

LOOKING AT FASHION THROUGH GREEN-COLORED GLASSES: A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF *VOGUE'S* SUSTAINABLE FASHION EDITORIALS

A Dissertation presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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JULY 2014

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LOOKING AT FASHION THROUGH GREEN-COLORED GLASSES: A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF *VOGUE'S* SUSTAINABLE FASHION EDITORIALS

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Joe, this is for and because of you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This undertaking was only possible with the help, support, and encouragement of organizations, mentors, family and friends. My appreciation truly knows no bounds. Thank you to the Textile and Apparel Management Department at the University of Missouri for the opportunity to serve as a graduate teaching assistant and for providing the financial support that made these three years of study possible. Additionally, thank you to the College of Human Environmental Sciences for additional support provided through the Maxine Hobbs Patrick and Homer Patrick Graduate Fellowship, the Martin Quilling Fellowship and the Piper Fellowship.

This research was made significantly easier with access to the *Vogue* Archive provided by the Hugh Stephen's Library at Stephen's College in Columbia, MO. Thank you, in particular, to James Walter, the Research and Collection Development Librarian who was always ready to assist me with archive access or simply welcome me with a warm smile.

My sincerest gratitude is expressed to Dr. Jana Hawley. I am forever grateful for the role you have played in my academic development. You were the first to plant the seed of higher education in my mind and my presence in Academia can largely be attributed to you. You have served as my champion on numerous occasions and I certainly wouldn't be the student I am today without your careful guidance and gentle nudging. To Dr. Jean Parsons and Dr. Laurel Wilson, thank you for helping me become a better researcher. Your knowledge base and passion for the material culture that occupies our world is always inspiring. Dr. Yong Volz, thank you for opening my eyes to a

whole new world of theory that has invigorated my zeal for qualitative research. You have provided me with analytical tools that will last me a lifetime.

Special thanks to my mentors, Dr. Abby Lillethun and Dr. Linda Welters, who continued to offer me support and advice long after I left their classrooms at the University of Rhode Island. You have taught me the value of pursuing subjects that both challenge and inspire me.

To my fellow grad students, you have made the difficult times bearable and the joyous times all the more so. To Jessica and Gargi, it has been a pleasure moving through this process with you. Most of all to Allie, we've gone to grad school hell and back and lived to tell the tale. That's the stuff of lasting friendships. I will always be appreciative for your sympathetic ears and words of encouragement. Most of all, I am thankful for the countless silly moments we had. Nothing was ever so bad that we couldn't giggle our way through it.

My eternal gratitude must be expressed to a family that has always supported my educational pursuits. To Mom and Doug, Dad and Nancy, Grammy and Poppy, Ray and Nora: the financial assistance was always appreciated but no words can express how much your constant encouragement and love have kept me going. Finally, to Joe (chef, editor, sounding board, personal trainer, friend, and husband): you are my traveling companion in the pursuit of love, knowledge and adventure. I cannot imagine the journey without you. I am indebted to you for the support you have provided and only hope to return the favor in due time.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored the discursive practices employed by *Vogue* to construct sustainable fashion in its editorials between 1990-2013. These discursive practices revealed the ideological stance of *Vogue* regarding sustainable fashion. The research asked: (a) how *Vogue* explicitly and implicitly defined sustainable, ethical and eco fashion through discursive practice; (b) how it visually illustrated sustainable fashion; (c) how *Vogue's* sustainable fashion discourse changed over time; and (d) how *Vogue's* inclusion of sustainability challenged or supported its position of power in the industry. A discourse-historical approach explored how *Vogue's* conception of sustainable fashion changed over time. Additionally, thirty-seven "Style Ethics" editorials were examined using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). References to sustainably minded values and actions were found throughout the twenty-three years analyzed, though these were in direct competition with the dominant discourse of the 'new'. Though *Vogue* periodically engaged the works of a handful of designers and activists striving for better products and practices, it rarely discussed the issues that led to their necessity, particularly ignoring labor issues. By co-opting preexisting nomenclature of sustainability without formally defining the concepts, *Vogue* was able to appropriate incongruous terminology into the discourse on fashion. *Vogue* relied heavily on stereotypical imagery to demarcate sections featuring sustainable goods. Over time, the sustainable fashion discourse was dismantled, neutralized and appropriated. It was presented as one option among many.

Furthermore, the few sustainably minded goods and services that were included were undermined by the magazine's general emphasis on the 'new'.

Chapter 1 : Introduction

“It’s not easy being green,” proclaimed the cover of *Vogue*’s November 2009 issue. In the issue, models were photographed guerilla gardening wearing 4-inch-heel woven sandals and raffia bags (Meier, 2009 November) while the “Steal of the Month” was a rain jacket made by Patagonia (Roy, 2009 November). Patagonia is a known environmentally and socially conscious company. The garments and accessories featured in the guerilla gardening spread, however, were framed as eco-conscious due to their proximity to an environmental act. The text and images in these editorials produced a multimodal discourse on the intersection of fashion and environmentalism. These discursive practices offered insight into the ideological stance of one of the most prominent fashion magazines on the market regarding an increasingly pressing issue facing the fashion industry. Namely, how the seemingly paradoxical concepts of fashion and sustainability merged into a cohesive discourse of sustainable fashion.

Problem Statement

Sustainable fashion has garnered a lot of academic attention over the last fifteen years with investigations into nearly every aspect of the supply chain for ways to improve the system. Research on and promotion of sustainable design practices (Botnick & Raja, 2011; Fletcher & Grose, 2012; Young, Jirousek, & Ashdown, 2004), developments in textile production and dyeing (Fletcher K. T., 1998; Scaturro, 2008), sustainable retailing practices (Bansal & Kilbourne, 2001; Jones, Comfort, Hillier, & Eastwood, 2005; Lai, Cheng, & Tang, 2010), advertising and marketing sustainable products (Davis I. , 2013; Koszewska, 2011; Yan, Hyllegard, & Blaesi, 2012), sustainable

consumption (Beard, 2008; Chen & Chai, 2010; Hustvedt & Bernard, 2008; Spaargaren, 2003), and post-consumption practices (Hawley, 2006; Koch & Domina, 1997; Shim, 1995) have all been explored academically. Multiple organizations have been established for the promotion and dissemination of information regarding sustainable fashion products and practices such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (www.apparelcoalition.org) and the Clean by Design initiative established by the Natural Resources Defense Council (www.nrdc.org).

There is one aspect of the supply chain, however, that has largely been ignored in the sustainable fashion literature: the fashion media. As a cultural intermediary (Bourdieu, 2010), the fashion media exists between the production and consumption of fashionable goods. The cultural capital of fashion publications like *Vogue* magazine grants it a special position to connect fashion consumers to fashion producers (i.e. brands and designers) and establishes closer interactions between the cultural and economic aspects of everyday life (Negus, 2002). While the influence of the fashion media on the construction of meaning in the industry has been studied from a variety of perspectives, it's construction of meaning for sustainable fashion products and services in particular has not been explored.

Statement of Purpose

This dissertation seeks to understand sustainable fashion from the *Vogue* perspective. *Vogue* has included elements of sustainable fashion in its page since 1990s and recognizes the concept on its website via its online encyclopedia, *Voguepedia* (Vogue, 2013). The existence of sustainable fashion in *Vogue* is not in contention, but

what this inclusion means ideologically is not clear. This dissertation examines how *Vogue* engages, shapes, and alters the sustainable fashion discourse within the limitations of a high-fashion magazine from 1990-2013.

Research Questions

This research analyzes sustainable fashion discourse in the popular fashion press, specifically as it appears in *Vogue* magazine between 1990 and 2013. The research asks how *Vogue* explicitly and implicitly defined sustainable, ethical and eco fashion through discursive practice. Additionally, what discursive practices are employed to construct, (re)produce, and challenge notions of sustainable fashion in the editorials?

While discursive practices are inclusive of a broad spectrum of human expression, the above questions largely concern the written document. Fashion magazines are, of course, a multimodal construction utilizing text, image, and even smell to communicate. Thus, the research also questions what iconography, symbolism and rhetorical devices are utilized in pictorial representations of sustainable fashion. Furthermore, How do visual representations corroborate or conflict with the editorials on sustainability?

The inclusion of twenty-three years of data required consideration of the changing socio-cultural and economic factors influencing the construction of the discourse. Consequently, the research also asks how *Vogue's* conception of sustainable fashion changed over time. Additionally, how do these changes relate to changing social, political and economic factors in American culture? Exploring how the discourse has changed over time in relation to relevant contextual factors offers insight into the *Vogue*

perspective and its ability to adapt in the face of major societal, political, and economic shifts.

Lastly, since *Vogue* was selected as the singular source of data for this project because of its privileged position in the fashion media landscape, the research questions how *Vogue's* inclusion of sustainability challenges or supports its position of power in the industry.

Overview of Methodology

This research used Discourse-historical Approach (DHA) and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), both of which fall under the broader umbrella of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to examine twenty-three years of *Vogue* magazine's construction, manipulation, and promotion of the sustainable fashion discourse. Both editorial text and the corresponding photographs or photo spreads were included in the analysis. Methods employing critical theory addressed the political, economic, and social contentions that surround not only sustainable fashion, but also sustainability in general.

CDA promoted by Norman Fairclough (1993; 2001) and Teun van Dijk (1993; 1997) served as both foundational theory and method. Though CDA is "pluralistic" in the theories it employs, there are three basic convictions held by those that engage this approach: "hidden power structures should be revealed, unjustified discrimination have to be fought, and the analyst has to reflect on her/his own position and make her/his standpoint transparent" (Forchtner, 2011, p. 1). Machin and Mayr's guide to MCDA (2012) helped operationalize the theory of CDA for the use of image analysis. The proponents of MCDA, informed by the theory of social semiotics, view text and image as

equally influential in the construction of knowledge with each utilizing conventions and devices unique to the medium to construct, challenge, and promote ideologies.

Employment of DHA as outlined by Lamb (2013), analyzed the changes in *Vogue's* sustainable discourse over time.

Rationale and Significance

'Discourse' is both a process and a result: it is the process of meaning construction as well as the resulting knowledge from that construction (Foucault, 1981; Kress G., 2010). Revelation of ideologies that influenced and shaped the construction of knowledge extends from careful analysis of the discursive practices employed by institutions and individuals (Barthes, 1981; Fairclough, 2001a; Foucault, 1970; Fowler, 1991; Hall, 1999; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Kress, 2010; Schirato & Webb, 2004; van Dijk, 1993). Institutions and individuals who have the means to control the construction and dissemination of knowledge are deemed more powerful in a society. The ideologies held by institutions or individuals that are more powerful will likely gain broader dissemination since they will be more visible. Furthermore, powerful institutions and individuals will maintain their position by excluding, dismissing, or even co-opting discourse that challenges existing ideologies (Foucault, 1981). *Vogue*, as an established, powerful voice in popular culture, has the ability to shape discourse on culture and fashion.

The discourse of interest in this study is that of sustainable fashion. Sustainable fashion, slow fashion, eco-fashion; they all appear ideologically at odds with *Vogue's* core mission to "immerse itself in fashion, always leading readers to what will happen

next” (Condé Nast, 2013, n.p.). Each month a new *Vogue* appears on the newsstands or in subscribers’ mailboxes, maintaining an endless cycle of ‘newness.’ However, *Vogue* is also a keeper of fashion history through the establishment of the *Vogue* Archive and its frequent use as a primary source. Numerous academic studies concerned with *Vogue*’s content and history position the magazine as a major gatekeeper and meaning maker within the fashion industry.¹ “No title resonates with authority and history the way that *Vogue* does” (Köning, 2006, p. 205). The magazine built a reputation on having its finger on the pulse of not only fashionable attire but also on culture in general. Exploring how the sustainable fashion discourse has emerged and evolved in the pages of *Vogue* offered a new perspective on the positioning of environmental and social activism within the fashion industry.

Fashion’s emphasis on newness paired with increasing technologies in production and information dissemination has resulted in near instantaneous style obsolescence (Cline, 2012). Scores of books and collected works have lamented the prevalence of fast-fashion, urging designers, retailers, marketers, merchandisers, and consumers to consider alternative ways of participating in fashion.² The discourse of sustainability competes with the discourse of fashion as newness resulting in the dominant ‘discourse of the new’ incorporating elements of the alternative discourse of

¹ In 2006, *Fashion Theory* published an entire issue devoted to research on *Vogue* magazine with a diverse range of methodologies, questions and perspectives (vol. 10, no. 1/2).

² *The Sustainable Fashion Handbook* (Black, 2013); *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys* (Fletcher, 2008); *Fashion and Sustainability: Design for Change* (Fletcher & Grose, 2012); *Shaping Sustainable Fashion: Changing the Way We Make and Use Clothes* (Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011); *Sustainable Fashion: Why Now?* (Hethorn & Ulasewicz, 2008); *Naked Fashion: The New Sustainable Fashion Revolution* (Minney, 2011).

sustainability. *Vogue*, in particular, has prided itself on co-opting alternative discourses, from grunge fashion in the 1990s (Snelgrove, 2013) to street style photo blogging (Givhan, 2014). It serves to reason sustainability, one of the major issues facing society today, would be co-opted as well. *Vogue* openly demonstrated its incorporation of the discourse, providing a timeline of the major “milestones” in its increasing inclusion of eco-fashion in its pages and consciousness in *Voguepedia*.

The media have played a central role in the evolution of the fashion industry. It has been “a medium that intimately connected people and things” (McNeil & Steorn, 2013, p. 135). Within this medium, there are two competing discourses. On the one hand, readers become aware of the impact their lifestyles have on individuals and ecosystems around the globe. This has occurred through news stories of worker exploitation such as sweatshop conditions tolerated by Nike in the 1990s (Greenberg, 2004). On the other hand, fashion magazines promote an image of luxury and desirability that masks any hardship or negative impact of production and consumption processes, creating a dream world and sense of escapism (Köning, 2006, p. 157). This research explored how one media source navigated the dissonance of two disparate paradigms.

Though *Vogue’s* power is regularly challenged and undermined by competing or alternative publications, its visibility has remained strong due to visually compelling books (Angeletti & Oliva, 2012; MacSweeney, 2012) and documentary films (Cutler, 2010; Bailey & Barbato, 2012) that aggrandize *Vogue’s* position in the American fashion psyche. Therefore, how *Vogue* chooses to present the sustainable fashion discourse has

the potential to set the limits of the discourse. This study is the first step in exploring the media's role in shaping cultural perceptions of and expectations for sustainable fashion.

Role of the Researcher

As this is a qualitative study, the researcher played a central role. I served as the research instrument, selecting the relevant editorials and processing the information in order to answer the research questions posed. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) referred to the qualitative researcher as a *bricoleur*—appropriating Lévi-Strauss's concept of *Bricolage* (1962, pp. 16-33)—in that the qualitative researcher cobbles together appropriate theories and methods to explore phenomena and create a 'montage'; piecing together disparate elements to offer new perspective and understanding of human behavior. The researcher uses different points of view and a variety of data to construct an interpretation that is greater than the sum of its parts. In this particular study, I explore editorials spanning a twenty-three year period, with texts penned by numerous writers and images produced by a bevy of photographers. The resulting interpretation, however, moves beyond the individual contributors and presents the development of a sustainable fashion discourse by *Vogue* as an institution.

Research Assumptions

Several key assumptions held by the researcher influenced the development of the research agenda. The first assumption was that there have been movements within the fashion industry to address concerns relating to environmental and social impacts. Evidence to support this assumption is vast; from the increased use of organic cotton by

global brands like H&M (H&M, 2014b), to the success of socially-conscious marketing campaigns like TOM's Shoes' one-for-one initiative (Marquis & Park, 2014). The second assumption was that *Vogue* had integrated a semblance of these movements into its pages. *Vogue's* self-curated encyclopedia, *Voguepedia*, confirmed this assumption with their eco-fashion entry (Vogue, 2013). The third assumption concerns the role of *Vogue* in popular culture. It was assumed that the way in which *Vogue* constructs the sustainable fashion discourse is of cultural relevance. The visibility of *Vogue* in the annals of popular culture informed this assumption. The magazine and the myths promulgated about it have served as inspiration for books and films, both documentary—*The September Issue* (Cutler, 2010), *In Vogue: An Illustrated History of the World's Most Famous Fashion Magazine* (Angeletti & Oliva, 2012)—and fictional—*Funny Face* (Donen, 1957), *The Devil Wears Prada* (Frankel, 2006).

Organization of Study

Chapter two presents a review of relevant literature to contextualize the study and findings. The chapter defines and operationalizes both 'discourse' and 'sustainability'. The academic disputes related to these oft-used words are explored, as well. Next, the chapter reviews the concept of fashion and its social contentions. This parlays into an introduction of sustainable fashion, presenting the most pertinent literature. Since magazines are the sites of research, a review of germane studies regarding magazines as discourse is offered. Finally, fashion magazines and, most relevantly, *Vogue* are explored as unique cultural artifacts, offering further justification for their selection as data.

Chapter three presents a full overview of the method employed, addresses researcher bias, as well as locates the study within the paradigm of social constructivist, qualitative research. Data analysis was separated between two chapters to maintain organization and focus. Chapter four explores the evolution of the sustainable fashion discourse over the twenty-three-year period studied via employment of the Discourse-historical Approach. Chapter five is an in-depth Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of one particular recurring feature titled “Style Ethics”. Chapter six reflects on the analyses offered in chapters four and five and offers a synthesis of findings. Moreover, limitations to this study as well as possible directions for future research are reviewed.

Chapter 2 : Sustainable Fashion Discourse And The Media

This chapter offers a comprehensive examination of the major theories, concepts, and definitions that served as the groundwork for this study. An overview of the theories of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Semiotics is presented. Definitions of key terms such as discourse, sustainability, and fashion are proffered as well as how these concepts interact and are combined for the purposes of this study. Additionally, relevant information regarding the development of fashion discourse and fashion media, with particular attention paid to the status of *Vogue* within this field, is offered for context.

The Discourse of Sustainability

Discourse is a complicated and multifarious concept. The vagaries of the concept extend largely from its varied applications across a diverse spectrum of disciplines. It is a central concept for linguistics, but has also been extensively used in psychology, philosophy, and literary studies. Discourse has, at times, been used interchangeably with terms such as rhetoric, communication, and dialogue. It has also held a place as a higher-order construct representing a complex super-structure or “a system of rules regulating the flow of power (both positive and juridical) which serves a function of promoting interests in a battle of power and desires” (Brown, 2000, p. 31). This research defines discourse as “a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts, which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as

thematically interrelated semiotic, oral or written tokens, very often as ‘texts’, that belong to specific semiotic types, that is genres” (Wodak, 2001, p. 66).

Jørgensen and Phillips outline the premise of discourse theory (2002). Discourse must be understood in its historical and cultural context. Additionally, the link between knowledge and discourse as a social process must be acknowledged. “Knowledge is created through social interaction in which we construct common truths and compete about what is true and false” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). It is through various discursive practices, both linguistic and visual, that knowledge is shared, constructed, and challenged. Discourse is inherently linked to knowledge since discourse encompasses what can be known on any given subject, setting the limits of what is knowable. Furthermore, within knowledge, there is power. As Michel Foucault states, “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized” (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). Thus, those who control the discourse will seek to maintain their position of power while those undermined by the discourse will construct a subversive discourse to challenge the hierarchy.

While there are as many ways to approach discourse as there are ways to define it, this dissertation was written from the social constructivist viewpoint of discourse/discourse analysis. This work will therefore focus on the social constructivist definition of discourse analysis and the myriad of ways it can be conducted within this one paradigm alone. Social constructivism’s foundational tenet is that reality (and “truth”) is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). That is not to say that the

material world does not exist, but that the world has no meaning without the social processes that take place between humans, largely through discursive practices. Additionally, it is understood that humans are not merely passive receivers of information from the external world. Humans, through discursive practice, are both constituted by and also actively constitute the world around them. Thus, to understand how humans make sense of the world, one must examine their social practices. Within this paradigm, discourse is defined as language in action, situated within social and historical context (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Therefore, discourse analysis within the social constructivist paradigm explores how language is used to act, whether in challenging old ways of thinking, or producing new knowledge about the world. Discursive practice analysis reveals ideologies and power structures of a given people at a given time (van Dijk, 1997). Discourse analysts generally take either a structuralist or poststructuralist approach to discourse. This research falls under the umbrella of poststructuralist discourse analysis.

The first presupposition of poststructuralist discourse analysis is that discourses can change or are mutable, both historically and contextually. This fluidity is seen in everything from changing definitions of individual words to sweeping shifts in paradigmatic thinking. Foucault argued that it is through discourse and discursive practice that we know what we know and that what we know then shapes discourse (Foucault, 1970). Thus, it would serve to reason, in order to understand a time and place and to explore the reality of our own making, one must look to discourse for the source of this construction. Additionally, poststructuralist discourse analysis is concerned with

intertextuality, or “the way that the meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts” (Rose, 2001, p. 136). To operationalize this approach, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was selected as the primary theoretical and methodological approach for exploring the sustainable fashion discourse in the pages of *Vogue* magazine.

Norman Fairclough succinctly summarizes the perspective and function of Critical Discourse Analysis stating:

“CDA provides a way of moving between close analysis of texts and interactions, and social analyses of various types. Its objective is to show how language figures in social processes. It is critical in the sense that it aims to show non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination, and in ideology” (2001b, p. 229).

It is the connection between discourse and ideology that is central to understanding how *Vogue's* relative position of power as a mass media outlet and cultural icon potentially shapes ideologies related to sustainable fashion. The entire “semiosis” of the magazine, the “meaning-making through language, body language, visual images, or any other way of signifying” (Fairclough, 2001b, p. 229), will be explored.

Though CDA is not necessarily limited to written and spoken language, the majority of studies utilizing its methods focus solely on text-based discursive practices (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). This is problematic in that little of what is experienced in the modern world involves language alone. “All media are mixed-media, with varying ratios of senses and sign-types” in modern communication (Mitchell W. J., 2002, p. 170). In other words, media is multimodal (Kress G., 2010). Thus, CDA was expanded to

encompass the multimodal elements of magazines by employing Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA).

The theory of Social Semiotics informs MCDA. Social semiotics broadens the scope of *where* meaning making happens, expanding beyond the limited view in which written and spoken language hold primacy (Kress G., 2010). It allows images and texts to share space without granting primacy to one over the other. Scholars have found social semiotics a useful tool for exploring a broad range of multimodal discursive practices including the media's coverage of 'greenwashing' (Maier, 2011) and branding of the environmental movement in text and images (Hansen & Machin, 2008). Both of these studies explored sustainable discourse as presented through text and image, revealing the sustainability discourse was constructed in a way to benefit individuals or groups in a position of power. Studies such as these inspired further analysis of the fashion media's discursive practices regarding sustainable fashion.

Defining sustainability. Sustainability, like discourse, is a word used frequently and across a diverse array of disciplines. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) lists three definitions for 'sustainable/sustainability'. The third, which is most relevant to this context, has both a generic and a human-centric orientation. First, the *OED* defines sustainability as an act that is "capable of being maintained or continued at a certain rate or level" (sustainability, adj., 2013, n.p.). The more human-centric definition states that sustainability "designates human activity (especially of an economic nature) in which environmental degradation is minimized, especially by avoiding the long-term depletion of natural resources; of or relating to activity of this type. Also: designating a

natural resource which is exploited in such a way as to avoid its long-term depletion” (sustainability, adj., 2013, n.p.).

The human-centric definition has informed several of the specific applications of ‘sustainability’ in various contexts. Today, the most oft-cited definition of sustainability stems from the “Brundtland Report” which actually defines sustainable development, not sustainability. The report stated that sustainable development “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environmental Development (WCED), 1987). This report still emphasized the need for economic growth, but suggested limits must be set and advantage must be taken of technological innovation to ensure damage minimization.

The human-centric definition of sustainability has three issues: (a) it assumes primacy of the human species in the hierarchy of the natural world, that our systems must be preserved first and foremost; (b) it assumes that human needs are universally defined and we are united in our stance on the type of ‘development’ needed; (c) it assumes economic development is still the primary concern. This classifies the human-centric definition of sustainability as “weaker sustainability” (Williams & Millington, 2004, p. 101). As Williams and Millington explained, though all definitions of sustainable development are concerned with the “environmental paradox”—the difference between what is demanded of the Earth and what the Earth is capable of providing—the approach to solving the paradox usually takes one of two routes (p. 100). The first route is represented by the Brundtland report: societies must be more efficient in their use of resources and rely on technology to assist in meeting demand. There is little

concern for curbing demand, merely finding better ways to meet it. “Stronger sustainability” considers the supply side of the Earth and recognizes that the Earth simply cannot continue meeting the current demand (p. 102). Therefore, demand must be reduced and perceptions of humanity’s role in the system must be altered (i.e. divest of the human-centric perspective). The “moderate approach” lies somewhere in the middle of this spectrum of weaker/stronger sustainability and incorporates a little of both into its approach.

The discourse of sustainability shows how discursive limits are constantly set, challenged, shifted and adapted based on contextual and social factors. The emphasis on the environmental aspect of sustainability has led to significant research on the discursive practices of various media concerning the subject (Alexander, 2009; Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Hansen & Machin, 2008; Hepburn, 2013; Maier, 2011; Mühlhäusler & Peace, 2006). The critical approaches of these studies revealed a complex discourse with a myriad of voices contributing to its production. Mühlhäusler and Peace defined environmental discourse as “comprising the linguistic devices articulating arguments about the relationship between humans and the natural environment” (2006, p. 458). While this definition addresses the human/nature interaction it does not address the other aspect of sustainability, commonly referred to as the ethical component or the human/human interaction. For the human/human element it is necessary to bring in the additional concept of social responsibility.

‘Social responsibility’ as a discourse has largely emerged from business literature and is frequently referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). CSR is as

contested a concept as sustainable development and sustainability (Dobers & Springett, 2010). It generally concerns the ethical aspects of modern business practice and forces business discourse to expand beyond the concentration on profit generation. CSR has led to changes in the business lexicon such as referring to 'stakeholders' rather than the more limited 'stakeholders'. This discursive change challenged the dominant capitalist discourse in regards to who should benefit from (or at least remain unharmed by) market operations (Freeman, Martin, & Parmar, 2007).

Dickson, Loker and Eckman (2009) sought a comprehensive definition of CSR specifically for the textile and apparel industry. Polling professionals and academics, they defined a socially responsible apparel business as one that considered "the entire system of stakeholders associated with apparel supply chains, including production workers, sales help, and consumers, and the entire product life cycle from the inception of raw materials and components to product design, use, and discard" (p. 30). In this definition, the emphasis is on people though the environment is acknowledged abstractly via reference to raw materials.

None of the definitions covered thus far gives equal acknowledgement to people, the environment, and profit. Sustainability requires cohesion amongst these three concepts, which led to the development of the triple bottom line. Elkington is considered the major contributor to the concept of the Triple Bottom Line or TBL (Elkington, 1998). The model places equal emphasis on social, environmental, and economic impacts of industries, businesses, and governments.

Issues facing sustainability discourses. While various company leaders have acknowledged the importance of the TBL, Springett (2003) found that CEOs in New Zealand co-opted the concept of a three-tiered approach and deprived it of all meaning. This superficial subscription to sustainability is common in the corporate world and has been termed “greenwashing” (Hobson, 2002). The practice of greenwashing has negatively influenced overall trust in sustainability claims as well as tarnished the brand identities of multiple corporations (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

The trajectories and measurements of economic development have largely been established and controlled by one dominant group for much of human history (Hobson, 2002). Whether in terms of politics, society, or economics, the Northern hemisphere (including Europe, North America, and Northern Asia) has set the parameters for the direction of human development. This hegemony has led to a limited definition of progress—marked by colonization, the establishment and evolution of the corporate model, and the stratification of social class. Thomas Friedman calls this a “Golden Straightjacket” (1999; 2005). The Golden Straightjacket refers to the rules and regulations placed upon the developing world (largely found in the Southern hemisphere) by the developed world (largely found in the Northern or Northwest hemisphere). These rules and regulations are so stringent that they do not allow any alternative forms of development. Countries and cultures must succumb to the straightjacket if they wish to gain access to the global economic and political forum. Developing economies must follow established economic models or risk being left

behind. A growth-oriented West established these models but the Earth cannot be sustained if everyone follows Western consumption habits (Durning, 1991).

The expectations that come with the Golden Straightjacket are highly relevant to the textile and apparel industry. For those putting on the straightjacket for the first time, the textile and apparel industry offers a viable starting point for economic development. The majority of cultures throughout the world have domestic processes already in place (frequently cottage or in the home) for the production and consumption of daily textile and apparel needs. These processes are thousands of years old, passed from one generation to the next, frequently from woman to woman (Barber, 1994). However, as the Golden Straightjacket takes hold, the rationalization of processes promoted by the West must be adopted. Fiber production moves to the agribusiness model and textile and apparel production moves to the factory floor. This shift from the domestic production of goods that will be consumed within the immediate vicinity of their production to the factory model where nondomestic goods are produced and then shipped to developed economies, is fundamental to understanding the context in which modern industrial production occurs.

Exploitation and alienation are unintended consequences of the modern industrial system. Emile Durkheim traced the rising level of anomie in modern society to the breakdown of the employer/worker relationship (Durkheim & Simpson, 1963, pp. 79-84). Horkheimer and Adorno's (2002) analysis of the culture industries revealed a rationalized system founded on technology claiming, "Technical rationality today is the rationality of domination. It is the compulsive character of a society alienated from itself"

(p. 95). The rationality of this system—capable of efficiently producing goods and services at incredible speed—has led to irrationalities such as worker exploitation and environmental degradation (Ritzer, 2000, pp. 16-18). The profit-driven model has proven ruthlessly efficient at both the production of goods and also the manufacturing of individual, social, and environmental discontent.

Disagreement exists as to the best way to encourage companies to address their environmental and social impact. Since the early 20th century, social activists have called for stronger regulation on corporations to force compliance with the moral codes and ideologies of their societies (Dybicz, 2004). Incidents like the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire spurred political action to protect workers from the greed and negligence of business owners (Marrin, 2011; Pence, Carson, Carson, Hamilton, & Birkenmeier, 2003). Not all parties, however, see the issue as a corporate concern. Those who stem from the ‘free market’ perspective put the onus on consumers, claiming that if consumers demand ecological and ethical production processes the industry will respond accordingly. In the 1970s, Milton Friedman promoted this view in his influential article “The Social Responsibility of Business is to increase its Profits” (Friedman M., 1970). Even today, there are those who view sustainability as a potential competitive advantage leading to larger market share rather than an ethical or moral obligation for responsible global citizenship (Crittenden, V.L, Crittenden, W.F., Ferrell, L.K., Ferrell, O.C., & Pinney, 2011; Hult, 2011; Koszewska, 2011).

The issues facing government agencies and NGOs in policing the environmental and social impacts of business is complicated by the incongruous boundaries of politics

and business. “Economic globalization proceeds full throttle with a large part of the world’s economy operating on a global scale. Meanwhile, political institutions for regulating the economy remain firmly national in scope, with little hope for change anytime in the near future” (Dybicz, 2004, p. 26). Numerous corporations have evolved to a multinational position, beyond the scope of nationally bound political entities. Each country a corporation operates in will likely have different regulations. Those with the most lax regulations will likely draw a greater percentage of business due to cheap operating costs. However, consumers can only fight for sustainability if they have the necessary knowledge and ability to distinguish between companies that greenwash and those that have sustainability embedded in their mission. Alexander’s (2009) critical discourse analysis of corporations’ sustainability efforts found that companies “overstate” their commitments to sustainable development in an attempt to “persuade people of [their] benign intents” (p. 64).

Growth in movements like the ‘No Logo’ campaign (Klein, 2002), ‘Buy Nothing Day’, and subversive magazines like *Adbusters* suggested growing segments of the population were weary of corporate greed and the invasive nature of capitalist ideals in everyday life (Soper, 2008). In the 1990s, as manufacturing jobs were outsourced overseas, the ‘Buy American’ campaigns were an organized response of the discontent (Frank, 1999). The 2008 financial crisis ignited a consumer-activist movement with the #OccupyWallStreet demonstrations. With battle cries of ‘we are the 99%’, protestors demanded acknowledgement by those with an inordinate amount of power in relation to population (Blow, 2013). Kozinets and Handelman’s (2004) research on consumer

activist groups found that not only are these groups fighting against what they see as a corrupt economic system and insatiable corporate greed but also against “what these corporations are seen to create: a selfish, greedy, consumer consciousness” (p. 702). American consumption habits were slow to change, however. That is, until the 2008 economic crisis forced consumers—at least those in the lower and middle classes—to change their ways because credit was no longer available and their savings were obliterated (de Graaf, Wann, & Naylor, 2014).

Small steps, big change. Rather than force change on a system that is broken, there are now movements creating a new discourse for measuring a successful business. There has been a growth in alternatives available to consumers wishing to avoid companies that follow the Milton Friedman, economic-centric definition of sustainability, allowing them to support business striving for the TBL. Unfortunately, these alternative organizations’ success was measured in the same way as non-TBL companies, that is, in terms of profit alone. A company that pays its workers a fair wage, considers environmental impacts, and gives back to the communities in which they operate cannot expect to directly compete with companies that drive down their operating costs for cheaper products within the profit-centric paradigm.

The Benefit Corporation (B Corp) movement has attempted to change the very definition of a corporation. Their goal is to distinguish between companies that are ‘being less bad’ and those that are ‘doing good’ (B Lab, 2013). There are now over 1,000 companies worldwide—several of them directly or indirectly involved in the textile and apparel industry. The B Corp movement not only emphasizes the TBL as foundational to

proper business practice, they are actually going state by state to implement legislation acknowledging the B Corp as an entity that should be held to a different standard than a traditional corporation (Clark, Jr. & Vranka, 2013). This legal precedent—which has passed in 12 states, including the corporate haven of Delaware—has the potential to change the evaluation standards for corporations.

Consumer activists no longer need to wait for a corporation to decide to take action. With crowdfunding, consumers are actively engaging in the development, promotion, and financial support of young or start-up companies that align with their values and ideologies. Additionally, there are now alternatives to the traditional financial markets. For example, Merritt and Stubbs (2012) explored the possibility of alternative markets such as TimeBanking, which uses human volunteer hours as currency to partially fund sustainability projects at the local level. These alternatives to traditional capitalist, profit-driven enterprises suggest change is possible across a wide spectrum of industries. The question remains, however, whether the fashion industry and the discourses constructing its limits are capable of a similar change.

Fashion and Sustainability: Strange Bedfellows

The fashion industry and its various discourses create a fashion system marked with paradox. For example, though technology has increased and logistic networks have improved, waste is rampant. The system is efficient but its efficiency has led to incredibly cheap clothing and an endless design cycle resulting in “fast fashion” (Cline, 2012; Clark H. , 2008). Consumers have fallen into a cycle of buying on sale, choosing

quantity over quality, and using/discarding without thought to the impact on social and environmental systems.

Consuming fashion. Fashion occupies an ambivalent position in modern society. On the one hand it is dismissed as frivolous while the expanse of the systems dedicated to its production implies significance to self and society. Even fashion's definition lacks clarity. Fashion is both an attribute given to a thing and the thing itself. This research espouses the definition of 'fashion' as a social mechanism; an intangible property ascribed to a select group of objects and cultural practices for a limited period and is eternally linked to the 'new'. Fashion is ephemeral while the object or practice to which it is ascribed remains concrete (Kawamura, 2005; Lipovetsky, 1994; Svendsen, 2006). Svendsen (2006) offered an overview of the various (philosophical) written works on fashion, which contained very little positive reflection on the subject. Svendsen stated:

“Fashion is irrational in the sense that it seeks change for the sake of change, not in order to 'improve' the object, for example by making it more functional. It seeks superficial changes that in reality have no other assignment and to make the object superfluous on the basis of non-essential qualities, such as the number of buttons on the suit jacket or the famous skirt length” (2006, p. 28).

Academics who study fashion exclusively, however, have discovered in fashion a phenomenon that assists individuals and societies cope with modernity (Wilson E. , 2006) and spread democracy (Lipovetsky, 1994). “Fashion implies a certain fluidity of the social structure of the community, and it requires a particular type of society, that is the modern world where the social stratification system is open and flexible” (Kawamura, 2005, p. 19). Thus, fashion allows individuals in a diverse and mobile society

to cultivate an identity and situate themselves in a particular time and place. In a modern, open society, the possibilities of identity construction are near endless.

Environmental impact of the fashion industry. In terms of the environment there are few industries that have been more destructive than the textile and apparel industry. From fiber production to consumer disposal, the outputs of the textile and apparel industry have taken a serious toll on the ecological stability of the Earth. Exploitation of natural resources has occurred at every level of the textile and apparel supply chain. Though the environmental impact is not isolated to any one segment of the industry, cotton has received a significant amount of the attention in this arena. Through the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, cotton yield has tripled over the last eighty years without increasing the amount of land utilized (Fletcher K. , 2008, p. 8). This was an astonishing feat that led to greater access to one of the most in-demand fibers across cultures. However, the industry polluted and diverted water systems through this cotton growth, potentially causing irreparable damage (Chapagain, Hoekstra, Savenije, & Gautam, 2006).

The materials. Organic cotton has slowly risen in consumer consciousness as an alternative to the conventionally grown crop. A diverse array of manufacturers and retailers have responded to the demand by incorporating it in some of their products including some of the most frequent offenders of 'fast-fashion': H&M, Inditex (owner of Zara), and Nike, Inc. have all offered organic cotton products at one time or another (Textile Exchange, 2013, p. 5). However, *WWD* reported in 2012 the organic cotton market is experiencing issues with supply and demand due to economic, social and

environmental issues of production in India, the main supplier of organic cotton to the world (Friedman A. , 2012). Current estimates place global demand of cotton around 107 million bales per year (Perez, 2013) while supply of organic cotton hovers around 700,000 bales (Textile Exchange, 2013). Thus it is necessary to explore additional options in the move towards more environmentally friendly fiber options. One way to do this is to reimagine the environmental impacts of synthetic fibers, long deemed an enemy of the environment and society due to their dubious origins (i.e. polyester and nylon from petroleum) and toxic production processes.

Though technological developments, such as synthetic fibers and dyes, exploit natural resources, technology also holds potential for more sustainable processes. Scaturro (2008) argued that technology and ecological responsibility work hand in hand. The popular outdoor brand Patagonia led the way with changing perceptions on the sustainability of synthetic fibers, melding the image of environmentalism with high-tech performance gear (Hepburn, 2013). Some of the newest fibers on the market like Lyocell™ and fibers produced from recycled water bottles (PET) demonstrated how technology can lead to environmental and social impact reduction when innovation is encouraged (Baugh, 2008). Thus, being more environmentally friendly requires continually developing technology that reduces environmental devastation and demands placed on the Earth.

The design. The role of the designer in the conception of a more environmentally friendly product has been explored, as well. Change is the hallmark of a fashion system and this quality is at the center of its unsustainable nature. Walker

(2010) argued, however, that the designer should not fight the demand for change. Designers must merely rethink their process so the product can adapt either to change or be easily broken down for reuse and recycling. While a good solution that works within the current paradigm, this solution does little to curb demand for products and use of natural resources.

Clark (2008) offered a slightly different perspective of the designer, “challenging the existing hierarchies of designer, producer, and consumer” (p. 429). She conceived of the designer as more closely aligned with their consumer, connecting consumers to the design process and helping them value their goods all the more. “Successful design will be well worn and loved by its owner, and possibly passed down to a new generation for another rotation in the clothing lifecycle” (Young, et al., 2004, p. 68). The ability for an object to survive the test of time—both physically and aesthetically—is largely dependent on its construction.

In order for clothing to become more meaningful and for consumers to know more about the products they purchase they must have a source of information. Few consumers can work directly with the designers of their fashion goods outside the shrinking realm of made-to-measure and *haute couture*. Fashion magazines have long served as a meeting place between production and consumption (Köning, 2006; Kopnina, 2007). However, how that role has served the sustainable fashion movement is unclear.

The consumer. “If environmental decline results when people have either too little or too much, we must ask ourselves: How much is enough?...When does consumption cease to add appreciably to human satisfaction?” (Durning, 1991, p. 11).

The role of consumption in the fight for a more sustainable future is a complex matter. Both too much and too little consumption can lead to humans negatively influencing the environment. The point of well-balanced consumption exists at the intersection of sufficiency and efficiency. Of course, these are culturally relative terms.

Currently, the consumption model moves in a linear fashion from acquisition to discard (Winakor, 1969). Consumers have coped with the mounting guilt of this linear system by finding alternative 'end-of-life-cycle' options for their goods, mainly through donation to charities and second-hand clothing dealers (Ha-Brookshire & Hodges, 2009). The abundance of used clothing in the United States has opened opportunities for a second-tier industry to collect, sort, and distribute the excess all over the world. This industry has diverted millions of tons of textile waste from landfills, and "is able to process 93% of the waste without the production of any new hazardous waste or harmful by-products" (Hawley, 2006, p. 264).

The recycling of textile waste and abundance, however, is not enough. This is an example of weak sustainability. The same issues of consumer alienation from production processes exist in the post-consumer recycling process; consumers simply do not know what happens to their stuff before and after they own it. While books and educational films enlighten conscientious consumers on the growing second-hand clothing market, particularly in Africa (Bloeman, 2001; Hansen K. T., 2000; Rivoli, 2009), the second-tier clothing market remains hidden from view.

Social impact of the fashion industry. As with the ecological issues facing the industry, awareness of worker exploitation has increased over time (Dybicz, 2004). With

each new revelation—whether it was the Kathie Lee scandal in the 1990s (Barrett, 1996), the GAP and Nike scandals (Klein, 2002, pp. 366-379), the Apple factory suicides in 2010 (Lucas, Kang, & Li, 2013), or the most recent tragedies in the Bangladesh textile industry in 2013 (de Graaf, et al., 2014, p. 69)—there is a surge in outrage over the working conditions in which consumable goods are made. The use of child and forced labor for production (Ellis, 2010), and the ‘race to the bottom’ has perpetuated poverty in developing economies (Collins, 2003, p. 15). In the face of power imbalance and social degradation, “civil society needs a new channel in which it can speak in a unified voice” demanding change and accountability (Dybicz, 2004, p. 41).

Companies have responded to social outcry with the establishment of ethical codes and by signing up for any of the numerous certification programs available. There has also been a surge of alternative trade organizations (ATOs). As seen in the academic study by Littrell and Dickson (2006) in India and the commercial work of Alabama Chanin (Fletcher K. , 2008, p. 144), these groups operate globally to bring valuable work to women without forcing them to abandon domestic responsibilities.

On par with sustainability, ‘transparency’ has emerged as an industry buzzword with widespread calls for access to supply chain processes (Lamming, Caldwell, & Harrison, 2004). Third-party certification organizations emphasize transparency. Certifications offer evidence to consumers that a product or service meets a baseline of desirable criteria. The demand for transparency, however, can have unintended consequences. Audited companies accused of greenwashing sometimes stop sharing all supply chain information, (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011). Regardless, consumers respond

favorably when they have access to information that helps them make critical choices regarding the goods they acquire in the marketplace (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011).

Though consumer awareness of worker exploitation is growing and there seems to be at least some demand for ethically made consumer goods (Ruddell, 2001), it is a niche market. Daniel Miller (2012) spent a great deal of time trying to understand where, how, and why consumers shop. Utilizing interviews, he found a contradiction between morality and ethics. Individual households gave primacy to their own family's needs based on a personal morality that one should take care of those closest in relation. An expression of this morality is through shopping with thrift. "By contrast, all forms of ethical shopping, whether organic or fair trade, were automatically assumed to be more expensive than buying regular goods," thus compromising thrift (morality) (Miller D. , 2012, pp. 88-89). "The ethical concerns for wider issues of the planet and other people were thereby, in practice, always seen to be at the expense of the moral concerns for one's own family and household" (pp. 88-89). Thus, asking consumers to be more ethical in their consumption is not simply an economic issue; it challenges the very ideologies and values of which consumption is an expression. The consumer must identify with the ideologies, values, and, of course, the aesthetics expressed by sustainable goods or they will be a failure in the marketplace.

"Fast" vs. "slow". The perceived frivolity of fashion, its planned obsolescence, and its history of worker and resource exploitation have resulted in academics and industry workers striving for change. Sustainable, or 'slow', fashion has emerged as a potential avenue forward. Hazel Clark (2008) argued that if societies really emphasize

and reflect on the connection to the things we consume—specifically our clothing—a slower fashion process would emerge. Clark reasoned, “the emotional attachment between human beings and clothes offers potential for designers wanting to explore fashion as a sustainable practice” (p. 441). In essence, material goods must become more important, not less, to alter the way individuals and societies view the clothing they consume.

Slow consumption emerged as an ethos for those promoting a different relationship between consumers and their goods. As on the production side of fashion, temporality is of central concern to the slow consumption movement. Slow consumption “means slowing the rate at which products are consumed (literally ‘used up’) by increasing their intrinsic durability and providing careful maintenance” (Cooper, 2005, p. 54). Slow consumption in fashion includes practices such as wardrobe building rather than trend following, choosing laundering options that preserve the material longer, and repairing the mendable. All of these practices require an educated consumer who is knowledgeable of the materials and processes used to create and care for fashionable goods.

Speaking of Sustainable Fashion. As mentioned above, greenwashing is as much of a buzzword as sustainability and social responsibility. Thomas (2008) offered an overview of the key terms adopted by the fashion industry, journalists, and academics. She noted that journalists’ approach to eco-fashion was “playful although it sidelines accuracy in the pursuit of amusement and attention” leading to confusion and loss of accuracy of terms (p. 528). Words like ‘natural’ and ‘green’ are (mis)used for a variety of

purposes and in a variety of contexts reducing any meaning they may have once denoted. The fashion industry's co-option of sustainability for marketing and selling "eco" products has been labeled "eco-narcissism" (Black, 2007). The insecurities and confusion regarding proper vocabulary such as 'fair trade', 'natural', and 'organic' have even led some firms to develop their own terminology to describe their sustainable processes (Beard, 2008, p. 459).

The use of third-party certification and labeling processes has increased in order to combat consumer confusion and misuse of common phraseology. The Ecolabel Index (Big Room Inc., 2014) lists 109 labels and certifications currently in use around the world for environmentally or ethically conscious textile and apparel products. These range from certifications for percentage of organic fiber content (e.g. Organic Content Standard) to the more comprehensive Global Organic Textile Standard, which examines the entire production process, certifying based on organic inputs and social impact (Global Organic Textile Standard International Working Group, 2013).

Materials are not the only certifiable aspect of the textile and apparel industry. The World Fair Trade Organization (<http://www.wfto.com>) monitors and certifies good labor practices and positive social impact. Beauty products, which constitute a vast number of editorial pages in fashion magazines as well as significantly contribute to advertising revenue, have separate certifications such as the Leaping Bunny (PETA, 2014). Products that do not use animal testing in any stage of research or production can display this label.

Once companies, brands or individual products pass evaluation they are given clearance to use the certifying body's label to communicate—or market—their standing to customers. Several issues arise in this process. One, though the textile and apparel industry is global, some of the certifications utilized are national or regional (e.g. USDA Organic). The standards in one country may or may not meet the standards in another. Two, the certification and labeling can itself become a troubled lexicon if it is not properly communicated to the consumer. Hyllegard, Yan, Ogle, and Lee (2012) discovered environmental and ethical messages were best communicated to consumers via hangtags with explicit information regarding the certifying body and the processes/materials that were covered by this certification. While hangtags are a great place to communicate information, they are quickly removed from the product. This would not be an issue if it were not for the burgeoning second-hand clothing market. This growing market could also benefit from material and process certification. Three, the textile and apparel industry is a complex system with multiple levels of inputs involving dozens of firms in the production of just one item. The certification of one input or one firm involved in the process does not necessarily result in a sustainable product. For example, if the cotton in a t-shirt is certified organic a consumer cannot also assume that the thread, dyes, or other material inputs are organic. Fourth, labels and certifications add value to the product at point of purchase but may do little for post-purchase behaviors. A 100% organic t-shirt can still be laundered excessively with harmful detergents and then thrown out with the trash at the end of life. Therefore, while certifications and labels attempt to clarify the sustainable fashion lexicon and ease

the disbursement of knowledge regarding socially and environmentally conscious practices in the industry, they come with their own lexical baggage that should not be taken for granted.

The Magazine

Magazines are just one of a variety of media used by a society for larger cultural production and regulating social practices. As such, they play a key constitutive role—along with blogs, newspapers, television and movies—“sustaining and changing the power relations enacted around issues of gender, sexuality, social class, race and ethnicity, colonialism and its legacies, and the geopolitics of space and place within globalization” (Lister & Wells, 2001, p. 62). The media occupies an ambivalent existence with some examiners proclaiming it a propaganda machine and others viewing it as a social educator, trusted to assist its audience with the struggles of change. The first position is taken quite strongly in *Manufacturing Consent* (Herman & Chomsky, 2002) while the latter is explored in *Paper Voices: The Popular Press and Social Change 1935-1965* (Smith, Immirzi, & Blackwell, 1975). What both sides acknowledge is the power the press holds in shaping and influencing the discourse of the society in which it operates. They differ on the level of malevolence ascribed to the press, which is deemed to have an inordinate amount of social influence. In this section the magazine in general, and *Vogue* in particular, will be explored as sites of discursive practices

The magazine as text. The text is more than just the physicality of discourse. Roland Barthes expanded the theoretical definition of text to construct an object that exists somewhere between its creator and its reader. He writes, “the text is a moral

object: it is written in so far as the written participates in the social contract. It subjects us, and demands that we observe and respect it, but in return it marks language with an inestimable attribute which it does not possess in its essence: security" (Barthes, 1981, p. 32). The text sets the limits of the discourse between author and reader, however it is not a passive object. The text continues to "work" long after the author stops writing and the reader stops reading: "the signifier belongs to everybody" (p. 37). Thus, when viewing the magazine as a text, it is understood as a social object existing somewhere between writer and reader, production and consumption.

Language "scaffold[s] the performance of social activities (whether play or work or both) and [scaffolds] human affiliation within cultures and social groups and institutions" (Gee, 1999, p. 1). When considering discourse as a social act, it is more than just stating we speak and write within a social network. Action is more than just 'doing.' The intentions of the writer/speaker, their perspective, and the perspective of the reader/listener, construct a complex social interaction suggesting a myriad of ways a researcher could approach discourse as a site of analysis (van Dijk, 1997). Intention and perspective are largely tied to the social roles the discourse participants occupy, thus the discourse must be first analyzed in terms of the definition of these social roles. Text within a magazine that gains the majority of its revenue from advertisers must be viewed in a different light than that of an academic journal where the text is tied to a completely different set of standards, expectations, and intentions.

Ellen McCracken (1993) took a more direct approach to accessing the meaning within women's magazines by using semiotic analysis. She noted that "the visual, verbal

and sometimes olfactory signifiers in these magazines offer women multiple layers of signifieds; along with the pleasure comes messages that encourages insecurities, heighten gender stereotypes, and urge reifying definitions of the self through consumer goods” (pp. 8-9). The power of the magazine is its ability to shape the readers’ view of self and others in terms that are most beneficial to the magazine and its advertisers. Magazines have an asymmetrical relationship with their readers granting them access to a position of authority that has the potential to shape the actions and beliefs of their readers (Fowler, 1991, pp. 105-106).

Hermes’s (1995) informants were resistant to the idea of women’s magazines holding any importance or meaning beyond that of being entertaining or useful in terms of tips and advice. “Women’s magazines as a text are not highly significant, but as an everyday medium they are a means of filling a small break and of relaxing that does not interrupt one’s schedule, because they are easy to put down” (p. 144). In order to reveal the cultural meaning of women’s magazines it was necessary for Hermes to move beyond what any single informant said and connect the discourse to the ideologies underlying the women’s magazine readers as a group. It is possible that Hermes’s readers could not see beyond the banality of their magazines because they were so well entrenched within the discourse. In fact, they were parroting back the ideologies of a culture that has frequently belittled media positioned specifically for women, especially fashion media (McRobbie, 1998). Discourse and semiotic analysis allows researchers to see the limits of the discourse and reveal the ideologies helping to shape its structure.

The Magazine as Visual Culture. Magazines are, of course, more than just written text. The visual elements of magazines play an equally significant role in constructing a discourse for the reader's consumption. This section will explore the role of visuals, particularly photographs, as communicative events.

Humans have a "double consciousness" regarding the visual world (Mitchell W. J., 2005, p. 7). They simultaneously believe that images are alive, demand things from the viewer, have agency and that images have no power without complicity from the viewer. Helmers and Hill (2004) suggest the action of images stating,

"Images work on us synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically, we view the image that represents the present. Diachronic viewings are slightly more complicated, for we view an image that represents the past and was created in the past, but we also view contemporaneous images with a knowledge of their precursors and their previous meanings" (pp. 12-13).

Sturken and Cartwright (2001) strip images of their independent power, returning power to the viewer and subsuming images under the more influential socially constructed elements of the context in which they exist. Much like texts, when images are systematically analyzed their connection to the ideological thinking of the individual or group that produced the image can be revealed. They noted that "images are elements of contemporary advertising and consumer culture through which assumptions about beauty, desire, glamour, and social value are both constructed and responded to" (p. 21). Images communicate specific meanings and are an integral part of the magazine reader's experience.

In this study, Social Semiotics will be used to analyze images relevant to the construction of sustainable fashion. Traditional semiotics, in which a strict code is placed upon visual representation, has largely been dismissed as counter-productive (Lister & Wells, 2001, p. 73). Much like structural linguists, early semiotics promoted the idea of universal underlying visual codes that could be 'read' and understood by those who knew the code, as a sort of pseudo-language (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). Semioticians pointed to visual codes such as road signage to make their point but the application of this logic to more complex visual cues such as photographs and television did not provide appropriate results. Social semiotics built upon the groundwork laid by Barthes and his contemporaries but differed by utilizing the concept of 'resource' rather than 'code.' Social semioticians also refuse to limit meaning to one single answer and instead allow images to have a more mutable/subjective "meaning potential" (pp. 134-136). Resources are better understood as conventions. The majority of image (or text) producers will operate within conventions for the given context. This does not mean that all images produced with the same conventions will have the same meaning, but conventions limit meaning potential since both producers and viewers are accustomed to certain norms for specific situations. "The use of conventions by photographers is a matter of assimilated 'know-how', a trained sense of 'this is how to do it' gained 'on the job' and by observing what does and does not 'work' in concrete situations" (Lister & Wells, 2001, pp. 74-75). Photographic conventions such as framing, gaze, lighting, context, and camera position can be altered in any number of ways to influence the meaning potential. Jewitt and Oyama (2001) give the example of photographing

politicians in a manner that makes them seem approachable and relatable even though they wield considerable power (p. 135). Social semiotics therefore provides the critical tools to ask questions about images that help reveal the meaning potential and ideologies behind their construction. In essence, the “rhetoric of the image” (Barthes, 1977) is under evaluation.

‘Rhetoric’ implies an attempt to persuade. The most obvious uses of visual rhetoric include images such as advertising and political imagery. Bulmer and Buchanan-Oliver (2006) explored rhetorical devices in advertising campaigns as a means of studying the conventions and techniques used by advertisers to persuade and influence audiences. Visual rhetoric also refers to the physical structuring of imagery in advertising as a mechanism for effective communication (Ortiz, 2010). Visual rhetoric is not limited to images. The spatial alignment of text, font choice, and use of positive/negative space can also shape meaning potential.

Visual rhetoric proposes a similar relationship between knowledge and language. Rhetorical analysis is in contrast to aesthetic analysis (Foss, 2004). The beauty of form is subsumed by the function of the image as a communicative tool. Visual rhetoric focuses on persuasive images that fundamentally shape discourse and are shaped by it. One can argue that all images can persuade since they literally and figuratively serve as a frame for the viewer and instruct on how to see reality. As Foss noted, “visual artifacts constitute a major part of the rhetorical environment, and to ignore them to focus only on verbal discourse means we understand only a minuscule portion of the symbols that affect us daily” (p. 303). Image makers use mechanisms to “focus [the audience’s]

attention on the specific elements that the rhetoric thinks will most benefit his or her case” or viewpoint (Hill, 2004, p. 28). Thus, whether intended or not, the individual or group that constructed the image helped determine for the viewer how that image should be approached or interpreted. Images are both subjectively created and subjectively viewed. Once again, this limits analysis to the discovery of meaning potential.

The majority of research on print magazine’s rhetorical visual content has focused on advertising. But one must consider the numerous other images and visual techniques employed by the art and editorial staff of a magazine. If the text can be viewed as an attempt to cultivate and persuade a willing consumer, the images must have a similar purpose. One of the goals of this research was to explore the use of images in the construction of sustainable fashion discourse. It is already assumed they are not merely illustrations to hold the interest of a visually oriented consumer. However, the role they play in building a convincing image of eco/ethical fashion was elucidated.

Fashion magazines. Fashion magazines exist at the intersection of production and consumption. Fashion magazines rely on text and images working in concert to create meaning for the products presented. Images “seduce” on first sight (Borrelli, 1997) while “text contributes to an understanding of fashion by assigning descriptive or interpretive meanings to the objects and images presented on fashion pages, thereby mediating a cultural understanding of the phenomenon” (Köning, 2006, p. 207). As fashion information dissemination has developed through a growing media, the

diffusion cycles have sped up immensely and have become more complex (Kawamura, 2005). Today, designers and brands are churning out six or more collections a year. With their extreme efficiency and tightly controlled factory systems, the fast fashion industries are able to translate designer styles into mass-produced knock-offs with drastically reduced lead times as compared to traditional manufacturing processes (Devita & Yoo, 2014). This has led to a glut in the marketplace, driving marketers and advertisers to constantly inform the consumer of what is 'new'.

There are two main institutional sources of information for what is new in fashion: (a) the designer or brand in the form of advertising and fashion shows or (b) the fashion media through various outlets such as magazines, videos, and blogs (Kawamura, 2005). The second source, the fashion media, is a part of what is generally known as "cultural intermediaries" (Bourdieu, 2010; Entwistle, 2009; Kaiser, 2012; Negus, 2002) in that they "possess a very great cultural capital of familiarity and social capital of 'connections'" (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 360). One of the key sources of *Vogue* and its competitors' power is their level of access to the producers. Magazine editors are granted interviews, attend fashion shows, and are able to photograph the newest designs for their pages before they are available to the public. As an institution, they have repositories of knowledge that, in *Vogue's* case, span over one hundred years of fashion history that they regularly call upon to demonstrate their cultural capital. This research acknowledged that magazines have lost some of their cultural capital to bloggers and other, less-institutionalized forms of digital media (Rocamora & O'Neill,

2008; Titton, 2013). For the purposes of this study, however, the focus will remain on the cultural capital fashion magazines have maintained.

Magazines make sizeable contributions to the democratization of fashion. Conversely, Lipovetsky (1994) argued that the spread of fashion democratizes a populace, in that a citizen has greater freedom through choice. Access to information through mass media informs those choices. However, fashion magazines have also been viewed as proliferators of imagery and text that negatively impact our society. One area of particular concern has been the promotion of unrealistic body ideals, particularly amongst adolescent girls (de Perthuis, 2005; Turner, Hamilton, Jacobs, Angood, & Dwyer, 1997; Vogue, 2013). Magazines also contribute to the cult of consumerism, “providing visual and tangible opportunities for consumers to evaluate, compare, and even obsess about product offerings” (Bickle, 2009, p. 108). Through advertising, imagery, and editorials, products are given attributes that raise them above simple commodity status and move them into the realm of objects of desire or fetish.

Regardless of whether the information is considered harmful or helpful to readers individually or society collectively, research continues to indicate that magazines matter. They play a key part in the diffusion of information and have the power, along with other forms of media, to impact perceptions of the world. Magazines communicate ideals to consumers, whether they are ideals of beauty or ideal concepts of fashion (Workman & Freeburg, 2009). Additionally, “since the fashion industry is marked by continuous change, those involved necessarily seek to impose stability on the instability wrought by the incessant quest for new trends. Magazines assist in this task

by commenting on, highlighting, and publicizing fashion designers and their collections to create an overall image of 'fashion' itself, its history and development" (Moeran, 2006, p. 735). The way the popular press chooses to present information can drastically alter the manner in which consumers and the wider populace approach, discuss, and think about a topic.

Fashion is inherently a visual medium. Though the other senses are engaged when encountering clothing, it is most frequently sight with which fashion is first evaluated. At the highest level of fashion production, the image is transmuted into a spectacle in the form of runway shows and photo shoots (Evans, 2008). Though fashion images appear everywhere—on billboards, in magazines, in museums—very little critical analysis of the medium has been conducted.

While portraiture, engravings, and illustrations have all served monumental roles in the visual communication of fashion images in the past, today the fashion photograph fills that role (Hollander, 1978). Rosenblum (1978) offered a discussion of the different "styles" we've come to know in photography. The various styles of photography are contemporaneous with the various tiers of fashion. The most revered designers/fine art photographers are afforded more freedom in their production, control more of the process of production and even find their work in major museum collections—sometimes to the dismay of the fine art circles. This revered individual operates in stark contrast to the commercial creator, more commonly known as the product developer/news photographer, who works like a cog in a machine; easily replaced by someone with an equal level of technical skill.

Watney (1999) argued Rosenblum subscribes too heartily to the role the institution plays on the production of the image. However, I would argue Watney oversimplifies Rosenblum's position, which admittedly presents the photographic categories as relatively rigid. One cannot completely reject the idea that social institutions play both social and psychological roles in cultural production. Since production occurs before reception, and the photographer plays that role as holder of the means of production, it only stands to reason that production of the image would be prioritized in a Marxist interpretation of material culture. Though photographs are able to work across institutional barriers—from news-photo to fine art—this does not mean the original borders did not exist in its production. Art is always produced for an audience, even if it is self-serving, and one of the key skills of an artist is to know that audience. This knowledge will inevitably influence the production of the art, whether consciously or not. The fashion photograph is no different in terms of its limits by photographic conventions, methods of production, and audience expectations (Ramamurthy, 1997).

Fashion images have become part of our social worlds. “We learn who we are as private individuals and public citizens by seeing ourselves reflected in images, and we learn who we can become by transporting ourselves into images” (Helmets & Hill, 2004, p. 1). This ability for images to reflect an ideal self back at the viewer has been both celebrated and reviled by readers and researchers of fashion magazines. The work of Craik (1994) and Jobling (1999) explored the role of the fashion photograph in communicating meaning and constructing the fashion discourse. On the one hand,

fashion photography is considered a fantasy, contributing to the overall sense of escapism offered by the magazine. Rocamora (2006) discovered in French *Vogue's* reader's letters that writers regularly equated the imagery found in its pages with works of high art. On the other hand, Crane (1999) found a disconnect between the idealized images of beauty and femininity in the pages of *Vogue* and the 'average' woman. Thus, the fantasy constructed through imagery in the pages of fashion magazines has a dual nature; one that pulls the reader in while also limiting perceived accessibility of the ideal.

Craik argued that fashion photography offered a new way of seeing clothing. It's supposed objective gaze implied a "naturalism" that stripped the garments portrayed of fantasy (Craik, 1994, pp. 89-90). While Craik was no doubt referring to the objective or empirical nature of the photograph, one may question her assumption that fashion photography is devoid of subjectivity. There are several levels in the production of a photograph in which subjectivity can be imparted from selection of content, positioning the frame, controlling light and color, not to mention the photo editing and selection that occurs prior to print (Price, 1997; Ritchin, 1990). Photographers are as much a part of the gatekeeping process in media as journalists and editors.

As gatekeepers, the mass communication industry holds a unique power position in the construction, maintenance, and alteration of the major discourses within our society. Additionally, mass media and the discourses shaping our modern world rely on both text and image for the site of discursive practices. Ignoring one or favoring the other fails to evaluate the full-spectrum of representation and impedes a thorough analysis of discourse. The eco-fashion and sustainable fashion discourse has found

media space in both mainstream and niche media outlets. Winge (2008) explored the glamorization of the sustainable fashion discourse in lifestyle magazines such as *Vanity Fair*, noting the reliance on celebrity idolatry to present sustainable lifestyles as both desirable and achievable. Beard, on the other hand, noted the rise of specialist magazines and websites, such as *Sublime*, in catering to “converted consumers”, or those already aligned with sustainable ideologies (Beard, 2008, p. 460). What were missing in the studies of the lexicon and verbiage of the sustainable fashion discourse were the connection between how it was presented and the ideologies that shaped its construction.

Vogue. Since its inception in 1892 *Vogue* has contributed to the American perception of what is and what is not fashion in terms of clothing, lifestyle, music and art. *Vogue* has survived multiple transitions and iterations including the mutation from a society register into a fashion publication and numerous editors, each with their own vision (Jobling, 1999). Condé Nast, who purchased *Vogue* to add to his media empire in 1909, realized that focusing on a high-society readership would lead to lucrative advertising contracts with luxury goods manufacturers and retailers. Additionally, “in order to be perceived as authentic leaders within the fashion industry by the consumer, *Vogue* was drawn into more direct participation in the fashion industry” through connections to the world of *haute couture* and high culture (Cox & Mawatt, 2012, p. 74). Again, this underlines *Vogue*’s power as stemming from its cultural capital.

During both world wars, the United States found itself cut off from the fashionable centers of Europe, it’s main source of discourse of the ‘new’. Out of

necessity, *Vogue* promoted the lifestyles and fashions found in Hollywood and Southern California, establishing demand for the unique American phenomenon of sportswear (Berry, 2000; Warner, 2005). *Vogue* was also instrumental in the promotion of American designers during the annexation of Paris and subsequent Nazi occupation. “The magazine’s staff realized that if American women were to respect the skills of American designers, then opinion leaders such as the editorial staffs of the major fashion publications would need to set the example” (Buckland, 2005).

Vogue, through its longevity and celebrity status in its own right, has become a symbol of all that is fashionable. Major motion pictures such as *The Devil Wears Prada* (Frankel, 2006) and *The September Issue* (Cutler, 2010) reaffirmed *Vogue*’s preeminent role as a taste-making, celebrity-endorsing, formidable force in the fashion industry as well as in the psyche of the American populace. Though the print version of the magazine, like its competitors, is experiencing a decrease in circulation (Wicks, 2012) their website is enjoying a drastic increase in traffic post-redesign (Davis N. , 2011).

Vogue is a publication considered to have a disproportionate amount of power in the fashion industry in terms of information shaping and dissemination (David, 2006). According to Cox and Mawatt (2012), *Vogue* transitioned from a “passive commentator” to an active fashion industry participant in the inter-war years by focusing on a core readership and developing meaningful relationships with their advertisers (p. 67).¹

Today, American *Vogue*’s position in the industry is illustrated by the seating charts at

¹ Cox & Mawatt (2012) offer further evidence of *Vogue*’s influence noting the magazine colluded with the government in the late 1930s, promoting shorter hairstyles to reduce the number of factory injuries caused by women’s fashionably long hair getting caught in machinery (p. 68).

the major fashion shows in New York, London, Paris, and Milan, where top media figures such as Anna Wintour and her editors have supplanted buyers in the front row (Wilson E. , 2009).

Vogue maintains its pulse on what is “new” in the industry. It even has a say in its future direction through the highlight and support of up-and-coming designers via the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)/*Vogue* Fashion Fund (Singer, 2004). Through its significant industry connections and this fund, *Vogue* is able to connect young designers with established design houses so they can be groomed for success in the industry. Additionally, *Vogue* has cemented its connection to the world of high culture and art through its sponsorship of the Costume Institute’s yearly ball at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. The 2011 ball for the exhibition honoring the Alexander McQueen, *Savage Beauty*, raised ten million dollars for the museum, which had been struggling due to the recession (Wilson E. , 2011).

The influence of *Vogue* has been linked to the individual who occupies the top seat as editor in chief (Borrelli, 1997). Some of the individuals who have held this post at *Vogue* have been as famous as the magazine they oversee. Each one imparted their vision and perspective, allowing the magazine to evolve and remain a relevant cultural icon. Today, there are few in the industry without an opinion (whether praising or scathing) of the current editor in chief, Anna Wintour (Ed. 1988-Present). Wintour has been labeled the “embodiment of fashion” (Brockes, 2006). The power of the fashion editor is expressed through the allocation of space within the magazine, through choices of inclusion and exclusion (Kawamura, 2005). The more space and content afforded a

product, designer, or brand increases its perceived importance. Conversely, by limiting or completely barring information the editor is indicating that information unworthy or not aligned with the mission of the magazine. Thus, the inclusion of a sustainable fashion discourse indicates an acknowledgement of the potential negative impacts of the industry. However, inclusion does not necessarily equate support.

Those who seek a sustainable fashion and lifestyle perspective have a multitude of options beyond *Vogue*. There are several print and digital magazines devoted to green, sustainable lifestyles (i.e. *Mother Earth News*, *Sublime*, *Refix*,). However, the readership of such publications is typically a fraction of the size of major publications such as *Vogue*.² In order for eco and sustainable fashion to reach a wider audience and thus make a sizable impact on the industry, it must be presented in a positive light. Additionally, it must be presented in terms best understood by a wider portion of the population—for example, highlighting quality and aesthetics rather than environmental impact. While exposure in any publication is beneficial to a designer attempting a career in the industry, niche magazines will only provide exposure to a limited audience.

In order for designers to be known and become world famous, they need to be legitimized by those who have the power and authority to influence, such as editors from major fashion magazines. Recognition by them gives the designers the prestige and confirmation that they are talented (Kawamura, 2005, p. 79).

² The most recent Alliance for Audited Media Report placed paid and verified monthly circulation of *Vogue* around 1,270,000 in 2013 (Publisher's Statement: *Vogue*, 2014) while *Mother Earth News* was just over 500,000 ("Publisher's Statement: *Mother Earth News*, 2014). It should be noted, however, that while *Vogue* experienced stagnant circulation growth rates over the last five years, *Mother Earth News* has experienced periods of growth. This was particularly evident between 2008 and 2009 when *Mother Earth News* increased circulation by 15% (Alliance for Audited Media, Publisher's Statement: *Mother Earth News*, 2014).

Recognition in *Vogue* is seen as a validation of the designer's work. When *Vogue* features a designer that is also incorporating eco or sustainable methods there is the potential a wider audience will accept eco or sustainable design as fashionable. What is of interest is how *Vogue* frames and contributes to the discourse surrounding these methods.

This study argues that *Vogue* has the power to move eco and sustainable fashion from the periphery into the mainstream for its readers. Whether and how they have done so will be explored using a discourse-historical approach and multimodal critical discourse analysis. Chapter three will outline the specific operationalization of the theories and methods covered in this chapter. Since it is known that *Vogue* began covering eco fashion since March of 1990 that is where this research begins. Chapter four is a discourse-historical analysis of *Vogue's* conception and reception of eco, ethical, and sustainable fashion practices and products between the years 1990 and 2013. This was a necessary first step since little is known about *Vogue's* conception of the sustainable fashion ideology. Chapter five is a multimodal critical discourse analysis of a specific editorial feature established in *Vogue* since 2009, "Style Ethics." The historical analysis will help contextualize the MCDA of "Style Ethics" while the MCDA will offer an in-depth linguistic analysis of the discursive practices employed by *Vogue* to construct, challenge, and alter a sustainable fashion discourse.

Chapter 3 : Methods

To understand my particular method, it is necessary to make quite plain my epistemological stance, which shapes not only my approach to the research questions posed but also my perceptions of both knowledge and reality. My research is grounded in social constructivism, best explained by Berger and Luckmann (1966) as a process of reality construction in the mind of the individual based on lived experience. Thus, “reality” is subjective, bound by the context in which it is experienced. This implies a turn away from positivist principles that emphasize a singular truth. In full view of this perspective, this dissertation is not only an exploration of how *Vogue* constructs its reality through language, but is itself a social construction and one interpretation of *Vogue’s* processes. To account for subjectivity, however, this chapter offers a detailed and reflexive delineation account of how research questions were answered.

Within the social constructivist paradigm, discourse is defined as language in action, situated within social and historical context. Therefore, discourse analysis studies how language is used to act, whether it is challenging existing discourses, reinforcing previous discourses, or producing/receiving knowledge about the world. By analyzing a particular language in action (in text and talk) the researcher synchronically witnesses the rules and limits of larger social ideologies.

Research Questions and Selection of Methods

Research questions determine the best choice of methods. To reiterate, the questions guiding this research are as follows: How does *Vogue* explicitly and implicitly define sustainable, ethical and eco fashion through discursive practice? What discursive

practices are employed to construct, (re)produce, and challenge notions of sustainable fashion in the editorials? What iconography, symbolism and rhetorical devices are utilized in pictorial representation of sustainable fashion? How do visual representations corroborate or conflict with the editorials on sustainability? How does the pictorial representation of sustainable fashion compare and contrast with fashion pictorials not demarcated as sustainable? How has *Vogue's* conception of sustainable fashion changed over time? How do these changes relate to changing social, political and economic factors in American culture? How does *Vogue* inclusion of sustainability challenge or support its position as a powerful force in the industry?

On the most general level, these questions and their phrasing align with qualitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) describe the current qualitative paradigm as one that has evolved over a century, from a positivist perspective closely aligned with the quantitative paradigm to today's perspective that embraces the narrative and subjectivity:

“It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world...attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5)

Thus, qualitative research is primarily concerned with meaning making in everyday life. Creswell (2014) builds on this definition by providing a more concrete explanation of what a qualitative researcher does. Qualitative research, he states, “involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data

analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes” (Creswell, 2014). Since everyday life is the primary site of research, qualitative researchers locate their findings in the ‘field’ rather than in a laboratory setting. The product of qualitative research is frequently referred to as a *Bricolage* (Levi-Strauss, 1962) since it is an amalgamation of disparate elements brought together to create new knowledge greater than the sum of its parts.

Due to the subjective nature of qualitative research, the researcher plays a central role in the research process. Qualitative research demands the researcher act as ‘instrument,’ becoming completely immersed in the process (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The researcher acts as representative of an epistemological, ontological and theoretical perspective, locating the subject within that particular paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The combination of epistemology, theory and research questions adopted here was deemed best served by the discourse-historical approach (DHA) and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). The DHA offered an avenue for critiquing *Vogue’s* discourse over a wider span of time while MCDA offers a systematic and rigorous method to critically explore both text and image for a smaller, relatively homogenous data set. These methods were employed to explore how text and image work side by side to construct, challenge, and promote a particular discourse. The method and theories that inform MCDA assume knowledge is a social construction and thus aligns with the epistemological stance of the research.

DHA as Method

Wodak (2001) states the discourse-historical approach attempts to:

“integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political field in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded. Furthermore, it analyses the historical dimension of discursive actions by exploring the ways in which particular genres of discourse are subject to diachronic change” (p. 65).

In the case of this study, the genre in question is fashion magazines. The discourse-historical approach emerged to assist diachronic analysis of numerous, heterogeneous texts while still employing the critical theories that inform CDA. The wealth of data collected from the cover-to-cover analysis of the September issues of *Vogue* between 1990 and 2013 proved too cumbersome, diverse and complex to implement methods like MCDA designed for analysis of smaller data sets.

DHA ensures the context in which the discourse operates remains present by integrating the historical context directly into the analysis. The researcher constantly moves between the text and the context to construct a narrative. DHA aligns with traditional historical analysis in that representation of social actors over time is emphasized (Lamb, 2013).

MCDA as Method

MCDA was utilized to explore the data set of thirty-seven “Style Ethics” editorials. This analysis examined the discursive practices employed by *Vogue* to construct a discourse—the “participants, values, ideas, setting times and sequences of activity” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 219)—of sustainable fashion in one particular editorial segment. Discursive practices are “the order of discourse” (Hook, 2001, p. 522), or the rules and mechanisms through which knowledge is constructed and communicated. Discursive practices embody power elements inherent in discourse and are grounded in

the ideology of the group that uses them. The rules constructed by discursive practices set the boundaries within which culturally acceptable discourse occurs. The boundaries are taken for granted since it is nearly impossible to think outside of them, their dominance being so uniformly accepted (Foucault, 1981). MCDA attempts to make plain the ideologies and boundaries informing and influencing a discourse. It is particularly appropriate for discourses that utilize multiple mechanisms in its discursive practice—text, audio, image, speech, etc.

MCDA is an expansion of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). While its adherents promote CDA as both a theory and a method there are few resources that offer a detailed description as to how it should be operationalized and applied. This is possibly due to the fact that, frequently, CDA analyses concern a small selection of texts. Sometimes only one text, such as a newspaper editorial, is considered. Fairclough suggests a five stage analytical process for CDA (2001b, p. 236). Each stage of analysis is intended to systematically examine the nuanced layers of meaning contained within the discourse. While not a great operational guide it did assist with the initial organization of the current project. In stage one, the research determines a social problem rather than a research question. The social problem under investigation here is the disconnect between the ideology of sustainability and the ideology of the fashion industry. Stage two asks the researcher to “identify obstacles to the social problem being tackled” (p. 236). The third stage is a discussion of major findings from analysis of the discourse. The researcher must theorize whether the problem is needed for the maintenance of social order. This research questions if those in power (*Vogue*, industry insiders) benefit from

the lack of a resolution between sustainability and fashion. Stage four requires the researcher to theorize potential ways of changing the discourse or at least challenging the status quo. Thus, the researcher is not simply a critic but a vital part of moving the conversation in a new direction. Lastly, in stage five the researcher must return to their analysis and reflect on their social position that may have influenced the critique. This is a nod to the reflexivity expected of all qualitative researchers and an important step to ensure the discourse is not simply moving from the hands of one power structure to another. Stages three through five are addressed in the conclusion of this research.

In order to find more structured guides for operationalization, this research turned to literary and social semiotic perspectives. General coding categories were established following those outlined in *Paper Voices*, a seminal work exploring meaning production in mass media outlets, specifically in newspapers (Smith, et al., 1975). Anna König (2006) used the model proposed by *Paper Voices* when she explored the changing use of language in British *Vogue* between 1980 and 2001. She demonstrated the model's ability to adapt to additional media landscapes. König's study and *Paper Voices* served as a model for the establishment of the general coding categories for the text.

The images required a slightly different approach and categorization but the method was informed by the same theories. Social Semiotics argues that while images can communicate their message cannot be studied as a language, per se. Instead, it approaches images as communicative tools built within a framework of rules impacting their construction (Machin & Mayr, 2012). It is the researcher's job to explore and reveal "the underlying resources available to those who want to communicate meanings

visually and [analyze] the way that these are used in settings to do particular things” (p. 18). The work of Machin and Mayr (2012) and Jewitt and Oyama (2001) guided the development of the framework used to explore images in this study.

Data

American *Vogue* magazine was selected as the site of research due to its position in popular culture and the fashion industry as one of the most prominent and influential voices in fashion discourse. As stated above, *Vogue* claims it began discussing eco-fashion in March 1990, thus the data search was limited to a date range of 1990-2013 (Vogue, 2013). This research focuses on material produced exclusively by and for *Vogue*—editorials, captions and photo spreads—for its regular monthly issues. It does not include advertisements or supplementary issues such as the Met Gala Special Edition or Fashion Rocks. In addition to content, details about placement, order, design, and layout of editorials and images were examined.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two phases and provided material for both diachronic and synchronic analysis. First, every September issue of *Vogue* 1990-2013 was read cover-to-cover to explore how the magazine’s discourse on sustainable fashion has changed and evolved over time. The September issue was chosen for two key reasons. First and foremost, the September issue is the most important and hyped issue of the year. It introduces the lucrative fall designer lines to the consumer and provides a strong revenue stream through advertising dollars for the magazine. Anna Wintour proclaimed the September issue was “the high point of the fashion-magazine year; the very big

one...It's the one some readers love because they get so much for their money—and some love to hate, because they can't find the fashion or the features for the ads" (Wintour, 1992 September, p. 30). The importance of the September issue has even been chronicled in a documentary of the same name (Cutler, 2010). Second, a preliminary search was conducted to determine if particular issues focused on the subject of sustainable fashion more often than others. This keyword search indicated September was slightly more likely than other months to carry articles relevant to the sustainable fashion discourse. This is likely due to the increased number of editorial pages during this month while other contextual factors are certainly at play.

Additional magazine issues known to contain a significant contribution to the sustainable fashion discourse were also read cover-to-cover. These issues were selected based on information provided by *Voguepedia* on their "Eco Fashion" page (Vogue, 2013). The website's timeline identified both particular issues and particular editorial content that might be of interest to the current study. Thus, the cover-to-cover analysis grew to include March 1990, June 2009, November 2009, and November 2010.

Physical rather than digital copies of the magazines were read during the diachronic search in order to more closely resemble the user experience. As reading occurred, notes were taken reflecting the experience of reading the magazine, the major themes discovered, and particular stories of interest. The reading paid particular attention to how *Vogue* incorporated and/or reflected social, political and economic events in its editorials. Once all issues of interest were read a list of relevant articles that required further, in-depth analysis was compiled for retrieval from the digital *Vogue*

Archive.

The second phase of data collection utilized the digital *Vogue* Archive. Digital versions of noted articles from the first phase were collected from the archive. Additionally, a targeted search was conducted to obtain all of the “Style Ethics” editorials, “a special section spotlighting the best in sustainable chic, edited by fashion director Tonne Goodman” (Vogue, 2013, n.p.). This editorial became a repeat feature starting in 2009 and continues to run at present.

The primary text studied was the written representations of eco or sustainable fashion as it appeared in *Vogue* between 1990 and 2013. Though this research explores how the text and images work in concert, the text served a primary role in determining which editorials were to be selected and retained for analysis. Even if an image could be construed as potentially impacting the discourse on sustainable fashion, the corresponding text determined whether it was, in fact, relevant to the study. Fürsich argued, “only independent textual analysis can elucidate the narrative structure, symbolic arrangements and ideological potential of media content” (Fürsich, 2009, p. 239). Images believed to exemplify the discursive practices employed by *Vogue* in building meaning for sustainable fashion were gathered during both phases. This included images that accompanied the editorial text as well as seemingly relevant photo spreads.

In total 175 editorials and photo spreads were retained for in-depth analysis post cover-to-cover and targeted digital search. These articles were gathered and organized by year/month of production and by core subject. Fifty-five articles and photo spreads

deemed relevant to the sustainable fashion discourse were collected via the cover-to-cover analysis spanning then entire time period of exploration. In order to have a counter-point to these editorials, six articles were collected between 1991 and 2009 because they embodied the anti-sustainability perspective common in the fashion industry. These editorials serve as examples of the dominant discourse with which the sustainable fashion discourse must coexist. Ten of the editorials were classified as 'Culture'; they were relevant to the sustainability discourse but were not necessarily directly related to fashionable apparel and accessories. They include articles on travel, food, and lifestyle. Four articles relating to 'Beauty' were collected as well. The "Style Ethic" search yielded thirty-seven editorials for analysis.

In addition, eleven 'Reader's Letters' that spoke directly to the sustainable fashion content were examined. Reader's letters were gathered in three ways. First, all the letters appearing in September issues were reviewed and those concerning sustainable fashion editorials published in earlier issues were retained. Second, reader's letters responding to the special issues demarcated by *Voguepedia* as relevant to the eco-fashion discussion were sought out. Reader's responses are delayed by two to three months due to production timelines so letters responding to the March 1990 eco-fashion editorial were found in the May 1990 issue. Third, letters responding to the "Style Ethics" editorials were discovered in the targeted key word search of the digital *Vogue* archives.

Two of the categories—"Letters from the Editor" (26 articles) and "Point of View" (25 articles)—were studied to understand the ideology of the magazine at the

organizational level. These sections existed in nearly every issue and offered a succinct overview of the major contextual factors (sustainability related and not) influencing the content presented to the reader. Lastly, every cover from the issues examined was gathered as supplementary information regarding the look, feel, and highlighted content the magazine presented over the years. Four of the covers referred to the sustainable fashion discourse via headlines or cover design.

Data Analysis

Each editorial was treated as a discreet text. An editorial is defined here as original content published by *Vogue* collectively or by an editor employed by *Vogue*. An article or page title along with a byline (if included) demarcated the beginning of an editorial. The end of fashion editorials is often determined by a solid or hollow square (■) known as a tombstone. These editorials were gathered in PDF format so the original appearance of the text—font, layout, and color—was maintained. Since the editorials were collected digitally, the coding process was also managed digitally. The digital file organization program Notability was used which allowed highlighting, marking, note-taking and digital voice recordings for each PDF. The four levels of analysis were coded within Notability for “content”, “tone”, “lexicon”, and “cultural references/intertextuality” as well as for each of the sub-codes falling under these main codes. Data analysis was a recursive process with preliminary readings leading to a selection of “representative examples, which can be more intensively analysed [*sic*]” (Smith, et al., 1975, p. 15).

The four general categories—content, tone, lexicon, and cultural references—

were used as a starting point for text analysis but were expanded with sub categories based on the social semiotic approach that informs MCDA (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Kress G. , 2010; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Additionally, a category to code the level of sustainability encouraged in the editorial based on Williams and Millington’s work (2004) was added. Table 3.1 and Table 3.2 outline the code categories and sub-categories utilized for the analysis of both text and image.

Textual analysis. Texts should be examined both syntagmatically¹ and paradigmatically² (Fairclough, 2001, p. 240). The content was examined, noting what, specifically, was written; the words chosen. “How often a word is used in a text, perhaps in proportion to other, say, lexical words, may have something to do with the points the writer wishes to stress. The role of lexical repetition should not be underestimated” (Alexander, 2009, p. 28). When trends in content were identified they were occasionally converted to numerical expressions and are included in the interpretation where relevant, however statistical analyses were not conducted. Within content, four subcategories were created: product category, social actors, brands and price points. These were developed in light of the object-centered nature of the magazine. Examination of the editorial’s lexicon offered a nuanced view of the content and began the critical process necessary in MCDA. Lexicon “encompasses not only specific uses of vocabulary and terminology, but also phraseology” (König, p. 240). Lexicon can be explored from a variety of viewpoints, each highlighting a particular way of

¹ The logic resulting from the sentence structure

² How the choice of particular linguistic elements (e.g. syntax and lexicon) places the logic within a particular paradigm

Table 3-1
Text Code Descriptions

Code	Description	Sub-code	Coding Options
Level of Sustainability	Categorized based on Williams and Millington’s assessment of the current sustainability discourse (2004).	N/A	Weaker Stronger Moderate
Content	The subject and object of the editorial	Product categories Social actors Brands Price points	Open
Lexicon	How the editorial is structured to provide meaning or (de)emphasis.	Representation Saliency Abstraction Modality Transitivity	Open
Tone	Indicates how the author or organization “feels” about the topic or how the author/organization is trying to get the reader to “feel” about the topic	Quality Mood	Quality: open Mood: positive, negative, neutral
Cultural Reference/ Intertextuality	Referenced or alluded to external texts, cultural expressions, viewpoints, or ideologies	N/A	Open

Table 3-2
Image Code Descriptions

Code	Description	Subcategories	Coding Options
Denotation	Content analysis, what is presented	N/A	Open
Conventions	The way in which the photo was taken	Frame Gaze POV Setting	Length of shot Front/Profile Low/Eye/High Studio/Outdoors/Indoors
Inclusion/Exclusion	Who was discussed in the text that is not included in the image and vice versa	N/A	Open
Transitivity	Action of actors	N/A	Passive/Active
Modality	Level of articulation indicating 'reality'		Low/High
Connotation	The ideas and values communicated	N/A	Open

communicating information common not only in media but also across human expression. Five subcategories were created to address these various mechanisms of communication: Representation, Saliency, Abstraction, Modality, and Transitivity. Representation concerns how individuals or groups of people (social actors) are depicted in text and image. "In any language there exists no neutral way to represent a person. And all choices will serve to draw attention to certain aspects of identity that will be associated with certain kinds of discourses" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 77). In this subcategory, particular attention was paid to the way social actors were described (adjectives and honorifics) and what social groups they were associated with. Saliency concerns visual and textual devices that promote the visibility/importance of one idea, person, organization, over another (Kress G. , 2010, p. 131). This was explored in terms of editorial organization, systems of quoting, and overall placement of the text within the magazine. Abstraction concerns the replacement of concrete information with vague, metaphoric or generalized information. Hyperbole and metaphor are common in language, especially when describing complex ideas (Machin & Mayr, 2012). However, Fairclough (2001) argued that when abstractions are present, ideological work is being done. The social contentiousness of sustainable fashion demanded particular attention should be paid to both the information provided and also what was left unsaid, or abstracted. Modality explores "the presence of an individual subjectivity behind the printed text, who is qualified with the knowledge required to pass judgment, the status to grant leave or assign responsibility" (Fowler, 1991, p. 64). Modality in text was explored in terms of voice, or who was allowed to speak and the type of information

they provided. This information revealed *Vogue's* perspective on the hierarchical structure of the fashion industry. Lastly, transitivity or “the study of what people are depicted as doing and refers, broadly, to who does what to whom, and how” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 104). Much like who is allowed to speak, who is allowed to act reveals aspects of the power structures being constructed or promoted by a particular discourse.

The definition of “tone” was taken from *Paper Voices*: “an evaluative ‘set’, or stance, towards a certain topic (or range of topics) taken by the ‘speaker’; and it invites the reader to assume a similar stance. Tone is another way in which the underlying assumptions behind an explicit rhetorical style can be traced out and shown to be at work” (Smith, et al., 1975, p. 23). Thus, the text was read with an ear tuned to the way that sustainable fashion was discussed. For example, Alexander discovered in his discourse analysis of *The Economist's* sustainability editorials a sarcastic, dismissive and cynical tone that undermined the entire perspective (Alexander, 2009, p. 15). “Lexicon” overlaps “tone” and it looks at both “specific uses of vocabulary and terminology, but also phraseology” (Köning, 2006, p. 210). Thus, word order and emphasis and its influence on tone will also be included in analysis. It is important for the researcher to remember “the really significant item may not be the one which stands out as an exception from the general pattern—but which is *also* given, in its exceptional context, the greatest weight” thus ensuring emphasis is of central concern (Smith, et al., 1975, p. 15).

“Cultural references” aim “to capture aspects of the text outside the central subject matter of the article...in order to highlight the assumptions made by the

publication about the wider cultural knowledge of the readership” (Köning, 2006, p. 210). I expanded this definition to include the intertextuality of the text. Intertextuality is “how an individual text draws on elements and discourses of other texts. It is by combining elements of different discourses that concrete language use can change the individual discourses and, thereby, the social and cultural world” (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 7) in order to ascertain the web of knowledge built and reinforced by *Vogue* in their discourse.

Visual analysis. As Barthes argued, text and the photographs or images that accompany it compliment one another, but need to be studied separately in their own form to elucidate meaning. “Whatever the origin and the destination of the message, the photograph is not simply a product or a channel but also an object endowed with a structural autonomy” (Barthes, 1977, p. 15). In a magazine the images may or may not align with the discourse of the text. Barthes noted that while images are discreet expression they are constantly in communication with its surrounding text, particularly in media. Thus, though the text and image were analyzed separately in this research they were brought back together to better understand how they work in concert to convey meaning.

While there are a variety of methods for exploring images and their meaning, their differences lie mainly in their ideological perspectives and not their process. Whether discussing paintings, photographs, highway signs, movies, or advertisements the analysis must first begin with what the image contains. The photograph is understood to have both connotative and denotative elements, both of which must be

examined for a comprehensive meaning to emerge. MCDA and social semiotics offered the means to explore both levels, leading to an understanding of the “rhetoric of the image” (Barthes, 1977) and their “meaning potential” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001).

From the photographs that accompanied the editorials to the graphic orientation of the text, all visual content had the potential to shape *Vogue’s* sustainable fashion discourse. The analysis for images will work in the same direction as the text analysis: from focusing on what is presented, to how it is presented, to how the magazine connects to socio-cultural context and other external texts. The coding categories have different names and foci than the text analysis. Five categories were developed to explore the collected imagery in more depth: Denotations, Conventions, Transitivity, Modality, and Connotation. Denotation is roughly equivalent to 'Content' in the text analysis. Exploring denotation is “the act of recognizing who or what kind of person is depicted...what he is doing, and so on” (van Leeuwen, 2001a, p. 94). Noting what was portrayed across the vast array of images allowed patterns to emerge both within and across editorial categories

Photographic conventions—the way in which a photograph is captured, edited and presented—greatly influences the way in which images are perceived. “[W]hatever an image depicts or shows us, the material means and medium employed to do so have a bearing upon which qualities of the depicted thing or event are foregrounded” (Lister & Wells, 2001, p. 89). Though photographs carry an illusion of reality much can be done to influence the perception of content. Frame, Gaze, Point of View (POV), and Setting

were documented for each image and served as a means to critique how the conventions impacted meaning potential.

The Inclusion/Exclusion category paid particular attention to the social actors presented in imagery. This category allowed the text and image to realign and showed which social actors were deemed more or less worthy for inclusion. Transitivity offered a similar point of analysis by exploring the activity of the social actors. Machin and Mayr noted, “We can think about what, visually, participants are represented as doing, whether there has been deletion of agents and whether the image helps to bring in an abstracted sense of what is going on” (2012, p. 123). How social actors are portrayed in a sustainable fashion editorial has the potential to impact the meaning given to those actions and any associated objects.

The modality of the image indicates the level of reality depicted by the image. Jewitt and Oyama stated, “the greater the congruence between what you see of an object in an image and what you can see of it in reality with the naked eye, in a specific situation and from a specific angle, the higher the modality of that image” (2001, p. 151). For the majority of the images this required a closed coding of either “low” or “high” modality. Exemplary images had their modality explored in detail to demonstrate how modality was expressed by *Vogue* and its impact on the meaning potential of the image.

Lastly, the connotation of the image was explored. This level of analysis addressed the overall meaning potential of the image; conventions, social actors, and content were brought back together. Connotation is described as “the layer of the broader concepts, ideas and values which the represented people, places and things

‘stand for’, ‘are signs of’” (van Leeuwen, 2001a, p. 96). Connotation is similar to the text code Cultural Reference/Intertextuality in that any iconography that connects the image to other established discourses in the socio-cultural imagination is considered.

Verification

Three key strategies were utilized to increase the validity of this study. First, low inference descriptors were utilized extensively. Whenever possible, direct quotations are made available to offer support of themes discovered during analysis. Images were not reproducible in this document due to copyright restrictions. However, explicit information regarding location of images of interest is available. Second, this research was undertaken with the guidance of multiple experienced faculty members with substantial research experience. They were consulted about findings and interpretations. Third, reflexivity was central to the analysis and interpretations of multiple texts. I remained aware of the effects my epistemology and theoretical perspective had on the findings and disclosed relevant biases of the approach.

Ethical Considerations

There were no reciprocal arrangements made prior to, during or after this research was conducted. Since all of the data was published in some form, either online or in print, there was no need to protect the identities of individuals or institutions.

Chapter 4 : Vogue And Sustainability (1990-2013):

A Discourse-Historical Approach

Chapter 4 is a critical, diachronic exploration of the sustainable fashion discourse evolution between 1990 and 2013. It focuses on the editorials gathered during the September issue review as well as five additional issues highlighted by the “Eco Fashion” *Voguepedia* page as particularly relevant to this analysis—March 1990, May 2007, June 2009, November 2009, November 2010. The majority of the analysis focused on the written text though imagery that significantly contributed to the discourse will also be discussed. This chapter contextualizes *Vogue’s* construction, appropriation, and alteration of the sustainable fashion discourse through application of the discourse-historical approach. Since little is known about *Vogue’s* position on sustainable fashion aside from its “Eco Fashion” entry on *Voguepedia*, this chapter builds a backdrop against which the MCDA of the “Style Ethics” editorials in chapter five can be placed.

The exploration was not limited to articles directly related to eco or ethical fashion. Editorials that promoted the values of “slow fashion” as discussed by Hazel Clark (2008) were also collected; that is, any article that embodied at least one of the following: (a) “challeng[ed] existing hierarchies of ‘designer’, ‘producer’, and ‘consumer’” (b) “question[ed] the notion of fashion being concerned exclusively with the ‘new’” (c) “challeng[ed] fashion’s reliance on image” (d) “present[ed] fashion as a choice rather than a mandate” and/or (e) “highlight[ed] collaborative/cooperative work—providing agency especially to women” (Clark H. , 2008, p. 429). Furthermore, editorials that encouraged sustainability related practices or ideologies in general—whether expressed

through culture, food, beauty, or travel—were also collected. Lastly, a selection of editorials that appeared to flout even the most elemental aspects of sustainability was also collected for review. These editorials offered a glimpse into the competing discourses that share space in this magazine. Thus, an inclusive review of the magazine revealed a whole host of editorials that contributed to a subtler discourse on sustainability that may have otherwise been overlooked in a targeted, digital search of the *Vogue* archive alone. In all, 116 editorials were collected and analyzed.

The “Letter From the Editor” and “*Vogue’s* Point of View” (POV) segments, found in nearly every issue, were the sites of power establishment for the magazine via fashion “commandments” and condescension towards last season’s clothes. They also operated as signposts for the ideologies and events influencing the magazine at the time. Thus, they offered a site to explore *Vogue’s* struggle to rationalize the incongruities between external circumstances (i.e. economic downturn, political turmoil, environmental degradation, and social unrest) and the internal, *Vogue* fantasy world of fashion. These sections set the tone for the issue and position the magazine within its contemporary context. Anna Wintour served as Editor-in-Chief for the entirety of the time period studied. Thus, the “Letters from the Editor” are truly an examination of how Wintour conceptualizes the role of the magazine, her position of power, and the need for *Vogue*, as well as the industry, to address sustainability. The POV section, however, does not have a byline and was read as *Vogue’s* institutional missive to the reader regarding the magazine’s collective consciousness.

The editorials were broken into four time periods, which reflected changes in the magazine's approach to sustainable fashion. These changes were brought on by economic and socio-cultural shifts in the United States at the time. The first era, 'the era of penitence', spanned four years as the United States was recovering from the economic downturn of the late 1980s. The ten years covered by the second era 1995-2005, was a tumultuous economic period including the uncertainty following the September 11th attacks in New York. However, the magazine largely excluded overt discussions of environmental and social sustainability in terms of fashion. This period was dubbed 'the covert slow fashion period' due to the wealth of editorials discovered that corroborated elements of the slow fashion ethos embedded amongst the dominant discourse of 'fashion as new'. The third period, 2006-2009 was entitled 'the gold age of sustainable fashion.' This period was a turning point, not just for *Vogue* but around the world, as climate change became a widely accepted reality. It was in this period that *Vogue* produced its 'greenest' issues, with editorials relating to sustainable fashion appearing as headlines on their covers. It also introduced "Style Ethics" in this period. The final period, 2010-2013, was labeled 'commoditizing the movement'. The economic downturn of 2008 led to a magazine with a duplicitous message. On the one hand it continued to promote ethical and environmentally friendly goods in its "Style Ethics" section and added a section promoting social consciousness ("Social Responsibility") in 2010. However, it also took up the mantle of saving the fashion industry from a stagnant economy. This resulted in editorials pleading for readers to go shopping and the

establishment of Fashion's Night Out, a city turned global-wide night of uninhibited consumerism.

The Era of Penitence: 1990-1994

"There's no doubt about it. Our world is going to hell in a hand basket. After a century of abuse, the poor planet is starting to fall apart at the seams" (Leggett, 1990 March, p. 472). Thus began the first editorial devoted to eco-fashion in *Vogue*. The last decade of the twentieth-century was a watershed moment in economics, politics, and environmental concern in the United States. The Reagan-era, and the excess it promoted, had left a country rich in consumer goods but weak in terms of social systems. Reagan-era politics reversed environmental gains made in the 1970s such as investments in solar and wind energies and rolling back mileage requirements for automobiles (Friedman T. L., 2009). Environmental concern grew in the 1980s with the discovery of depleted ozone regions over the Antarctic and Arctic regions (Browne, 1989). The depletion of the rain forest was a regular topic of conversation. Western nations called for conservation and held benefits while poorer countries (e.g. Brazil) fought for the right to use the forest as a gateway to economic prosperity (Cohen, 1989).

The mainstream fashion industry got on the bandwagon of environmental awareness in the spring of 1990. The *New York Times* reported on fashion's "green movement" in March 1990. It somewhat disparagingly chronicled an increased use of naturalistic imagery and green marketing strategies (Hochswender, 1990). The article juxtaposed academic critiques of fashion's emphasis on consumption and the industry's attempts to clean up its image pointing out the irony of fashion promoting

environmentalism when so much of its ideology was grounded in planned obsolescence. In June of 1990, *WWD* reported on a Fashion Group International-hosted conference titled “Only One Earth: A Conversation about the Fashion Industry and the Environment” (Gordon, 1990, p. 15). At the conference, longtime fashion environmentalists such as designer Katharine Hamnett and The Body Shop founder Anita Roddick profiled the industry’s environmental impact and even suggested a need to “cut back on the marketing of conspicuous consumption in apparel” (p. 15).

Vogue’s March 1990 issue, which proclaimed on its cover, “Ecology: Fashion Gets Involved”, preceded both of these editorials. The last line of the “Point of View” stated—after listing everything new offered that season—“And designers show what ingenious things can be done with found objects and some ecological thinking” (Fashion: A Softer Approach, March 1990, p. 407). The aforementioned editorial, “Natural Selection” was sandwiched between a story on the fall of the USSR and a pink color trend photo spread. The editorial was cautiously optimistic about fashion’s ability to change. The author stated, “if the design community can use its far-reaching clout and visibility to make people aware, get them involved, and change their ways so that the world can be preserved for the future, then we can only applaud the effort and hope it continues” (Leggett, p. 472). Ecologically conscious brands and designers were profiled, with their efforts ranging from donating money to environmental groups, including slogan t-shirts in their runway shows, using fake fur, rethinking packaging, eschewing animal testing in beauty products, and using natural fibers instead of synthetics. Simply

using nature as a design inspiration—like Michael Leva’s “agrarian feeling” fashion show presentation—was also a qualifier for inclusion (p. 524).

Though the language of the editorial was pressing—“urging” was used four times throughout—the numerous harms the fashion industry had caused the environment were largely nominalized and abstracted. For example, the article stated, “many chemicals harmful to the delicate balance of nature are used to manufacture fabric” (p. 472). The offending fibers and fabrics and the chemicals used are not elucidated. Synthetic fibers and fabrics are generally lumped into the category of “ecologically suspect” by Isaac Mizrahi who “[tries] to work with natural fibers” as much as possible (p. 472). The article was completely devoted to environmental as apposed to social concerns aside from a brief mention of “local craftsman” “producing traditional African cloth” with a conservation message printed on in Kafue, Zambia (p. 472).

The “Natural Selection” editorial’s corresponding photo spread was peppered with visual clichés. A mostly nude black model—not identified by name in the captions—posed in California’s Redwood Forest wearing little more than sea glass jewelry and “hats” constructed from vegetation (Fig. 4.1 and 4.2). The iconography harkened back to the “Noble Savage” discourse that evolved with increased global exploration and popularized by Rousseau in the eighteenth century (Ellingson, 2001). The concept of the Noble Savage idealized non-white natives of the colonies as closer to nature and uncorrupted by modernity. The use of the Noble Savage meme continued into the early twentieth century with some individuals like Josephine Baker capitalizing on the stereotype by reimagining it as performance (Sweeney, 2004). The juxtaposition

of Europeans and Africans was captured at this time by Man Ray for French *Vogue* in 1926 in his iconic *Noire et blanche* (Grossman & Manford, 2006).

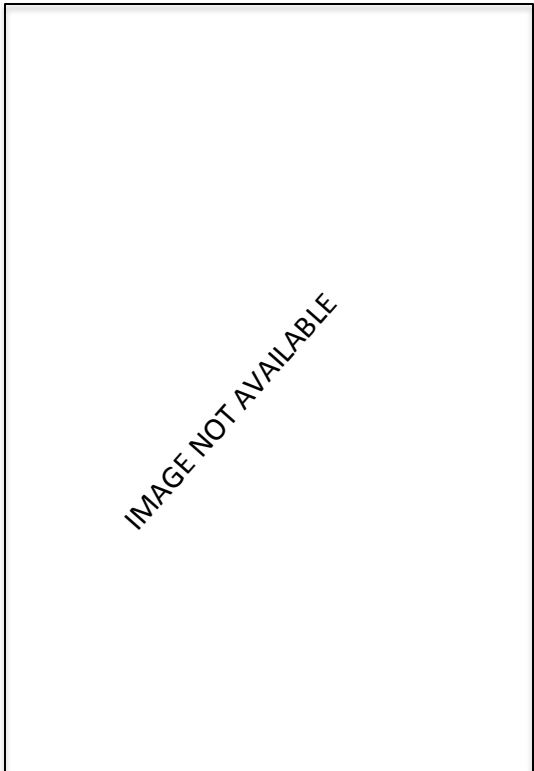


Figure 4.1 Harkening back to 'noble savage' imagery. Reprinted from "Natural Selection" (p. 471), by Herb Ritts, *Vogue* (March 1990).

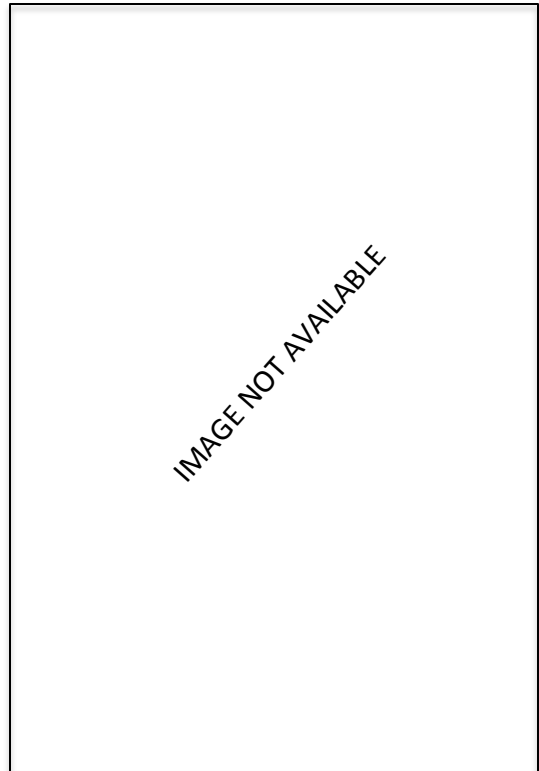


Figure 4.2 Wearing the unwearable. Reprinted from "Natural Selection" (p. 477), by Herb Ritts, *Vogue* (March 1990).

The images accompanying "Natural Selection" did little to promote an inclusive, diverse, and accessible representation of the fashions outlined in the editorial. This visual dissonance further marginalized the eco-fashion movement as an ideal and not a reality. Though the editorial referred to seventeen different brands and designers participating in some level of activity *Vogue* deemed environmentally conscious, the photo spread featured only one such designer.

In September of 1990, the environmental awareness discourse was limited to a brief mention of faux fur as an option for “environmentalists” in the POV editorial (p. 513). The editorial concerning faux fur as a fashion trend (Faking it, pp. 620-627), however, focused on the technological advancements contributing to its increased desirability. This story competed with earlier editorial promoting new trends in real fur that emphasized the trendiness of the material (Starzinger & Drake, 1990 September). At this time, fur was a point of contention in the fashion industry, with the growing visibility of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the media fodder their public protests offered (Bloomfield, 1990). *Vogue* readers were not quick to accept fake fur as an environmentally friendly option, however. One reader wrote in May 1990 “fake fur is a burden to the natural environment. Fake fur is a synthetic (that is, man-made) product that is not biodegradable” (Features: Talking Back, 1990 May, p. 66). The reader defended fur and reinforced a human-centric view of the world stating natural fur “is a logical and natural process that does not pollute the environment. The world is a continuous ecosystem with a food chain in which humans are at the top. Animal rights [are] not an environmental issue” (p. 66). This exchange highlighted the contentions within the environmental debate, with differing perspectives on the appropriate solutions.

Joan Juliet Buck’s article on “American Style” in September 1990 offered a further glimpse into the contemporary fashion psyche. Americans were praised as industrious and for finding success in comfort and thrift, but it was noted that they treated rarefied objects (i.e. high fashion) too preciously. “You don’t see old leather

coats or ancient Hermès scarves or discolored cashmeres or twenty-year-old handbags on any but members of the grandest and most decadent families” (p. 316). Rather, “expensive items are preserved with a kind of manic intensity...the way some people cover living-room suites with clear plastic slipcovers” (p. 316). The reader was encouraged to really live in their clothes and be stylish while not being slave to a “look”. The last line of the piece hinted at a shift from Reagan-era extravagance to a new mood: “In this country where everything is available, the determination to choose very little is the only defense. Economy is the best revenge” (p. 316). Essentially, the production of things cannot be curbed, one can only resist by choosing to participate as little as possible. Thus, the onus was placed on the American fashion consumer to resist the abundance provided them by the industry. Nevertheless, *Vogue* was still running editorials promoting brands, icons and consumption-oriented practices. For example, a reverential editorial on Karl Lagerfeld quoted the iconic designer stating, “clothes are only fashion when they are used up. Clothes are like food. Something to eat, wear, use up, throw away [*sic*]” (Kramer, 1991 September, p. 514).

The concept of pairing down—simplifying and building a wardrobe to suit the individual—persisted. The reader needed to buy the simplified wardrobe first, however. “Recession or not, 1992 was going to be one of those fashion years, hated by the public, beloved by the stores, when your spiffy new 1991 wardrobe would, as if by magic, suddenly seem as dated as the programs on *Nick at Night*” (Wintour, 1992 September, p. 30). Fashion was viewed as the avenue for revolution with September 1992’s POV claiming “this season, real change—radical or not—is within everybody’s grasp” (p. 479).

To fit with the economic restrictions some readers may have been experiencing, the looks were promoted as “easy,” “wearable” and “affordable” (p. 479). The reader’s old wardrobe was just not suited to the new ideologies of the nineties.

The early nineties brought a bevy of designers that had been working in the periphery into the limelight. Four were profiled in “La Nouvelle Vague,” and showed their differences from the average fashion designer that craved media attention and equated luxury with excess (Betts, 1992 September). “Although they say their clothes are not political, their conversation is peppered with references to ecology, immigration, racism, feminism, and the death of communism” (p. 240). Martin Margiela was one of the designers profiled. His was the only voice that aligned with a sustainable ethos. “I think it’s sad that so many garments are never used,’ he lamented, adding that a few seasons ago he found a bunch of fitted fifties ball gowns that he cut into waistcoats. ‘You don’t always have to create from zero. Renewing an old garment changes your perspective on it; there’s a whole new freedom to dressing’” (p. 240). Jean Colonna on the other hand worked in “undesirable materials like Leatherette, nylon, and fake fur” to create inexpensive designer fashions that “break the social shackles that expensive labels carry” (p. 264). His ethos could not have been any further from Margiela’s, illustrated by his saying: “Buy one thing, add it to your wardrobe, throw it out, buy another” (p. 264). These two seeming opposites, however, were grouped together to illustrate how the fringe was becoming mainstream. For *Vogue*, sustainable approaches like Margiela’s were as peripheral to the core of fashion’s ideology as Colonna’s desire to work in cheaper fabrics and promote them as luxury.

This discourse continued into September 1993 with Wintour noting, “As fashion takes a less ostentatious turn, designers are hiding away their logos and stripping off all show decoration...and you should follow suit...This is clearly not the moment for the excesses so close to couture’s heart (p. 50). Some designers were promoted as finally finding a market after years of going against the eighties grain. Rei Kawakubo had “become the guru of a whole generation of deconstructionists who [were] tearing through fashion, challenging all previous notions of status and certainty” (Betts, 1993a September, p. 471). A *Charivari* employee explained, “In the eighties the emphasis was on exhibitionism and flesh” (Betts, 1993b September, p. 224). Helmut Lang’s clothes, she argued, had “always been simple and easy to wear, but the fact that they never looked expensive threw them out of sync with the ostentation of the eighties. You can’t sense the value in them until you actually put them on...And that’s a very nineties concept” (Betts, 1993b September, p. 224). These qualities fall in line with the ideologies of slow fashion, particularly “challenging existing hierarchies” and “challeng[ing] fashion’s reliance on image” (Clark H. , 2008, p. 429).

Though environmental consciousness did not reappear in any of the editorials featuring apparel and accessories during the remainder of early nineties, it was not all together forgotten. The culture and beauty sections ran editorials that connected the discourse of the magazine to social concerns but did not necessarily have direct association with the fashion industry. In September 1992, the book *Shampoo Planet*—a fictional work which followed young twenty-somethings into an uncertain future—was reviewed. The reviewer noted that the book’s characters were representative of the

youth in the United States. He stated, “Nuclear waste, ozone depletion, dying oceans, lying politicians, AIDS, and global warming are not horrifying headline news to these folks but the operative assumptions with which they grew up” (McCauley, 1992 September, p. 370). The book reviewer was able to express his own dismay at the current state of affairs, which meant *Vogue*, by proxy, did as well. A statement such as “twenty-year-olds are being handed a world so physically abused and depleted in almost every sense that it’s hard to imagine the planet sustaining healthy life for much more than one hundred years, give or take a decade or two” (p. 370) is less problematic in a book review than it might be in a fashion editorial where questions regarding fashion’s role in the depletion could arise.

In the same issue, *Vogue* promoted travel to the Amazon rain forest where author Tad Friend “discovers a vast green world that is both awesomely powerful and frighteningly fragile” (Friend, 1992 September, p. 604). The same tendencies towards the ‘noble savage’ stereotype portrayed in the March 1990 photo spread resurfaced in the author’s interaction with his Yanomami Indian guide. The article was rife with comparisons between the industrialized West and the unspoiled nature of the Amazon and noted the detrimental impact of the former on the latter. At the end of the article the author asked his guide which life he preferred. “I choose to be a secret Yanomami in the jungle. You have your bow and arrows, your blowpipe, your wife. There’s no sugar to take out your teeth, and no priests to tell you your *mutum* and *papagaio* feathers and armbands look silly and that people will laugh at you in the towns...Yes, out there [in the Amazon] you are free, and you are happy” (p. 608). The connection between the two

cultural editorials and the world of fashion was never made, but their inclusion in the pages of *Vogue* demonstrated the magazine's awareness of contemporary reader's socio-cultural concerns. *Vogue* contributed to the dominant conversations of the day without implicating the fashion industry and its role in the degradation discussed.

While in 1993 *Vogue* called the nineties a "time of reckoning and repentance, a time of atonement for sins committed in the Babylon eighties" (Gandee, 1993 September, p. 524), by 1994 the "guilt-trip "was over according to Wintour (1994 September, p. 68). With "vivid make-up [ousting] the 'eco' natural look" she proclaimed, "the era of penitence has ended, and fashion is fun again" (p. 68). In 1994 the economy had recovered from the 1991 recession. *Forbes* asserted that in 1994, the worst was over and "the US is on course for a long expansion that creates jobs and puts idle factories to work" (Brownstein & Spiers, 1994, p. 40).

The economic growth experienced in the mid-nineties, however, was disproportionately found amongst wealthier individuals as "the 1980s trend in income inequality and the middle-class squeeze" continued (Mishel & Bernstein, 1994, p. 1). For a magazine that largely promoted luxury goods, the lack of equality in recovery was hardly an issue. The new optimism the economic change brought was demonstrated in an editorial on fake fur. No longer an alternative for environmentalists, the once eco-material became a way for designers to "lend a sense of humor to fall's ultraglamorous mood" (Fashion: Pure fluff, 1994 September, p. 516). The next ten years would see the pendulum swing away from austerity, but elements of slow fashion persisted.

Covert Slow Fashion: 1995-2005

In September 1995 *Vogue's* POV stated, "Compared with the looks of last fall, this season's fashion has taken as drastic a turn as Congress after the Republican takeover on Capitol Hill" (Vogue point of view, 1995 September, p. 465). Though it was not a return to the "glam-riddled eighties" aesthetic, *Vogue* celebrated a return to conservative simplicity in dress from couture to ready-to-wear in both its POV and in the Letter from the Editor (Wintour, 1995 September, p. 32 & 56). Though fashion was taking on a sleek, unadorned sophistication in the pages of *Vogue*, the mid-nineties proved to be a tumultuous period for the industry as harsh lights were shone on some of the practices employed to produce its wares.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) was established in 1995. One of the significant outcomes of the WTO's establishment was the plan to phase-out the Multifiber Arrangement (MFA) which had restricted trade in the textile and apparel sector for twenty years (Kunz & Garner, 2007). Though generally hailed as positive step in the promotion of economic cooperation amongst a broader range of countries (Bueno de Mesquita, 2000; Miller, Benjamin, & North, 2001), it also paved the way for developing economies, like China, to woo Western nations with low labor costs and lax environmental regulations spurring a 'race to the bottom' (Chan, 2003; Friedman T. L., 2005; Klein, 2002; Porter, 1999).

As American companies began outsourcing their production, taking advantage of the freer trade promised by the WTO, it was apparent the companies were not taking the American labor standards with them. Numerous highly publicized stories of labor

abuses were covered in 1995 and 1996, so much so the period was dubbed “The Year of the Sweatshop” by the director of American Studies at New York University (Klein, 2002, p. 327). One of the more memorable incidents involved the then co-host of a popular morning talk show, Kathie Lee Gifford. The Kathie Lee line was sold exclusively at Walmart when the media revealed that child labor in Honduras was used in its production (Barrett, 1996; Klein, 2002). The irony of this particular situation was that Gifford had earmarked a portion of the sales to go to children’s charities. The apparel industry, with the guidance of an anti-sweatshop coalition established by President Bill Clinton, created a code of conduct for American companies using overseas labor (Greenhouse, 1997). *Women’s Wear Daily* profiled Nike’s move towards more transparent labor practices in 1997, as well (Feitelberg & Freedman, 1997). The discourse on labor practices used in apparel and accessories production never made it to the September pages of *Vogue*, however, at least not in an overt way.

Several editorials aligned with elements of the slow fashion in this period. They are grouped below based on their alignment with Clark’s slow fashion values. While these editorials were cohesively presented to construct a narrative of slow fashion in *Vogue*, it is important to remember that these editorials were frequently one lone voice in a sea of editorials promoting the ‘new’. As designers became celebrities and celebrities became cover models, the industry banked more on image than on quality and craftsmanship.

“Present fashion as choice rather than as a mandate”. One of the key tactics *Vogue* used to establish authority and underline their power in industry was presenting

new fashions in a dictatorial voice (Köning, 2006). In this period, examples of overt establishments of authority were abundant such as the “commandments” offered for fall in both 2003 and 2004 (Vogue point of view, 2003 September, p. 597; Vogue point of view, 2004 September, p. 677) and in subtler ways like Anna Wintour offering her “shortlist of this season’s themes” (Wintour, 1996 September, p. 38). The breakdown of designers serving as the ultimate authority on what people should be wearing, however, came to a head in the late nineties with alternative forms of inspiration like street fashion becoming even more influential. The job of editor was more difficult with this surfeit of stylistic options. *Vogue*, and Wintour in particular, dealt with the span of possibilities as a boon to consumers, presenting it as a celebration of individuality while simultaneously portraying the abundance as potentially “scary” to consumers. *Vogue* was the reader’s guide to help them build their unique identity from options made available through the magazine’s pages.

The plethora of choice available to consumers in the late 1990s kept the magazine from taking a definite stance on what was in and was not. Wintour expressed this sentiment, trying to rationalize abundance by stating, “It’s an interesting spectacle—with more included than excluded. What’s out-of-date when no skirt length is wrong, no color or print out of fashion? Maybe this lack of a single prevailing style bears a bit of the fin de siècle stamp” (Wintour, 1997 September, p. 34). In the POV of the same issue “the incredible variety of this September proves fashion is more wonderfully insane than ever” (Vogue point of view, 1997 September, p. 583).

With the turn of the millennium, there seemed to be a more consolidated view of fashion—a return to glamour. In spite of this, the strain of individuality established in the late nineties persisted. *Vogue* gave the reader the option to “obey the laws of fashion” or “twist the rules to suit” their own needs (*Vogue* point of view, 2002 September, p. 587). The “commandments” mentioned above were offered “ironically.” Wintour stated, “if there were one rule that must be followed, it would be to ignore all directives and regulations and to devise a style that suits your life and your budget” (*Wintour*, 2004 September, p. 126). It was an odd, postmodern moment in *Vogue’s* discourse where it simultaneously rejected and reinforced their power over the reader.

This mentality was further supported by *Vogue’s* profiles of ‘real women’ adapting runway styles into their existing wardrobes (*Gandee*, 1995 September; *Yaeger*, 2004 September). “For those of you who love fashion but think it’s for others...Charles Gandee addresses the issue of fashion phobia, talking with four women who manage to dress with great style while remaining above the fray” (*Wintour*, 1995 September, p. 56). *Vogue* recruited ‘average’ women who were deemed masters of their own style to share their philosophies on smart dressing. While four women were interviewed for Gandee’s piece, the amount of voice, represented by the amount of space each was granted, varied. The 22-year old aspiring television personality with a wealthy family that had always provided her the latest fashions was given two pages; she could wax poetic on the virtues of a Chanel jacket or Helmut Lang t-shirt (1995 September, p. 552-553). The forty-eight year old head of the Sex Crimes Prosecution Unit in New York who admired

Armani but admitted Mary McFadden's lower-priced line was more her speed, was relegated to the end of the article (1995 September, p. 611).

“Fashion not concerned exclusively with the ‘new’”: *“Plus ça change...”* mused the 2001 September POV as it revisited the past and demonstrated that very little was ever truly new in fashion. The de-emphasis of the new was predominately displayed through the promotion of design styles and brands that focused on quality over arbitrary changes in silhouette. This tactic included profiles of bags that “[took] nine to twelve months to manufacture” and “are crafted to last for years” (The Vogue File: Carry-alls, 1997 September, p. 402). An editorial on accessories brand Tod's also fell into this category. The Italian leather goods producer's claim to fame lay in a loafer that had little to offer in terms of style breadth aside from color options. Tod's shoes were “still handmade in the traditional way, painstakingly slowly (each pair takes a whole day), still by elderly artist-craftsmen, still using luxury materials” but they were equated with fashion because “the shoes were too expensive for the common herd, and...celebrities adored them” (Woods, 2000 September, p. 386).

As editor Julia Reed cleaned out her closet, she encountered garments that had been in there so long they were back in fashion, underlining the cyclical nature of fashion styles (1996 September, p. 320, 330). The article emphasized the emotional connection one could have with clothes and also the fleeting nature of some style's appeal. Reed filled “garbage bags” with unwanted objects that must be “tossed” due to a range of offenses, most of which included lack of newness (p. 320). The editorial read

as a cautionary tale of filling a closet with frivolous purchases and the value of investing in quality goods that deserved to be cared for.

Vintage clothes had made an appearance in the early nineties but largely in association with the grunge trend and the youth market. In 2005 it was presented as a viable, high-quality alternative to brand new garments (Yaeger, p. 443-444). This was the same issue that both lamented and justified the rising costs of new designer clothes. Since the mainstream trends had embraced vintage styles and the new versions had price tags forcing fashion lovers to consider alternatives, turning to the original was justified. The editorial, entitled “The new old thing,” bemoaned the rising costs of even vintage wares. Experts in the vintage fashion field were consulted for their expertise, providing guidance to the reader on sound investments. The advice was differing, with some emphasizing the prestige of labels while others emphasized the superiority of vintage construction and craftsmanship (p. 444).

“Challenging the hierarchy”/“Collaborative cooperative work”. As a fashion intermediary, *Vogue* is the gateway to the inner workings of the fashion industry. Encouraging readers to gain closer ties to producers has the potential to undermine *Vogue’s* authority. This can be avoided and turned in *Vogue’s* favor, however, if it is *Vogue* that forges and sanctifies the relationship. In a handful of instances, *Vogue* discussed ways the typical cycle of production and consumption could be broken.

Vogue staffer Betsy Berne’s quest to recreate her “perfect pants” that “have graciously accommodated—and flattered—[her] fluctuating body for nearly six years” (Berne, 1998 September, p. 308) highlighted the difficulty encountered when a

consumer attempted to disrupt the ‘trash the old, buy something new’ progression. The editorial was as much a diatribe on the loss of skilled tailors in the United States as it was a personal journey to recreate the pants. When Berne shared her quest with a friend she replied “‘Good luck’...I’ve been trying to find [a good tailor] for years. Let me know what happens’” (p. 308). *Vogue* provided contact information for designers and tailors in major cities that readers could use for the same purpose. The language used to introduce the list, however, was less than a ringing endorsement. The header for the list read, “Copy Cats: A few good fakers from around the nation” (p. 312). Rather than admired for the skills they possessed they were presented as second-tier designers, as “fakers” or knock-off artists.

A similar editorial encouraged readers to consider taking bags to be repaired rather than simply replacing them. In a story titled “The Lifesavers” (Sullivan, 2002 September) *Vogue* profiled an “institution” in New York that repaired worn out and damaged handbags that might otherwise have been discarded. “To whom do you turn when your clutch is in the clutches of an emergency? Artbag—the ace first-aiders for Furlas, Fendis, Falchis, et al” (p. 450). This article was considerably more respectful of Artbag’s craftsmen as well as of the necessity for such an establishment. It perhaps reflected *Vogue*’s perception of what was to be valued and treasured (i.e. handbags) and what should be worn, discarded and replaced (i.e. apparel).

In September 1998, designers who challenged the status quo were labeled avant-garde. Wintour noted, “the avant-garde designers seem to want to invest their clothes with something intangible before they let them go to strangers who will

eventually buy and wear them” (Wintour, p. 36). Wintour gave particular examples of designers with an ‘avant-garde’ ethos. “The designers of Vexed Generation go to great lengths to make sure that their clothes go to a worthy—or at least properly educated—wearer. Before you can buy an item over the Internet, you have to reach the Vexed Generation website, where you are *forced* to read about the designers’ political and social concerns [emphasis added]” (Wintour, 1998 September, p. 36). This type of avant-garde did not appear to hold much interest for Wintour. “The mainstream designers we showcase throughout the rest of this issue...need hardly despair about their politically incorrect adherence to mass production, runway shows, and traditional retail outlets” (p. 36). Wintour further dismissed the work of conscientious designers stating, “In any case, despite the literal meaning of its name, the avant-garde is usually followed not by massed troops but by more avant-garde” (p. 36).

Skilled craftspeople outside of the United States were also highlighted in an article titled “Helping Hands” (MacSweeney, 2002 September). The article discussed Indian women who have been given a place to work by an artist who came into money and decided to establish a charity. “The result is a kind of anti-sweatshop” *Vogue* explained (p. 504). “Women can put their skills in embroidery and jewelry making to work for American fashion companies” and they were “properly” paid with an end goal of self-sufficiency (p. 504). Though the women were exchanging their skilled labor for payment from well-known American brands like Anthropologie, the word “charity” was set in large font right in the middle of the editorial. While the labor of the tailors and the handbag specialists were portrayed as highly skilled and a valuable, diminishing art, that

of the Indian women was overshadowed by the good deed and charitable nature of the Westerner.

Eco-consciousness. The environment did not feature prominently in any of the fashion editorials collected during this time period. 'Glamour', the buzzword of this period, was perhaps incompatible with the eco-movement. Environmentalism was largely relegated to the travel, food, and beauty editorials.

The perils of ecotourism were detailed in a travel story on the Galápagos. There was a disconnect between the perception of luxury cruises where “[o]ne is whisked from island to island on yachts equipped with de-salinizers and groaning larders, then ferried ashore to stroll easy trails packed with fauna (Friend, 1995 September, p. 391) and the harsh terrain the cruisers actually encountered. “Luis [the travel party’s guide] was looking out for us because nature doesn't, because natural selection works in ignorance of man’s comfort—because the Galápagos are actually bleak, dry, and punishing” (p. 394) The irony of the editorial lay in its simultaneous promotion of travel to the region—the reader was provided contact information for four businesses specializing in Galapagos travel arrangements—while bemoaning the negative impact human encroachment has had on its delicate ecosystem. While adventure was found through interacting with landscape, the author cautioned that “In the fragile Galápagos, you are like a pedophile in a nursery: Every touch is a bad touch” (p. 394). Species introduced through the proliferation of man in the region “constitut[ed] more than one-third of the total fauna” (p. 394). Thus, in one article *Vogue* encapsulated the paradox of

environmentalism: awareness was enhanced through interaction with the environment, but interaction potentially brought greater harm than good.

In 1986 Carlo Petrini staged a protest against a planned McDonald's location in Rome, which led to the establishment of the International Slow Food Movement. By the time of his book release in 2003 'slow food' awareness had spread to the United States (Hesser, 2003). "Cream of the Crop," a five-page editorial profiling a family of growers in California and their slow food approach, connected *Vogue* to the growing social discourse of reconnecting to food sources. Though the phrase 'slow food' was never used, the philosophy was revealed in the description of the organization. "Everything they sell is picked that morning, and all the work is organized to make that happen" (Steingarten, 1999 September, p. 696). The editorials revealed the hardship and planning that went into managing a family farm, connecting the reader to the source of bounty found in grocery stores and farm-to-market restaurants.

An article on trying to create a healthy fast-food chain furthered the slow food presence in *Vogue*. "Polls suggest that we are more worried than ever about the purity and nutritional value of everything we ingest, and yet we spend more than \$112 billion a year on fast food. For some reason, the swelling health- and organic-food business, which has grown at an annual rate of 20 percent, seems to have missed the spots that people flock to most for meals on the run" (Chen, 2001 September, p. 476). This was the same period when Whole Foods was increasing its market share by opening around ten stores a year and its stock market prices were steadily rising (Gray, 2003). Incidentally, it was during this same period that fast fashion chain Forever 21 was in the news for

lawsuits claiming they had outsourced labor to American sweatshops on the West coast (Tyree, 2004). The connection between fast fashion and fast food was never made. This aligns with research that suggested consumers compartmentalize their sustainable consumption, invoking environmental or ethical ideologies for some purchases (i.e. organic food) but ignoring them for others (i.e. fast fashion) (Joy, Sherry, Jr., Venkatesh, Wang, & Chan, 2012).

A profile of Dr. Bronner's soap, which went "from being the all-purpose cleanser of sixties hippies—flower children washed everything from their hair to their teeth to their Volkswagen vans with it—to being hip with nineties hipsters, the fashionable anti-fashion soap selection that is as cool again today as it is cheap" (Sullivan, 1997 September, p. 546), was one of the few articles in this period to promote an environmentally-conscious product. "Dr. Bronner was the original Ben & Jerry in that he gave money to the homeless, sponsored a rain forest, built a drinking well in Ghana, and, on behalf of his profit-sharing employees, planted trees around the factory property in their names" (p. 546). The entire profile read like a slow-fashion manifesto. The sourcing of ingredients was done locally with peppermint, "notably fine and pure" obtained "from the Yakima Valley in Washington State" (p. 548). The ideologies of the brand, which were promoted on the densely worded, inspirational labels, were linked to notable figures like Jesus Christ, Karl Marx and even Oprah Winfrey. Though the soap company was admired in the editorial it was still linked to a particular demographic through its popularity in Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco and "in health-food stores across the nation" (p. 548).

The changing economic climate. The events on September 11, 2001 had wide-reaching effects on the consumer market and the fashion industry in general. Whether the terrorist attacks that occurred so close to the epicenter of the American fashion industry were the reason for the drastic downturn in apparel manufacturing in New York City or just the final straw for a domestic industry that had already slipped into decline due to international competition, is difficult to determine. Regardless, the factories that had supplied small runs for New York designers began to disappear in the years following the attacks (Furukawa, Malone, Socha, & Murphy, 2003). Consumer confidence was down considerably. “Five new designers know that spending money as if it were going out of style is, in fact, not in style” (Mower, 2002 September, p. 360).

The luxury market appeared to regain some strength by 2004 with retailers investing in in-shop designer boutiques and expanding their accessories departments (Wilson, Moin, Young, & Williamson, 2004). This was the period of *Sex and the City*, which, through the lead character’s shoe obsession, introduced millions of watchers to high-end accessories brands like Manolo Blahnik (Richards, 2003). Aspirational brands like Coach excelled in the market (Young & Holt, 2005) and a growing counterfeit trade (Derby, Tucker, & Rashid, 2005) meant a wider portion of the population could possess at least a semblance of the cachet offered by branded goods. While middle-class Americans were demanding well-branded goods, a study in 2004 found that more affluent Americans were turning away from ostentatious luxury in search of higher quality goods that did not necessarily advertise prestige (Seckler, 2004). To the detriment of both types of consumers, designer fashion prices, particularly those with

European origins, became prohibitively expensive in the United States by 2005 due to a Euro to dollar exchange rate (Holt, 2004) and rising gas costs (Clark E. , 2005).

It was in this climate that *Vogue* produced the 2005 September issue with one of the headline stories “Why clothes cost what they do.” *Vogue* addressed concerns of rising fashion costs by providing a long, illustrated list of garments and accessories placed in the margins of the “Vogue: View” section. The brief rationalizations of prices—ranging from \$100 for scarves to \$18,000 for a Neil Lane amethyst bracelet—called more attention to their aesthetic value than any tangible quality the object might have. For example, a \$2,995 Gucci jacket was “chic” and “trim” (p. 466) and a \$1645 Chloé handbag was “a shape and hue to covet” (p. 462). There were exceptions, such as a Monique Lhuillier dress (\$2,050) that possessed “wedding-gown skills found in a day dress” (p. 464), a “glossy croc bag” by Alexander McQueen described as “timeless”, and a \$1,495 dress by Magda Berliner—a designer that worked exclusively in recycled vintage linens—was described as “one-of-a-kind reworked vintage” (p. 462). In an article titled “Break it down” Mark Holgate profiled a Roland Mouret suit for the reader in an attempt to justify its \$2,300 price tag (Holgate, 2005 September). “The suit [was] made in France” and “took 120 hours to construct from Mouret’s initial draping on the mannequin to fittings, toiles, and the finished jacket and skirt” (p. 462). It was a rare glimpse into the production process of high fashion, connecting the reader to the value of the object beyond its aesthetic evaluation.

A couple of pages later in an editorial titled “What price glory”, *Vogue* blamed the high prices that “shoppers have no alternative but to deal with” on the weak dollar

and “designers who, God bless them, have, on the whole, designed collections as if they were designing for people living in Versailles” (Sullivan, 2005 September, p. 464). *Vogue* spoke to several small boutiques across the country that specialized in high-end designers and their responses showed evidence of what de Graaf et al. (2014) described as ‘affluenza’. Sullivan stated, “Everywhere that is somewhere you would wear something exceptional, store owners are saying that if the dress is amazing—really amazing—and the event is extraordinary, then shoppers act as if they have a connection at the Federal Reserve Bank” (2005 September, p. 466). *Vogue* used the perspectives of these experts to further rationalize spending exorbitant amounts of money on fashion goods. One shop manager stated that “fall is always expensive” and “shopping has changed” with jewelry selling for multiple tens of thousands of dollars but worn anytime, not just for special occasions (p. 468). Sullivan distanced himself from the more farcical justifications stating, “This certainly says something about America, and this reporter is loath to say precisely what” (p. 468). With the financial crisis of 2008 just over the horizon, Sullivan was perhaps the most astute contributor to the editorial by implying the spending habits of Americans were out of control, unjustifiable, and unsustainable.

Vogue’s disconnect from larger social issues experienced by the non-elite was also referenced in the reader’s letters. One reader lamented both the magazine’s promotion of excessively over-priced goods and the use of exotic locales for their photo shoots. The reader stated:

It’s already bad enough to tell people that buying \$800 tank tops is appropriate for lunching with friends, it is shameful to tell people that wearing ridiculously overpriced clothes to a Third World country like Bhutan is an absolute must. It’s sickening to see extremely wealthy

people wearing haute couture and frolicking with poor children (Talking back, 2005 September, p. 315).

A letter praising the same photo shoot referenced by the reader above immediately followed on the same page, counteracting the first letter's negativity. By publishing these letters side-by-side, *Vogue* allowed the readers to take up a debate within its pages without actually having to respond to either side.

The Golden Era of Sustainable Fashion: 2006-2009

By the mid-aughts there was a growing consensus that the American lifestyle was no longer consequence free. The United States was involved in two wars in the Middle East, putting immense strain on the national budget. Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, and New Orleans in particular, in the fall of 2005. Media coverage and subsequent academic studies highlighted the plight of poor black people in the affected region disproportionately impacted by the lack of aid and support from the government (Levitt & Whitaker, 2009).

With Hurricane Katrina still fresh in the minds of the American public, Al Gore released the independent film *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim, 2006), a companion to his book of the same name (Gore, 2006). Though scientists of the day took issue with some of Gore's scientific claims in the book and film, the overall message was not lost on the public and the film went on to win an Academy Award in the documentary category (Broad, 2007). *An Inconvenient Truth* did for the sustainability movement of the 2000s what *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962) did for the environmental movement of the 1960s and Henry David Thoreau and John Muir's work did for the early 20th century

conservation movement. That is, these works bolstered civilian support for change and brought awareness to practices and policies that were potentially devastating to the health of the nation in all manners of speaking. However, the lasting effects of these works are questionable.

Fashion academia was active in this period as well, exploring the impacts of the industry. The years 2007-2008 proved to be influential for sustainable thought. Kate Fletcher published her seminal work on sustainable design practices (Fletcher K. , 2008) and *Fashion Theory*, a notable journal published in the United Kingdom, released an issue entirely devoted to the subject of sustainable fashion in December 2008. In rare instance of industry and academic collaboration, The Earth Pledge foundation published an anthology of white papers featuring voices from both realms (Hoffman & Earth Pledge, 2007). Thus, it appeared the time had come for a more serious conversation about fashion and its negative social and environmental impacts. Apparently *Vogue* heard the siren calling as well. This section charts this period of *Vogue's* heightened environmental and social awareness.

During this 'golden age' of *Vogue's* discourse on sustainability, the labor and social impacts involved in fashion production made increasing appearances in the discourse. However, the focus largely remained on environmental impacts. In the May 2007 issue a green banner with the words "sustainable style" demarcated a "Vogue View" section with five editorials focusing on (mostly environmental) concerns relating to sustainability. Though the special section was not mentioned on the front cover, in

Wintour's "Letter From the Editor" or in the POV section, it spanned over twenty pages and addressed issues from plastic shopping bags to the environmental impact of denim.

The pinnacle of *Vogue's* sustainable discourse was reached in 2009. In March the magazine launched the "Style Ethics" section (examined in detail in chapter 5), a recurring editorial devoted to highlighting designers and products produced with an environmental and/or ethical ethos. *Vogue* also released their (quite literal) "green" issue in June (fig. 4.3). However, despite the green font the only overtly environmental message was the cover story regarding Cameron Diaz's eco-conscious lifestyle and the "Style Ethics" feature. The November 2009 issue capped the year off with the cover stating, "It's not easy being green." The issue included seven editorials either directly or indirectly related to environmental and/or social consciousness. This section will examine this newfound interest in sustainable fashion, from its impetus to its appropriation.

The plight of the industry.

Disenchantment with the increasingly polarized global political machine was reflected in the fashion industry and *Vogue*. Wintour commented on the "Darkening political climate" in September 2006. She noted Japanese designers' use of "their Paris shows to stage an extraordinary series of protests against corporatism, conformity and militarism"

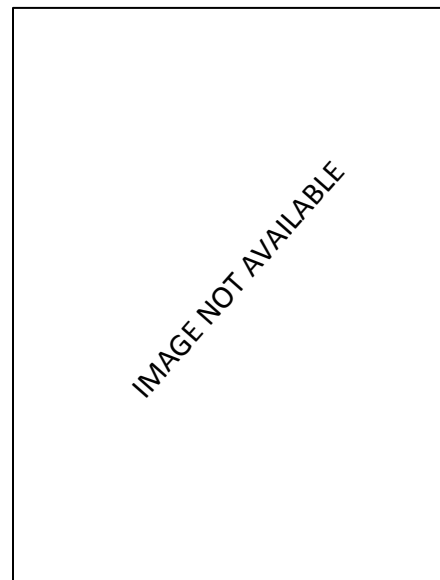


Figure 4.3 Cover of the "Green" Issue. Reprinted from *Vogue* (June 2009), photography by Mario Testino.

(Wintour, 2006 September, p. 150). However, the “the ideological turmoil in which much of the world, [the United States] included, now finds itself” was still a wearable trend that a “very chic protester at the Sorbonne” might assume (Wintour, 2006 September, p. 158). Not every social issue could be combatted with chicness, however.

For the first time since the condemning editorial in March 1990, *Vogue* started discussing the negative aspects of the industry, though often in vague terms. For example, the magazine reported, “In some parts of the world, pollution from textile mills can rival the toxicity of the chemical industry” (Norwich, 2007 December, p. 426). This type of abstraction did not allow a connection between where it was happening and where the reader was located, but it did shed light on the negative side of fashion production. *Vogue* did offer some facts and figures with more specific information, but it was buffered through third-party sources. “According to the NRDC...it takes more than five ounces of pesticides to produce one traditional cotton T-shirt. Every year, more than a billion pairs of blue jeans are dyed with synthetic indigo and benzene derivatives and then further treated with chemicals like hydrogen cyanide” (Norwich, 2007 December, p. 427).

An editorial in May 2007 looked at denim processing exclusively. Designer denim was a major trend throughout the 2000s. Small, luxury labels and megabrands alike pushed up prices by injecting fashion into the staple, emphasizing variety in washes and finishing techniques as well as brand appeal (Tucker & Tran, 2006). The editorial outlined common chemicals used in the denim industry known to be harmful like, “thiox (for the indigo), potassium permanganate (for the distressing), sandblasting (for the

worn-in look)” (Herman, 2007 May, p. 136). The use of scientific terms like hydrogen cyanide and potassium permanganate lend credibility to the claim though the reader is left to wonder what the negative impacts of such chemicals might entail. Furthermore, in the denim article the number of traditional processes and material sources that would have to be changed in order to create an eco and ethical pair of jeans were so overwhelmingly large that the designers attempting any level of change were commended. Both high-end labels like Habitual and Loomstate were profiled but so were Levi’s and Cheap Monday. “Few know that Levi’s has been enforcing a strict global code for ethical labor practices and improved water quality in its factories for more than a decade” (p. 138). Regardless of the eco and ethical strides made by the various brands profiled, *Vogue’s* final word is to make them desirable based on style. “If [their practices/materials are] not reason enough to want a pair, perhaps the fact that they’re all still so flattering, characterful, and cool is” (p. 138).

Criticisms of shopping and consumption behavior were also included. “Annually, the U.S. disposes of 100 billion plastic shopping bags. In landfills, it can take up to 1,000 years for a bag to degrade” (Mower, 2007 May, p. 122). According to Mower, what was needed was a “great-looking, functional, lightweight, capacious, durable [bag] that [is] unobtrusively streamlined to fit the patterns of our shopping habits” (p. 122) and it had to fit with the fashions of the time. Once readers were acquainted with all the harmful processes used to create their favorite jeans they were warned against overreacting. “Loving the [denim] we own less because of the damage they’ve already done is not the

answer...we'd actually do more good wearing our favorite offenders forever" (Herman, 2007 May, p. 138).

The biggest issue *Vogue* faced in this period was addressing the stereotypes and misconceptions associated with people and products deemed environmentally and socially aware. An editorial titled "Earth to Fashion" took the position that the reader might need some convincing that eco-consciousness and fashion could, in fact, co-exist. Sullivan (2007 May) spoke for the magazine when he stated "We are happy to report that as of right now the trend in fashion is—are you ready?—to do the right thing" (p. 128). He underlined the stance by externalizing the joy in announcing it to other notable industry figures like Julie Gilhart "who is not working for the Peace Corps, by the way, but for Barneys New York, where she is fashion director" (p. 128). The movement was presented as a trend throughout the article, one that "does not appear to be a short-term trend but one that could last multiple seasons" (p. 128). The lexicon of the movement was also addressed with the author noting the "green trend [latched] on to the idea of sustainability, which seems, at least, less preachy than the word *green*, more practical" (p. 130) though what sustainability meant was never made clear. The blame for misconceptions surrounding ethical and eco-fashion lay with "the political right wing in America" that had "done such a good job at making even mothers who fight for clean air and water sound like the Unabomber" (p. 130). The article also positioned parts of the industry as already in line with such issues since "high and even luxurious fashions are not automatically at odds with what's sustainable or considered fair trade. Making goods in small batches, in sweatshop-free environments, using local high-quality

materials is, it turns out, organic, in a sense” (p. 130). The article essentially picked up the conversation where the editorial in March 1990 left off. The model in the 2007 editorial’s cover image was even wearing a Katharine Hamnett t-shirt, one of the designers featured so prominently in editorial seventeen years earlier.

Eco through association. *The September Issue* (Cutler, 2010) was a film that documented production of the September 2007 issue of *Vogue*. The documentary examined the dynamics between Wintour and her staff as well as gave an inside look into photo shoots and magazine assemblage. While the film documented the capture of the cover story concerning actress Sienna Miller and two of Grace Coddington’s photo stories, one photo story made it into the issue but was never mentioned on film: editor Tonne Goodman and photographer Steven Meisel’s environmental technology shoot. The photo story, titled “Power Players” (p. 712-725), was a presentation of the men’s tailoring trend for the seasons. It was as visually stunning as Coddington’s vintage Paris shoot, but its message could not be more different. “Model environmentalist” Shalom Harlow was photographed alongside some of the most forward thinking energy-saving technologies of the time, from plug-in electric cars, to LED lighting, to solar panels (Fashion: Power Players, 2007 September, pp. 712-725). Mainstay designers, like Prada and Balenciaga, produced the fashions, none of which were said to possess any sustainable properties. However, above each of the captions a white box detailed the benefits of the technologies included in the imagery (See fig. 4.4). For example, the solar panels “convert a drop of golden sun into electricity (2,450 kilowatt hours a year, to be exact)” (p. 719). However, these little white boxes also offered an opportunity to shame

some of the consumption practices of Americans. Next to an image of Harlow breathing into a man's silk handkerchief, *Vogue* offered the statistic that "Nearly half of the nation's air pollution comes from the exhaust fumes emitted by vehicles in the United States—almost a quarter billion in all" (p. 721). The box further instructed the reader to "Bike, walk, take public transportation, or carpool, and breathe easy" (p. 721). The editorial offered the opportunity for fashion editor Tonne Goodman, one of the few *Vogue* staffers to have openly expressed interest in environmentalism (Contributors, 2007 September, p. 351), to promote a cause she believed in while still conforming to the expressed mission of *Vogue* to present the "new." Both the fashion and the technology benefited from the juxtaposition. Technology like LED lights, solar panels and wind energy are framed as 'fashionable' while the high fashion garments are linked with the modernity of new technologies.

The juxtaposition of high fashion and environmental action was a continuing trend in this period. The diametrically opposed concepts of high-fashion (devoid of any mention of environmental or ethical production processes used in their construction) and environmentalism appeared again in four of the November 2009 editorials. The fashion photo spread that accompanied an editorial on "woofing"—"working without pay on an organic farm"—placed designs by Proenza

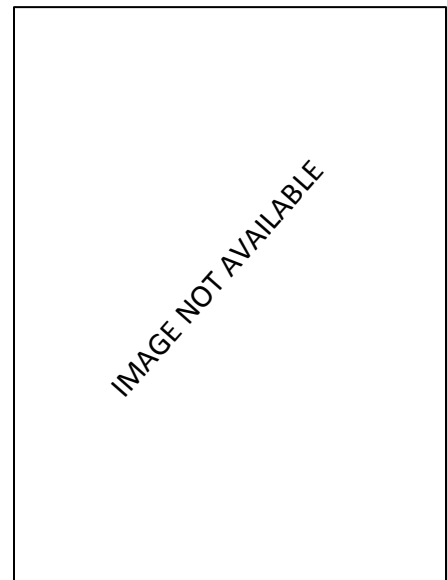


Figure 4.4 Juxtaposing fashion and eco-tech. Reprinted from "Power Players" (p. 719), photography by Steven Klein, fashion editor Tonne Goodman, *Vogue* (September 2007).

Schouler and Marni against the backdrop of an idyllic farmstead (Herman, 2009 November, p. 188-197). Furthermore, an editorial titled “Midnight in the garden of good” (Holgate, 2009 November) presented resort accessories that shared “guerilla gardening’s love of nature” with “organic-chic straw from Lanvin; rustic woven leather from Proenza Schouler” (p. 200). *Vogue* assured the reader that “the irony of these überluxe pieces in the context of a grassroots movement [wasn’t] lost on [them]” but “both want to make the experience of city life that much more beautiful” (p. 200). At best, these juxtapositions of environmental acts motivated by activism with fashions that have little relation to eco-consciousness demonstrated the absurdity and irony present in fashion journalism as found by other scholars (König, 2006; Lyng-Jorlén, 2012). Another perspective is that they were misleading and could easily be classified as greenwashing. Organic and natural were already complex terms that had been misappropriated to their detriment. To complicate the lexicon by calling raffia sandals “organic-chic” did little service for readers seeking more sustainable options.

There were environmental editorials that were more straightforward in their presentation. In September 2006, *Vogue* ran a piece on dry-cleaning practices that underlined the toxicity of current techniques. “If these [petroleum based] solvents sound harsh, they are. In California, businesses that use perc must post notices about the health hazards where both employees and customers can see them” (Herman, 2006 September, p. 500). An article titled “Terra Firma” (La Cava, 2007 May) also clearly stated why hemp was a sustainable fiber perfect for eco- and socially-conscious fashion label Viridis Luxe. “It’s ability to flourish without pesticides and replenish soil with

nutrients” is further bolstered by the fact that that the designer “[routinely visited] the factories, where fiber [was] harvested by hand and natural dyes and no-dioxin bleaches [were] used” (p. 134).

Setting a good example. Though *Vogue* was an authority on what is new in fashion, it was not an authority on sustainability. This fact was underlined by *Vogue*’s frequent use of experts and role models to convey best practices and justify the movement’s inclusion in its pages. However, those consulted were largely of high socio-economic standing, suggesting that sustainability was an elitist trend. This point was evident in an editorial titled “Green Day” which stated, “The private jet-set are not just cutting carbs, they’re cutting their carbon footprints” (Norwich, 2007 May, p. 116). The article goes on to namedrop notable figures in New York society (emphasized by bold lettering) that were organizing environmental awareness events. Jerry Seinfeld’s wife Jessica’s eco-friendly approach to hosting a children’s party was another example of a socialite setting the example. “[S]he does not set the table with paper products, out of concern for the environment, she lets her children and their guests pick the color of the cloth napkins they like, and plates are recyclable and easy-to-clean tin or acrylic. Flatware is stainless, not plastic” (Norwich, 2007 September, p. 444).

Advice was also sought from three experts on the perfect eco-conscious gifts for the holidays in December 2007 (Norwich, p. 396-428). *Vogue* presented the eco-credentials of each of the three women consulted. One served as editor of an eco-how-to book, the other two served as trustees for the Natural Resources Defense Council. Portraits that pictorially underlined the experts’ environmental-consciousness

accompanied their shopping and eco-living suggestions. The how-to book author, for example, was photographed in a cocktail dress and wellington boots with a manicured garden as backdrop (p. 397). The editorial conveys an entire lifestyle devoted to sustainable living: organic farm ownership, driving a Prius, even making Christmas gifts by hand. In an attempt to reduce the self-righteous tone “Goldsmith insists she is not a hero” (p. 398) and another informant asserted “I cannot be perfect but I can be good” (p. 399).

The fashion editor did offer veiled criticism of the socialites’ shopping-as-environmentalism perspective. “Skeptics from the orthodox environmental establishment, which has been around since the sixties, are wary of upstarts one might refer to as ‘green lights’. Criticism falls mainly upon younger affluent people who believe that eco-shopping and organic dining will save the planet” (Norwich, 2007 December, p. 398). It was noted in the article that all three experts were wealthy with powerful husbands. He also subtly points out the hypocrisy of one of the interviewees. In response to her claim that “[t]he idea of consuming less is the key issue for me” he acerbically added, “despite their two residences, the family will have one Christmas tree” (p. 398). The experts did offer more practical advice. They suggested imagining a child’s potential gift four weeks after Christmas and posing the question “Will it be cherished, or will it end up broken in a landfill?” Regardless, the last line of the editorial ends with the author and one of the experts “[shopping] up a merry storm” (p. 428).

Cameron Diaz was another figure identified and presented as a beacon for the environmental movement. Wintour described the June 2009 “green issue” cover model

as “a steadfast environmentalist and role model for those seeking a greener lifestyle” (Wintour, 2009 June, p. 48). The Diaz editorial painted a picture of a model citizen and is even titled “Sunshine Superwoman” (Sullivan, 2009 June, p. 94-105, 168-169). She drove a Prius with exceptional skill and deferred to the safety of her passenger. The actress also made a documentary television show for MTV where she traveled with celebrity friends to environmentally precarious regions. But, once again, the subject rejected the burden of being a role model. “She’s clearly not looking to be a poster girl for the environmental movement. She is there for the environment if it needs her, buying carbon offsets with no great fanfare, making ecologically sensitive shopping choices quietly and happily” (p. 96). The corresponding photo spread continued the image building. Diaz was photographed barefoot in the Palm Springs resort and surrounding desert wearing mostly white garments from mostly environmentally conscious brands. Her hair was down, loosely styled, blown in the wind, the lighting was provided by saturated sunlight and her makeup was indiscernible. The stereotypical imagery was overt, but the association with such a bankable celebrity granted it more credibility. The reader responses to this particular story reinforced *Vogue’s* selection of Cameron Diaz with one letter stating, “She epitomizes the green movement” and another reader commented, “...Diaz is a breath of fresh air” (Talking back, 2009 September, p. 250).

The example set by *Vogue* was not always well received by its readership, however. While most letters that were read throughout this research delighted in *Vogue’s* content, there were some constructions that did not align with some reader’s sensibilities. One reader “was stunned to see photographs of beautiful Liya Kebede amid

what looked to be poor African citizens in the June issue” (Talking back, 2008 September, p. 364). The reader took issue with *Vogue* photographing a model in a \$4,000 dress while standing amongst impoverished children mostly dressed in second hand clothing. In the same issue, another reader questioned *Vogue’s* environmental values when she asked, “I wonder how many barrels of crude oil (that’s where all that plastic comes from, you know) are used to create a spa in a Ziploc (ditto) that flies over the Earth spewing jet-fuel smoke trails?...Are we so addicted to our physical perfection that we can’t do without *all* of our tubes and bottles for a few days?” (p. 364).

Much like what Rocamora (2006) discovered in her analysis of French *Vogue* reader’s letters, the letters that disparaged *Vogue’s* practices were surrounded by positive responses, neutralizing the negative with the positive. The same editorial that was lambasted for portraying Liya Kebede in high-fashion next to impoverished children dressed in cast-offs was complimented by another reader who applauded *Vogue* for “casting model Liya Kebede and choosing clothes that complemented the environment of Mali in the best possible way” (Talking back, 2008 September, p. 364).

Economics move front and center. In 2007 the relative economic abundance experienced by the middle class came to an end. The 2007-2008 financial crisis eventually lead to a global economic recession and was considered the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. The crisis did not affect all Americans equally. In fact it largely served to widen the gulf between the wealthy and everyone else. “In 1980, the top 1 percent of Americans earned about 9 percent of our national income; by 2008, they were earning 23 percent, more than the bottom 50 percent of Americans put

together” (de Graaf, et al., 2014, p. 70). As CEO pay increased in double-digit increments, the number of Americans living in poverty increased to sixteen percent (p. 71).

In her letter for the September 2008 issue, Wintour managed to express both concern for economic responsibility while also continuing to exalt the extravagance of the super wealthy. “In putting together these stories, we were always conscious that fashion may not be, in this period of economic and political uncertainty, at the forefront of our reader’s minds. We’ve tried, therefore, to edit the collections with value in mind” (p. 320). And yet, not two paragraphs latter is she fawning over the other story contained in the issue on a “dazzling, even dizzying...superyacht ironically named *Guilty*” which had been painted by the artist Jeff Koons and served as an art collector’s floating gallery (p. 340). She attempted to justify the inclusion by stating “I like to think that art is the one thing that is that is recession-proof” (p. 340).

As the effects of the financial crisis lingered, economic sustainability became a central concern. In an effort to address readers’ limited resources *Vogue* introduced their “Steal of the Month” editorials in November 2009 (Wintour, 2009 June, p. 48). The editorial was “ironically titled” according to Wintour, perhaps due to the items in these editorials still being relatively expensive compared to other similar options available in the marketplace. In November 2009 the steal of the month was a \$150 Patagonia rain jacket (Holgate, 2009 November). After providing the jacket’s details and a rundown on Patagonia’s eco-credentials, the author stated that this was “all very wonderful and commendable, yet woman cannot dress by ethics alone, a fact not lost on Patagonia” (p.247). The VP of Patagonia’s design and merchandising contributed, “we don’t want

anyone to feel they've taken a step backward on fashion. Part of feeling empowered when you are outdoors is to look good" (p. 247). Thus, even the great outdoors is a space in which fashion and branding remain of central importance. The author helped the reader move beyond the stereotypical image that accompanied the editorial—a model standing on a beach next to a raggedy tent with hiking gear in hand—letting them know they could “swap the shorts for leggings and the hiking boots for rugged tread-sole heels, and this jacket could assail any city block in style” (p. 247).

In an attempt to become better informed of the industry and show solidarity with those who found fashion out of their reach, one editor chose to demonstrate the triumphs and tribulations of home sewing in an editorial titled “Haute Home Economics” (Kane, 2009 September). When considering the cost of decorative pillows, she realized it might be better (i.e. cheaper) if she just made them, but she did not know how to sew. In her quest to learn, she teamed up with designer Jason Wu. He convinced her that learning to sew a dress would be more fun. The author made an admission highlighted in a red quote box: “I write about clothes for a living. Shouldn't I know how they are made?” (p. 366). While the statement was seemingly innocuous and rationalized the premise of her editorial, it highlighted a weakness in the *Vogue* system: individuals with very little knowledge of what goes into producing fashion are the same individuals justifying their costs and value to the reader. The editorial ended with a slow-fashion lesson, however. “While I am sitting there, needle and thread in hand, it also really hits me how worth it saving up for a few pieces of beautiful clothing is, rather than buying cheaper things that haven't been constructed with so much attention and care” (p. 372).

By granting the reader an inside look at the trials of producing her own dress, she simultaneously justified the price of well-made high fashion garments while also keeping designers on a pedestal for their mastery of a skillset no longer held by many American readers.

Fashion's Night Out. In September 2009 *Vogue*, along with the CFDA and NYC & Co., hosted a citywide shopping party in an effort to jump start consumerism, which had remained sluggish since the financial collapse. *WWD* reported on the development of the event: "The objective, said several of the 100 or so U.S. retailers that have agreed to participate so far, is to offer a fun evening of shopping in order to boost business and creatively transform stores into more entertaining theaters of commerce, rather than the usual now overused tactic of discounting" (Feitelberg, Moin, & Celeste, 2009, p. 1). Wintour celebrated the triumph of the evening noting, "There was a 50 percent rise in traffic overall at the stores, and seven out of ten people went home with something new" (2009 November, p. 70). Regardless of the integration the sustainable fashion discourse with eco and ethical concerns, the economic element, as far as Anna Wintour was concerned, trumped all. In the same issue her staff reported on organic farming, wilderness boot camp, and 'greening' an apartment. Wintour noted each of their contributions in her letter and connected them to her own mission stating, "These stories celebrate activism and fun, the guiding principles of Fashion's Night Out" (p. 76) further legitimizing shopping as a form of socio-political advocacy.

Commoditizing the movement: 2010-2013

The economic downturn remained the key socio-political factor in 2010. Recovery was slow and inconsistent. The *New York Times* dubbed this period of economic mixed messages “The Great Ambiguity—a time of considerable debate over the clarity of economic indicators and of the staying power of apparent improvements” (Goodman, 2010, p. A1). The lack of retribution on the banks—believed to be at the root of the financial collapse in 2008—fueled discontent and led to the #OccupyWallStreet movement (van Gelder, 2011). The political mood remained contentious with the divide between Republicans and Democrats growing even wider, with the issues surrounding climate change serving as a prime example (McCright & Dunlap, 2011).

The Gulf Coast faced yet another disaster when a deep water oilrig owned by British Petroleum exploded in April 2010, killing eleven people and spilling tens of millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf (How much has spilled and how far? Seeking answers as questions mount, 2010; Robertson, 2010). *Vogue* contextualized the impact on the region through a poignant editorial in September 2010 (Reed, “Engulfed”, p. 352, 360, 362). The author had vacationed in the region all her life and offered a comparison between pre- and post-explosion. She profiled the loss of industry and the plight of the people living in the aftermath stating, “handmade signs that once advertised pogies, shrimp, crab, live bait had been replaced by those expressing rage and despair (BP=Bayou Pollution; God help us all)” (p. 360). Most relevant to this study, the editorial connected environmental degradation with economic impacts and social well-being, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the triple bottom line.

As the fashion industry continued to struggle with recovery after the global financial collapse of 2008, *Vogue* expanded its development and support of Fashion's Night Out (FNO). Wintour's "Letters" in the September 2010 and September 2011 issues were almost entirely devoted to drumming up support for what had evolved into a global shopping party. Wintour recounted the ways *Vogue* had risen to the occasion to help the industry in the past:

"There was the CFDA/*Vogue* initiative 7th on Sale to help those living with HIV and AIDS in the nineties. In the years after 9/11, many of the country's young designers suffered terribly, so the CFDA/*Vogue* Fashion Fund was set up to steer them toward a strong and viable future. And, of course, Fashion's Night Out was born out of the economic downturn and the attendant downward slide in our desire to shop" (2010 September, p. 240).

FNO was the cause célèbre of the late aughts. Reviving the fashion economy was placed on par with 1990's campaigns assisting HIV and AIDS victims.

This emphasis on shopping coincided with a shift in the way *Vogue* constituted eco-fashion. Eco and sustainable fashion was originally presented as a movement. Throughout 2010-2013 the magazine shifted to an object-centric discourse, focusing on goods produced with eco and ethical considerations in mind. Earlier editorials dedicated to eco, ethical, slow, or sustainable fashion frequently discussed more than one brand or designer, suggesting a sub-cultural movement. The designers listed in the March 1990 editorial were a collective demanding change. The avant-garde in the mid to late nineties were united by their opposition to mainstream fashion. The experts and socialites of the 'golden era' were the antithesis of mindless consumption. By 2013 the threat of sustainable fashion—threatening in the sense that it demanded change to the

basic premise of the fashion system—had been negated, or at least marginalized. The co-option of the sustainable fashion discourse did not mean it was eliminated from *Vogue's* pages. Rather, the discourse was transformed to align with *Vogue's* mission of presenting what was new.

In November 2010, *Vogue* published a photo spread entitled “Naturally Refined” (p. 260-267) (see fig. 4.5) This pictorial was one of the last collective presentations of multiple designers presenting eco/ethically-oriented goods. The photo shoot included one look per page and featured sustainable fashion offerings from mainstream designers like Francisco Costa for Calvin Klein and Michael Kors. What made this photo shoot noteworthy was its lack of stereotypical imagery found in the majority of *Vogue's* portrayals of sustainable fashion. The model was styled in modern make-up and architectural hair. Though the color palette of the garments was largely neutral there was one bold crimson dress included in the spread. The model was fully accessorized, showing total looks rather than just focusing on the eco-friendly garments. There was a complete lack of greenery and proximity to nature that had been a mainstay of earlier sustainable fashion imagery. The studio setting and choice of one lone model was a common set-up for the “Style Ethics” editorials and is discussed in detail in chapter 5. If one did not read the captions it would have been difficult to pinpoint this photo spread as eco-minded. This point was further emphasized by *Vogue* in the POV section when they stated, “You can’t spot eco chic anymore; it has zero to do with blowsy peasant blouses or Birkenstocks. Sustainable fabrics can be slinky and citified and sexy” (2010 November, p. 195). This statement, while accepting certain elements of eco-fashion into

the mainstream, mocks supposed stereotypes of sustainable fashion. By introducing the phrase “eco-chic”, *Vogue* extends its authority to define what is and what is not fashionable in terms of sustainable fashion.

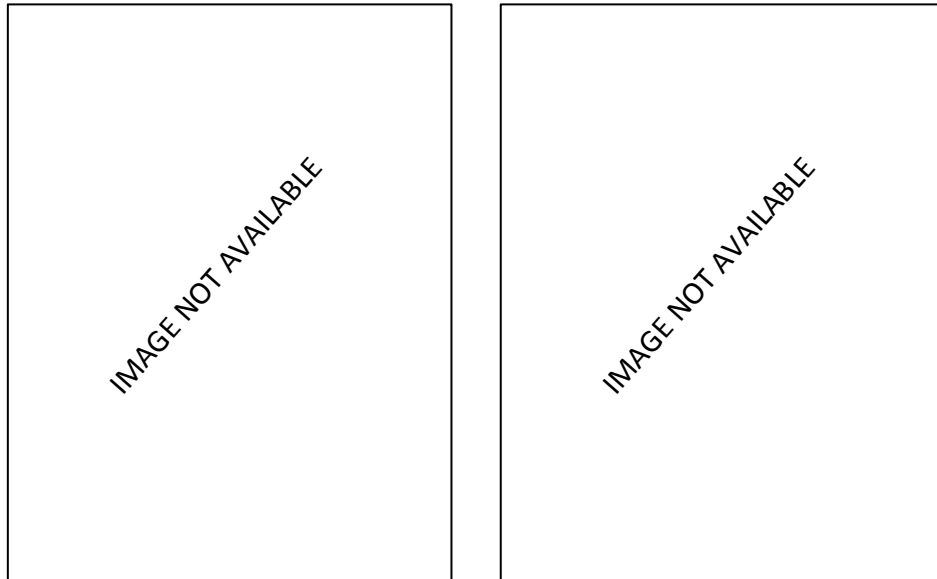


Figure 4.5 “Eco-chic” goes mainstream. Reprinted from “Naturally Refined” (pp. 260-261), photography by Patrick Demarchelier, fashion editor: Tonne Goodman, *Vogue* (November 2010).

Though the “Naturally Refined” spread was a step forward in terms of integrating well-known designers into the sustainable fashion discourse, it perpetuated the focus on environmental impact while largely ignoring social impact. Featured on the first page, the caption for a Stella McCartney trench—a designer whose environmental ethos had been discussed in previous *Vogue* profiles (Woods, 2003 September, p. 340-344)—stated it was “made entirely of organic cotton” and that “it gets its color-of-the-moment camel shade from a low-impact dyeing process” (“Naturally refined”, p. 260).

The captions for all the garments followed in the same vein, emphasizing reduced impact on the environment. The only mention of labor was for the Michael Kors “hand-knit boyfriend sweater” (p. 263).

For the rest of the object-centered editorials collected in this period, the eco and ethical fashion discourse was broken down into disparate parts. Instead of eco or ethically minded groups of people speaking as one, *Vogue* separated them into singular voices. Instead of profiling eco designers and brands collectively, one designer or one product was featured. Unlike the editorials in May 2007, they no longer had green banners announcing their collective mission. Sustainable fashion was effectively absorbed into the magazine.

The goods. Profiles of individual goods with sustainable credentials were regularly featured in short editorials. In November 2010 three different individual products were featured that were classified as sustainable or slow fashion. Each had its own editorial. A plastic necklace made from recycled plastic bottles by mainstream fashion label and frequent *Vogue* advertiser Marni was the “Steal of the month”. A “25-year-old actress, vintage shopper, and vegetarian [that] that doesn’t wear leather (unless its thrift)” (Roy, 2010 November, p. 250) modeled the necklace in the corresponding image.

Elsewhere in the issue, a one-off shoe produced by Giuseppe Zanotti that was made from old design samples was featured with the ‘anatomy’ of the shoe included. “The suede for this boot-sandal hybrid, \$585, came from discarded handbags he had in his factory” and “the lining was crafted from scraps of leather salvaged from the

warehouse floor” (Adams, “Soul to sole”, p. 158). The editorial occupied about one-sixth of the page and was illustrated by one of the shoes against a white background. On the same page a handbag made in the recently reopened Roman store, Saddlers Union, conformed to the slow fashion ethos in that “it still takes a day or two to create each burnished-leather saddlebag” and at the back of the store, “pull the drapes back and you can shake the hand of the man who made it” (Holgate, “Go local, look global”, p. 158). The accompanying images placed the bag against a map of Rome to emphasize its place of production and even included an image of the street on which the shop was located. *Vogue’s* movement towards featuring one product, one designer was embodied by the “Style Ethics” editorials that *Vogue* continued to include through this period. These are further explored in chapter 5.

The people. The other editorials in this period were largely profiles consisting of one designer or social figure interviewed about their sustainably minded ethos or their fashion label. In September 2013, for instance, “environmentalist and supermodel Amber Valletta branch[ed] out into e-commerce with Yoox” and *Vogue* profiled her Master&Muse collection (Holt, “The natural”). The profile presented the products associated with Valetta as superior, new takes on eco-friendly goods. *Vogue* endorsed Valetta’s credentials stating, “Good taste and social awareness come naturally to her—and two decades as one of the industry’s most in-demand faces have earned her a kind of ultimate insider status. Who better to bring a sharp, informed eye to a genre that too often is more hippie-dippie than hip?” (p. 608). This last line showed how *Vogue* derided previous fashion seasons in order to highlight and increase demand for what was newly

available. Valetta's authority on the subject was further enhanced through a description of how her ethics ran through her personal life.

A profile of model Miranda Kerr's organic beauty line Kora likewise combined both product review and contextualization of the product within Kerr's lifestyle. The profile began with her fashion credentials: "All the world's a runway for Australian model and street-style star Miranda Kerr, whose every fashionable step is chronicled by the legions of photographers who follow her" (Regensdorf, 2013 November, p. 202). A description of the antioxidant-rich organic ingredients in Kerr's beauty products parlayed into a description of her "bohemian" home, relating product to personal lifestyle. By bridging the connection between lifestyle and product, *Vogue* constructed an image of the intended consumer. Readers that connected to the aesthetics, values and lifestyles of these two models may view the sustainable good as relevant and desirable.

While an editorial tagline for Charlotte Casiraghi (granddaughter of Princess Grace of Monaco) read, "Monaco blue blood Charlotte Casiraghi is a rising star of show jumping and a champion of sustainable fashion", the actual editorial consisted of just three sentences explaining her sustainable credentials. "Charlotte checks all the boxes for newspaper front pages—youth, beauty, background, glamour, and *a credible green agenda* [original italics]" (Woods, 2010 September, p. 668, 670). Casiraghi launched a sustainable fashion and lifestyle online magazine, *Ever Manifesto*, which, to date, has produced three issues. According to *Vogue*, the credibility of her commitment stemmed

not from any overt action discussed in the editorial but because she was who she was: a notable socialite of the highest order.

Another royal, Prince Charles, penned a one-page editorial in the same issue. His contribution, entitled “Royal Green” (2010 September, p. 666) was appreciably more compelling as an invitation to follow in the footsteps of a notable individual towards sustainability. Though Prince Charles admitted he did not consider himself a fashionable person, he saw the value of harnessing fashion’s ability to “make new ideas attractive and to do so rapidly and on a grand scale” (p. 666). The editorial discussed nearly all aspects of sustainability, from slow fashion (“wearing old or secondhand clothes” and “reusing and repairing”), to reduced use of natural resources, to supporting local economies (“promoting the rediscovery and reuse of [British] wool”) (p. 666). The editorial “urges” readers to start wherever they can, making the movement open to any action and not demanding a complete lifestyle overhaul. What was still missing, however, was a conversation on social impacts.

Social impacts. Though the social impact of the industry was largely ignored in most of the editorials between 1990-2013, the definition of sustainability in *Vogue* started to include more references to labor utilization and charitable giving in the most recent years studied. A notable contribution to this element of the discourse was *Vogue*’s establishment of a recurring feature entitled “Social Responsibility” in April 2010. The title implied a discussion on fashion industry initiatives to address social impact. However, it was more a platform for celebrities, socialites and models to showcase their charity work and bring awareness to their causes. Images accompanying

these stories focused on the well-known individual involved rather than the individuals or communities being assisted by their actions. Consequently, it was more a review of fashion adjacent philanthropy through the actions of celebrities and socialites rather than fashion industry ethics.

The other editorials from this period that discussed social impact focused on labor groups or the communities assisted through fashion industry employment. In a 2011 editorial on Scottish woolen mills, *Vogue* reported, “Specific intelligence about the provenance of fashion is fast becoming a new, name-dropping facet of luxury” (Mower, 2011 September, p 532). In November 2010, designer Sharon Wauchob of Edun—which “partly produces its clothes in Africa” (Adams, “Garments of Edun”, p. 156)—shared that the brand’s clothing was exceptional because of its handcrafted details such as “brass beading by artisans in Nairobi” (p. 156). Thus, the details were meant to enhance the value of the object and not necessarily express the ethics of the company.

In honor of the magazines 120th anniversary in 2012 *Vogue* compiled a list of 120 individuals, “designers, models, actors, singers, and social girls, aged 45 and under, who...make fashion so very exciting now and will do so in the years to come” (Wintour, 2012 September, p. 302). Notably, four designers and brands included in the list operated under sustainably minded principles. Their descriptions included references to environmental and social impacts with Suno bringing “sustainable employment to Kenya” (The *Vogue* 120, 2012 September, p. 854), Monique Péan “sourcing ethically mined gold and gems in far-flung locales while donating a portion of her proceeds to charity” (p. 854), and Christopher Raeburn acting as “standard bearer for British craft” (p. 854). The

list also included a group referred to as “The Socials”, a collective of socialites included as representatives of “the new breed of social slasher: Editors, entrepreneurs, artists, eco-warriors, models, advocates for social change” (p. 845). This showed the continued emphasis on social figures to set examples and act as leaders of sustainable fashion.

The only editorial in 2010-2013 that made an explicit connection between consumption of fashion goods and potential social impact was a profile of a TOM’s shoes and Tabitha Simmons collaboration (Malle, 2013 November, “Happy feet”). The editorial followed Simmons to Honduras as she distributed TOM’s as part of their one-for-one campaign. Though similar programs conducted by brands Warby Parker and FEED were mentioned, the focus remained squarely on TOM’s and the specific impact it had in Honduras. This was one of *Vogue’s* least abstracted approaches to sustainability. The impacts were made tangible by showcasing stories of particular children who would be able to attend school because of the proper footwear provided by the brand. To highlight the point, Simmons herself was pictured fitting TOM’s on a child.

The institutional voices. While Wintour had her sights set on economic recovery, she left it to her editorial staff to cover the other pillars of sustainability. Hamish Bowles was regularly sent out on assignment to gain insider perspectives on a broad spectrum of lifestyles and experiences. In November 2010 he profiled a community in Oakland, California that lived off scavenged food and urban gardening (Bowles, p. 98-106). As he described his surroundings, he related the experiences to his childhood and the time he spent living on a farm in Kent, England. The editorial was both personal and informative, though occasionally it was peppered with stereotypical lexicon like “hippie”, “hipster”

and “granola” (p. 102). The distance between his own ‘fashionable’ life and the one he was experiencing was made evident when he stated, “decades spent in the artificially scented air of hothouse fashion shows, of Fifth Avenue salons and Mayfair aeries, have evidently thinned my blood. I, who once boldly gathered eggs from our nesting Rhode Island Reds, now balk at the fierce hens in [his host’s] hut” (p. 104). Though he participated as best he could, he noted his longing for the “gourmet fish restaurants and 400-thread-count sheets on downy beds” in San Francisco just across the bay (p. 104). The editorial was more an escapist fantasy than a promotion of the lifestyle.

On the other end of the socio-economic experience with sustainability was fashion editor Sally Singer, who wrote about the “greening” of her Chelsea Hotel apartment in November 2009 (pp. 242-245). She also reignited the conversation of slow fashion with an editorial that relayed the benefits of custom-made suits. Ralph Lauren (“the man, not the brand”) tailored Singer’s suit pants and “one of Lauren’s own tailor’s, Frank Vita, had flown in specially from Italy to begin the laborious process of making [her]...look as trim and elegant as his boss” (Singer, 2010 September, p. 486). Unlike Bowles experiences, this slow approach was hardly within every reader’s reach. “There is a price tag—a jacket, vest, and trouser start at around \$5,800—but you’ll come to realize that this is an investment way beyond fashion” (p. 488). Unlike Berne’s editorial in 1998 where she sought out tailors to recreate her pants, Singer did not offer the reader a span of price points at which they could emulate this process. Thus, slow fashion in this period was not a feasible option for most, at least the approaches promoted by *Vogue*.

Fashion editor Tonne Goodman persisted as the key environmental voice of the magazine. On top of serving as the editor of the “Style Ethics” editorials, she was also the architect behind the “Naturally Refined” photo spread. Goodman approached various well-known designers and asked them “what their idea of ethical chic might be” (Yaeger, 2010 November, p. 96). It was this question that prompted Michael Kors to “explore the possibility of working with his textile suppliers to find materials that were eco-friendly yet still felt luxurious. It took him two fashion seasons to create his exquisite, organically farmed cotton lace, finished using all-natural solvents” (p. 96). This insight revealed two points: (a) mainstream designers may require a push towards sustainable fashion from an external influence; and (b) *Vogue* did have influence over designers, which could be used to change their behaviors. It also shed new light on the photo spread. The editorial suggested that these designers were integrating eco-consciousness into their lines, though there is no evidence provided that the brands had expanded these practices beyond the one-off contributions featured in “Naturally Refined”.

As the key social actors involved in the construction, promotion, and legitimization of the sustainable fashion discourse, Wintour and her staff wield immense power. They had high “expert authority” through their association with the magazine (van Leeuwen, 2007, pp. 94-95). Van Leeuwen noted that an expert’s “utterances themselves will carry some kind of assertion that a particular course of action is ‘best’ or a ‘good idea’” (p. 95). Wintour’s “Letters from the Editor” and the “Point of View” editorials offered the reader a broad overview of what was best for the coming season.

The editorials written by individuals such as Goodman, Singer, and Bowles demonstrated limited authority since they provided agency to designers and social figures by allowing them voice in the magazine (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Social actors possess varying degrees of social capital. This social capital impacts perception of their authenticity and the authenticity of the discourses they contribute to and promote. While authenticity is an attribute that can be ascribed via scientific verification (i.e. certification of organic cotton), Van Leeuwen noted “In the end, something is authentic because it is declared authentic by an authority” (2001, p. 393). When the authority of *Vogue* was not enough to authenticate the sustainable fashion discourse, they relied on the authority of experts or individuals with social capital in their respective areas.

Besides authorization, *Vogue* also used moral evaluation to legitimize the sustainable fashion discourse, “that is, legitimization by (often very oblique) reference to value systems” (van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 92). In this instance, references to value systems had varying degrees of obliqueness. References to slow fashion values were more veiled than those referencing environmentalism. The environmental editorials were written, in many cases, in express support of, or at least a willingness to engage, the values associated with the movement. Slow fashion, on the other hand, was an external value system used by the researcher to help categorize ideologies expressed by *Vogue* that ran contrary to the discourse of the new.

There were, however, multiple instances when *Vogue* undermined, or de-legitimized the authority and values expressed by social actors outside of the magazine.

Wintour undermined the avant-garde in the 1990s when she dismissed their impact on the wider industry. Norwich undermined the commitment of his informants to environmentalism when he highlighted their hypocrisy. The de-legitimization of the aesthetic of sustainable fashion occurred regularly with the incorporation of terms like “hippie”, “granola”, and, to some extent, “ethnic”. The only sustainable fashion aesthetic that was legitimized by *Vogue* was that of “eco-chic”.

Appropriating or Undermining?: *Vogue* and Sustainability

Robyn Givhan, a noted fashion journalist, summed up the discoveries made in this discourse-historical analysis best when she stated, “what the fashion industry loves, it woos — then swallows whole” (Givhan, 2014). Givhan was referring to the appropriation of fashion blogging but this is, of course, not a new phenomenon. Dick Hebdige’s seminal work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Hebdige, 2007) demonstrated how subcultures progressed through stages of incorporation to negate their threat to society. This concept was a useful mechanism to explain the evolution of the sustainable fashion discourse. It began with designer pronouncements of doom and gloom and slowly morphed into the shopping recommendations and disparate individual voices that dominated the discourse in the final era of study. A feverish commentary on the degradation of the planet (Leggett, March 1990) became “eco chic” as the discourse evolved into promoting sustainably minded products as another option in the cornucopia of product choice (Holt, September 2013).

While references to sustainably minded values and actions were found throughout the twenty-three years analyzed, it must be noted that these were

exceptions in the discourse, not the norm. As one would expect to find in a fashion magazine, the dominant discourse emphasized “the new” and the ephemeral. There were periods when the rhetoric was toned down, such as in the wake of the 1980s excesses and again in 2009 after the 2008 global financial meltdown. Wintour’s commitment to *Vogue*’s discourse on the new was regularly made apparent. Wintour claimed in September 2010 that *Vogue* had always been invested in “wonderfully wearable and thoroughly desirable clothes” (p. 260). Regardless of wearability, the POV section and Wintour’s letters promoted the new, the exciting, and the “cravable” for the majority of the 1990s and the early 2000s. “Glamour” was a favorite word, always celebrated when it returned to the pages after a period of conservatism or minimalism. Wintour was committed to creating a fantasy; the aesthetic was the main focus..

Wintour kept the sustainable fashion discourse at arm’s length, shifting focus away from the magazine as an institution onto others in her employ or notable figures that could stand in as role models. In the ‘green’ issue, Wintour stated, “our fashion director, Tonne Goodman (herself a green-minded spirit) chose to style [Cameron] Diaz mostly in clothes that are ethically produced from organic materials” (Wintour, 2009 June, p. 48). Thus, the magazine as an institution was distanced from Goodman as an individual. It was not an institutional decision to style Diaz in sustainable fashion; it was Goodman’s. When Wintour did speak for the institution using the pronoun ‘we’ it was to align the magazine’s commitment to rebuilding the industry economically with others’ commitment to greening the industry. She stated, “It goes to show that being proactive

is always the best way to get results. That's why we chose to spotlight the admirable eco stances of Charlotte Casiraghi and the Prince of Wales" (2010 November, p.272).

Furthermore, though *Vogue* periodically engaged the good works of a handful of designers and activists striving for better products and practices, it rarely discussed the issues that led to their necessity, particularly ignoring labor issues. On April 24th, 2013 Rana Plaza in Bangladesh collapsed and killed more than 1,100 garment workers and injured 2,500 more (Friedman A. , 2014). The labels found amongst the rubble included those carried by fast and mass retailers like Zara, Mango, and Walmart (Yardley, 2014). The global media coverage of the historic garment industry tragedy spurred another wave of consumer, governmental, and non-governmental activism calling for changes in the textile and apparel industry. Fashion Revolution was established to mark the anniversary of the Rana Plaza tragedy (Fashion Revolution, 2014). The organization's goal was to bring awareness of global apparel production. They asked consumers to wear their clothes inside out on April 24 to highlight the label identifying country of origin. It was accompanied by 'hashtag activism' with participants sharing photos of themselves with their clothes turned inside out and by tagging them with #insideout. The website also invited visitors to find out how their garments were produced. Visitors submitted pictures of their clothing with label information and the organization responded with pertinent information.

Though there was plenty about hashtag activism to critique including its underlying narcissistic tones, social media has proven to be a key avenue for connecting with younger generations on socio-political issues like #OccupyWallStreet (Gerbaudo,

2012). Social and digital media have already usurped some of the power held by traditional media sources in terms of gaining access to the fashion industry. Entirely digital news sites like thebusinessoffashion.com are offering daily insider fashion business reporting. This venue was once monopolized by subscription-only publications like *Women's Wear Daily (WWD)*. *Vogue* did not convey any information concerning the Rana Plaza tragedy in its pages. The only mention was on its website in a post about a party hosted by eco-fashion activist Livia Firth where “Karlie Kloss, Sofia Sanchez Barrenechea, Marina Rust, and Misha Nonoo stopped socializing briefly” to watch a film promoting transparency and social responsibility in the fashion industry (Betker, 2014). If the academic and industry reports are correct and fashion consumers are looking for more accountability from the industry, it may behoove the fashion media to position itself as a source of sustainable fashion information and guidance. If mainstream media channels like *Vogue* fail to provide the information consumers seek on issues such as sustainability, it is likely they will turn to new media to fill the gap, further undermining *Vogue's* position of power in the fashion media hierarchy.

Chapter 5 : The Materiality of Conscientiousness

In the March 2009 issue of *Vogue* on page 326, framed in a bold green banner, *Vogue* introduced “Style Ethics” a recurring editorial featuring fashion’s latest creations that appropriated environmental and ethical values (Herman, March 2009). *Voguepedia* explains that the “Style Ethics” editorials offer “a special section spotlighting the best in sustainable chic, edited by fashion director Tonne Goodman” (Vogue, 2013). The inaugural editorial in March 2009 began “[e]very inch of the Organic by John Patrick look that you see here is environmentally sound” (p. 326). The corresponding image emphasizes the materiality of ethical style by offering a three-quarter, full-frontal presentation of the suit described in the text against a neutral gray background—not unlike an image one might see in a catalog. The editorials’ emphasis on materiality provides a focused site to explore how goods become ‘sustainable’ via *Vogue*’s text and image. This chapter critically analyzes all thirty-seven “Style Ethics” articles published between 2009 and 2013 and places them into the larger context of *Vogue*’s discourse on sustainable style.

Magic Words: Turning ‘Consumer Goods’ Into ‘Sustainable Fashion’

Dress is, at its most basic level, a consumable good that serves purposes of warmth, modesty, and decoration (Eicher, Evenson, & Lutz, 2008). Of course, consumer goods are valued for more than their utility. Fashionable dress, in particular, allows individuals to construct personal identities as well as display group associations (Wilson E. , 2006). These identities and associations are only possible if the object has been infused with the values of the culture in which it is worn.

As discussed in the literature review, the media—through advertising, branding, and celebrity endorsements—bestows a considerable amount of the embedded meaning found in fashionable apparel and accessories. Grant McCracken’s model of this process (1988, p. 72) is recreated below to help illustrate the role of the press in bestowing meaning unto consumable goods (Figure 5.1). The processes of particular

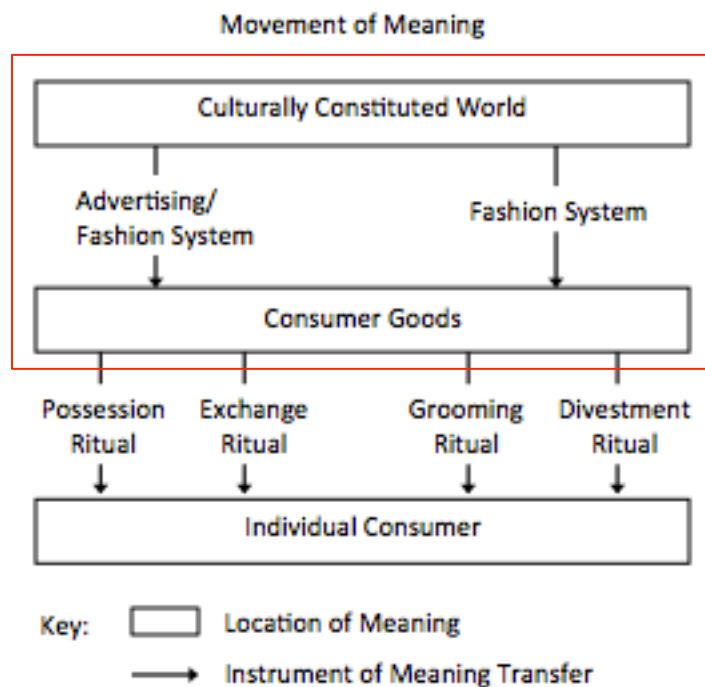


Figure 5.1 McCracken’s model of meaning movement. Reproduction of model from *Culture and Consumption* (p. 72), by Grant McCracken, 1988, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

concern to this research have been outlined in red. Consumer goods, McCracken argues, gain their meaning via instruments of meaning transfer such as advertising and the fashion system, which includes fashion media (1988, pp. 71-83). Import is grounded in the culturally constituted world and thus reflects the beliefs, values, and ideals of the

society in which the goods operate. Goods produced in a foreign culturally constituted world (whether geographically or ideologically) would first be imbibed with the local beliefs, values, and ideals by the instruments of meaning transfer in order for the goods to have significance for the consumer. It is argued here that the text and images in the “Style Ethics” section of *Vogue* serve the purpose of aligning sustainable goods featured with the dominant ideology of the magazine.

Before goods can become ‘sustainable fashion’ they must first become ‘fashion’. There are certainly a number of brands known to have a sustainable ethos but have yet to be included in a high fashion magazine. The brands discussed in the “Style Ethics” sections have, by sheer inclusion, surpassed other eco or ethical brands in terms of becoming ‘fashionable’. They appear amidst the high-fashion advertisements and lists of “must haves” for the season. If *Vogue’s* mission is, as it states, to “immerse itself in fashion, always leading readers to what will happen next” (Condé Nast, 2013) then it is safe to reason that what falls between its pages has been deemed fashionable. Table 5.1 offers a list of the brands included in the “Style Ethics” sections as well as the qualities highlighted by the journalist and those interviewed indicating their ethical or environmental bent.

Inclusion in “Style Ethics” is not only beneficial for bestowing fashionability on relatively unknown brands; it also bestows sustainability on brands that are not commonly associated with the concept. Oscar de la Renta, Bottega Veneta, Erdem, Derek Lam, and Gucci are not brands normally associated with sustainable fashion. Though the majority of the brands included in Table 5.1 have committed themselves to

Table 5-1

Brands Featured in the Style Ethics Editorials

Brand	Issue featured	Product Category	Place of production	Eco-materials	Eco-production	Fair Labor	Social engagement
Organic by John Patrick	March 2009	RTW	New York	X			
Bamford	April 2009	RTW		X			
Hessnatur	May 2009	RTW		X	X	X	
Loyale	June 2009	Swimwear	New York	X	X		X
Alabama Chanin	July 2009	RTW	USA	X	X		X
Stella McCartney	September 2009	RTW		X	X		
Lutz & Patmos	October 2009	RTW	Uruguay	X	X	X	X
Stewart+Brown	November 2009	RTW	USA, Mongolia	X	X		
Susan Woo	December 2009	RTW	USA	X	X	X	
Lauren Pierce Atelier	March 2010	Made-to-measure	DRC			X	X
Suno	April 2010	RTW	Kenya			X	X
Way it Should Be	May 2010	RTW	Haiti	X	X	X	X
Lemlem	June 2010	RTW	Ethiopia			X	X
North Circular	September 2010	RTW	UK	X		X	X
Costello	October 2010	RTW			X		
Tagliapietra							
Pure	March 2011	RTW		X	X		
Threads/Alberta Ferretti							
Gregory Parkinson	April 2011	RTW		X	X		
Bantu	May 2011	Swimwear	Africa			X	X

Table 5-1 Cont.

Brands featured in the Style Ethics Editorials

Brand	Issue Featured	Product Category	Place of Production	Eco-Materials	Eco-Production	Fair Labor	Social Engagement
Aurora Lopez Meja	June 2011	Accessories	Peru	X	X	X	
Oscar de la Renta	September 2011	Bridal		X			X
Gucci	October 2011	Accessories		X			
Maiyet	March 2012	RTW	New York, Kenya, India, Italy			X	X
Alternative Apparel	July 2012	Accessories			X	X	X
Derek Lam	September 2012	Outerwear	Turkey	X			
Bottega Veneta	October 2012	Accessories		X			
ABC Kitchen	November 2012	Restaurant		X	X		
Bionic	December 2012	Men's		X			
Yarn/Burton		Outerwear					
Kerry Cassill	February 2013	Home Goods	India	X	X		
Diesel+Edun	March 2013	RTW	Africa			X	X
H&M	April 2013	RTW		X	X		
Bespoke Global	May 2013	Bicycle	USA	X	X		
Rosel	June 2013	Accessories	Peru	X		X	
Panda	June 2013	Accessories					X
Gallant & Jones	June 2013	Home Goods		X	X		X
Faherty Brand	June 2013	Swimwear		X			
Freja+Mother	July 2013	RTW		X	X		X
Uncharted Play	August 2013	Toy			X		
Maiyet	September 2013	RTW			X		X
Erdem	October 2013	RTW		X			

sustainable production, the products included for the more mainstream brands were largely one-offs or special projects associated with a promotional event, such as Runway to Green (Bahrenburg, October 2013; Talbot, September 2011; Talbot, October 2011; Talbot, September 2012).

Another standout brand that was included was H&M, the Swedish fast-fashion clothier (Talbot, April 2013). Like many of its competitors (i.e. Forever21, Zara, and Topshop), H&M bears the hallmarks of a fast-fashion ethos. They produce fashion-forward pieces in short timelines and sell them at 'affordable' prices (Cline, 2012). More recently however, H&M has made a concerted effort to change its image, leading the charge for more sustainable practices. News articles have highlighted H&M's efforts to use organic cotton, reducing water usage for fiber production and recycling consumers' used garments (Diderich, 2013; Edelson, Report highlights H&M's organic bent, 2012). Additionally, since 2002 they have voluntarily released reports on their website detailing their Corporate Social Responsibility efforts (H&M, 2014) with their most recent report offering a comprehensive analysis of their supply chain's environmental and social impact (H&M, 2014). However, they have been careful with branding, choosing to use the phrase "more sustainable" as apposed to sustainable fashion in order to avoid accusations of greenwashing (Edelson, 2014).

Inclusion was only the first step in *Vogue's* legitimization of these brands as sustainable fashion. Each editorial engaged the brand within both the fashion and sustainability discourses, albeit at varying degrees for each. The next section will explore

the discursive practices at the lexical level using the five points of analysis discussed in the methods section—representation, salience, abstraction, modality and transitivity.

Representation. The heavy use of descriptive phrases in these editorials was a key discursive practice employed by both the journalist and those quoted to construct a sustainable identity for the objects and brands presented. This extortionate use of descriptive phrases is known as overlexicalization, defined as an “excess of quasi-synonymous terms for entities and ideas that are a particular problem in the culture’s discourse” (Fowler, 1991, p. 85). Materials and their sources were the most common pleonastic elements. Raw materials and fabrics were frequently given two or more adjectives to explain their sustainable qualities such as the "organic Japanese-cotton seersucker" suit presented in the first “Style Ethics” editorial (Herman, March 2009) or the ancient-artifact inspired amulets produced by Aurora Lopez Meija made from metals “recycled from melted-down, already-existing supplies” (Talbot, June 2011).

The lexicalization of material sources also imparted elements of novelty to the pieces such as Christopher Raeburns’ parkas, crafted from “*Eurostar* uniforms, old Belgian army tank suits, or even retired hot-air balloons” (Kane, 2010 August, p. 124). Costello Tagliapietra’s dress was constructed of fabric colored by AirDye, “a technique in which hues are heat-transferred (by energy-efficient machines) from paper (which then is recycled, of course)” (“View: Style Ethics”, 2010 October, p. 216).

As discussed in the literature review, the raw materials used in the fashion industry have been a point of discord for those seeking more sustainable options. By

emphasizing the materials and processes that make these objects unique, *Vogue* is acknowledging the faults of the standard, dominant system.

Overlexicalization was also used to impart elements of luxury or desirability. Luxury requires “beauty, rarity, quality, and price, and also an inspirational brand endorsing the product” (Godey, et al., 2012, p. 1462). *Vogue*’s first language is that of luxury thus it is unsurprising the objects included in “Style Ethics” would be lexicalized in a way similar to products found in other areas of the magazine. This process was most evident for the products produced by the better-known brands. For example, Bottega Veneta; Carta Giapponese handbag was created using a “time-honored art: Japanese paper making” known as “*washi*, a delicate paper derived from the bark of rapid-growing kozo trees. ‘It has been produced for more than a thousand years in Japan—tradition, technique and craftsmanship surround it’ [the designer] explains” (Talbot, 2012 October, p. 264). The magazine notes “spinning and weaving the material requires an unprecedented degree of skill” (p. 264) helping to justify the \$2,060 price tag. The mission of luxury and the mission of sustainability were further aligned when discussing Oscar de la Renta. “Aspects of ethical awareness and sustainability can inherently be found in many of his pieces: He opts for natural fibers over synthetics whenever possible and craftsmanship is carefully considered to last a lifetime” (Talbot, 2011 September, p. 584). This representation contains echoes of the slow fashion ethos and expands the limits of sustainable fashion beyond objects created with organic materials and in fair labor certified factories.

Lastly, the objects were represented as material embodiment of the maker's "story". The value for some of these objects was not that they were aesthetically desirable or that they were terribly necessary in terms of their utility. Rather, the object was justified because it provided someone in a developing country (frequently a woman) an opportunity to participate in the market economy of the West or sustained processes that had been marginalized by industrialization. Lutz & Patmos created knits in Uruguay while Hassan Pierre chose Port-au-Prince for parts of his production process. These sites were selected not because they were the best and most logical sites of production, but rather, as a means to provide jobs for those struggling in the region (Holgate, 2009 October, p. 178; Kane, 2010 May p. 150). Likewise, Lemlem's founder, model Liya Kebede employed women from her native Ethiopia "...so they [could] be self-sufficient, so they [could] send their children to school or rise from poverty" (Kane, 2010 June, p. 98). Max Osterweise, designer of Suno, chose sub-Saharan Africa as his place of production to challenge consumers' expectations of what the region is capable of producing (Kane, 2010 April, p. 170). Bantu, established by an economist-cum-designer, is produced across multiple African nations "bringing industry to some of the world's neediest communities" (Talbot, 2011 May, p. 180)¹. Edun and Maiyet built their brand identities around the ethos of bringing economic opportunities through fashion to struggling communities. This ethos was highlighted in each of the three articles

¹ *Vogue* states *bantu* means 'gateway' in "Senegal's native language" (of which it has many). *Bantu* is more commonly known as a language group containing over 400 dialects spoken in sub-Saharan Africa (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, n.d.). *Bantu* has a troubled linguistic history and is considered offensive if used to refer to a person. In South Africa, *Bantustans* were areas of land set aside for native South Africans during Apartheid (Harries, 1989). Thus, its linguistic heritage makes it an odd choice for a brand that purports to aid African workers.

pertaining to these brands (Adams, 2013 September, p. 650; Holt, March 2012, p. 428; Talbot, 2013 March, p. 452). Lauren Bush, embedded this 'story' element in the object by including the name of the customer who ordered the made-to-measure dress on the label alongside the name of the artisan in the Democratic Republic of Congo that hand-dyed the material selected for use (Kane, 2010 March, p. 370). Thus, the identities of the individuals involved in the construction of the garment appeared alongside that of the designer in a nod to the collective effort of production.

Salience. Certain aspects of the sustainable products highlighted in the "Style Ethics" were given greater emphasis suggesting they carry more significance in the construction of an identity that is sustainable. Editorial focus helped elucidate what *Vogue* and the contributing voices believed made these products different than those found elsewhere in the magazine. One prominent category was the importance of geography. To help build the identities of the brands, place of material sourcing, production, design inspiration, and even location of the brand's headquarters were all deemed worthy of inclusion. For example, Bamford was an "ethically and sustainably minded British label" (April 2009), Loyale's swimwear was "made in a New York factory" (June 2009), North Circular's wool came from "rare Wensleydale longwool sheep that roam the Yorkshire countryside", and the Diesel+Edun collaboration utilized "Kenyan metalwork and Dogon-inspired symbols" in their designs (Talbot, March 2013, p. 452).

Though the magazine heavily emphasizes place association, it should be noted that previous research found US consumers ranked country of origin (COO) low on the spectrum of desirable luxury good qualities as compared to quality and brand (Godey, et

al., 2012). Additionally, sustainable product consumption literature that was reviewed for this study regarding does not appear to address place of production either. Thus, it is likely *Vogue* and the brand representatives are using place as a mechanism to build brand myth and identity much like the luxury fashion brands have in the past (Tungate, 2012, pp. 22-23). Future research might explore the importance consumers put on place when considering sustainable fashion products.

The role and ethos of the designer is also given prominence in the lexicalization of the product. Placing the designer in central focus is a common tactic of the media as it builds designers into mythic heroes of the industry (Kawamura, 2005, p. 63). The ideologies and perspective of the designer were elucidated through quotation. Through salience, the designer was imparted with a level of authority on par with that of the magazine. The designer conveyed both tangible and intangible qualities of the sustainable objects with the insider information they provided which often revealed ideologies behind production. For example, Oscar de la Renta stated "eco-friendly fashion implies a commitment to the traditional techniques of making clothes" (Talbot, 2011 September, p. 584). The designers at Masterworks Wood and Design claimed "we're about old-world craftsmanship" (Adams, 2013 May, p. 200). *Vogue* relied on the expertise of the designers to help construct and define sustainable practices.

The concepts of 'craftsmanship', 'artisanship', and 'handmade' appeared throughout the "Style Ethics" editorials with sixteen of the editorials engaging one or more of these concepts. These concepts oppose mass-produced factory processes prevalent throughout the rest of the industry, once again providing opportunity to set

these goods apart. For example, “[Maiyet] works with artisans in developing economies, and to preserve craftsmanship everywhere else” (Holt, 2012 March, p. 428). Liya Kebede, model and designer of Lemlem, noted her brand was unique “because it’s handmade, something really quite special” (Kane, 2010 June, p. 98). The traditional wax-prints used by Bantu are “designed by local artisans in Cote d’Ivoire” (Talbot, 2011 May, p. 180). The “artisans” may or may not be working in a traditional factory setting, but their work is romanticized and raised above the typical menial, low-skilled labor associated with the production of fashionable apparel.

In terms of the objects, data analysis revealed that the qualities promoted for well-known brands emphasized the eco-related aspects such as organic components like the “Oeko-Tex certified silk” used by Erdem (Bharenburg, October 2013, p. 260) and the cottons used by Alberta Ferretti in her Pure Threads line (Talbot, 2012 March, p. 414). Environmentally conscious production processes were also emphasized such as Derek Lam’s “unprocessed, naturally colored pelts” he used for his shearling coats (Talbot, September 2012). However, labor and social impact were less accentuated or ignored all together for these products and brands.

Fairclough argues that when considering what is made salient, the researcher must also acknowledge what or who is excluded or pushed to the sidelines (Fairclough, Langauge and Power, 2001). The voices of those actually producing these sustainable products are the most obvious exclusion. Though craftspeople, place, and communities being assisted by the production of these goods are noted, the actual individuals that

are supposedly benefitting are not represented in any way except through vague references and generalizations.

Abstraction. Abstraction or oversimplification of the processes used to produce the products featured in “Style Ethics” made it difficult to assess *how* sustainable a product might be. For example, indeterminate and nominalized phrases like “less chemical intensive” and “better for the environment and the people who have to work with it” (June 2009) abstract concrete levels of impact. Without having a basis of comparison, such as how much waste the average dye process produces, stating a product is dyed with a “less” harmful process is a hollow statement.

Another abstraction discovered concerned *Vogue’s* reportage on the cause-related marketing (CRM) activities of the brands included in “Style Ethics”. CRM is defined as “the process of formulating and implementing marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organizational and individual objectives” (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988, p. 60). CRM has been hailed as a way for companies to build relationships with their consumers through shared values (Ross, Patterson, & Stutts, 1992). On the other hand, the benefit of CRM activities have been critiqued because of unclear motives or abstract verbiage making it difficult for consumers to easily understand what or how much the brand is contributing to society (Kim & Lee, 2009; Polonsky & Wood, 2001; Pracejus, Olsen, & Brown, 2003). Five “Style Ethics” editorials mentioned some form of CRM activity. Three of these used abstract language such as “a portion of Loyale's proceeds goes to Green Corps” (Herman,

June 2009, p. 68), "a portion of profits will go to environmental organizations" (Talbot, 2011 September, p. 584) "proceeds benefiting the Academy for Peace and Justice" (Holt, 2012 July, p. 58). The abstraction of how much will be donated and even which organizations will be receiving the proceeds has the potential to negatively impact consumers' perceptions of these activities. The two other mentions of CRM were less abstract, allowing the reader to more adequately assess the alignment between their values and the values of the brand. For example, Freja Beha Erichsen "earmarked 10 percent of sales for Médecins Sans Frontières" as part of her collaboration with Mother jeans (Adams, 2013 July) and Panda, a sunglass brand, has a "buy-one/give-one line that provides prescription lenses to people in need" (Talbot, 2013 June).

Panda's CRM scheme is still abstract in that it is unclear as to who is included in the "people in need" category. However, this may not be an issue since the buy-one/give-one model has moved into the popular consciousness due to brands like TOM's Shoes and Warby Parker implementing similar systems (Marquis & Park, 2014). Unfortunately, the benefits of these types of schemes for both the company and the communities it claims to assist are now being called into question (Bansal S. , 2012; Marquis & Park, 2014; Rothstein, 2014). The 'buy-one give-one' CRM model needs to be more closely analyzed by scholars to help clarify the benefits and pitfalls associated with the approach.

Designers revealed points of social contention in the sustainable fashion discourse when they challenged un-named oppositional perspectives and engaged potential critiques by stating what the sustainable fashion ideology is 'not'. This

rhetorical tactic is known as “Ideological Squaring” (van Dijk, 2011, p. 397). Ideological squaring was found throughout the text and the following represents a cross section: “it’s not a trend but a way of life” (Kane, April 2009), “doing the responsible thing doesn’t mean you have to sacrifice good taste” (Kane, 2009 September), and “this isn’t charity; it’s a sustainable business collaboration” (Talbot, 2013 March). In each instance the speaker is challenging an invisible ideological opponent indicating longevity, desirability, and motivation for action are imagined points of contention potentially hindering wider acceptance of sustainable fashion practices and products.

Modality. The modality, or commitment of the speakers to the sustainable fashion ideology, was expressed in a variety of ways. The magazine and the quoted speakers engaged in both high and low modality. Generally speaking, those who are more assured of their position and their ability to influence will speak with higher modality (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 190). Though the magazine and the designers have shown a commitment to being more sustainable simply by engaging the discourse, the contentious nature of the subject matter leads to hedging and reduction of certainty in language. However, language that employs lower modality potentially seems more sincere (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 188).

Vogue occasionally exhibited lowered modality in phrasing like “you could safely say fashion has joined that fight [for more sustainability], too” (Kane, 2009 April, p. 136) and when it noted Jenny Hwa’s bikini “argues a strong case for sustainable swimwear” (Herman, 2009 June, p. 68). Rather than simply state the fashion industry has committed to the sustainable fashion mission or more firmly assert the desirability of

sustainable swimwear, *Vogue* hedges these claims to reduce their impact. Additionally they hedged their appraisal of the fast-fashion system and H&M's role in it by stating, "fast fashion sometimes goes hand in hand with high wardrobe turnover" (Talbot, 2013 April, p. 204). By including "sometimes" the statement is less of an accusation, which could alienate not only readers who participate in the fast fashion system but *Vogue* advertisers, as well.

The editorials, however, became more assertive with less hedging and more outright support of the movement over time. This was particularly true when it came to some of the challenges facing the entire fashion industry, not just sustainable fashion. *Vogue* stated, with high modality, "Manhattan's garment district is in jeopardy as more designers produce their collections overseas" (Holt, 2012 March, p. 428). The problem and the cause are laid out with clarity indicating *Vogue's* interest in and perspective regarding the subject. *Vogue* also made high modality remarks concerning climate change stating, "in an age of rising sea levels and diminishing shorelines, it's time to think twice about leaving carbon footprints in the sand" (Talbot, 2013 June, p. 116).

Designers and brand spokespeople also exhibited periods of high and low modality. However, unlike *Vogue*, these social actors' statements read as indications of commitment to the ideologies behind their actions. For example, Stewart+Brown, a knitwear company, stated with relatively low modality, "We try to conserve on a daily basis and use our head about where everything we use came from and where it goes" (Singer, 2009 November, p. 144). Lily Cole, as representative of North Circular, stated, "We want to promote the idea that ethical, capitalist business models can make

beautiful clothes” (Kane, 2010 September, p. 528). Oscar de la Renta’s commitment to the mission of sustainability was also of a lower modality. He stated, “I’ve made thousands of wedding dresses but never one quite like this...I hope to make several more like it” (Talbot, 2011 September, p. 584). Though the goals of the designer and brand representatives are expressed as hopes without measurable returns rather than assertions, they align the brand with a particular business ethic to which the consumer can relate.

Some designer convictions were conveyed with higher modality such as Hassan Pierre’s declaration that “[a]ll clothing should be sustainable and organic...it really has to be the entire process...beyond it just being organic. And it’s more important now than ever” (Kane, 2010 May, p. 150). His call to action reached beyond the limits of his label and was a rarity in the discourse for its frank assertion of what was needed in the industry. *Vogue* noted Erdem’s naïveté by including the quote “I was fascinated to discover many of the mills I’ve worked with for years already supply sustainable fabrics” (Bahrenburg, 2013 October, p. 260). This quote suggested one of the main issues facing sustainable fashion is the lack of knowledge by those in a position to have influence, such as designers. It also illustrated the ability of the industry to adapt when given the proper information.

Transitivity. The objects and brands included in “Style Ethics” were given additional eco/ethical credibility through the ethical and eco activities of social actors associated with the products. The transitivity of the social actors aligned the objects

with a way of life, offering context for the social life of the goods. Celebrities, socialites, and models were the main social actors used for these purposes.

Celebrities and models with known eco/ethical principles were utilized in the construction of the object's identity and meaning creation. In twenty of the editorials, the ideologies of the celebrity/model/socialite that modeled the object were made apparent in either the body of the article or in the product caption. In eight instances the person modeling the object was not discussed in the main editorial, thus the caption served as justification for the connection between the sustainable good and the person modeling. Barthes described the connection between caption and image as "parasitic" (Barthes, 1977, p. 25). "[I]t is not the image which comes to elucidate or 'realize' the text, but the latter which comes to sublimate, patheticize or rationalize the image" (p. 25). For example, it is within the caption that the reader learns of Cameron Diaz's involvement with Al Gore's campaign against global warming (Kane, 2009 April), Gisele Bündchen's blog on socio-environmental causes (Herman, 2009 June) and fashion models with eco and ethical ethos (Herman, 2009 March; Kane, 2009 May; Talbot, 2011 May; Talbot, 2012 October). Their social actions justified their inclusion in the text and images.

In twelve of the editorials, the ideologies of the celebrity/socialite/model were fully integrated into the text. The actress Eva Mendes, "a huge fan of Stella [McCartney's] clothing" that she was modeling, further aligned with the environmental lifestyle by describing her new car; "a 1984 Mercedes station wagon converted to run on vegetable oil" (Kane, 2009 September, p. 400). Alicia Silverstone, pronounced the

“celebrity authority on the vegan lifestyle” is the central feature of the April 2011 editorial (Lennon, p. 216). Her lifestyle choices and career comeback overshadow the one-sentence mention of the brand she is modeling. These editorials thus become as much about describing ways to be “green” as they are about the individual objects included.

Eight of the editorials highlighted social actors (celebrities/socialites/models) directly engaged in the production of the object. In these cases, the direct association of a known individual that has credibility as a tastemaker further highlights the object. Emma Watson’s collaboration with Alberta Ferretti is a great example. The reader is first reminded of Watson’s status within the movie industry as the magazine notes her move from film to high fashion. Her alignment with the sustainable fashion mission is made plain when she states, “I’m happy to encourage anyone interested in making conscientious clothing from raw, sustainable materials, so much so that I’ll work for free” (Talbot, 2011 March, p. 414). Her role in the “work” of creating the organic line is described with the ambiguous phrase “teaming up with the designer Alberta Ferretti to launch Pure Threads” (p. 414). She is portrayed as an active force, even if it is just serving as muse and spokesperson. Pharrell Williams, music producer and mogul, has a less ambiguous role in the fate of Bionic Yarns (Talbot, December 2012, p. 230). Through investment, he backs the company that produces fabrics from recycled plastic bottles. He also plans to expand the company into new product categories. Model Freja Beha Erichsen was one of the most active of the social actors highlighted (Adams, 2013 July, p. 68). Her name appears in the brand collaboration Freja+Mother. She is described as a

co-designer making her role less ambiguous. Her ideology is also actively spread when she “coaxed [fellow models] Arizona Muse, Abbey Lee Kershaw, and Sasha Pivovarova into joining her in donating a day’s salary from their work during October 2011 Fashion Week” (p. 68).

In thirteen of the editorials, the celebrity/socialite/model’s actions were minimal but their presence was still beneficial to the object. They could simply “wear” the object as was the case with actress Sienna Miller (2009 December), model Jessica Stam (2010 April), and model Joan Smalls (2013 April). In the most passive examples, the object was simply “on” an actress like Charlize Theron (2009 October) or Blake Lively (2010 August). In these cases, the social actor’s alignment with the ideologies of sustainability was irrelevant as was the justification of their selection as participant. Though these social actors are relatively passive, their notability and celebrity status lent credibility to the objects presented. It also coincides with the trend of the magazine as a whole, which has increasingly relied on celebrity to sell and promote product (Gibson, 2012, pp. 127-131).

Getting the feel for sustainable fashion

Vogue’s tone was authoritative in most instances, similar to what König found in her analysis of general fashion writing in British *Vogue* (2006). The magazine could make grand statements like the goods were “living proof that our planet need not suffer for fashion” (Herman, 2009 March, p. 326) or assert that Loyale’s swimsuit had “a lot of consciousness for just \$120” (Herman, 2009 June, p. 68). Commandments, however, were not very common. Two of the ‘commandments’ were more lighthearted proverbs

than authoritarian directives such as “[r]emember the four Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle, and Raeburn” (Kane, 2010 August, p. 118) and “[p]atience, remember, is a virtue” (Herman, July 2009, p. 44). Both instances invite the reader to adopt the ideologies of sustainable, slow fashion but do not pressure the reader to do so. Other directives—like the one set down after a description of several objects that would help a beach trip be a sustainable outing to “grab a straw hat, a good book, and some sunscreen—and relax” (Talbot, 2013 June, p. 116)—expressed *Vogue’s* authority. These commands are innocuous, however, in their potential ability to impact the behavior of the reader.

Vogue’s use of scientific and technical language in the discourse was an opportunity for the author to further establish authority by demonstrating specialist knowledge in the field. This language was most frequently used when describing production processes. Rather than describe a Suno dress as simply tie-dyed, it was “Shibori-inspired tie-dye” (Kane, 2010 April, p. 170) and H&M’s eco-conscious evening dress was made from a “bone-corseted verdigris tulle” (Talbot, 2013 April). The Freja+Mother faux-leather jean utilized “a convincing polyurethane stand-in” and “eco-sensitive fabric that, unlike leather, doesn’t require chemically laded production processes and, unlike PVC will eventually biodegrade” (Adams, 2013 June, p. 68). *Vogue* was even able to integrate the discourse on sustainable technology for the home by setting the scene of one of their editorials in the yard of a “photovoltaic, high-performance, low-energy town house” (Adams, 2013 August, p. 118). They also emphasized their insider status by using and translating foreign words like *bantu* “mean[ing] ‘gateway’ in Senegal’s native language” (Talbot, 2011 May, p. 180) or

intrecciato, Bottega Veneta's method of weaving strips of leather to form their handbags (Talbot, 2012 October, p. 264).

The tone of the editorials established *Vogue's* authority on the subject of more sustainable fashion. By maintaining an optimistic tone, the products and processes presented in the editorials were constructed as genuine alternatives to mainstream fashion. The magazine tempered the self-righteousness of the message by avoiding the didactic language commonly found in other areas of the magazine such as "Ten Commandments for Fall" ("Point of View", 2003 September, p. 597) or referring to the products as 'must haves'. Overall, the message from the editorials was one of optimism. Sustainability was presented as a problem that the correct mentality, a little knowledge, and the right product could, if not solve, at least alleviate. Since the text rarely acknowledged the reasons sustainability was needed in the fashion industry, the products were not politicized. In all, the editorials upheld the findings of McRobbie (1998) and König (2006) that fashion journalism rarely chooses to criticize the industry it represents.

How to be a better consumer

When considered collectively, the "Style Ethics" editorials represented a moderate to weaker sustainability model. While the designers and brand representatives largely promoted a respectful human/nature and human/human interaction, embodying a "tread lightly" type of mentality, the emphasis was still on consuming better, not consuming less. Since the products are presented as "less bad" than other options on the market (i.e. less waste in production, less environmental

impact due to dying, better labor practices, higher social impact through charity), a consumer's guilt is assuaged while still allowing them to participate in the important task of consumption.

Visual representation

The photographic conventions for the "Style Ethics" editorials were largely homogenous. The conventions set the editorials apart from the other segments in the magazine. Each of the editorials occupied an entire page of the magazine within the "View" magazine sub-section. The editorials in the "View" section tend to be longer editorials—two to three pages—highlighting brands, trends, or designers. By comparison, "Flash", the sub-section that precedes "View", is image-laden and contains shorter 'newsflash' style prose, often with more than one story on a page.

The design and layout of the editorial evolved over the first year and a half, but by mid-2011 it reached the standardized format that carries through today. The first few editorials had additional subtitles, but this was abandoned after the initial three months, as "Style Ethics" became a recognizable heading on its own. It no longer required the superfluous qualifiers alluding to a sustainable fashion focus such as "Gatsby goes organic" (Herman, 2009 March, p. 326), "Pure Magic" (Kane, 2009 April, p. 136), or "Clear Skies" (Kane, 2009 May, p. 130).

The graphic design of the editorials also went through stylistic changes. In 2009, the "Style Ethics" title was in white font on a green banner closely situated to the

model's face.² Starting in 2010 the font was streamlined, made larger and green. Green colored font was commonly used in other sections of *Vogue* to denote eco/ethical/sustainable editorial subjects. As Style Ethics became its own 'brand', it also abandoned the color green in its font design. The magazine used red for the "Style Ethics" font twice (Holgate, 2009 October; Talbot, 2013 March). In September 2011, the font had changed yet again to a bolder, black font that the editorials currently maintain.

Denotation. The imagery was largely used to illustrate the text. All of the editorials present either the specific product mentioned in the text or an object selected to exemplify the brand/designer discussed. Every editorial but one encompassed the entire page. The only exception is the profile of Lauren Bush's Atelier that shares the page with designer John Patrick's "five latest eco favorites" (Patrick, 2010, p. 370). This potentially influences the visibility of the discourse for the reader.

In thirty of the thirty-seven editorials (81%), there was a single model. All but one of these individuals—Pharrell Williams (2012 December)—was female. Four of the editorials (11%) had two or more models. Emma Watson is photographed alone but a 19070s photograph of her "style icon", Jane Birkin, is inset just to the left of her face (2011 March). Oscar de la Renta's organic wedding dress was featured on a model holding the hand of another female model with a wedding ring, suggesting a gay union (2011 September). The editorial profiling the Soccket soccer ball that stores kinetic energy was illustrated with an image of model Karolina Kurkova, her husband, and their son. Kurkova's son sits atop his father's shoulders while throwing the ball towards the

² In this section the social actors in the images will be collectively referred to as "models" though some of the 'models' are in fact actresses, socialites, or other forms of celebrity.

reader (2013 August). Lastly, the February 2013 editorial features model Kasia Struss and a male model lounging in a bed made up with the sheets discussed in the editorial. Three editorial images (8%) are product shots without models, though the objects were artfully arranged.

Twenty-one (57%) of the editorials have a neutral backdrop that implies a studio setting. There were sixteen (43%) non-studio photographs. Eleven were photographed in an outdoor setting—two with a distinctly urban backdrop and nine with a ‘nature’ setting such as the beach, a pond, or a grass field. The remaining four are indoor photographs with a less ambiguous background than the studio images. Three are in specific locations—“the royal suite at the Ritz London” (2013 October), “the ‘Big Bambú’ installation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art” (2010 October), and “the Surrey Hotel, NYC” (2010 March). The February 2013 editorial was shot in a studio but the models were in a bed, providing more contextual elements to the image.

An informal content analysis revealed 74% of the models were photographed in minimal, neutral make-up and 82% were photographed with loose, wavy, unstructured hair. Fifty-four percent of the objects featured had a color palette classified as neutral, cool, or muted. Three of the garments were made from tie-dyed fabric, five utilized flowers or inspiration from nature for the print, and six used a print originating from a non-Western culture (e.g. African wax prints, Indian hand-blocked prints) representing 77% of the bold, warm-toned garments. Sixty-one percent of the models were photographed without jewelry or additional accessories. Of the jewelry and accessories included 54% were an eco-friendly or ethical brand, which was determined by

researching the jewelry brands outlined in the caption. The majority of the models (60%) were photographed against a white, grey, or tan backdrop. Thirty percent had a backdrop that was predominately blue or green, with much of the green provided by foliage or trees and the blue by sky or water.

Conventions. “Style Ethics” images evolved in their construction. Four different conventions emerged: portraiture, candid, still life, and street fashion. Some of the images were difficult to place in just one category. For example, actress Jessica Alba, photographed in one of Natalie Chanin’s dresses (Herman, 2009 July), was captured mid-motion, more like an impromptu snapshot than a posed, pre-meditated moment. The image was classified as portraiture because dominant elements like the studio background, lighting, and eye contact seemed more relevant than the model’s lack of stillness. Likewise, the photograph of actress Stacy Martin in the Royal Suite at the Ritz Carlton wearing Erdem’s eco-conscious evening dress (Bahrenburg, 2013 October, p. 260) was classified as ‘Street Style’ because the lighting combined with the ensemble/setting pairing captured a more ‘natural’ moment than a portrait. Each convention is described below with pictorial examples provided where possible. Table 5-2 offers an overview of the pictorial data. The table also includes the photographer attributed to the image. There are twenty-one different photographers constructing these four conventions. This suggests that these conventions were dictated independent of a photographer’s personal style.

Table 5-2
 Overview of "Style Ethics" Pictorial Data Coding

Convention									
Table 5-2 Overview of "Style Ethics" Pictorial Data Coding									
Editorial	Style*	Photographer	No. of models	Frame	Gaze	POV	Setting**	Modality	Transitivity***
Mar 2009	P	D. Jackson	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Apr 2009	P	D. Jackson	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
May 2009	P	H. Walsh	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
June 2009	C	N.J. Roy	1	¾	Profile	Low	S	Low	P
July 2009	P	N.J. Roy	1	¾	Front	Low	S	Low	A
Sep 2009	P	N.J. Roy	1	¾	Front	High	S	Low	P
Oct 2009	P	M. Testino	1	½	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Nov 2009	P	M. Testino	1	½	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Dec 2009	P	C. McDean	1	¾	Front	Eye	O	Med	P
Mar 2010	P	N.J. Roy	1	¾	Front	Eye	I	High	P
Apr 2010	P	N.J. Roy	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
May 2010	P	A. Elgort	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Jun 2010	SS	P. Demarchelier	1	Full	Front	Low	O	High	A
Aug 2010	P	M. Testino	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Sep 2010	P	S. Kim	1	½	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Oct 2010	P	A. Elgort	1	Full	Front	Low	I	Med	P
Mar 2011	P	J. Sutton	2	½; Full	Front	Eye/Low	S/O	Low	P
Apr 2011	C	N.J. Roy	1	Full	Profile	Eye	O	High	P
May 2011	C	D. Jackson	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	A

*Style Key: P=Portraiture; C=Candid; SL=Still Life; SS=Street Style

**Setting Key: S=Studio; I=Indoor; O=Outdoor

***Transitivity Key: P=Passive; A=Active

Table 5-2 Cont.

Overview of "Style Ethics" Pictorial Data Coding

Editorial	Style*	Photographer	No. of models	Convention				Modality	Transitivity***
				Frame	Gaze	POV	Setting**		
Jun 2011	P	A. Pennetta	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Sep 2011	P/SL	K. Sadli; T. Hout	2	¾; N/A	Front; N/A	Eye; N/A	O; N/A	Med	A
Oct 2011	P	L. Bailey	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Mar 2012	P	A. Sjödin	1	Full	Front	Low	S	Low	P
Jul 2012	P	C. Buchet	1	¾	Front	High	O	High	P
Sep 2012	P	C. Buchet	1	Full	Front	Eye	O	High	P
Oct 2012	P	B. Hassett	1	¾	Front	Low	S	Low	P
Nov 2012	SL	C. Pitman	0	Full	N/A	High	I	High	P
Dec 2012	P	B. Jonasson	1	Full	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Feb 2013	C	L. Bailey	2	¾	Profile	High	I	High	A
Mar 2013	P	S. Kim	1	¾	Front	Eye	S	Low	P
Apr 2013	C	P. Demarchelier	1	¾	Profile	High	S	Low	P
May 2013	SL	M. Spiegelman	0	Full	N/A	Eye	O	Med	P
Jun 2013	SL	E. Boman	0	Wide	N/A	High	O	High	P
Jul 2013	SS	L. Bailey	1	Full	Front	Eye	O	High	A
Aug 2013	P	J. Schmidt	3	Wide	Front	Eye	O	High	A
Sep 2013	SS	L. Bailey	1	Full	Front	Eye	O	High	A
Oct 2013	SS	A. Pennetta	1	¾	Front	Eye	I	High	P

*Style Key: P=Portraiture; C=Candid; SL=Still Life; SS=Street Style

**Setting Key: S=Studio; I=Indoor; O=Outdoor

***Transitivity Key: P=Passive; A=Active

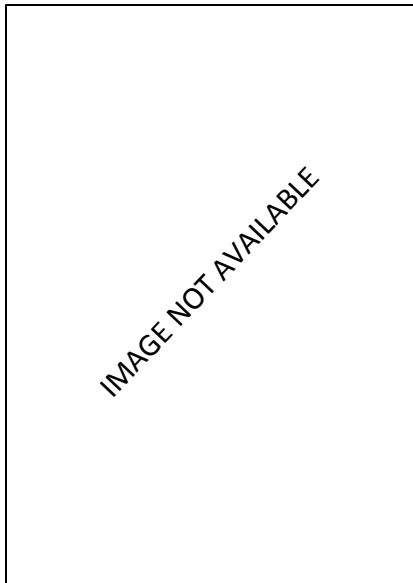


Figure 5.2 Debut “Style Ethics” editorial. Reprinted from *Vogue* (p. 326), photography by Daniel Jackson, author: Jane Herman, March 2009.

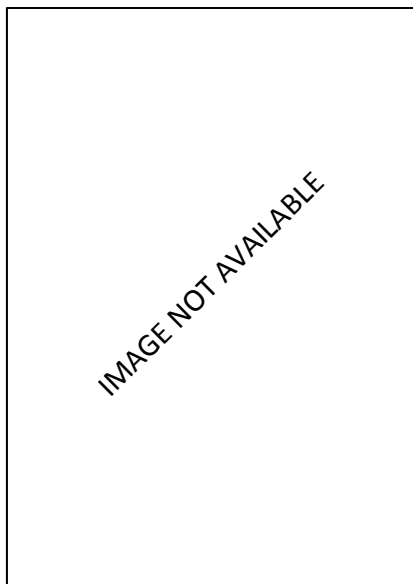


Figure 5.3 Oscar de la Renta’s eco wedding dress. Reprinted from *Vogue* (p. 584), photography by Karim Sadli and Tim Hout, author: Lindsay Talbot, September 2011.

Twenty-five (68%) of the images accompanying the editorials were coded as portraiture (See Fig. 5.2 and Fig. 5.3). The conventions of portraiture are best described by Richard Brilliant, who explained, “[m]ost portraits exhibit a formal stillness, a heightened degree of self-composure that responds to the formality of the portrait-making situation” (Brilliant, 1991, p. 10). Though the Style Ethics images did not always exhibit formality, the models were posed, engaged the reader via direct eye contact with the camera, and little movement was conveyed. The lighting was soft and often from the side, imitating natural sunlight coming through a window. All of the models were photographed in three-quarter length or less. The closeness of a photograph influences the closeness the viewer feels with the subject. “People shown in a ‘long shot’, from far away are shown as if they are strangers; people shown in a ‘close-up’ are shown as if they are ‘one of us’” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 138). This element is important for a fashion magazine that needs to convince readers that the looks and

models presented are accessible both physically and ideologically. Of course, it is also important in terms of displaying the detail of an object.

All photographs present a point of view that situates the viewer in relation to the subject. The compelling feature of portraiture is their forward-facing stance and eye contact with the viewer. “It asks something of the viewer in an imaginary relationship, so they feel that their presences is acknowledged and, just as when someone addresses us in social interaction, some kind of response is required” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 71). The gaze outward is more open and inviting than when the subject’s focus is off-frame. Machin and Thornborrow’s analysis of *Cosmopolitan* found that the photographs that made eye-contact with the reader offered an invitation to be *like* the person in the photo; to do as she does (2003).

The position of the viewer in relation to the sitter indicates the level of power each has over the other (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Kress G. , 2010; van Leeuwen, 2008). While all of the models in the portraits looked outward at the viewer, the angle at which the viewer gazed at them varied slightly. The majority of the portraits (68%) were shot with the model at eye level. Six of the portraits (16%) forced a low-angle interaction with the reader, with the model looking out and down at the viewer. Six portraits (16%) had a high-angle interaction with the viewer looking down on the model. Thus, for the majority of the portrait style images, the model was on equal standing as the viewer, which is more likely to encourage connection between the two. Eye-level contact further emphasizes the invitation to be like the model since the viewer is addressed on equal standing.

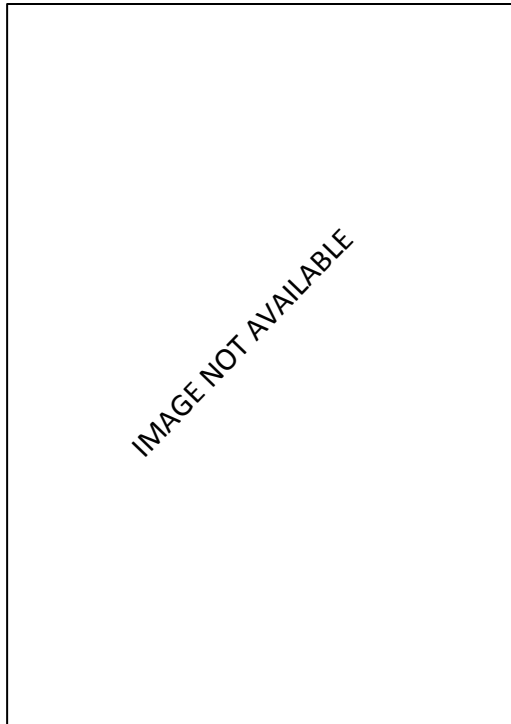


Figure 5.4 Candid Style Ethics editorial.
Reprinted from Vogue (p. 170), photography by
Lachlan Bailey, author: Lindsay Talbot, February
2013.

Five images (13%) were classified as ‘candid’ photographs (see fig. 5.4). They resemble snapshots, capturing private moments of individuals when they are seemingly unaware of the presence of a camera. In this context, however, the model was certainly posed or given direction for mood and aware that a camera was trained on them. The model does not make eye contact with the camera. Their attention is focused somewhere out of frame showing detachment with the viewer. The viewer is looking in on the scene as an outsider. This type of image is referred to as an “offer image” allowing the viewer to scrutinize the image and gain information without interacting with the model (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 124).

Four “Style Ethics” photographs (11%) were classified within ‘street style’ conventions (Fig. 5.5). Street fashion photography is defined as a “head-to-toe documentary portrait of a fashionable individual captured in the street” and is also known as the “straight-up” (Rocamora & O’Neill, 2008, p. 186). These types of images began as a subversive mechanism to challenge the hegemony of fashion photography occurring in studios and on fashion shoots. They typically captured ‘real people’ exhibiting their personal style that may or may not coincide with the fashionable dress of the day. Like most subversive elements, however, it was co-opted by the mainstream media. Notable street style photographers like Tommy Ton and Scott Schuman, for example, have had their work commissioned for major publications and fashion news outlets like *Vogue* and Style.com (Titton, 2013).

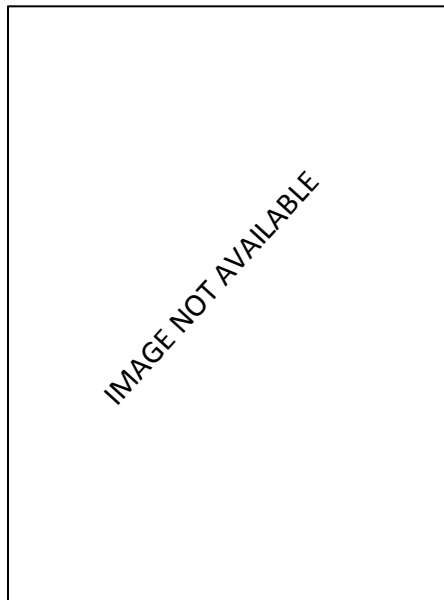


Figure 5.5 Street style Style Ethics editorial. Reprinted from *Vogue* (p. 68), photography by Lachlan Bailey, author: Esther Adams, July 2013.

The street style images are similar to the portraits in that they engage the viewer with eye contact. However, their contextualized background sets them apart. All four photographs were set in an urban setting—three out of doors one indoors at a luxury hotel. They presented themselves as merely capturing the model venturing through life. Two of the photographs captured the model in motion (Kane, 2010 June; Adams, 2013 September) and two were posed (Adams, 2013 July; Bahrenburg, 2013 October). Though some of the portraits were also set in ‘the field’, they were largely situated in places one would not expect to find high fashion. The photograph of Derek Lam’s shearling coat was on a rocky beach (Talbot, 2012 September) and another portrait was set at an animal sanctuary (Lennon, 2011 April). The street style “Style Ethics” photographs borrowed from a popular style well known to consumers of fashion media and inserted the environmental/ethical brands into the scene.

Three of the editorials (8%) were photographed in a convention best described as ‘still life’ (Fig. 5.6). These visuals were entirely product-centered with the objects arranged in an artful vignette. Additionally, one portraiture editorial contained still life photographs to further illustrate the text (Fig. 5.3). The Oscar de la Renta wedding portrait was surrounded by satellite images of environmentally or ethically conscious wedding accouterments including a vegan cake, conflict-free diamond and emerald earrings, and digital invitations (Talbot, 2011 September). The still life images further emphasized the materiality of sustainability and closely resembled the imagery one might find in a catalog. Without a model, the viewer can only engage with the object

and any associations must be found in the text.

Modality of the image. Visual modality refers to how ‘truthful’ the image appears, how much ‘real life’ the image reflects. “Visuals can represent people, places and things as though they are real, as though they actually exist in this way, or as though they do not—as though they are imaginings, fantasies, caricatures, etc.” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 161). Fashion

photography has a wide range of modality. On

the one hand, the objects included in the

magazine can be rendered in high definition to

make the object more real to the reader. On the

other hand, magazines also use a variety of photographic strategies—tricks of lighting, application of make up, and the prodigious use of Photoshop, for example—that push the image beyond reality into the surreal.

There are two types of modality in visual communications: naturalistic and scientific. They both concern the representation of reality but their definition of reality differs. Naturalistic visual reality is defined as “the greater the congruence between what you see of an object in an image and what you can see of it in reality with the naked eye, in a specific situation and from a specific angle, the higher the modality of that image” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 151). In theory, photography is the art form that

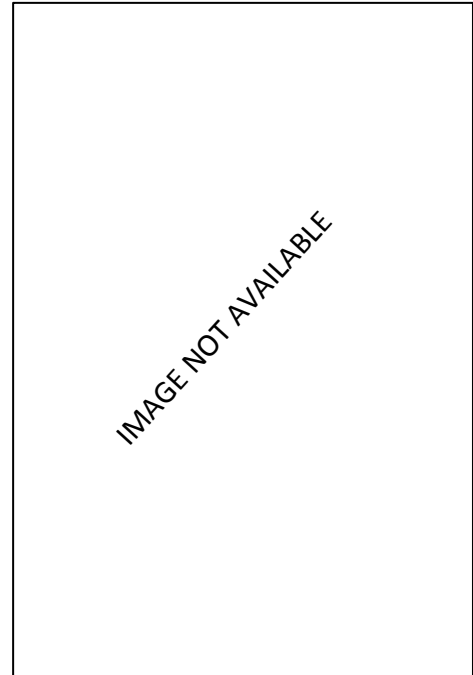


Figure 5.6 Still life Style Ethics editorial. Reprinted from Vogue (p. 200), photography by Matthew Spiegelman, author: Esther Adams, May 2013.

most closely achieves a naturalistic visual reality. Obscuring or removing elements that give the image a sense of place and time can reduce the 'truthfulness' of an image. "The absence of setting lowers modality, moves images away from naturalistic representations to more schematic and idealized, or more abstract representations" (Machin & Thornborrow, 2003, p. 459). Scientific visual reality, on the other hand, seeks the "hidden truth", searching "beyond the surface and abstracts from detail" (p. 151). Charts and graphs that visualize aggregated data are examples of scientific visual reality. The context and specific instances are abstracted to present the 'truth' lying beneath the detail. All of the "Style Ethics" editorials were naturalistic visual realities with varying degrees of modality

Editorial photographs for "Style Ethics" integrated both high and low modality elements into one image. Low modality was expressed in the background since the contextualizing details are largely obscured for the majority of the images. This may reduce the ability of the viewer to envision the object as a relevant addition to their life. The individual modeling the object, on the other hand, lent high modality. This is particularly true for the celebrity models. Their faces were well known through popular culture, so they do not stand in as a 'type' of ethical or ecologically conscious consumer. The celebrity is an individual with a distinct cult of personality that may or may not appeal to the reader. The caption further emphasizes their identity and their *raison d'être*.

For some knowledgeable readers, the fashion models may be recognizable as well. It is *Vogue's* policy to highlight the model's identity through the caption, which

helps faithful readers follow their careers. “Models” is one of the eight topic headings on *Voguepedia* with over sixty-five model biography pages. Of the nineteen fashion models used for the “Style Ethics” visuals, seven of them have an entry on the *Voguepedia* page (Vogue, 2014). In the categories of looks, income, and social position Eva Mendes, Blake Lively, Karolina Kurkova and Joan Smalls are not the average woman. Nor is Pharrell Williams the average man. Thus, these models are not abstracted in a way that allows the reader to easily insert herself (or himself) into the image.

In terms of detail, all of the objects were rendered with high modality. The lighting did not abstract color or texture and details such as seams were still apparent. For example, the Stella McCartney dress photographed on Eva Mendes showed puckering along the stitched hem and Mendes’s pose made the pocket gape open (Kane, 2009 September). Additionally, Aurora Lopez Mejia’s necklaces were presented on a model to show length and styling options while also offering a detailed close-up shot of a particular medallion (Talbot, 2011 June).

Four editorial images had low ideological visual modality, meaning there was dissonance between some of the objects featured in the image and the ideology of “Style Ethics”. In order to create a complete ‘look’ for some of the models, high-fashion garments/accessories were worn by the model and featured in the caption that were not aligned with the ethical or ecological-consciousness of the editorial. Though Pharrell Williams wears a Burton parka made from the Bionic Yarns promoted in the text he also wears a Comme des Garçons sweater, pants and shoes (Talbot, 2012 December). These items were listed along with the Bionic Yarn parka in the caption. It is likely a reader

would blend eco- and ethically-minded products in one ensemble. This tactic, however, might mislead a reader into thinking Comme des Garçons shares the ideology or even uses Bionic Yarn in its production. Similarly, the *wasi* Bottega Veneta handbag was featured with an entire Bottega Veneta ensemble including a cardigan, dress, and jewelry (Talbot, 2012 October). It is unclear whether all the products produced by Bottega Veneta were ecologically minded since the text only discussed the *wasi* bag.

Transitivity. Much like the text, the study of transitivity of visuals focused on the action of the social actors included in the imagery. The editorials portraying one social actor were predominately passive. The models either smiled or at least looked thoughtfully out at the reader. The majority of the models affected informal open poses with hands placed on the hips or in pockets. Models also used their posing to bring attention to the featured product. Model Alex Deng's torso was almost fully obscured by the Gucci organic cotton and bamboo handbag she held under her arm (Talbot, 2011 October). Movement was conveyed in the portraits via strands of hair blowing out of place or fabric rippling in the (manufactured) breeze.

In the case of multiple models, the action was still largely directed towards the reader as in the case of the Soccer ball launching outwards (Adams, 2013 August). The social action that was most intriguing, however, was found in the editorial featuring Oscar de la Renta's organic wedding dress (fig. 5.3). The images surrounding the portrait are all traditional wedding accouterments except that they are ecologically or ethically minded. The bride, however, was not pictured with a traditional groom. Two female models standing one in front of the other clasp hands, one in the organic Oscar de la

Renta dress and one in a white organic cotton button down shirt. The woman in back wears a prominent ring on her left ring finger. The image appears to be a wedding between two women. The caption title further emphasizes the break with tradition by simply stating “Modern Times” (Talbot, 2011 September). The action subtly conveys the relation between the two models.

Particular attention was also paid to which social actors were presented in imagery. This allowed a comparison as to which social actors were more or less worthy for inclusion in text versus image. While the editorials emphasized the social actions of designers, they were largely absent from the visual representations. Seven of the visuals featured either the designer or the celebrity/model collaborator in the photograph. Designer Lauren Bush served as the model for her Lauren Pierce Atelier dress (Kane, 2010 March) while Emma Watson modeled her “favorite look” from her collaborative effort for Alberta Ferretti’s Pure Threads line (Talbot, 2011 March, p. 414).

None of the visuals connected the reader to the production process aside from illustrating the end result. Likewise, none of the artisans or craft workers emphasized in the text were pictured. The most obvious exclusion was found in the still life visuals. While social actors associated with the production of these objects were discussed in the text, they were completely excluded from the visual representation.

The inclusion of celebrities and models and the exclusion of designers and producers from the visual representation of fashion is not necessarily a revolutionary finding. However, sustainable and slow fashion encourages a closer link between the

producer and the consumer. Excluding producers from the visual representation did not encourage this link to grow stronger.

Iconography and stereotypes. The connotation of the images was explored through iconography and stereotypes. “The naturalistic image states *what is*. The humanistic photographs states *what could or should be* [original italics]” (Jay, 1978, p. 649). Individually, the visuality of “Style Ethics” editorials more closely aligned with naturalism. The detail is clearly wrought and enough information was provided in the adjoining caption to assess the contents accurately. However, when viewed as a collection of images they moved into the realm of humanistic photography. It is irrelevant whether the reader could acquire any one particular item on display. In the case of the Soccer soccer ball that could be used to power a small lamp after play (Adams, 2013 August, p. 118), the item was only available for a limited time through its Kick starter campaign as the company raised funds for operation (Uncharted Play, Inc., 2013).

Both the goods and the people modeling them were representatives of an ideal. They demonstrated what was possible within the realm of sustainable thought and action. However, that meant they were also setting the discursive limits of possible thought and action. In some cases, what was represented was limited through stereotypes like ethnic prints, minimalist make-up, nature-inspired color ways or prints, and tie-dye; essentially the tropes that originated in the 1970s with the hippie/’go natural’ movement (Welters, 2008).

There were also images, however, that broke through those stereotypes and extended the limits of what could visually be classified as 'sustainable fashion'. The 'street style' images were the most successful at bridging the gap between mainstream and sustainable fashion. Erdem's eveningwear, Freja+Mother's faux-leather jeans, and Maiyet's ensemble in motion existed between these two worlds. This was due in large part to the contextualization of the model by placing her in a space with higher modality rather than isolating her in the studio. Moreover, her setting was not riddled with clichés such as the grass field used for Oscar de la Renta's wedding dress (2011 September) or the bamboo scaffolding behind Costello Tagliapietra's dress (2010 October). The style of image connected the object and wearer to a growing trend of communication in fashion media while the text and caption grounded the practice and material in the sustainable fashion discourse.

It was notable that the most successful images that bridged the gap between sustainable fashion and mainstream fashion were the more recent images. As "Style Ethics" and the sustainable fashion movement became more established, the focus shifted from showing how the objects and social actors were different to showing how they were the same. From the evolution of the typeface and graphic design to the changing conventions of the photograph, the editorials become more approachable, less stigmatized, and less alienated from the other segments in the magazine.

Who is buying sustainable fashion?

The "Style Ethics" editorials were also analyzed for their intertextual elements and cultural references. Through text and image, the editorials built identities not only

for the objects presented but for the potential consumer, as well. This was accomplished through the various discursive practices outlined above but also by connecting the discourse of the objects to external socio-cultural discourses.

First, the editorials assumed a certain level of awareness by its reader concerning the jargon associated with the eco and ethical practices, qualities, and behaviors. Words such as ‘organic’, ‘humane’, ‘ethical’, ‘eco’, ‘fair trade’ and ‘sustainable’ were used prodigiously but never directly defined. They were frequently part of the overlexicalization of the object, one amongst several descriptors for the product or process in question. Two of the editorials mentioned ‘certification’ as in “certified artisanal miners in Peru who offer a completely transparent manufacturing process” (Talbot, 2011 June, p. 108) and “environmentally friendly Oeko-Tex certified silk and Newlife yarns” (Bahrenburg, 2013 October, p. 260), However, neither the certifying bodies nor the benefits of certification were ever discussed. By including them under the banner of “Style Ethics”, all of the objects were placed on the same level of sustainability. *Vogue’s* consistent use of language across products and processes, presents all of the “Style Ethics” products and processes as equal. While undoubtedly some of these goods are more sustainable than others—Alabama Chanin’s dress versus Gucci’s one-off bamboo handled bag, for example—there is no way to distinguish the differences due to uniformity of message and consistent modes of delivery.

The editorials constructed a narrow definition of the potential consumer of the goods featured through allusions to psychographic qualifications. Phrases like, “If you are already cycling from A to B” (Adams, May 2013, p. 200), “[Burton’s Bionic Yarn

parka] makes an excellent eco-holiday gift for adventure seeking beaus and brothers” (Talbot, 2012 December), and “[H&M’s Conscious Exclusive collection] is an elegant array of options for, say, Natalie Portman or Michelle Williams—and for smart shoppers on a budget” (Talbot, 2013 April, p. 204) did little to expand the consumer base beyond those who might already be engaged in lifestyles aligned with the ideologies behind the product.

The visuals that corresponded with the editorials potentially limited the reach of sustainable fashion. First, the visuals limited potential acceptance by consumers through association with stereotypical imagery like, ‘natural’ beauty, tie-dye, neutral color ways, and non-Western print motifs. These elements became less emphasized as Style Ethics evolved, however, modernizing its look and integrating more with mainstream fashion. Second, the editorials largely featured the products void of context. Aside from the association with celebrity, the majority of the objects were not situated in any real-life or even fantastical situations.

These consumer demographic/psychographic limits were restricted further through the publishing of reader’s letter written in response to the editorials. Four such letters were collected for analysis via the same digital *Vogue* archive search used to collect the editorials. All four reinforce the connection between the goods and a particular lifestyle already engaged by the consumer. One reader wrote “I’m a vegan, so I was delighted to see vegan sandals in ‘Style Ethics’. They are super-cute and, most important, ethical. I hope you’ll include more leather-, fur-, and wool-free fashions in VOGUE” (“Talking Back”, 2010 September, p. 316). Along the same lines, a reader

praised *Vogue* for their inclusion of more vegan options in the October 2012 issue writing, “thank you so much for reminding readers that luxurious animal-friendly options are getting easier and easier to find” (“Talking Back”, 2013 January, p. 30). The ‘vegan’ lifestyle is a controversial one. The researchers Cole and Morgan (2011) discovered that both academic and public vegan discourse tends to present the lifestyle as deviant from the norm, with many instances of the media presenting it as a fad or subject to ridicule. While *Vogue* does not in any way ridicule the vegan lifestyle, the prevalence of letters from vegans or those interested in animal rights binds sustainability to a sub-cultural trope as opposed to demonstrating its wide-spread appeal.

In November 2012, the limits regarding participation in a sustainable lifestyle by purchasing sustainable objects were at their strictest when farm-to-table chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten assured the reader that it was entirely possible to do a completely organic and local feast for Thanksgiving. He states, “This is how I do Thanksgiving at my *weekend house* in Waccabue, New York [emphasis added]” adding, “and not too far from how the Pilgrims would have done it, too” (Talbot, 2012 November, p. 186). A reader who responded to the magazine in February 2013 stated she, too, embraced the same ethic for her Thanksgiving feast and applauded his advice:

To be truly sustainable and green, my family enjoys a vegan Thanksgiving, complete with carrot-ginger soup, seitan roulade with oyster-mushroom dressing, heaps of mashed potatoes, and pumpkin ‘cheesecake.’ Being able to stuff ourselves without contributing to climate change, cruelty to animals, or our cholesterol levels is truly something to be thankful for! (“Talking Back”, 2013 February, p. 96).

This promotion of a lifestyle only attainable by those with very specific tastes and financial ability mirrors what Angela McRobbie lamented as the “willful avoidance of the question of poverty and hardship” when promoting a culture of consumption (McRobbie, 1997, p. 73). McRobbie explained that as historians explored the rising call to women to be consumers in the 20th-century, they did not fully address the fact that the call did not go out to all women equally. White, middle-class women were given preference (p. 74). It appeared that the “Style Ethics” editorials are limiting in the same way. Not all women, or even all *Vogue* readers, were invited to participate equally. Rather, the editorials attempt to appeal to a particular consumer or vaguely show that *something* was done to address the industry’s social and environmental impact.

Commoditizing sustainable goods

Schirato and Webb (2004) built on the philosophies of Adorno, Benjamin, and Baudriallard and argued that the commoditizing of material culture has reduced the importance of where and by whom an object was made. This means it is near impossible for the commoditized object to provide “an insight into, and a critique of, culture and society...since the link between what the work is and where it came from is now effectively severed” (p. 156). However, sustainable fashion demands a reinstatement of these links. One cannot assess the sustainability of an object without provenance. Style Ethics offered a site for discursive practices that may not have been possible in other sections of the magazine. To be included in the Style Ethics sections, an object’s makers must have maintained the connection between material, process, production and presentation. This created a narrative that placed the object within a realm of

desirability for a particular consumer. Consequently, it is a tautology: the product is sustainable because it is associated with individuals who seek sustainable products.

Furthermore, isolation of the objects was documented in both text and image. Sustainable fashion goods were effectively reified through this process. Reification, a theory attributed to Lukács, is grounded in and expands upon Marxist theory on the centrality of the commodity in capitalist economies (Woodward, 2007). Lukács argued that objects are presented as embodiments of their production processes but they have “phantom objectivity” (Lukács, 1971, p. 83). “By posing deceptively as a prop on the stage where social activity is enacted, its everyday or ‘use value’ masks a menacing ideological content” (Woodward, 2007, p. 39). The sustainable goods presented in *Vogue* production processes are actually less ideologically contentious than other fashion objects presented. However, through *Vogue*’s inoculation of fashionable properties and reification processes sustainable fashion becomes just another commodity, limiting the possibility of any real social change.

This study revealed an evolution in the tactics used to sell the ideology of environmentally and ethically conscious fashion. Celebrity endorsement of the sustainable ideology was important in the first few years of Style Ethics. Not only were they used as models, their credentials as sustainability-minded individuals were highlighted in both the captions and in the text. Celebrity lent credibility to an array of products produced by lesser-known brands.

During the years 2010 through 2012 it was more common to associate the products with a particular lifestyle and ideology. A gay wedding was implied while

vegan/slow-food practices were highlighted in both image and text. The editorials emphasized social impact such as providing jobs in Africa or helping industrialized economies maintain domestic manufacturing.

The object moved into central focus during the later editorials as evidenced by the still life visuals and the decreased use of well-known faces. One-off products like Philip Lim's shearling coat or the limited time collaborations like Freja+Mother opened the discourse on what constituted an eco or ethically minded brand. These limited projects potentially undermined the efforts of brands fully committed to the ethos.

A dissonance was found between the evolution of text and the evolution of the image. While the text maintained the separation between products and individuals and failed to invite a broader consumer base, the images moved goods and social actors into a space recognized as mainstream fashion. This, of course, has both positive and negative implications. While it is beneficial for sustainable products to be viewed as accessible and desirable, it may not be in the best interest of the brand to enter into the cycle of fashion plaguing the industry. It can be argued that if consumers are going to continue their consumption patterns, then at least they can consume better products, be armed with better information, and strive for a more idealized lifestyle. The Style Ethics editorials support such developments. The discourse does not argue for a change in consumption levels, however.

Conclusion

By segregating more sustainable brands and products from other luxury goods in the magazine it implies they are outside the core discourse of the publication. In

actuality, the goods promoted in the Style Ethics sections share many of the same qualities as the luxury goods promoted elsewhere in the magazine such as craftsmanship, rarified materials and desirable brand names (Fionda & Moore, 2009). Segmenting the discourse draws attention to eco- and ethically-minded brands, products, and design projects that may otherwise be lost in the dominant discourse of the magazine. On the other hand, it has the potential of alienating readers who do not identify with the sustainable lifestyle/movement, limiting the number of individuals who consider the products desirable.

Chapter 6 : Conclusions

The diachronic and synchronic analyses conducted in this research explored sustainable fashion product and practice representations in *Vogue*. It also critically examined the discursive practices employed to construct meaning potential for these goods and behaviors. In this concluding chapter the findings will be reviewed in terms of how they answered the research questions posed. Furthermore, major contributions, limitations, recommendations for future research, and researcher reflections are included.

Findings

Defining sustainable fashion. In the years between 1990 and 2013 the lexicon of sustainable fashion in *Vogue* was refined. In many of the editorials, *Vogue's* use of sustainable fashion appellations such as 'eco', 'ethical', 'green', and 'sustainable' were in the form of product descriptors. They were used as mood setters rather than as scientific evidence of a product's environmental or ethical qualities. 'Natural' and 'organic' were employed in the same manner. As *Vogue* shifted from collective reports on several designers and brands participating in a range of sustainability-related activities toward focused, in-depth editorials on one brand or individual, the discourse was grounded in more concrete descriptors (e.g. Oeko-tex certified). By co-opting the preexisting nomenclature of sustainability without formally defining the concepts, *Vogue* was able to appropriate incongruous terminology into the discourse on fashion.

Environmental consciousness, as opposed to social-consciousness, remained central to the definition of sustainable products and practices included in *Vogue*. This is

not surprising considering *Vogue's* inclusion of 'Eco-fashion' in *Voguepedia* while excluding an entry on ethical fashion. However, *Vogue* often conflated environmental and socially responsible practices into the definition of eco-fashion. Thus, there were times the products promoted as eco-fashion were more than just environmentally conscientious.

Association as a discursive practice was central to the meaning construction for sustainable goods. Environmentally and socially conscious goods and practices were given credibility by placing them in close proximity, both physically and ideologically, to principled celebrities/social figures and outdoorsy settings. Likewise, sustainable fashion goods and practices were legitimized as fashionable through association with well-known designers and celebrities with no known connections to the sustainability movement. These practices connected the sustainable fashion goods to the intertextual concepts of 'fashion and celebrity' common in fashion discourse today.

In order to construct the sustainable fashion practice and goods as modern and fashionable, the magazine often defined eco and sustainable fashion by first mentioning and then rejecting stereotypical, outmoded conceptions of what it meant to be environmentally or socially conscientious (i.e. hippie). Ideological squaring was employed to distance the *Vogue*-defined suitable goods from non-luxury permutations. The establishment of "eco-chic" as part of the sustainable fashion lexicon was the ultimate expression of this discursive practice.

Pictorial representations. Both the diachronic and the synchronic analysis revealed that *Vogue* relied heavily on stereotypical imagery to demarcate sections

featuring sustainable goods. Throughout the 1990-2013 discourse-historical analysis, 'natural' settings such as gardens, farms, woods, and indistinguishable greenery backdrops were used to delineate eco-fashion and sustainable fashion editorials and photo-spreads. Models in both the historical analysis and the "Style Ethics" editorials were often styled in minimalist makeup and hair design.

As the discourse moved in an object-centered direction, and as *Vogue* established their "eco-chic" concept, the backdrop was abstracted. This brought focus to the goods and reified them as embodiments of sustainable practice. Only in the most recent issues has *Vogue* started to move away from the stereotypical or decontextualized image. This integration, while beneficial to sustainable fashion's 'fashion' element may undermine its sustainable qualities.

The majority of the images utilized in the construction of *Vogue's* sustainable fashion discourse corroborated with the text. The images illustrated either the objects connection to nature, its association with celebrities or social figures, or its fashionability in terms of aesthetics. There were moments, however, when the image served to undermine the discourse established in the text. There were occasionally disconnects between the text and image in regards to *Vogue's* claims of fashionability and widespread appeal. For example, the use of outmoded stereotypes for the March 1990 editorial and the use of green banners segmenting the sustainable fashion goods from the rest of the magazine conveyed a different message of limited applicability and limited mainstream acceptance.

Vogue's evolution. *Vogue* demonstrated that it was capable of adapting the magazine's discourse to changes in its economic and social context. In the early 1990s it promoted a streamlined, pared-down aesthetic to correspond to the economic and political fall-out from the preceding decade of excess. It did so again following the economic downturn and political turmoil of 2008. However, *Vogue* has yet to embrace the sustainable fashion movement as an industry-wide necessity. Instead, the discourse was dismantled, neutralized and appropriated. It was presented as one option among many.

The lexicon of sustainable fashion evolved over time. It began with inclusion of any product that promoted environmental awareness, whether or not the product was actually produced with environmentally conscious methods. As far as *Vogue* was concerned, nature as inspiration was as legitimate an approach to eco-fashion as the use of organic materials or altering the packaging. Over time, *Vogue* co-opted the language of environmentalism, using organic, natural, and green prodigiously when discussing products or practices that concerned environmental awareness. The incorporation of socially responsible practices such as fair labor and bringing opportunities to impoverished areas was slow but eventually became a recognized aspect of the sustainable fashion discourse. In periods when *Vogue* was not consciously promoting environmentally and sustainably sound consumption practices, it still engaged the slow fashion discourse.

The discourse-historical analysis of the most recent editorials revealed the path *Vogue* took to reconcile sustainable fashion and the economic recovery of the industry.

Since the establishment of the “Style Ethics” editorials in 2009 and the “Social Responsibility” editorials in 2010, the sustainable fashion discourse appeared in thirty-nine of the sixty issues printed between 2009-2013. These editorials confined sustainable fashion and provided it a separate space, isolating it from the rest of the magazine and its discourse of the new.

Vogue’s position of power. As a cultural intermediary, *Vogue* held a privileged position to influence and construct the discourse on sustainable fashion. *Vogue’s* institutional power was most often reflected and reproduced in Wintour’s “Letters” and the POV section. However, when it came to the sustainable fashion discourse, Wintour distanced herself from the conversation and placed the onus on other fashion editors at the magazine.

Vogue fashion editors conveyed their credentials to discuss sustainable lifestyles by engaging directly in sustainable activities then reporting their experiences. Whether eco-touring the globe, visiting an organic farm, learning how to make a dress, or relaying the joys of having pants custom-tailored, the fashion editors built the magazine’s social capital by serving as a conduit of knowledge. Whether the editor personally aligned with the values ingrained in the experience was irrelevant. Hamish Bowles, more often associated with couture than the great outdoors, was the least likely to go dumpster diving for sustenance or participate in a wilderness survival camp added entertainment value. His praxis also drew the line between a fashionable life and a life oriented towards the environment or sustainability.

In the later periods (2006-2013), Tonne Goodman became the main editorial voice constructing sustainable fashion within the magazine. Goodman was one of the few editors whose credentials were established external to her editorial assignments. Her personal ideologies were regularly referenced by Wintour and in the “Contributors” page that introduced the reader to the various fashion editors responsible for the magazine’s content. Her values were the impetus for the photo spreads “Power Players” and “Natural Refinement.” Thus, her association with these editorials and the “Style Ethics” section lent ideological credibility to the content they may have otherwise lacked.

Designers and wealthy, recognizable figures were equally important to the construction of *Vogue*’s conception of sustainable fashion just as they were in the discourse of luxury and the new. The designers offered background and insight into the materials and processes used in production and the socialites/celebrities epitomized the ideal consumer of such goods. *Vogue* deferred to the individuals often, allowing them direct voice through quotation. As social agents external to the institution of *Vogue*, they connected the magazine to the actual practice of sustainable fashion. It was a mutually beneficial relationship. Designers and celebrities were able to espouse their values in a magazine that determined what was fashionable, while the magazine reinforced their social capital by demonstrating connection to these notable individuals.

The reader was treated as a relatively passive receiver of information throughout the twenty-three years analyzed. They were occasionally included in the social action of the magazine’s discourse through pronoun usage such as ‘we’ and ‘you’. The handful of readers’ letters, which responded to *Vogue*’s sustainable fashion discourse, were

exceptions to this passivity. The responses to the “Style Ethics” editorials *Vogue* printed reinforced the limited consumer demographic constructed in the feature. Any negative letters that questioned the environmental or ethical ideologies promoted by *Vogue* were negated with positive letters praising *Vogue* for that same content.

Exploring this power structure revealed the mechanisms *Vogue* used to maintain its authority in a subject ideologically at odds with its core mission. *Vogue’s* social capital remains central to its dominance. When it was lacking the necessary social capital, it sent representatives out to acquire legitimacy and reflected upon it for the reader’s entertainment. However, *Vogue’s* social capital is not merely established by the magazine, it is reinforced by the readership. The power structure of *Vogue* was maintained by all participants.

Discussion

As expected, *Vogue’s* sustainable fashion discourse was firmly rooted in weak approaches to sustainability. However, there were moments in the discourse where potential for change appeared. The implicit, slow fashion editorials offered a stronger argument for changing consumer behavior than the explicit editorials discussed in chapter four and the “Style Ethics” editorials analyzed in chapter five. The combination of the two—emphasis on better products and emphasis on carefully curated wardrobes based on individual tastes as opposed to chasing trends—constructed a balanced (more) sustainable approach to fashion. Unfortunately, sustainability as a whole continued to be undermined by the magazine’s general emphasis on the ‘new’ and maintaining the strength of the fashion industry in solely economic terms.

In the more recent editorials, *Vogue* began merging concepts of sustainability with luxury. Luxury was better suited to the sustainable fashion discourse than the discourse of the “new”. However, the language of luxury had its own issues; namely, that of exclusion. *Vogue* constructed an image of sustainable fashion that portrayed it as being predominately accessible only to the wealthy. The predominance of products and brands featured in *Vogue*’s sustainable fashion discourse were priced in aspirational and above price points. Brands like H&M and Dr. Bronner’s soap were anomalies. *Vogue* did not emphasize many brands that most would deem affordable, or even reasonable in some instances. Again, this is not surprising when considering the context in which the brands were featured. By focusing on higher priced eco and ethical labels like Stella McCartney, Maiyet, Edun and the one-off contributions of well-known designers, it was easier for *Vogue* to connect the sustainable fashion discourse to the discourse on luxury. Furthermore, by remaining focused on higher-end lines, the need to address the ethical implications was lessened. The reader was reminded on more than one occasion that the production practices of luxury designers like Oscar de la Renta were already aligned with the demands of sustainable fashion in terms of ethics. The designer just needed to reimagine the materials they worked with. This frequently meant switching to organic cotton or using a ‘natural’ colored wool.

The majority of labor abuse allegations were directed at lower priced lines, particularly fast-fashion brands. While *Vogue*’s main focus has largely remained on luxury and prestige brands, they have integrated a number of fast fashion brand editorials. This has especially been the case as designers have increasingly used fast

fashion to grow their business. As the worlds of high and fast fashion collide more frequently, *Vogue* may find itself promoting brands that have been accused of ethical misconduct. By ignoring the social impact of fashion outside the realm of designer ateliers, *Vogue* disregards a central tenet of sustainable fashion discourse.

The “green” movement has already encountered criticism in the mass media as it continues to focus on consumption driven practices that require a certain economic standing (i.e. middle-class and above). *The Guardian* noted, “The media's obsession with beauty, wealth and fame blights every issue it touches, but none more so than green politics” (Monbiot, 2007, p. 27). *Vogue*'s complicated relationship with eco-, ethical, and sustainable fashion further illustrates Monbiot's account. This predicament is due to the dissonance between the ideals of the green movement and the ideals of capitalism. In the capitalist system “...our identity is always subject to what we can call an ‘order of lack’—that is, we are called up (interpellated by fields such as the media) as lacking something that will complete us (romance, success, various possessions that function as status symbols), and which capitalism is only too happy to provide—at a price” (Schirato & Webb, 2004, p. 167). Thus, even when what is lacking is sustainability the answer from a capitalist market will always be to buy something.

Vogue expressed awareness, at least in theory, of what could happen to a movement when its lexicon was treated frivolously or as another marketing term. On its *Voguepedia* page under “Eco Fashion” it stated, “In addition to all the by-then-familiar eco jargon (*certified Organic, Fair Trade, sustainable, low-impact, local, ethical, artisanal, and repurposed*) consumers became sadly aware of another term:

greenwashing [italics original]" (Vogue, 2013). *Vogue's* role in consumer awareness and wariness of greenwashing was abstracted. However, the majority of what the magazine presented was a form of greenwashing. The reader was not offered definitions or finite evaluations of the level of sustainability for the featured products and practices. *Vogue* employed terms like green, eco, organic, natural, and ethical indiscriminately. All one could discern from the "Style Ethics" editorials was that there were some products on the market that were less bad than others.

It is necessary to understand not only the limits of discourse within the modern socio-cultural context but also within the limits of the publication in which it was produced. *Vogue* has always been a publication targeted at the wealthy or those aspiring to be so (David, 2006). It would be entirely outside its discursive limits to frame the sustainable fashion movement as something other than a consumption-driven luxury. This does not, however, shield it from criticism.

Contributions

The current project was viewed as a conversation starting point for how sustainable fashion is portrayed in the media. The literature review revealed a serious lack of attention to the subject, which resulted in an incomplete view of the sustainable fashion supply chain. The review of *Vogue's* discourse on sustainable fashion was the necessary first step in examining the role played by mainstream fashion magazines in the construction of meaning for sustainable goods and practices.

Sustainability in fashion becomes a more pressing matter year after year. Growing consumer awareness of the issues paired with governmental regulation has

forced the industry to start taking action. This study revealed that *Vogue* has incrementally adjusted to the changing demands of the modern socio-cultural context in which it operates. Since Anna Wintour was the editor in chief for the entirety of the period studied, it is impossible to gauge the impact of magazine leadership on the construction of the discourse. The “Letters from the Editor” made it apparent that environmental and social activism was not her chief concern. She was the main voice disengaging the conversation and putting it upon others—like Tonne Goodman, or the socialites, celebrities and designers selected as ambassadors of the movement. Essentially, it appeared *Vogue’s* chief concern as an institution was the economic well-being of the industry. Social and environmental activism was subsumed by economic ideology.

This study contributes to the growing academic literature on the sustainable fashion movement. Scholars interested in consumer behavior, cultural studies, mass media studies and marketing will benefit from the findings of this research. Likewise, designers and brands involved in the production of eco and sustainable fashion goods may find this study useful as it could influence the way in which potential consumers perceive their products. It could also lead to future discussions on the best way to frame eco-fashion within the popular press to simultaneously emphasize the social and environmental benefits without detracting from mass appeal.

In an ideal world, *Vogue* might view this research as a call to action, to re-evaluate its role in the promotion of sustainable fashion practice and production and to consider tactics of inclusion that don’t reduce it to another fashionable consumer good.

One simple change *Vogue* could make to help in this avenue would be the inclusion of more editorials geared towards educating, as opposed to wooing, consumers. If readers lack the basic knowledge to gauge quality and make educated consumption choices, fashion magazines are an ideal location to impart that knowledge. If the emphasis remains on aesthetic evaluation or economic value, then one cannot expect readers to value fashion for much more than appearances and price.

Opportunities for future exploration

This research was a targeted examination of *Vogue's* sustainable fashion discourse over the last twenty-three years. Several opportunities for building upon the discoveries made here exist. For example, the establishment of a basic understanding of *Vogue's* engagement with sustainable fashion provides impetus to research smaller segments of this time period with more depth and rigor. This research began with 1990 but that is not to say *Vogue* completely ignored environmental and social causes before this date. A study of the discourse beginning with 1970—the year Earth Day was established—and moving through the 1980s might reveal a different perspective, especially considering the change of editor-in-chiefs during this period.

Furthermore, while there are several fashion magazines and countless media outlets that have reported on the eco/ethical/sustainable fashion movement—for example, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Elle*, and *W* as well as international magazines, newspapers, and blogs—this study has been limited to *Vogue* for a variety of reasons mentioned above. *Vogue* is an international title with twenty-one editions worldwide as of 2013 (Cartner-Morley, 2012). A different editor-in-chief heads up each edition and reflects

the local culture in which it operates. It is highly likely these international editions have engaged the sustainable fashion discourse in a different way than the American edition. By comparing American *Vogue* to an edition produced in a culture considered more progressive in their sustainability efforts, revelations about the limits of the sustainable fashion discourse in both cultures might be revealed. If conceived as a collaborative project, it would provide opportunities to bring together academics working in fashion media studies in multiple countries.

This research could also be expanded to alternative media sources. There is a plethora of media involved in the construction of the sustainable fashion discourse. Comparative studies could be done with magazines devoted to a sustainable fashion and lifestyle ethos like *Sublime* and *Ever Manifesto*. The problem with some of these magazines, however, is their erratic publication¹ and longevity. It may also be beneficial to examine how the sustainable fashion discourse has been constructed in trade publications like *WWD* or well-circulated newspapers with devoted fashion coverage like the *New York Times* or the *International Herald Tribune*.

The scope of this research did not allow for a thorough analysis from production to consumption of this discourse. The reader makes a brief appearance in the form of reader's letters written in response to the magazine's content. Films like *The September Issue* provided a glimpse into the hierarchy and production processes of the magazine in general, but these aspects of the discourse were not studied in detail. The research could be expanded on either end of the production-reception model. Interviews with

¹ *Ever Manifesto* has only produced three issues in five years (Ever Manifesto-Home, 2014)

editors at fashion magazines known to have covered sustainable fashion in order to explore the processes and ideologies influencing production would offer an institutional perspective. Moreover, studies involving consumers of fashion magazines would offer perspectives on the reception of the sustainable fashion discourse. Studies such as these would help expand the findings of this research beyond the limitations of the text

This study focused exclusively on editorial content, excluding consideration of advertising from the study. Since fashion advertisements have become a pervasive feature of fashion magazines, contributing to a larger portion of their revenue as well as their page numbers, an exploration of the advertisements in *Vogue* and their contribution to sustainable fashion meaning construction could be fruitful. Application of MCDA to other segments in the magazine, such as advertisements, would expand the analysis to include the entirety of the magazine's discourse. Additionally, the "Social Responsibility" editorials established in 2010 need to be critically analyzed since they focus more on the social rather than environmental aspect of sustainability. This would help create a more complete picture of *Vogue's* approach to sustainability since the majority of articles analyzed skewed towards environmental concerns.

Researcher reflections

The major findings of this research were largely unsurprising. It was expected that *Vogue* would engage sustainable fashion on their own terms, at times undermining sustainable fashion/lifestyle values and practices in order to preserve the discourse of the new. There, were, however elements that were unexpected. One surprising element was the informed and impassioned explorations of human environmental impact in

Vogue's culture editorials such as the profile on traveling to the Galapagos. This component was largely lacking in the sustainable fashion editorials and completely absent from the discourse on the new. *Vogue* readers received message of environmental degradation merely pages away from elaborate spreads on the new styles of the season.

It is important at this point to reflect on biases that may have influenced research outcomes. Critical discourse analysis presupposes that the issue at hand is a social problem requiring analysis and adjustment in perception of the issue in societies' collective consciousness. The emphasis in CDA is frequently on negative or harmful representations of ideologies, groups or individuals. By phrasing the questions as I did, I attempted to avoid taking a critical outsider stance against the magazine. The intent of this research was to present sustainable fashion from *Vogue's* perspective. In order to do that, however, it was compared to textbook and academic research that have helped define what sustainability means ideologically. However, by viewing the magazine in context using discourse-historical method, there was an attempt to avoid applying modern conceptions of sustainability to *Vogue's* past. There was also an attempt to include both the setbacks and the progress the magazine made towards a more rounded and informed sustainable fashion discourse.

The other biases that may have influenced the outcome of the research lay with me as the researcher. It was vital my interpretation of *Vogue's* efforts not skew towards the overly critical since I am a supporter of changes to the fashion industry that would result in more sustainable practices and goods. As a participant in the fashion industry—

and recreational reader of *Vogue*—I want the magazine to do a better job providing information to those seeking fashionable, sustainable options like myself. As an academic studying the fashion industry, I want to help others reading *Vogue* and other fashion media outlets question the mechanisms the media uses to promote consumption practices that may not be in the best interest of all stakeholders.

While the research questions that guided this study were answered, several larger questions relating to the fashion press remain: Is it too much to expect *Vogue* and other publications that facilitate the fashion industry to address the social consequences and concerns created by the industry? To whom is *Vogue* obligated, the readers or the industry? Does the social contract that dictates the relationship between journalists and society exist for fashion publications? The answer to these questions are not easily obtained and will likely morph from reader to reader and from publication to publication, but they are questions academics, the industry, and the fashion press will continue to grapple with as calls for change continue.

In closing, what this research discovered and presented was only the beginning of a long conversation. As the challenges of sustainability are engaged in more meaningful ways, one can hope that fashion, led and enabled by its press, will move to the forefront in offering viable solutions to the most pressing concerns. However, much like Foucault's musings on what architecture might do for liberty (1999), the production and promotion of sustainable fashion discourse does not in itself guarantee sustainable fashion practice. The reader is still free to act as they choose. Nevertheless, if the

'architects' of the discourse have sustainability in mind, the practice of sustainability stands a greater chance.

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APPENDIX

Data Sources Organized by Chapter

Editorials used for Chapter Four Analysis

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VITA

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