

Knitting for Identity: How the Alienation of Clothing Production Unraveled Our Understanding of the Clothing We Wear

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This research investigates how we as a society choose to value the clothing we wear, purchase, donate, and throw away. From the exact place(s) of production, to purchase, and finally discarding clothes, this project identifies our thoughts and feelings around fast fashion, handmade items, and secondhand clothing. Because clothing is such a critical part of how we express our personal identities as human beings, it is shocking how little we know about what we choose to wear. This disconnect has impacted our thoughts behind the mass consumption of clothing today and why so many people are not aware of the societal and environmental impacts. Examining how we choose to view handmade items as opposed to store-bought items, or retail clothing versus secondhand clothing, reveals biases we have been taught as the norm in society. Data were collected through scholarly research and an anonymous survey conducted here at Alma College. Through analysis of participants responses, it can be concluded that society is largely unaware of how their biases have been shaped to work in the benefit of corporations. With this presentation, the goal is to spread awareness about the harmful cycle of fast fashion and how it has impacted society, the global economy, and the environment. Through greater awareness, more individuals may recognize the benefits of shopping secondhand, investigate the origins of their purchases, and acknowledge the damage mass consumption of clothing has done to our environment. We as a society have the power to change the attitudes and norms; we can do away with the trends of fast fashion and overconsumption.