ground, kept separate and pulled taut.
7. Knot the **6** yarns together at the end.
8. Begin working together to twist the **6** yarns **clockwise**. Start near the drying rack and work your way down the line twisting the yarns tightly as students comb through and shake out the looser yarns further down the ropewalk (neglecting to do so will cause the rope to be tight at both ends but loose in the middle).
9. Quickly clamp the newly created strand to a table and repeat the process **2** more times to create **2** more strands.
10. Hold tight to the **3rd** strand and quickly unclamp the other **2** strands. Immediately encourage the **3** strands **counter-clockwise** then allow the rope to create itself. Enjoy the *magic* of this moment! It is now safe to cut the yarns free from the drying rack.



Creating Rope From Post-Consumer Textiles



Vocabulary

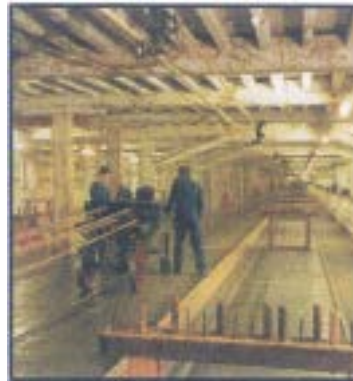
Rope: a length of fibers, twisted or braided together to improve strength, for pulling and connecting.

Standard rope is 3 stranded.

Post-Consumer: pertaining to a product after it has been used and recycled.

Ropewalk: a self-contained production site for creating rope.

A. Fibers B. Yarns C. Strands D. Rope

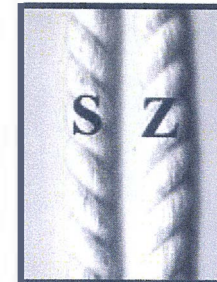


Introduction

Rope has been a tool since prehistoric times. Today, ropes can be made by machines, in the past however, they were created in a ropewalk. The purpose of the ropewalk was to stretch the yarns out between revolving hooks often 300 yards apart (The Navy required a minimum of 120 fathoms or 720 ft which was the length needed to anchor a ship). The hooks would twist and ply the yarns together.

Today, artists have begun making ropes from post-consumer textiles to create visual “life lines” that connect them to their loved ones (Janine Antoni) and to address the problem of massive accumulations of textile waste in our landfills (*The Rag and Bone Project*). The artists process their clothing, linens, and other textiles and memorabilia into linear raw material, walking the ropewalk and twisting the textiles into lengths of rope. According to Susie Brandt and Kristin Woods (the artists behind *The Rag and Bone Project*): “It is a beautiful form of recycling, a meditation on disposability and consumerism, and a useful reminder about the history of one of humanity’s oldest and most important technologies (<http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/008285.htm>).

S or Left laid rope / Z or Right laid rope



Lesson #2 T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge

Description: This lesson begins with a PowerPoint Presentation about Bohemian Dress in Greenwich Village, New York during the 20th Century. The presentation will provide the students with background information about the Industrial Revolution. Students will realize that not everyone was thrilled with the conveniences industrialism had to offer. The Bohemians created a counter-culture movement that embraced the handmade and less restrictive styles of dress. The presentation will also highlight contemporary Bohemians such as Iris Apfel, Sheena Matheiken and participants in today's slow fashion movement, anti-consumer movement and do-it-yourself movement.

On the third and final day of this lesson, the students will form groups of three and work together to create a piece of wearable art from an old T-shirt. All team members must collaborate on the piece including the member who will model it. The teams will have thirty minutes to complete the challenge and will be encouraged to avoid racy and revealing garments. Instead, the students should consider the way Bohemians incorporate accessories and layers.

This lesson connects the counter-culture dress movement of the 20th Century to the slow fashion movement occurring today. Just as the rope-making lesson encouraged the students to appreciate the handmade and reflect upon the harmful effects of industry and consumption, so too does the T-shirt reconstruction lesson.

Hook: The anticipatory set for this lesson includes a PowerPoint Presentation about Bohemian Dress in Greenwich Village during the 20th Century. The presentation will inform students about the Bohemian lifestyle and culture. Students will have an opportunity to choose the Bohemian "mind-set/style" that is most like their own. They will also create a Bohemian name for themselves. They will share their new name along with their chosen style with a partner. The students will take turns introducing each other to the class.

Foundation:

Day 1 (Introduction to Bohemian Dress in Greenwich Village)

1. Motivation and Exploration
 - The instructor will begin the lesson with some questions. Ask students, "What does the Bohemian culture value?" "Where did American Bohemians of the twentieth century settle?" [entire group] [auditory]
2. Activity/processes
 - The instructor will show a PowerPoint Presentation about Bohemian culture and dress in Greenwich Village. [entire group] [auditory, visual]
 - Upon the completion of the first half of the PowerPoint Presentation, the students will choose a partner and tell them what their "Bohemian Style" is as well as their Bohemian name. The students will take turns introducing each other to the class. [entire group] [auditory]

Guided Practice: 42 minutes

Independent Practice: N/A

3. Cleanup: None needed.

4. Closure/Discussion: Ask students, "What did you learn today?" "What injustices or problems do you want to take a stand against?" (4 minutes)

Day 2 (Slow Fashion Movement and T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge Introduction)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will begin the lesson with some questions. Ask students, “Can you think of any modern day Bohemians?” “What were the Bohemians reacting against?” “What is the Slow Fashion movement about?” [entire group] [auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The instructor will continue the PowerPoint Presentation from the day before. This portion of the PowerPoint will connect Bohemian dress of the twentieth century to modern day Bohemians (participants in the slow fashion movement, anti-consumer movement, and do-it-yourself movement). The presentation includes brief films about “Slow Fashionistas:” Iris Apfel and Sheena Matheiken. The presentation concludes with hints and tips for reconstructing a T-shirt along with many examples of wearable art made from reconstructed T-shirts. [entire group] [visual, auditory]

Guided Practice: 42 minutes

Independent Practice: N/A

3. Cleanup: None needed.

4. Closure/Discussion: The students will get into groups of three and quickly brainstorm ideas for the T-shirt reconstruction challenge. The students will ask each other to bring in embellishments from home. (4 minutes)

Day 3 (T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge)

1. Motivation and Exploration

- The instructor will answer any questions the students may have about the T-shirt reconstruction challenge. The instructor will remind the students that their grade will be based on participation and the creation of a wearable piece of art. [entire group] [visual, auditory]

2. Activity/processes

- The students will have 30 minutes to get into groups of three and reconstruct a T-shirt into a wearable piece of art. [entire group] [visual, auditory, kinesthetic]

Guided Practice: 5 minutes

Independent Practice: 30 minutes

3. Cleanup: Embellishments and supplies should be put away neatly. Small scraps of fabric can be thrown away. Scissors should be returned to the back counter. (7 minutes)

4. Closure/Discussion: The students wearing the reconstructed T-shirts will model the finished pieces for the class. (4 minutes)

Reflective Action: The students will work together in groups of three to create a wearable piece of art from an old T-shirt. Every student will be expected to participate in the T-shirt reconstruction process. Students will be graded on their participation throughout the duration of the project.

T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge Rubric

Name: _____

Period: _____

Craftsmanship and Technique- 20 points _____

The new **garment** is well-crafted, wearable and exemplifies a high level of creativity.

Effort, Participation and Cleanup - 40 points _____

Effort- Worked on the project consistently and enthusiastically (**20 points**)

Participation- Brought in embellishments (i.e.: lace, buttons, fabric paint, textile scraps) from home (**5 points**)

Cleanup- Helped put away scissors and other supplies and threw away all scraps left on the tables and floor (**15 points**)

Reflection and Written Response - 40 points _____

Please write at least two paragraphs about your experience reconstructing a T-shirt. In your response please include answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What did you like most about participating in the T-Shirt Reconstruction Challenge? What suggestions do you have that could make this activity better in the future?
- ❖ How has this unit (the Rope-making Lesson and Clothing Reconstruction Challenge) changed your way of thinking about how we obtain clothes?
- ❖ In what ways have the Bohemians of Greenwich Village inspired you to live a more unrestricted and creative life? What injustices or problems will you speak out about or take a stand against? What unconventional endeavors will you pursue in the future?

Student

Comments: _____

TeacherComments: _____

Bohemian Dress in Western Culture

Teacher's Guide

PowerPoint Instructions: To PLAY – Click on “Slideshow” on the top toolbar and in the drop down box that appears select: “View Show.” Click on each slide to make the text appear and to move to the next slide.

Slide 1-4:

Slide 5: *Information to add:* Bohemians have always wanted to protect the disenfranchised.

Slide 6: *Information to add:* These are actual pages from catalogs from the late 1880s and 1890s. Notice the corsets that women wore at the time.

Slide 7: *Information to add:* The Bohemians feared technology and science as agents of unstoppable change and enemies of nature. They feared the loss of self and identity to machines.

Slide 8: *Information to add:* Bohemian women claimed not to wear clothes, but to “wear ideas.”

Slide 9:

Slide 10: *Information to add:* Notice the difference between the comfortable looking gown created by Paul Poiret and the hobble skirt. The Bohemians preferred Paul Poiret's dresses over the restrictive fashions of the time.

Slide 11-12:

Slide 13: *Information to add:* The kimono dress was created from an authentic kimono imported from Japan. This was a custom made dress for an artistic Bohemian.

Slide 14: *Information to add:* The artistic Bohemians appreciated the bold, vivid colors of the smock dresses. These dresses were called smocks because the way the material was gathered and sewn was referred to as “smocking”. Smocking appears on this dress around the neck, waist and wrists and makes the rigid material more elastic. These dresses gave the Bohemian women the freedom of movement they desired. Smock dresses were handmade in London.

Slide 15: *Information to add:* This children's dress was also referred to as a “smock” although it doesn't appear to have the smocking that the previous dress had. The loose-fit of the dress still allows for freedom of movement. There were not many Bohemian children in Greenwich Village. Most Bohemians rejected the traditional lifestyle of marriage and family.

Slide 16:

Slide 17: *Information to add:* Here is another smock dress. This dress was handcrafted in London by the company Liberty of London.

Slide 18: *Information to add:* Dress reform was not only taking place in America and England but in Austria as well. Here is a painting, by the famous Gustav Klimt, of a woman wearing a loose fitting dress. This woman happens to be his muse: Emilie Floge. A muse is a person who is responsible for inspiring an artist. Klimt and Floge were involved in the Secession group of artists, architects and designers who were creating reformed dresses. The corset had come under attack as the root of all female ailments from sore throats to corns and perhaps most obviously: difficulty breathing.

Slide 19: *Information to add:* “Reformkleid” is German for “reform dress”.

Slide 20-21:

Slide 22: *Information to add:* Again, notice that the inspiration for the reform dress movement stemmed from Japan.

Slide 23: *Information to add:* Avant-garde means – daring, unorthodox and experimental. Fortuny was a Spanish-born Italian designer who was greatly influenced by Greek and Roman dress. Poiret was a French designer who was also creating loose-fitting exotic looking dresses. His dress resembles the way women in the Middle East were dressing at the time.

Slide 24: *Information to add:* Raymond Duncan was considered very unconventional. He raised his own sheep and spun their wool to create his own clothing. He was obsessed with handmade and unique items. He detested anything mass produced. Like Fortuny, he too, was inspired by Greek dress. Raymond was known for wearing sandals even in the winter. He is considered one of the forerunners of the “green movement.”

Slide 25:

Slide 26: *Information to add:* Dresses created by Raymond Duncan.

Slide 27:

Slide 28: ***Class activity*** Make sure every student has a partner and pass out “Bohemian Mindset/Styles packets to each student!

Slide 29:

Slide 30: *Information to add:* Iris Apfel is the canvas that becomes the art. Her medium is clothing. She combines haute couture (high fashion) with flea market finds, tribal dress and street style. She works with color (notice her use of complementary and contrasting colors), pattern (notice the bold, large flowers on the shirt she is wearing) and texture (notice the fluffy texture of the white dress) in a very sophisticated way. She has inspired fashion designers such as Isaac Mizrahi and Jason Wu but claims she is not interested in what is trendy or in style. She simply enjoys expressing herself through fashion and wears whatever pleases her.

Slide 31: *Information to add:* Iris likes to put together outfits that create unusual silhouettes (she is drawn towards clothing that gives her the outline of an inverted triangle: wide on top and narrow on the bottom). She adds visual interest to her outfits through her accessories (chunky bracelets, belts and necklaces). Many of the haute couture pieces in Iris’ collection were gifts from friends from the fashion industry. Iris is very selective about the clothing she buys for herself. She has worn all of the pieces in her collection many, many times and has a knack for making clothing from three decades ago look fresh and modern.

Slide 32: ***Click on the image of Iris to watch a short video clip***

Slide 33:

Slide 34: *Information to add:* The slow fashion movement is about designing, producing, consuming and living better. It is an approach in which designers, buyers, retailers and consumers are more aware of the impacts of products on workers, communities, animals and ecosystems.

Slide 35: ***Click on the image of Sheena to watch a short video clip (or skip to the next slide to see this clip included in a longer video)***

Slide 36: ***Click on the image of Sheena to watch her TED talk. The video clip from the previous page is included in this 19 minute video.***

Slide 37: *Information to add:* Pause...Think...Consider this: Your money is your vote in society! What are you supporting with your money?

Slide 38:

Slide 39: *Information to add:* Ask the students what they see in this slide. Possible answers include: Sweatshop labor, exposure to toxins, greenhouse gas emissions, textile waste (from fast changing trends), fibers (down) and hides from animals (geese and cattle on factory farms), oil (to create synthetics such as polyester), water and soil pollution from dyes and the chemicals released during textile production, desertification – loss of the Aral Sea due to the intensive cultivation of cotton

Slide 40: *Information to add:* Ask the students what they see in this slide. Possible answers include: Organic textiles, clothing Made in the USA (sweatshop free), clothing that can be washed by hand and hung out to dry (no toxic dry cleaning needed, no energy intensive washing and drying needed), Toms shoes: vegan and for a good cause since they give a pair to a child in need with every purchase, re-purposed or “upcycled” clothing, Sheena Matheiken’s slow fashion dress (high quality and very versatile), fair trade clothing, second-hand clothing

Slide 41: *Information to add:* Swapping helps to keep textiles out of the garbage. Did you know: 193,000 TONS of textile waste from New York City residents goes into the landfills each year!

Slide 42-44:

Slide 45: *Information to add:* Internet sites such as Threadbanger and YouTube have online tutorials. Etsy and Pintrest are also good sites for inspiration.

Slide 46:

Slide 47: *Information to add:* At the end of class you will have a few minutes to form a team and brainstorm ideas. One team member will be the model and the T-shirt will most likely be reconstructed right on her/him. All three of you will participate in the “upcycling” process. Please feel free to bring in embellishments (buttons, lace, clothing scraps etc.) from home.

Slide 48: ***Click on each pair of scissors to play a reconstruction tutorial video. There may be a short advertisement prior to each video. You should be able to “skip” the advertisement.***

Slide 49-53:

Slide 54: *Information to add:* Point out where in the room interested students may find a pledge. Tell students how long you have been living a slow fashion lifestyle (i.e.: I took the pledge in 2008 and haven’t looked back!).

Slide 55: *Information to add:* Let the students know that these questions will appear on their rubric for this lesson so they should begin thinking of their answers.

Bohemian Mindsets/Styles:

The Nouveau Bohemian

The Nouveau Bohemian combines traditional Bohemian ideals with modern day culture without letting go of the fundamental values- the glamour, the art, the non-conformity. One major advantage Nouveau Bohemians have over their contemporaries is that they have money. Those with money or a trust fund are not prohibited from living a Bohemian lifestyle. On the contrary, Nouveau Bohemians can afford to forgo nine-to-five jobs and immerse themselves in their art. While this may seem like the ultimate win-win situation, the Bohemian with money must strive to create an unconventional lure, appearance and lifestyle. A superficial love and understanding of art simply will not cut it. It is highly recommended that the Nouveau Bohemian form friendships with poverty-stricken Bohemians to help bring out the essential eccentricity that does not just come from style alone.

The Nouveau Bohemian hosts lavish parties. Furniture may be designed just for the event, invitations may be sent by messenger - nothing is out of the question. Remember the Nouveau Bohemian lives a life of pleasure and excess. In order to stay true to their Bohemian roots, The Nouveau strives to give back to society. He or she may sit on the board of directors of an animal shelter for example. Nouveaus have a real knack for fundraising and are devoted to rehabilitating abandoned animals.

Fashion for the Nouveau is often a blend of new and vintage and even some custom made clothing. The Nouveau may seek out designers who lived a Bohemian lifestyle at one point in time. They may adopt any of the Bohemian styles: paint-streaked jeans and ragamuffin shirts are to be expected.

The Gypsy Bohemian

These wanderers create their own happiness wherever they go. They are flower children, hippies, fairy folk, dreamers, Deadheads, and Phish fans. They may listen to Joan Baez, early Bob Dylan, and Joni Mitchell but more often than not they are creating their own music.

Gypsies rarely own a watch, show up on your doorstep and disappear in the night, and are comfortable living out of cars and vans. As far as careers go, Gypsies are painters (canvases, signs, and houses), dancers, singers, actors and musicians. Other gypsy jobs include carpentry, leather tooling, jewelry making and midwifery.

Gypsies have also been known to give lessons: music, dance, singing, language, sculpting welding, and fencing.

They tend to know a little about a lot of obscure things, like how to milk a goat, how to make candles and soap and how to fix a carnival ride. They practice crafts such as glassblowing, encaustic and papermaking. They hand make their own violins, mandolins and dulcimers. They mix their own essential oils, grow

their own herbs, embroider and crochet their own clothing and may build little houses in old tree stumps for elves.

The Gypsy Bohemian is globally aware when it comes to fashion. They are very interested in authentic national folk costumes and native dress- Indian paisleys, Chinese slippers, Mexican embroideries and Native American turquoise beads. Their attire is typically made up of fringed shawls, gauzy peasant tops, suede vests, ponchos, headscarves, jeans, flowing skirts, and old-man trousers in black gabardine. If the outfit is unacceptable in conservative business environments then it's safe to assume a Gypsy will wear it. When the Gypsy Bohemian isn't barefoot, you may see him or her wearing moccasins, tall black or brown leather boots (regardless of the season), ballet slippers, Birkenstocks, and vintage Earth shoes.

The Beat Bohemian

The Beat Bohemian is a free-spirit. He or she believes in freedom of expression. They have let go of material desires and travel light. As Jack Kerouac put it, "If you own a rug, you own too much." One thing they will always have on them is a notebook. The Beat is passionate about writing and is quick to quote Baudelaire, Keats, Walt Whitman and Tennessee Williams.

Beats thrive on movement. They choreograph thought provoking dances, make spontaneous art that is about the act of creation itself and will take to the open road at the drop of a hat. They've learned from the Zen Bohemian: no expectations, no disappointments.

Beats look cooler than any other Bohemian. They are the toughest, most tautly attired of the Bohemians. Black is the most dominant color in their wardrobe. Some favorite clothing items of the Beat are black turtleneck sweaters, black jeans, black leotards, black jackets, black ballet slippers and black sneakers. Well-fitting plain white T-shirts, trench coats in black, navy or beige and hats (anything from fedoras to berets to Greek fisherman's caps) are considered staples of a Beat wardrobe.

The Zen Bohemian

The Zen is a post-Beat who yearns for a spiritual awakening. They are more into astral travel than taking to the open road, and are likely to have an organic farm, practice yoga, listen to world music and whale songs, and work with organizations that try to save the whales. They believe in the power of shiatsu, acupuncture and meditation. Zens protest nuclear power, but are all about promoting solar power. They are the ones sending all those petitions and activist emails.

Zens make trips to Japan, India, Peru, New Zealand or Tibet. They learn Sanskrit, weave, knit, paint spirits and oceans and landscapes, and make their own paper, pottery, prayer beads and jewelry inspired by their travels. Zens pick

mushrooms, make their own granola and are often vegans. Seaweed of all varieties and miso soup are the Zen's favorite foods. They actively protest against products tested on animals and will willingly forgo the use of nail polish and shampoo that foams in an effort to avoid exposing themselves and the environment to formaldehyde, toluene or sodium lauryl sulfate.

Zen's enjoy surfing (the internet and ocean), playing the flute, bongos or didgeridoo, snowboarding and hiking. Typical career paths include the alternative healing arts, eco-warrior, astronomy, graphic design, and yoga, juicing at health food stores, and architecture- no skyscrapers though.

The Zen typically wears bulky sweaters from South America, jeans, tai-chi outfits, drawstring pants, overalls, hiking boots, and Teva sandals. They often adorn themselves with beaded necklaces and bracelets and put chopsticks in their hair of skullcaps on their heads.

The Dandy Bohemian

Dandies are the most polished of all Bohemians even when their clothes are threadbare. The Dandy aspires to old money without the money. They might wear only vintage clothing found in flea markets and refuse to own modern conveniences.

The Dandy believes in the importance of honor, elegance and dignity along with starched collars and/or ruffled cuffs. They despise T-shirts with corporate logos and reality TV. They resist global marketing and hold tight to their individuality. The Dandy uses dress as a way to set him or herself apart from others. While thrifty by circumstance, they appreciate excess in clothing, beverages, food and art. A Dandy Bohemian's apartment will make you think of an aristocrat who has fallen on hard times - part Oscar Wilde, part *Addams Family*, a little *Scarlet Pimpernel*.

As far as hobbies go, the Dandy does not like to exert him or herself too much and abhors sweating. They prefer badminton and croquet over tennis. Career choices often include giving guided walking tours, writing poetry, book, dance, theater, art or film reviews, photography, editor at large, and curator at large, - anything that allows them to set their own hours so they can drink, eat and create as they please.

A Dandy will spend a great deal of time putting an outfit together. The Dandy loves vintage, especially big brooches, fragile gowns and kaftans. The Dandy may break gender rules. A female Dandy may embrace Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and dress androgynously, wavering between the two sexes. They also like antiquated attire. In Victor Hugo's day, outrageous costumes, deliberately not in style, were designed to wear to opening nights of plays. The Dandy never minds a little bit of attention. Most importantly, the Dandy takes ownership of his or her clothing and styles it with a peculiar irreverence.

Bohemian Names:

Bohemians love names inspired by god, goddesses, legendary Native Americans such as Hiawatha, bodies of water, rivers, mountains, flowers, fruits and seasons, and they can't resist something mythic and otherworldly- Cosmos, Europa, Celeste, Juno. Fairy Folk Bohemians love all the moons of Uranus, especially Oberon and Titania, named after characters in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. Puck, Quince and Moth are also favorites. Zen Bohemians may choose Hindu and Sanskrit names such as Chandra, Lakshmi, Shakti and Vishnu.

Bohemians dislike anything boring and common, but may give their children old-fashioned or outdated names. A favorite band or singer may also inspire a name: Fleetwood, Jethro, and Donovan.

Bohemians have also been known to re-name themselves. They are most likely to do so after a creative awakening. If the awakening is of a spiritual nature the name might be Hindu or Sanskrit. Bohemians may identify with a character in an obscure book or with a historical figure. They tend to abbreviate, use nicknames or just a single name. They many also use initials to obscure gender.

Bohemian Name Changes:

Francois Marie Arouet = Voltaire
John Birks Gillespie = Dizzy Gillespie
Eleanora Fagan = Billie Holiday
Emmanuel Radnitsky = Man Ray
Robert Allen Zimmerman = Bob Dylan
Ultra Violet = Isabelle Collin Dufresne
Bjork = Bjork Gudmundsdottir
Hilda Doolittle = H.D.

Pablo Diego Jose Francisco de Paula Juan = Pablo Picasso
Nepomuceno Maria de los Remedios
Cipriano Santisima Trinidad Ruiz y Picasso

All information adapted from the book *Bohemian Manifesto: A Field Guide to Living on the Edge* by Laren Stover

Stover, L. (2004). *Bohemian manifesto*. New York, NY: Bulfinch Press.

The Pledge

I _____ pledge that I shall abstain from the purchase of "new" manufactured items of clothing, for the period of 2 / 4 / 6 months. I pledge that I shall refashion, renovate, recycle, pre-loved items for myself with my own hands in fabric, yarn or other medium for the term of my contract. Signed _____.

The Rules

1. No buying new! (Handmade is accepted; so this allows for Etsy purchases etc!!) All clothing must be Recycled, Renovated, Pre-loved or Thrifted, or Handmade only for the term. Employment related and special needs clothing (i.e. sports, school), shoes and undies are exempted from the rules, although you are encouraged to have a go at making these.
2. In extreme circumstances, maybe a special event, or the world's greatest and most amazing never to be repeated sale that you simply can not pass up, you may use the Get out of Refashionista Jail Free Card. You are able to use this card once during the 2 month part of your contract; i.e. 1 for 2 months, 2 for 4 months etc.



The innovative people at Wardrobe Refashion (<http://nikkishell.typepad.com/wardroberefashion/>) are helping get people involved into the recycled side of fashion by putting together a pledge. *"I pledge that I shall abstain from the purchase of "new" manufactured items of clothing ... that I shall refashion, renovate, and recycle pre-loved items for myself with my own hands in fabric, yarn or other medium for the term of my contract."*

Take the pledge today. Everyone's doing it! Sewing is undergoing a big revival right now, the thrifty desire to recycle, concerns about sweatshop labor and over consumption, as well as a growing online 'craft' community have fueled sites like 'Wardrobe Refashion', a community blog, based in Australia, with participants worldwide. Wardrobe refashion community members have all taken a pledge not to purchase any new manufactured clothing for a set period; instead all clothing must be recycled, renovated, pre-loved, or handmade.

This is a great idea that we applaud, for direction or ideas check out some of our recent stories and DIY fashion recyclers like Particle Reconstruction, Dust Factory Village and online boutiques like Counter Culture store.

