

The Shirt Off My Back: A Humane Education Curriculum

An Independent Learning Project  
Presented by

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To

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**Abstract**

This Independent Learning Project includes a high school level course designed for independent study, distance, or online learning entitled, “The Shirt Off My Back”. The course takes an everyday object, the t-shirt, and looks at it in terms of its impact on the environment and other species, its impact on other people, and its relation to marketing, advertising, and consumerism in youth.

The focus of this project is to create a course which looks at the various areas of comprehensive humane education, as there are currently few resources available which do this. It works also to include service learning aspects. Since there are currently so few comprehensive humane education professionals, the distance learning format allows the greatest number of students to benefit from access to courses in humane education.

The primary goal of the project is to provide opportunities for high school students to take courses in comprehensive humane education. Through the creation of this course, focusing in humane education with distance learning and service learning components, it is hoped that it will serve as a template for developing future humane education courses.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **Rationale**

This Independent Learning Project has been developed as an addition to the small, but growing, collection of curricula whose emphasis is in the area of humane education. Broad - based humane education is an emerging field. It seeks to link the areas of environmental protection, human rights and diversity, culture and media, and animal protection. Traditionally, humane education's focus has been on the protection of animals and children. While there are a good many curricula that focus solely on this area of humane education, solely upon the environment, solely upon human rights, or solely upon media literacy, there seems to be lacking a variety of sources for a curriculum that encompasses multiple areas at once.

As I progressed through my coursework related to this program, I began collecting materials for my own future use with students in humane education programs. While I was able to obtain materials that had great value, it was clear that each had its own particular focus in only one of the many areas addressed by humane education. So I was able to get lesson plans that dealt with animal issues, videos that dealt with human rights issues, books that dealt with environmental issues, and curriculum guides for media literacy. What I could not find were planned curricula that helped to tie together all of these areas and issues.

I do feel that each area is important in its own right; however, I wanted my own students to experience some of the ah-hah's and uh-oh's that I had, through looking not only at each area individually, but by beginning to see how they are related to one

another. One of the strengths of humane education is that it looks at the interconnectedness of a multitude of issues. In creating this Independent Learning Project, I hope to create a curriculum guide that will help students to explore issues on a variety of topics related to living more compassionately.

In the creation of a curriculum guide, it is also hoped that others in the field of humane education will benefit as a result. It can serve as one possible model for bringing humane education to learners. Through my research and development of this Independent Learning Project I hope not only to learn more in depth information about the variety of issues presented within the curriculum, but also about the process of creating such a curriculum to be used by educators and students.

## **Goal**

My goal for this Independent Learning Project is to develop a curriculum for high school students. This curriculum will be for a semester long course – formatted primarily for independent study, distance, or online learning although adaptable for classroom use. The subject of the course, “The Shirt Off My Back,” will be the t-shirt. This is an object with which nearly all youth have a good deal of familiarity. Students will explore issues in humane education through the thematic scheme of the t-shirt. Topics addressed will include environmental impact, the impacts on other human and non-human beings, how media and advertising might affect the purchase of the t-shirt, and consumption patterns, among others. Students will also participate in a service learning project related to the topics covered within the coursework.

By developing this Independent Learning Project, I hope to create a curriculum that addresses a variety of issues related to living more humanely, with compassion, and in a more sustainable way. I also hope to promote critical thought and decision making in the students. With the coursework, it is my desire to increase the awareness of the students on a multitude of issues, help them to sort through a variety of resources and ideas as they develop or redevelop their opinions and values related to the issues, as well as to empower them to make choices that are in alignment with their new awareness.

In addition to the aforementioned outcomes, the curriculum can also become a tool for other humane educators. The format of the project can be used as a template for other courses. Since the course is primarily designed for delivery through independent study, distance, or online methods it is more easily incorporated into the current school systems, often times without excessive expense to the school through adding additional staff, etc. This could possibly be a factor in success when approaching schools or districts with a proposal for teaching a humane education program. It also allows for one humane educator to work with students from a variety of geographic locations, thus making the small number of current humane educators available to a greater number of students.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem that this Independent Learning Project will address is the lack of curriculum pieces in the area of broad-based humane education. While there exist many resources in the various areas of humane education, there are few full length curricula that encompass multiple areas of study in relation to living more humanely.

Most high school students are never able to take a course in the area of humane education or humane studies. This course will be a way that students can begin to have access to such courses and learning opportunities. Students, and school administrators, look for ways to add more elective choices to their course offerings. “The Shirt Off My Back,” is one possible solution to adding more choice in relation to high school elective opportunities.

The proposed project will not only add to the current library available to humane educators, but it can also serve as a model for other courses to be developed upon. The overall format, involving independent, distance, or online study, along with the service learning component, can be used in creating other courses for the study of humane education topics.

### **Population**

There are a number of individuals and groups that could potentially stand to benefit from the development of this Independent Learning Project. First, and foremost, are the future students of the course. They will be able to gain new awareness, develop critical thinking skills, and become empowered to take action based upon their values. Through this curriculum, they will also have access to more elective course options in the area of Humane Studies.

Humane educators, and educators in general, will also benefit from the development of this project. Teachers may be looking for a way to incorporate humane education into their curriculum. They may use this course as a guide in doing so. This course, in particular, will be of interest to humane educators who wish to teach their

students about similar topics as those included in “The Shirt Off My Back.” Schools and educators that are already incorporating humane education may be able to use the curriculum within their programs and charter school course offerings. The format of the course may also serve as a template to help other humane educators develop additional curriculum pieces that can increase the opportunities for students to become involved in a humane education course during their K-12 educational period. Administrators who are looking for ways to meet federal and state mandates for humane education could also benefit from the course developed in this ILP.

In addition to the direct beneficiaries listed above, there are also other potential parties who stand to benefit indirectly from the material contained within the course curriculum. From the students’ increased awareness about such things as pesticide use, organic materials, the chemicals used in the process to make the t-shirt, and ecological footprints there may come benefits for the environment, and the human and non-human inhabitants of the environments that have been affected. Through increased awareness of the issues facing workers who work in the factories, both here and abroad, that produce clothing for resale in the United States, the workers themselves may stand to benefit from the choices made and the actions that student take. The families, peers, and possibly communities of the students can stand to benefit as the students share their knowledge with others about what they have learned related to environmental stewardship, working conditions in the factories, and the effect that media and advertising can have, not only on our purchases, but also on our perceptions. Additionally, the organization for which the student performs their service learning project will benefit from the student’s involvement in the course as well.

## **Methodology**

In beginning to develop the curriculum, “The Shirt Off My Back,” I will look to create the course around a topic with which the students would have some familiarity. I want to take something that the students would already have a connection to, the t-shirt in this case, and look at it in as many ways possible related to the areas involved in humane education. By looking at the lifecycle of the t-shirt, connections will begin to come out linking the t-shirt to the different units of study in this program. This will allow me to create a curriculum that will show the interconnectedness of the issues related to animal protection, environmental stewardship, human rights, and cultural and media related issues through a common thread – the t-shirt. This will also be a way to draw the students personally into the course. Nearly everyone has a t-shirt or two, and so all will be connected in some way to the information that we will be learning in the coursework.

From here I will chose to focus on several topics for the course. The following are the areas on which I will base the course. The first area is related to the pesticide use in the cotton industry, the effects of its use, and alternatives to its use. Second is helping the students to understand the idea and implications of ecological footprints. Another is the debate over how workers in clothing factories are treated, both here in the US and internationally. Next is the influence that corporations and media can have on us as consumers. I will chose to look primarily at how advertising targets youth as I feel that will help the students to relate to the coursework in a more authentic way. Finally, the idea of alternatives to the consumption levels that most are used to will be addressed to

expose the students to different ideas on the subject than what they may hear in the mainstream media.

After I have developed the course outline, I will research these areas in depth. The research will be done by looking at books, videos, databases of newspaper and magazine articles, and internet based resources. I will look at the various sides and viewpoints related to the issues in order to present the most accurate information that I can to the students. While searching for background information, I will also be looking for materials to use within the course itself as resources, readings, and activities for the students. This will require evaluating not only the material itself, based upon the viewpoints of the authors, but also to evaluate it in terms of the reading level required to understand the writing so that the students will be able to comprehend the information presented in the course.

In creating the course, care must be taken to limit the topics. Since there are indeed so many interconnections, and each interconnected topic is an area of study in its own right, limits must be placed on what is studied and the length of time that is spent on that particular topic. For example, an entire semester long (or longer) course could be developed which looks at pesticide use, the effects that it has on the environment, human, and non-human beings, as well as alternatives to its use. However, in order to help the students explore as many areas as is possible, I will limit our study in this area, and other areas, within the course. It is my hope that the students will be exposed to as many areas related to the t-shirt as possible. Perhaps, if students have an interest in a particular area, it will lead to further independent study on the topic, either with or without the guidance of an instructor.

While it is my hope that the course that will be developed in the Independent Learning Project will serve as an introduction for students to the various areas of humane education, I realize that it cannot be all encompassing, nor can it ever be fully complete. The topics are not static but evolving, with new information becoming available almost constantly. So, it will not be enough to ask the students to explore only what is presented in the course. The students must also be taught how to research and evaluate new information, and to reevaluate their own opinions, values, and actions related to this new information. Only in this way will the course be truly successful.

Once the topics for the course are outlined and developed, then comes looking into the delivery method for the course. I will choose several components in this area that will contribute to the overall goal of the course. The format that will be chosen for the course is independent study, distance, or online learning. I feel that this will help in reaching the largest number of students possible with the course offering. The course will not be available only to those students who are in a particular school or a particular classroom. With this format, the course can be offered to a multitude of students, thus helping the beginning seeds of humane education to spread more widely. This format also may be beneficial when approaching schools with the course, as it may not require the same levels of funding, space, and commitment to new staff that a traditional classroom course might require. On a personal level, this format also allows me to begin working toward full time employment in the field of humane education while maintaining my current position as a full time high school math teacher.

One final piece that I will include in the course is that of a service learning project. Service learning will be a way for students to make a personal connection with

the learning in the course. Service will also help the students to get involved in their own community. Students will choose and design a service project related to one of the topics covered in the course. Throughout the course, students will be asked to reflect upon their service project in reflective writing, mostly through journal entries that will be sent to the instructor, but also possible through only discussion board entries. It is hoped that this will help the student to take the learning past the paper or the computer screen and apply it in a way that is meaningful for them.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

#### **Developing a Humane Education Curriculum**

Comprehensive humane education is still an emerging field. For this reason, most of the material available to educators comes in fragments. Rather than looking at the connections between social justice issues, environmental degradation, animal protection, and cultural influences, most curricula available today look only at one or another of these areas. In order to promote a better understanding of the interconnectedness of these issues, humane educators must begin to develop curriculum pieces which work to highlight the links between them.

While many see the incredible value of comprehensive humane education, it "...is still on the periphery of the educational system..." (Center for Compassionate Living [CCL], 1999, p.2). More opportunities must be made for K-12 students to take part in learning opportunities based in humane education ideals and processes. One way to provide these opportunities is through humane education courses delivered in an independent study, distance, or online learning format.

#### **A Look at Humane Education**

Why humane education?

As stated in the *Sowing Seeds Workbook: A Humane Educational Primer*:

In a world in which people are quickly destroying natural resources, abolishing species, and perpetuating warfare; in a world still filled with poverty, hunger, racism, bigotry of all kinds, cruelty, and injustice, what could be more important than humane education? (CCL, 1999, p.2)

Many, it seems, would agree with the importance of humane education in today's school curriculum. Kaufmann and Fitchett (1999) stated clearly how important it is that children are encouraged to engage in humane behavior and begin to develop empathy for others. Stout (as cited in Kaufmann & Fitchett, 1999) went on to say that there is an increasing support for moral-cognitive education. In this approach, the two main reasons for education to exist are for "the development of critical intelligence, and the nurturance of the human capacity to care" (p. 2). Evidence is even found within our own legal documents, as there are many states in which humane education is required, even if the definitions of humane education in the laws are limited. However, "...the very fact that humane education laws have been passed in so many states reminds us that many citizens believe it is important" (International Institute for Humane Education, 2003, p.19).

Traditionally, humane education has involved issues related only to companion animals and children. Today, humane education is evolving to include other areas, as well as certain processes of learning. While there are varying definitions, most of these point to similar attributes when describing modern humane education. Weil (1998) stated that it has grown to "encompass all animal issues, as well as environmental and human rights issues" (p.19). This was echoed by Kaufmann and Fitchett, who went on to give a four step process. It begins with creating respect and compassion, next comes looking at

the relationships between living and non-living things, after that personal responsibility comes into play, and finally there is the movement towards transforming the learner or the learner's behavior (1999, p.2).

The authors of *The Better World Handbook* help us look another way at education as a catalyst for personal change. They stated that “[a]n understanding of the scope of the world’s problems and their potential solutions will help you to realize the importance of your everyday actions and will inspire you to create meaningful change” (Jones, Haenfler, Johnson, & Klocke, 2001, pp. 11-12). While one goal of humane education is to facilitate change in our world, it is important to note that “[i]t does not promote a single correct path, but rather introduces options so that each person can make informed, wise, and compassionate choices” (CCL, 1999, p.1) In addition, Weil (2004) had this to say about humane education:

...humane education examines what is happening on our planet, from human oppression to animal exploitation to ecological degradation. It explores how we might live with compassion and respect for everyone, not just for our friends, neighbors, and classmates, but for all people; not just for our own dogs and cats, but for all animals; not just for our school and home environments, but also for the Earth itself, our ultimate home. (p.4)

As shown above, humane education is hard to put into a single box with a single definition. There are a wide variety of educational philosophies and methods that fall under the umbrella of humane education at times. Environmental education, character education, peace and justice education, and others can all be considered humane education. “Education which promotes the many qualities of being humane, which

examines their meanings, and grapples with their ambiguities in a confusing and complex world is humane education” (CCL, 1999, p.2). The ultimate goal of any humane education program should be to “provide students with knowledge, awareness, and information-gathering skills so that they are able to choose to live according to their list of best qualities [of human beings] to the greatest extent possible” (Weil, 2004, p.6).

### **Humane Education for the High School Student**

During the period of adolescence, many are working to form their own identity. With the development of abstract thinking – they begin to look beyond themselves in sorting out the values by which they live their lives. Their idea of community begins to expand beyond their family and their school to include others in the world (Kaufmann & Fitchett, 1999). In spite of, or perhaps because of, this inner turmoil, the high school years can provide a wonderful opportunity for humane educators to reach students. Even though the humane education process may expose them to some harsh realities, high school students can often “become positive agents of change, [while] their cynicism and apathy diminish” (Weil, 2004, p.7).

Weil (2004) identified four crucial elements to include when developing a humane education program:

1. Providing accurate information so students understand the consequences of their decisions as consumers and citizens.
2. Fostering the 3 Cs: Curiosity, Creativity, and Critical Thinking so students can evaluate information and solve problems.

3. Instilling the 3 Rs: Reverence, Respect, and Responsibility so students will act with kindness and integrity.
4. Offering positive choices that benefit oneself, other people, the Earth, and animals so students feel empowered to help create a more humane world. (pp. 19-20)

Kaufmann and Fitchett (1999) also gave some activity types that are preferable when working with adolescents. Involving the students with guest speakers, and in discussion rather than lecture are two types that they promote. In addition, individual research on topics, and getting involved in politics, perhaps through letter writing, are other areas where adolescents may thrive. Finally, service activities are especially appealing to this age group, as it gives them the opportunity for self expression, as they are allowed to express their personal choices of service in the community.

Humane education works to “[create] awareness of choices and [expose] influences which are usually too subtle or too hidden for people (especially young people) to notice” (CCL, 1999, p.4). It also encourages young people to take responsibility for the choices that they make in their own lives. It is important for students to understand that nearly every one of us, no matter how kind our way of living, causes some harm (Weil, 2004). However, in working through the four elements listed above for humane education, students are able to make wiser choices, hopefully decreasing the amount of harm that they might cause. They will also work to improve their critical thinking skills, as “[h]umane educators encourage their students to think critically not only about advertising, products, and attitudes, but also about the information that they themselves are presenting” (Weil, 2004, p.25).

What are the beneficial outcomes of providing opportunities in humane education for high school students? Weil (2004) provided a list of qualities, which in her experience, are outcomes that she's seen from humane education programs. The students:

- Are less susceptible to media messages
- Become better critical thinkers
- Develop more compassionate attitudes towards others
- Take more responsibility for their actions and choices
- Gain lifelong problems solving skills
- Often have increased self-confidence and self-respect
- Become more conscious of their duties as citizens
- Demonstrate leadership qualities and skills
- Are empowered to be agents of positive change
- Actually improve the world (p. 43)

With this list of possible outcomes, why wouldn't we want humane education in our high schools?

### **The Distance Learning Model**

There are numerous factors which might lead to the selection of distance learning as a method of delivery for a course curriculum. Anything from teacher shortages to geographical location can make it difficult for a school to offer a wide variety of courses (Martin & Rainey, 1997). Many schools turn to distance education in order to offer course selections to their students that they would not be able to offer otherwise

(McGreal & Simand, 1997; Zucker & Kozma, 2003). Because the number of humane educators is still quite small, distance learning provides an excellent opportunity for courses to be offered across the country utilizing these professionals as instructors and resources. Another factor attracting schools to distance learning is that costs can be lower in some cases, than to introduce the same electives via a traditional route on campus. Zucker and Kozma (2003) also pointed out that distance learning can attract instructors with the opportunity to offer courses that they might not otherwise be given the opportunity to teach. Again, this provides an excellent avenue for humane educators, enabling them to offer courses in their subject area. While many have provided reasoning supporting distance learning based on expanding options for students in our high schools, Clark (2004) also noted that homeschooled students will also benefit from the increase in course options.

Although distance learning via correspondence has a long history in our country, there is a recent upsurge related to the spread of technology, and more specifically, the internet. Zucker and Kozma emphasized this with the fact that “there are dozens of online schools, and tens of thousands of high school students are taking courses every year through the internet” (2003, p.xiii). Virtual schools are designed in much the same format as traditional schools with relation to schedules, grading, credits, etc. This generally makes it easier for the virtual component of education to fit right in to a brick and mortar setting (Zucker and Kozma, 2003). Still, “in 2001, independent study programs still enroll[ed] more students in K-12 courses via distance education than all of the technology-based methods combined” (Clark, 2004, p. 673). So in designing a course

that could potentially be used in distance learning, one might want to consider both the traditional correspondence and the newer online distance formats.

### **Students of Distance Learning**

Why do students become involved in distance learning? What are some of the benefits to students? Two of the main reasons that students seem to enroll in distance learning courses is that they are able to take courses that they would not be able to take otherwise and that it gives them greater flexibility within their schedules (Zucker & Kozma, 2003). Students seem to enjoy the fact that distance learning is unique, and they also see it as fun (Yates, 2003).

Administrators, teachers, and distance education advocates promote distance learning for a variety of reasons. Some see the independent learning required of students in these circumstances as good preparation for future college level learning. Others see it as a way to build better citizens, with an increased knowledge of how to find, sort through, and evaluate information. In essence, the students are learning how to learn, a skill which will help them to develop into lifelong learners (Zucker & Kozma, 2003; Yates, 2003; Dillon & Greene, 2004).

Distance learning also has a tendency to help students move learning outside of the box of the school or the classroom. This helps them to see that learning is not limited to a particular time or place (Bruce, 2004; Yates, 2003). Yates (2003) emphasized that interactive distance learning can help the student to find “opportunities that are not confined to the normal seven-and-a-half-hour school day” (p. 23).

Another benefit to students would be that it “introduces them to new people and new perspectives that they may not encounter otherwise” (Zucker & Kozma, 2003, p.4). It is also reassuring that many studies indicate that students learn well in a distance learning environment (Yates, 2003).

### **Considerations in Developing a Distance Learning Course**

One of the primary differences between distance learning and some traditional settings is that the teacher transforms from a curriculum specialist to a “facilitator of learning” (Moore, 1997, p.2). The fact that students stand at the forefront of the learning process was emphasized many times in the research on distance learning. Schmidt, Sullivan, and Hardy (1997) explicitly pointed out that “the students must be participants, not recipients” (p. 53). They also highlighted the importance of interaction among the learners themselves.

There are two primary modes of communication, one is asynchronous, which is delayed time such as postal correspondence, email, discussion boards, etc. The other is synchronous, which involves real time communication. Phone calls and online chats would be examples of synchronous communication. Both play a crucial role in distance learning.

It is asynchronous communication that allows for the flexibility that so many of the students say is important to them in the distance learning environment. Some advise, however, that instructors keep their students on a similar schedule. This is known as “scheduled asynchronous” (Zucker & Kozma, 2003, p. 26). So while the students retain

some of their freedom as to scheduling their work time, they still have due dates for the activities within the course.

While the main benefit of asynchronous communication is flexibility, one of the main benefits of synchronous communication is the sense of community that it can help to build. Students report that it helps them get to know their classmates more easily (Zucker & Kozma, 2003). These authors also pointed out how synchronous methods can help to facilitate small group work. Building community within the distance learning course is especially important when the students will be involved in learning about controversial issues. Synchronous communication is seen as crucial for helping to build this much needed sense of community (Haythornwaite, Kazmen, Robins, & Shoemaker, 2004). This sense of community has an effect on learning and motivation, as both are influenced by feelings of empathy and belonging (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2003). In using both asynchronous and synchronous methods in a variety of ways, it allows all students the chance to participate (Burbules, 2004).

Out of the research also came additional practical information to consider when designing a distance course. One is to first teach the students how to use the technology involved in the delivery of the course materials so that students are not dealing with interference from the technology in trying to work with the content of the course (Zucker & Kozma, 2003). Another is to use a great variety of material for instruction, so that all of the student's time is not spent on the computer (Yates, 2003). Yates also pointed out the need for educators "to consider how to help students connect with society in positive and productive ways" (2003, pp.21-22). So in developing curriculum for distance learning, it is important to create ways for students to become involved in the community.

Finally, it is important to chunk printed information into smaller pieces if using an online format to make it easier for students to access and read (Davis, 2004). There is a great variety of tools presented in the research to help facilitate learning in a distance environment.

### **Potential Drawbacks**

Distance learning requires a great deal of independence, motivation, and personal responsibility on the part of the learner. It is for these reasons that Martin and Rainey (1997) cautioned that distance learning is not appropriate for all students. They also recommended that students be evaluated for their ability to be successful in a distance learning format.

Because of the current increase in online learning, some pointed out that it may “exacerbate the gap in educational outcomes between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’” (Zucker & Kozma, 2003, p. viii). They went on to show that both education level and income level may restrict access to the internet. Of those making more than \$75,000 per year, 88% had internet access, while only 34% of those making less than \$25,000 had access. While 76% of those with a bachelor’s degree have access to the internet, only 18% of those without a high school diploma do. Both Davis (2003) and Shearer (2003) emphasized that access to technology must be considered when trying to provide educational opportunities online.

For reasons of equality, it seems a wise choice to include traditional correspondence learning opportunities as well as online learning opportunities. Yates (2003) reminded us that although “correspondence may seem an antiquated way of

learning, ...less than 10% of the world's population has online access" (p.60). She also pointed out that it is a very affordable option for most situations.

In light of the above information, the Independent Learning Project which makes up chapter three, while designed for use in an online learning format, will be able to be converted into a traditional correspondence course with relative ease.

### **Service Learning**

Why look at service learning? Service learning is increasingly becoming a part of the educational system. Studies have shown that:

- Half of all high schools have service learning projects.
- Several million students participate in service learning projects each year.
- Students participating in service learning show improvements in academic achievement, career preparation, feelings of self-efficacy, behavior, attendance, and civic engagement.
- Students participating in service learning are more likely to continue to volunteer later in life (Kaye, 2004, p. ix).

In defining service learning, there are many common themes that emerge. Kaye (2004) summed up the main ideas of service learning when she defined it as "a teaching method where guided or classroom learning is deepened through service to others in a process that provides structured time for reflection on the service experience and demonstration of the skills and knowledge required" (p.7). Canada and Speck (2001) wrote that it is an experience where "students both study issues and become participants in the outworking of those issues in a particular community setting" (p.1).

Most forms of service learning can be categorized as one of four different types. The first is direct service, where the service directly impacts and involves those individuals being served. Indirect service, on the other hand, serves not individuals, but communities or environments. Advocacy is a third type, which involves awareness raising related to a given set of issues. Lastly, research involves information gathering and reporting in relation to the issues at hand (Kaye, 2004). All four types are valuable both in terms of the service provided and the learning involved. In deciding which type to use one must evaluate the various factors related to the given situation.

Now that the question of what service learning is has been addressed, the next item on the agenda will be to determine why it is useful and important in the learning process.

### **Reasons for Including Service Learning**

Two main schools of thought are addressed through service learning. The first being one with a philanthropic basis in which the service provides the opportunity to help others. The second is often called a civic approach where the goal of the service is to promote social justice (Speck, 2001). Whichever school of thought is emphasized within a particular program, service learning serves to bridge the gaps between schools and communities, and between knowledge and application for the learner (Claus & Ogden, 1999). Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said that “education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no potential; social action without education is a weak expression of energy.” Service learning attempts to meld education and social action into one.

Though some (Halsted,1999) pointed out that student involvement with social issues can create feelings of overwhelming frustration, others (Schine, 1999) touted service learning as a way to “counter act that sense of helplessness, empowering young people to address some of these problems...” (p. 16). In support of this latter view, Youniss and Yates (1997) promoted the idea that service learning “can provide opportunities for youth to be taken seriously as contributing members to society and to participate in meaningful problem solving actions” (p. 18).

Due to the fact that service learning grounds the academic learning in real world issues, it has “enormous potential for enhancing the learning process” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. ix). Billig told us that “students who participate in service learning are more engaged in their studies and more motivated to learn” (as cited in Pritchard & Whitehead, 2004, p.7). So while service helps to “achieve real objectives for the community,” it also leads to “deeper understanding and skills” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 9) for the learners involved. Dewey, and others in the movement towards experiential education, promoted the notion that the learner must construct their own knowledge through experience (Eyler & Gyles, 1999). In that case, service learning provides a necessary avenue toward true learning and understanding.

The growth of students in areas outside of pure academics is another valuable outcome of service learning. Greene (as cited in Shumer, 2001, p.29) claimed that students involved in service learning “developed a significant ‘other’ orientation to the world, moving toward more empathy and understanding.” Halsted (1999) felt that such activities as service learning are necessary to nurture this emerging sense of awareness that extends beyond the self to include such ideals as “justice and the common good” (p.

96). Service learning has been shown to help build tolerance, break down stereotypes, lead to increased leadership skills, strengthen problem solving skills, and open doors to understanding new perspectives (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Thus the benefits to students involved in service learning are complex and multifaceted.

Kaye (2004) stated that “our society depends on active participation of its members to thrive” (p. 2). In this, service is a way to increase the active participation of this generation of learners. Canada and Speck (2001) took it a step further when they wrote that “[t]he primary goal of service learning is to foster responsible citizenship and, consequently, to promote students’ lifelong involvement in helping to solve social issues” (p. 1). Youniss and Yates (1997) encouraged others not to just live history but to “make history [by] working towards goals, working for principles, or trying to alter the course of current events” (p.1). Hence, through service learning, learners are encouraged to make a difference today, and for the rest of their lives.

### **How to Make Service Learning Successful**

There are critics of service learning who are skeptical of whether service truly influences the learning of students (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Time and again, author after author emphasized one valuable resource in ensuring that learning was indeed involved in the service-learning package. This resource was extensive reflection on the part of the students. The reflection could be done orally, with the group, or also individually through such forms as journal writing and the writing of reflective papers.

Kaye (2004) stated that “[r]eflection is a vital and ongoing process in service learning that integrates learning and experience with personal growth and awareness”

(p.11). Reflection should be done continuously throughout the service-learning experience. With reflection occurring before, during, and after the experience, a greater impact is made upon student learning (Eyler, 2001). This reflection should be explicit in connecting the service to the community with the learning objectives for the course. Journaling is a valuable method to use in the reflection process, and Eyler (2001) emphasized that the journaling should be structured and that feedback should be provided to the students. Journaling also provides a safe environment for students, free from peer pressure. This safety is important to help ensure that students are more honest in their reflective pieces (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Many times, simple reflection is not enough, but critical reflection is required. In working toward this critical thinking, it is valuable for the student to “com[e] into contact with people whose life experiences and assumptions about the world are different [than] one’s own” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p.34) as this helps the students to begin to question their own assumptions. Kahne and Westheimer (1999) agreed that reflection must include critical thinking. “To be critical thinkers, students must be able to consider arguments that justify conclusions that conflict with their own predispositions and self-interest” (p.37).

While critical reflection is necessary for student learning, another aspect is important as well. It is crucial that the students not only provide temporary aid through their service, but that they also learn about, and look at, the issues underlying the situations in which they are involved (Kahne & Westheimer, 1999). Claus and Ogden (1999) took it one step further and noted that “it is not enough in service programs to acknowledge that social problems exist. We need to go further to reflect on the source of

these problems and to build the skills and perspectives required for engaging in reform” (p.91). Once again, the end goal of the service learning project is not the current level of service, but the ongoing commitment to service and social justice that grows out of the experience.

### **Service Learning and Humane Education**

Service learning and humane education have many similar goal and ideals. Schine (1999) noticed that “there is ... substantial popular support for the role of the school in teaching the skills of critical thinking and decision making” (p.10). With this support, it is hoped that humane education and service learning, both of which put great emphasis on critical thinking and decision making, will continue to grow in visibility and availability within our school systems. Even though public schools are generally seen as places “where sides are usually not taken, important social issues can still be addressed by reviewing the several sides than impinge on them” (Youniss & Yates, 1997, p141).

Sorenson wrote (as cited in Claus & Ogden, 1999, p. 73) that “[d]ecision making, critical thinking, reflection, and recognizing multiple viewpoints are all part of the process of empowerment.” Indeed, these are all part of the process, learning, and desired outcomes for both service learning and humane education. It is the hope in both methods that each learner will “become the kind of person who will take part in shaping and reshaping [our] worlds” (Claus & Ogden, 1999, p.69). Thus service learning and humane education complement each other perfectly, for in each, as Herbert Spencer once said, “[t]he great aim of education is not knowledge but action.”

## **A Look at the Topics Explored in the ILP Course**

Within the coursework developed through the completion of this Independent Learning Project, students will be presented with a variety of issues. In the first part of this chapter the general outline of the course, the format, and the inclusion of service learning were discussed. In the remainder of chapter two, the topics of study from the course “The Shirt Off My Back” will be explored.

### **Cotton and the Use of Chemicals**

Conventionally produced cotton accounts for approximately ten percent of the world’s pesticide use annually (Ryan & Durning, 1997). Approximately twenty five percent of insecticides used on a global level are used in the production of cotton. This amounts to nearly \$26 billion spent on pesticides each year (Pesticide Action Network North America [PANNA], 1998). In some cases cotton crops are sprayed with chemicals eight to ten times per season (Imhoff, 1996). Some of the chemicals used on cotton are among the most toxic. Aldicarb is commonly used on cotton crops, and it is the “most acutely toxic pesticide registered with the EPA” (Imhoff, 1996). Parathion is another chemical that is often used. It was originally developed circa World War II as a component of nerve gas, as were many of the organophosphates used as pesticides on today’s cotton crops (PANNA, 1998). To produce the amount of cotton needed to make one t-shirt about 17 teaspoons of synthetic fertilizer and three-fourths of a teaspoon of pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, and defoliant are used (Imhoff, 1996).

Sources stated that while pesticide use is continually increasing, the loss of crops to insect infestation ranges from remaining at a steady rate of loss of 33% - to a loss

amount that is double what it was fifty years ago. (The Earth Works Group, 1989; Metzger & Whittaker, 1991). Although statistics would indicate that pesticide use has been unsuccessful in many ways, even the US government promotes their use. US farmers can earn subsidies that guarantee them a minimum price for their crop. However, if the farmer doesn't have a chemical program in place, getting this financing may prove to be difficult if not impossible (Imhoff, 1996).

### **Effects on the Environment and Wildlife**

In her environmental classic, *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson showed us how these chemicals entered the food chain and stayed there, within the body tissues of fishes, mammals, and birds. In fact, this is so widespread that scientists have found it “almost impossible to locate subjects free from such contamination” (1962, p.16).

When pesticides are sprayed onto a field, they seep into the ground and kill off the microbes and earthworms that live there. Once their numbers have been decimated, it can take earthworms up to five years to return to a healthy population after pesticides are no longer in use on a plot of land (Ryan and Durning, 1997). Due to the pesticide induced barrenness of the soil underneath a crop such as cotton, when the crops are irrigated much of the water runs off rather than soaking in, often carrying pesticides and residues with it. This is what happened in 1995, when shortly after farmers in Alabama applied pesticides to their cotton crops, rains came and washed them into surrounding areas of water. At least 240,000 fish died as a result. (PANNA, 1998).

Along with fish, birds are often most affected by the application of pesticides. Estimates are that approximately 67 million birds are killed each year in the US as a

result of pesticide use (PANNA, 1998). In one area in California, birth defects in birds are reaching record numbers. This area is downstream of irrigation run-off from cotton fields which have been treated with pesticides. (Imhoff, 1996).

Carson (1962) brought into light the idea of bioaccumulation. When pesticides enter the environment and the water, they also enter the food chain. As one moves up the food chain, the concentrations of toxic chemicals in the body increase. These chemicals are stored in the fat cells of the body. So once the fish and insects “absorb” these chemicals into their bodies, so too will the birds and mammals that consume them.

### **Effects on Human Life**

Pesticides aren't only found in the water where fish live, but in the water that the human population drinks as well. In a 1988 study of groundwater done by the EPA, there were found to be 74 different pesticides in the water. Aldicarb, one of the most toxic, was found in the groundwater in 16 states. (Imhoff, 1996)

Why should we worry that pesticides are in our groundwater? “Pesticide exposure can cause cancer, birth defects, and damage to body organs” (Metzger & Whittaker, 1991, p.65). Eighty-three of the active ingredients currently on the market have been found to cause cancer in laboratory experiments. Another 400 were registered for use before any testing was done to see what the possibilities were of them causing cancer or birth defects. Worldwide, it is estimated that nearly 25 million people are poisoned by pesticides annually. (Imhoff, 1996)

While anyone can be, and nearly everyone is, at risk for exposure to pesticides, the people who work with the chemicals on the farms are at the highest risk. Within the

US there are at least 300,000 illnesses related to pesticides each year among those workers. (Imhoff, 1996). Even worse are the exposures to workers in other countries. Chemicals can be sent there, even if they are banned for use here in the U.S. There often is very little education regarding the hazards and safety precautions, and most of the warning labels are printed in English, a language that most of the workers do not read (Metzger & Whittaker, 1991). In addition, equipment is often outdated, leading to even more chemical exposure. In developing countries, “10% of all fatal injuries can be attributed to pesticides” (PANNA, 1998).

In 1991, Jerry Williams, with the Arkansas Extension Service, was quoted in the New Yorker as saying, “If cotton were a crop that we ate instead of one that we wore, the EPA and the FDA wouldn’t allow us to spray it with some of the things we use” (as cited in Imhoff, 1996). But in fact, the cottonseed does end up in our food in the form of cottonseed oil. Look for it in the ingredients list the next time you pick up a snack, then decide exactly how you feel about this quote, and the use of pesticides on cotton.

### **Marketing, Advertising, and Youth**

Children today are exposed to marketing and advertisements almost constantly from the time of birth. Billboards, newspaper ads, magazine ads, and commercials are just some of the ways that companies try to get their messages across to youth. Television is one of the most popular. It is estimated that the average American will spend nearly two years of his or her life watching television commercials! (New Road Map Foundation [NRMF] & Northwest Environment Watch [NEW], 1998) The overall amount of time that is spent watching the television is on the rise, from 10.3 hours per

week in 1965 to 15 hours per week in 1995. People are now spending 40% of their free time in front of the television. With this increase of television time comes also an increase in television commercials. The average American child views 40,000 television commercials annually (NRMF & NEW, 1998).

Not only are children simply exposed to more advertising, but more and more of that advertising is being directed specifically at them. Why are children being targeted? Companies today are trying to create brand loyalty at as young an age as possible, hoping to start early and to continue to profit throughout the child's journey through adulthood. "Marketers understand well the value of early brand recognition. Introducing a product to a child might provide a company with a customer for today – and for the next seventy years" (Jacobson & Mazur, 1995, p.19).

Ads targeted at teens are designed to play upon their desire to fit in with their peers. One ad agency president said:

Advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you're a loser. Kids are very sensitive to that. If you tell them to buy something, they are resistant. But if you tell them they'll be a dork if they don't, you've got their attention. (Jacobson & Mazur, 1995, p.26)

Clothing companies are no exception. Indeed they design their ads to create desires for, often very costly, brand-name clothing. They have been amazingly successful in this endeavor. In a 1993 USA Today - CNN - Gallup Poll, more than half of all boys and girls considered brand name clothing to be important to them. (Jacobson & Mazur, 1995) Identity for this age group, therefore, often does revolve a good deal around the clothing that one wears. Humane educator and parent, Zoe Weil, reacted by

pointing out that “[s]uch attitudes are profoundly damaging both to teenagers themselves and to our world, which needs its youth to be awake, aware, and committed to discovering who they are beyond appearance” (Weil, 2003, p.149).

### **No Child Left Behind**

While the schoolhouse used to be considered off limits to the commercial reach, it is not so any more. Advertising and corporate presence is popping up all over the K-12 campus. One school district in Colorado was the first to put advertising on its school buses and in its halls in 1993. It created a trend that has spread through cash strapped school districts across the nation (Schlosser, 2002). Beverage companies such as Coke and Pepsi-Cola negotiate exclusive rights to sell their products within school walls. These rights bring much needed funding to the schools, but they also come with sales quotas that the districts must maintain in order to collect the funding (Klein, 2000). Even materials used in the classroom have become marketing tools. Companies such as Lifetime Learning Systems and Scholastic create classroom activities to promote certain products or companies. Students today are learning about volcanoes by studying GUSHERS fruit snacks, about credit from Discover Card, and about nutrition from the M&M-Mars candy company (Jacobson & Mazur, 1995).

One of the biggest, and most controversial, forms of commercialism to make it through the school doors is Channel One. Channel One started as a project of Whittle Communications, in which the company gives the schools video equipment in exchange for the students’ viewing of a 12 minute program daily. During this program there are ten minutes of news and two minutes of advertising (Klein, 2000; Jacobson & Mazur,

1995). Companies pay big to get their ads on the Channel One program – about \$198,000 for thirty second of air time. (Jacobson & Mazur, 1995). It can charge this rate, nearly double that of any other 30 second spot, because it promises advertisers a “captive audience”. Nearly eight million students watch Channel One programs every school day (Klein, 2000). Critics not only worry about the ethics of the situation but are also concerned about the content. Channel One commercials promote unhealthy foods such as candy and soda, at the same time they are promoting materialism (Consumers Union of United States [CUUS], Inc., 1995). This creates an additional concern when it has been shown that schools with higher percentages of low-income students are “more than twice as likely” (Jacobson & Mazur, 1995, p.30) as wealthier schools to have Channel One programming in place. Thus students who are least likely to be able to afford the costly items (such as athletic shoes) advertised on Channel One are most likely to be the ones viewing the program.

### **Creating Media Savvy Teens**

Since teens are being inundated with advertising, both inside of school and out, it is important for them to become more media literate. The media is very prominent in our culture today. In fact, “[w]e are so totally immersed that it is virtually impossible to step back and take notice of what is happening” (Summers, 1997, p.iv). This is why media education and learning media analysis is so vital for our young people, in reality, for us all.

Summers (1997) noted that there seem to be two main philosophies in relation to media literacy. There are the protectionists, who seek primarily to limit children’s’

exposure to advertising, and there are the advocates of free speech, who feel that it is necessary only to give youth the skills they need to critically evaluate the messages that they come into contact with. Indeed, while it may seem preferable not to expose teenaged children to commercial messages, in practicality it borders on the near impossible. Thus it seems the best thing to do is to teach them how to watch out for themselves when it comes to marketing and advertising. Summers defined media literacy as “the skills and knowledge needed to question, analyze, interpret, and evaluate those messages that are created and disseminated by the mass media” (1997, p.v). Summers (1997) went on to add that not only should students be instructed in ways to look at media, but also in ways to look at issues underlying the media messages related to various areas of the culture. Weil also emphasized that humane educators not only help students to look at the messages of the ad, but also at how the ad might affect “other species, other people, and the Earth” (2004, p.24). She gave a list of questions that educators might use when helping teens to evaluate the messages in advertising:

1. What product or service is the ad selling?
2. What deep need or desire is the ad appealing to?
3. Who is the intended audience, and what do you suppose their reaction to the ad might be?
4. Who is excluded by the ad?
5. How does the ad affect your personal desires, self-image, beliefs, and consumer choices?

6. What are the effects of the product or service the ad is selling on people, other species, and the environment, and what suffering, destruction, and/or exploitation remains unseen? (pp. 23-24)

As has been shown above, children of all ages need to be able to manage all of the information that they are being presented by the media, both directly and indirectly. It is important to create a balanced way of evaluating things, in order to promote critical thinking rather than simply creating cynics. Korzybski (as cited in Summers, 1997, p.iv) pointed out that “[t]here are two ways to slide easily through life; to believe everything or to doubt everything. Both ways save us from thinking.” Indeed it is the goal of humane education to challenge students to aim at the middle of this thinking continuum. Media analysis is one of the powerful methods which can be used to encourage this type of learning.

### **Over-consumption in Our Culture**

All that marketing and advertising seems to be paying off. “In 1992, teenagers between the ages of twelve and nineteen accounted for a whopping \$93 billion [in spending]” (Jacobson & Mazur, 1995, p. 22). Not only that, Jacobson and Mazur continued, but they are influential in an additional \$130 billion in spending by their parents and other family members. *All Consuming Passion – Waking Up from the American Dream* (1998) is a booklet produced by New Road Map Foundation and Northwest Environment Watch. Within this booklet there are several startling facts in relation to consumption levels in our country:

Number of high schools in the United States in 1996: 24,000

Number of shopping centers in the United States in 1996: 42,130 (p.6)

Americans spend twice as much on children's athletic shoes as they do on children's books. (p.5)

The amount of energy used by one American is equivalent to that used by:  
3 Germans, 6 Mexicans, 14 Chinese, 38 Indians, 168 Bangladeshi (p. 12)

These high levels of consumption can take a toll on other species, other people, and the Earth. It is estimated that if everybody on the planet lived the lifestyle that North Americans live, that we would require three more planets in order to supply enough resources (Wackernagel & Rees, 1996). Ryan and Durning (1997, pp. 4-5) wrote "Though they see only a fraction of it, Americans consume 120 pounds – nearly their average body weight- every day in natural resources extracted from farms, forests, rangelands, and mines." They went on to say that this is mainly made possible through the long chains of production that keep most of the impacts hidden from view of the consumer. Part of humane education is to help bring some of these hidden impacts into view for consideration by students.

The United States, although it makes up less than 5 % of the world's population uses approximately 24% of the world's resources (Ryan & Durning, 1997). In fact "since 1940, Americans alone have used up as large a share of the Earth's mineral resources as all previous humans put together" (Jones et al., 2001, p. 25). Wackernagel and Rees, authors of *Our Ecological Footprint* (1996), told us that while there is only available 1.5 hectares of land for each person on Earth today, the average North American needs the resources

from 4 to 5 hectares to maintain their current lifestyle. While all of these facts seem to point to the problems created by the lifestyles of North Americans, what is more alarming is that our “way of life” is spreading, thanks in part to marketing and advertising that reaches across the globe (Jones et al., 2001). It seems clear from a humane, sustainable, and ecological standpoint that we need to look at alternatives to our current ways of living.

### **Your Life Energy as Money**

While it goes without saying that humane education would look at the problem of over-consumption in terms of its effects on other people, other species, and the Earth it is important also for students in humane education courses to see some benefits that they too can gain through making changes in their behavior patterns. Dominguez and Robin wrote about another aspect of consumption in the book *Your Money or Your Life* (1992). While they pointed out that it was only recently that Americans transformed from being citizens to being consumers, their book holds out hope that we might be able to change our ways. One of the main premises of their book is that “money is something that we choose to trade our life energy for” (Dominguez & Robin, 1992, p.54). The authors asked readers to compute their “real hourly wage” by first adding up the number of hours that they spend on work (this includes getting ready, commuting, etc) then finding out how much money they have as a result (this would be their income minus expenses related to their job for such things as work clothes, transportation costs, tools needed, etc). When they divide these two numbers they are able to obtain their real hourly wage – which is often quite different than the one they signed on for.

Dominguez and Robin then asked readers to use this value in evaluating the money they are spending in terms of life energy. At their “real hourly wage” how many hours of their life will it take you to buy that new t-shirt, that new CD, that new car? This is often a new idea when presented to teens (and adults!) which helps them to reevaluate the amount of money that they spend on “things” in a new and different way.

### **Voluntary Simplicity: Wants Vs. Needs**

One movement that is growing in reaction to the high levels of consumption that are viewed as “normal” is the voluntary simplicity movement. Many are working toward simplicity in their lives as a result of feeling overstressed from working too much and having less time to spend on things that are important to them. Sixty-six percent of Americans say that they want more balance in their lives, while 60% want to simplify their lives (NRMF & NEW, 1998). With these high numbers, it is clear that something in the status quo is not satisfying to a large percentage of people. Many of these people are already doing something about this desire for change, as one fifth of Americans have already taken steps to simplify their lives (Jones et al., 2001).

Jones et al. (2001) gave us some ideas of what living simply might mean:

- Living more frugally
- Working less
- Slowing down
- Spending more time with loved ones
- Developing your passions and creativity
- Building strong communities

- Focusing on inner growth instead of on outward appearance
- Engaging in meaningful and satisfying work that contributes to others (pp. 44-45)

Elgin, in his book *Voluntary Simplicity*, emphasized that simplicity is not about giving up everything material, but about learning “to live between the extremes of poverty and excess” (1993, p.147). He stressed the importance of understanding the difference between “wants” and “needs” in creating this balance for ourselves.

Needs are those things that are essential to our survival and our growth. Wants are those things that are extra – that gratify our psychological desires. For example we *need* shelter in order to survive. We may *want* a huge house with many extra rooms that are seldom used. We *need* basic medical care. We may *want* cosmetic surgery to disguise the fact that we are getting older. We *need* functional clothing. We may *want* frequent changes in clothing style to reflect the latest fashion. We *need* a nutritious and well-balanced diet. We may *want* to eat at expensive restaurants. We *need* transportation. We may *want* a new Mercedes. (Elgin, 1993, p. 147)

For many teens, there is little distinction between what they want and what they need. It is one of the purposes of the humane educator to encourage them to understand what the differences are and to help them to see their purchases in a new light. A group looking at living simply set this as one of their criteria related to consumption, “Do I consider the impact of my consumption patterns on other people and on the earth?” (Elgin, 1993, p. 149). If we all took this into consideration before every purchase, what a

world of difference it would make. This is one of the reasons that this topic will be included in the course developed through this Independent Learning Project.

### **Sweatshops Defined**

There are various definitions of what a “sweatshop” is depending upon where the definition is coming from. Leibhold and Rubenstein said that the sweatshop “refers to a workplace where relatively unskilled employees work long hours for substandard pay in unhealthy and unsafe working conditions” (1999, p.3). If more than one US labor law is violated by a factory then the US Department of Labor considers it a sweatshop. UNITE, the US garment workers union, calls a sweatshop any factory where workers are not able to form a union. Other groups consider an additional factor: if the workers of the factory are paid a living wage (Global Exchange, 2005).

### **Potential Problems For Workers in Sweatshops**

While the low wages often paid in the sweatshop factories within the garment industry are a primary concern, there are still others. Benefits that many of us take for granted are non-existent in the sweatshop factories. Employees generally have no health insurance, no paid holidays, no vacation time or sick leave, and often get no raises (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000). Working overtime is often seen as mandatory, since a worker who refuses can lose his or her job, be fined, or be humiliated. Female workers who get pregnant are often fired, and showing soiled sanitary napkins to a manager is one way the pregnancy screening is done (Varley, 1998). In some cases indentured or child

labor occurs within the factories. Leibhold and Rubenstein pointed out that within the US:

some exploitive garment contractors use the threat of INS deportation to keep workers from reporting health, safety, and wage code violations. A few contractors have even been known to turn in their employees to the INS to avoid paying their wages. (1999, p.8)

In a 1997 study, 96% of garment factories in the US were found to be in violation of health and/or safety standards. Fifty-four percent had violations that could prove to lead to serious injury – or death (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000).

While there are often injuries to workers in garment factories around the world, the workers often suffer from verbal and physical abuse. Sexual abuse also occurs, particularly due to the fact that many workers are female teens or young adults. Workers who try to organize are often specifically harassed, sometimes arrested, sometimes fired, and in some cases killed. Protection is not given to workers to keep them safe from chemicals that could be harmful nor fibers that can cause respiratory problems. (Global Exchange, 2005).

### **Issues of Inequality, Gender, and Race Related to Sweatshops**

Bonacich and Appelbaum emphasized in their book, Behind the Label: Inequality in the Los Angeles Apparel Industry, how “[t]he lifestyles of top retailers and manufacturers, along with the professionals who serve them, stand in stark contrast to those of the persons who make the clothing” (2000, p. 219). This goes for most garment factories abroad, as well as some here in the USA. Some have estimated that a worker in

Haiti, producing clothing for Disney, would have to work for 156 years to make what the Disney CEO makes in an hour. Disney is not the only company that exemplifies this unequivocal distribution of income. “According to Business Week’s 2001 annual report, CEO’s at 365 of the largest publicly traded companies earned 531 times the earnings of the average worker in their companies” (Giles, as cited in Esbenshade, 2004, p.21). The National Labor Committee said that of the \$140 a jersey costs in the US, a worker in El Salvador earns about 24 cents (Global Exchange, 2005). A study in 1997 showed the average wages of garment workers around the world: Germany - \$18.43, United States - \$9.56, Mexico- \$1.08, Haiti - \$.49, China - \$.28, and Pakistan - \$.26 (Varley, 1998). While some might argue that the cost of living in some of these countries is lower, the wages that the workers earn are often one third of what is needed to be above poverty levels in their countries. The government in El Salvador has even said that garment workers’ wages leave them in “abject poverty” (Global Exchange, 2005, p.4). Even workers in sweatshop conditions here in the US suffer economically. Liebhold and Rubenstein told us that “[t]he average garment worker in Los Angeles makes under \$8,000 a year, less than two-thirds of the poverty level income” (1999, pp. 56-57).

More than 70% of the workforce in the garment factories is women. As mentioned above, there are often female specific abuses and harassment from the management with relation to pregnancy and sexual abuse. They are often considered by management to be the “ideal workforce as they frequently lack the experience and alternatives that would enable them to demand higher wages and better treatment” (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000, p.7.). Even with the already low wages common to the

industry – females generally earn less than the males that are working the same positions within the factories.

Breakdowns within the garment industry, seem to point to a racially divided chain of power. Most factories are owned by people who are Caucasian, managed by people who are Asian, and have a primary workforce which is either Latino or Asian. Within the US, workers in the garment factories are 75% Latino and approximately 85% are recent immigrants (Bonacich & Applebaum, 2000). With different ethnicities concentrated at different levels within the industry, there is often a lack of communication between workers and management. Many times the managers and workers do not speak the same language. This can sometimes lead to higher levels of frustration, lower feelings of camaraderie, and increased levels of harassment and exploitation in the workplace.

### **Reasons Given for the Existence of Sweatshops**

Time and again in the literature, the globalization of corporations and competition for increased profits were given as primary factors in the existence of sweatshop factories. Esbenshade (2004) focused not only on the increasing power of the corporation, but also of the decrease in the levels of power for the workers and the state. Free trade agreements, such as NAFTA, allow for easier movement of goods across borders. Because corporations have the freedom to move to different countries throughout the world, they are locating, and relocating, in various countries in order to find lower wages and fewer regulations (Global Exchange, 2005). Many have called this a race-to-the-bottom as wages, employee rights, and environmental restrictions are driven down lower and lower.

Governments in developing countries, who are often desperate for money and jobs, often work with the corporations and other entities. Countries will set low minimum wages in order to attract corporations to bring their factories there (Global Exchange, 2005). There is also pressure on the countries from the IMF and World Bank to move toward export centered development in order to receive the loans that they need or want (Esbenshade, 2004). Often places where the factories are located - called export processing zones - have lower regulations and wages than exist outside of the zones (Varley, 1998). Governments try to deliver a subordinate and docile workforce to the companies. Bonacich and Appelbaum (2000) wrote that workers' poor working conditions are "exacerbated by political regimes, often supported by the US, that have restricted the worker's ability to organize and demand change" (p.7).

Often times it is argued that consumers are partly to blame since they desire cheap clothing. This is most often seen as the incredible power that retailers have over the prices paid for goods to the manufacturers, and ultimately to the workers in the factories. Such a small number of retailers control such a large proportion of retail sales that when they decide to lower wholesale prices, it has an effect on everyone below them in the process. The garment industry had been likened to a pyramid, with retailers on the top, then manufacturers, then contractors, then workers. Manufacturers rarely ever really do the manufacturing of the item – but instead parcel the work out to various contractors or subcontractors who have the sewing factories. This system has several benefits to manufacturers, including externalizing risk and lowering labor costs (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000). When the retailers lower prices, this begins the crunch. "The low prices paid by the manufacturers to the contractors set the stage for violations of labor

standards” (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000, p.138). Since the contractors themselves are barely able to maintain steady work, this is passed on to the workers in the form of unsteady work schedules, with times of increased production and thus lots of overtime as well as times of lower production and thus no paycheck. Pressure remains high, though, on manufacturers and contractors to keep wages low because there is always the risk that the retailer will move their business to places where the wages are cheaper (Global Exchange, 2005).

The drive for getting the most work done at the lowest cost drives not only lower wages, but also contributes to some of the abusive situations we see in sweatshop factories around the world. There are many issues involved, and complicated paths to trace. As Leibhold and Rubenstein (1999) stated “understanding why sweatshops persist means exploring issues of competition, government regulation, immigration, business practices, and racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination” (p. 3).

### **Made in the USA**

For many people, looking for the “Made in the USA” label has been one way that they thought they could buy clothing made under fair labor conditions. Clothing with this label, however, can be made under a variety of conditions which are not just. The United States does have sweatshops within its own borders, particularly within the larger cities. While some cases are more famous, the 1995 bust of a sweatshop with indentured Thai workers in El Monte, California (Liebhold & Rubenstein, 1999) for example, there are others that exist without being publicized or documented. In a 1996 report, it was estimated that one half of all garment shops in the US were in violation of wage and/or

safety laws. Los Angeles has a very large apparel industry. It “accounts for 14 percent of all manufacturing jobs in Los Angeles County, making it the largest manufacturing sector” (Gale Group, 2004, ¶ 10). In 1998, the Department of Labor found 61% of LA garment factories to be violating wage and hour regulations (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000). Even with all of these findings, the Department of Labor felt that there are many factories with conditions that are unknown. Alexis M. Herman – the US Secretary of Labor in 1997 expressed that:

In this era of concern for civility, decency, and family values, sweatshops are repugnant to our moral core. It is wrong to value fashion when we do not value the people who make fashion real ... Sweatshops reflect too vividly how we as a nation feel about the weakest among us. And it is such an “underground” problem that there is no definitive source on how many sweatshops operate in this country. But we know this: One is one too many. (as cited in Leibhold & Rubenstein, 1999, p.36)

While the apparel industry began moving factories overseas in the 1960’s (Liebhold & Rubenstein, 1999) there is still a demand for factories here in the US. Since the turnaround time for an order sent to a US factory is two weeks as compared to six weeks for an order sent to Mexico, specialized and fast changing items tend to be made within US factories (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000). Of course these high pressure jobs can lead to an environment of sweatshop conditions for workers.

So while clothing actually made in the United States cannot be guaranteed “sweatshop free,” this is not the only clothing that carries the label. Clothing made in factories in US territories are also labeled as “Made in the USA”. A 20/20 report by

Brian Ross on March 13, 1998 exposed sweatshop conditions in the factories on the island of Saipan. Many well know brands were being made in these factories, and being readied for retail with the label “Made in the USA”. So it is important to realize that this label does not necessarily indicate that the clothing was made within the 50 states nor does it indicate that it was made without sweatshop labor.

### **Arguments in Favor of “Sweatshops”**

Many, particularly economists, have come out in favor of sweatshops. While there are few, if any, that feel that abuses are appropriate, there are some that propose that the low wages and long hours required of sweatshop workers are to the benefit of workers in developing countries. While the wages may be low, economists argued, they are better than no wages at all in countries where unemployment and underemployment levels reach the 50% mark (Garvin, 1997). There are workers who hope for long hours and overtime so that they can make more money to support themselves (Kristoff & Wudunn, 2000). Others workers say that the pay is not so low, that the factories pay better than being an elementary school teacher (Garvin, 1997). Lucy Martinez-Mont, a Guatemalan economist, pointed out that:

People choose to work in maquilas of their own free will, because those are the best jobs available to them. Given that unemployment compensation is unheard of in Central America, a lousy job is better than no job at all. (as cited in Varley, 1998)

Not only did economists assume that these factories are a good alternative for current employment in developing countries, but that they are an important step on the

road towards industrialization and prosperity (Varley, 1998). Wolf (2004) argued that in order to get a good market, there has to be a good government. Following this theory, he proposed that global competition is one way to work to improve the governments of developing countries, which he concluded are more often corrupt than those in developed countries.

Another argument given in favor of sweatshop factories is that they provide women in developing countries a chance to work to support themselves. Since in some countries women are treated as second class citizens, the jobs created for them at the factories allow for greater freedoms and self-sufficiency than they would be able to obtain otherwise (Wolf, 2004).

Another section that is often looked at through a special lens is child workers. While in the US we tend to be against child labor, proponents point out that “in much of the Third World, it is natural to view your child as an economic asset” (Goldberg, 2001, ¶ 15). While one reason for not supporting child labor is the thought that the child should be at school, many who are working might not have the option of going to school even if not working (Varley, 1998). Discharging the children – without a program in place to provide education or income opportunities – may lead to worse conditions for the child. They may end up begging on the street, or as happened in Bangladesh according to UNICEF, the children may end up in prostitution (Stossel, 2003).

It seems that on the issue of sweatshops around the world, for every argument in support of sweatshops, there is an argument against them, and vice versa. For example, those in favor pointed to the sweatshops in the history of the United States, South Korea, Japan, China, and other developed countries and see them as a crucial step in building a

prosperous future for the country. Opponents to this view pointed out that there are fewer and fewer places for the factories to move to once a country “graduates” from sweatshop labor into more lucrative fields. Still others brought up the idea that the wages aren’t being suppressed naturally by the economy, but unnaturally by governments, corporations, and factory managers, thus it’s not part of a “natural” economic growth chart. As one can see, there are many sides to many issues within the sweatshop debate. Only after understanding the multiple sides of the issues can one make a well informed decision on the topic.

### **Processes to Help End Sweatshop Practices**

Co-op America has put out “A Guide to Ending Sweatshops”. In it they listed several things that they propose would help to bring an end to sweatshop conditions. For the workers there must be a living wage, the chance for education, and the right to organize and advocate for themselves in the workplace. For companies, there must be accountability, responsible actions, and full disclosure to the public of the working conditions of workers that produce their goods.

Monitoring of the factories seems to be the most prevalent idea as a way to go about creating corporate accountability and disclosure. There have been two main types of monitoring discussed in the literature, private and independent. Private monitoring is where the company itself hires the monitors. While this does seem to have some positive effects upon how workers are treated, there are many opponents to this as the single way of monitoring. For one thing, if the manufacturers are paying the monitors then they are in control of “both the process and the information gathered through it” (Esbenshade,

2004, p.88). Others are in favor, some demanding of, regular monitoring of the factories by independent groups, often nongovernmental organizations. Independent monitoring allows workers to be a more authentic part of the process, and it also allows for the public publishing of the findings from the monitoring investigations (Ebenshade, 2004).

In the event that a factory is found to be in violation, it is an important step that rather than simply stop doing business, the companies work with the factories to improve conditions. If a company leaves the factory, it “leads to job loss rather than improvements in labor standards and does nothing for the workers” (Hansenne as cited in Varley, 1998, p. 24). Since it is the workers that most opponents to sweatshops are trying to protect, this would seem a critical point. In a line of similar reasoning, boycotting the company may not be in the best interest of the workers if it leads to the loss of their jobs, but consumers working to convince the factories and companies to stay involved and to work towards improvement through letters, calls, and campaigns can lead to more effective and lasting change.

Another area that seemed to be of great importance to improving conditions is for the workers themselves to have the right to organize and negotiate with management. Varley (1998) agrees when she wrote “with a union in place, workers have the vehicle they need to set their own priorities for higher wages and better working conditions” (p.80). This is the empowerment that is needed to bring about sustainable change.

Since so many companies today are based upon image and brand name, consumers hold a slight advantage in working with them. Consumer loyalty is very important to these companies, and thus it gives customers leverage in working to end

sweatshop practices (Varley, 1998). Consumers must use this power in a positive way to improve the lives and working conditions of many.

Bonacich and Appelbaum (2000) expressed so well the importance of action on these issues: “The significance of the anti-sweatshop movement extends far beyond the apparel industry. It represents nothing less than an attack on the entire system of global, flexible production and the social inequality and suffering that it is creating” (pp. 296-297).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the literature review, there have been discussions on a variety of issues related to the topic at hand. The T-shirt has led us in exploration of environmental effects, pesticide use, consumption levels, marketing and advertising, and sweatshop labor. It is time now, to work to create the Independent Learning Project, the course entitled “The Shirt Off My Back” as a way for students to become involved in learning about these issues. It is the hope that through this course the students will begin to see their ability to affect positive change in their worlds.

As Robert F. Kennedy once said:

Each time a person stands for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he or she sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. And crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance. (as cited in Jones, Haenfler, Johnson, & Klocke, 2001, p.51)

Here is to hoping that this course helps to create the beginning of one of these ripples of hope.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Shirt Off My Back: A Humane Education Curriculum**

The high school course “The Shirt Off My Back” is a course which works to link various areas in humane education. It looks at these areas through their relation to an everyday object, the t-shirt. The course has been formatted for online learning, although it could easily be modified for independent study, traditional correspondence distance education, or use in the classroom. Also included in the course is a service learning project to be completed by the students.

I have included objectives for the course, and Colorado model content standards that are addressed within the course. I have also included several materials such as evaluation forms, surveys, and handouts that the students would need to complete the course. It is assumed that any articles or readings that are not available online, as well as videos, will be sent to the student as part of their course materials, I have not included all of these materials here.

I have not included specific information about course websites, navigating these websites, login information, or grading policies. It is assumed that each of these would change depending upon the instructor and website used by each to put the course online.

The course has been divided into sections to help the students in organizing their studies. Sections B and C deal with the service project, and should be worked on throughout the span of the course. The other sections should be completed one at a time, and in order, by the students as they move through the assignments and activities. It is

my hope that the course not only be valuable in itself, but that it will serve as a template on which other humane education courses for high school students may be developed.

## Colorado Model Content Standards Addressed in “The Shirt Off My Back”

### Reading and Writing Standards:

1. Students read and understand a variety of materials.
2. Students write and speak for a variety of purposes.
3. Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.
4. Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.
5. Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.

### Geography:

1. Students know how to use and construct maps, globes, and other geographic tools to locate and derive information about people, places, and environments.
2. Students know the physical and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define and study regions and their patterns of change.
4. Students understand how economic, political, cultural, and social processes interact to shape patterns of human populations, interdependence, cooperation, and conflict.
5. Students understand the effects of interactions between human and physical systems and the changes in meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources.
6. Students apply knowledge of people, places, and environments to understand the past and present and to plan for the future.

### Mathematics:

4. Students use geometric concepts, properties, and relationships in problem solving situations and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.
5. Students use a variety of tools and techniques to measure, apply the results in problem solving situations, and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.
6. Students link concepts and procedures as they develop and use computational techniques, including estimation, mental arithmetic, paper-and-pencil, calculators, and computers, in problem-solving situations and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.

### Science:

6. Students know and understand interrelationships among science, technology, and human activity and how they can affect the world.

### Economics:

1. Students understand that because of the condition of scarcity, decisions must be made about the use of resources.

2. Students understand how different economic systems impact decisions about the use of resources and the production and distribution of goods and services.
3. Students understand the results of trade, exchange, and interdependence among individuals, households, businesses, governments, and societies.

Civics:

2. Students know the political relationship of the United States and its citizens to other nations and world affairs.

History:

2. Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.
4. Students understand how science, technology, and economic activity have developed, changed, and affected societies throughout history.

## **Course Section Objectives:**

Section A: The student will be able to log in to the course, post a response to a topic on the class discussion board, and send an email with an attachment.

Section B: The student will be able to define service learning, tell four different types of service projects, choose a service project, and relate that project to the course content.

Section 1: The student will be able to locate countries on a map, and list patterns and trends in information.

Section 2: The student will be able to describe at least three steps in the process of making a t-shirt, compare their level of consumption to others', create a visual representation of their ecological footprint to scale.

Section 3: The student will be able to list possible benefits and drawbacks to the use of pesticides with relation to people, other species, and the environment.

Section 4: The student will be able to begin to develop understanding of issue related to sweatshops, compare purchasing power of a worker in a sweatshop with that of a union worker in the U.S., give two steps that can be taken to help the workers in the sweatshops.

Section 5: The student will be able to list at least three solutions for the problems in sweatshops.

Section 6: The student will be able to understand the history and current conditions of sweatshops in the U.S., form an opinion on sweatshops and support their opinion with at least three reasons, list at least one change that they can make in their life in relation to what they've learned.

Section 7: The student will be able to communicate their ideas and opinions in writing using details, facts, and examples from materials in the course to support their ideas.

Section 8: The student will be able to analyze advertising aimed at teenagers, express opinions about ad campaigns that are directed at children.

Section 9: The student will be able to read and understand different perspectives related to company logos and compare them to their own.

Section 10: The student will be able to identify humane criteria for shopping habits and demonstrate understanding of the difference between a want and a need by listing five of each.

Section 11: The student will be able to give three criteria for a humanely produced t-shirt.

Section 12: The student will be able to create a project which demonstrates at least three positive choices or actions that can help to lessen or alleviate the negative impacts from the lifecycle of their t-shirt, and evaluate the project and course learning.

# The Shirt Off My Back

A Humane Education Course

## **Welcome to “The Shirt Off My Back”!!**

In this course we will be taking an ordinary, everyday object, the t-shirt, and looking at it in different ways. You will be looking at many things related to the t-shirt: how it is made, where the materials come from, and the effects that these processes have on people, other species, and the environment. You will also look at how advertising might affect which t-shirts you purchase, and how these purchases in turn can affect you and others.

The course has been divided into different sections to help you through your studies of the different areas in the course. With the exception of Sections B and C, you will probably want to complete each section before moving on to the next section. Sections B and C involve a service project which will continue throughout the course.

While much of the course will be completed individually, there are a few group/partner projects. For nearly each section – there will be a discussion topic. You will need to post your response to the topic on the “bulletin board” and respond to at least two of your classmates’ responses. There will also be scheduled chat or conference call sessions for the entire class every three weeks. You will receive emails with the dates, times, and topics for these at a later date.

If you have any questions, remember to email or call your instructor about them.

I am here to help you through this learning process. I hope that you enjoy the course.

Good luck!

## **Section A: Getting Started**

In Section A you will complete a student survey, post a message on the discussion board, and send an assignment via email. This will help you to be familiar with these modes of communication since many of your assignments will be sent via email or posted onto the discussion board.

- Take the *Student Entrance Survey*. Turn this in to your instructor. You may either send it via email, fax, or postal service.
  
- Write a paragraph about yourself. Write at least one thing that is important to you, or tell a funny story about something that's happened to you. Also, be sure to answer the following questions. Why are you taking this course? What do you hope to learn?
  - Email this paragraph to your instructor, either by copying and pasting it into your message, or sending it as an attachment.
  
  - Go to the class discussion board, reply to the topic "Introductions", copy and paste your paragraph as your reply. Also, as your classmates put their own introductions on the discussion board read them all, and respond to at least two of them by replying to them on the discussion board.

***Extra Credit:*** This extra credit assignment can be completed at any time during the course. Find a current event - newspaper article, magazine article, or article on the internet - that relates to something that you are learning in the course. Write a one page paper summarizing the article, telling how it relates to what you're learning in the course, and telling how you feel about the information in the article and why you feel that way. Send your paper to your instructor as well as a copy of the article – or a link to get to it online.

## Section B: The Service Project

As part of this course you will complete a service project. Your service project must address some problem that exists within your community. There are several topics which you will be learning about in this course, and your service project must relate to at least one of them.

Some possible topics include:

- Organic growing methods
- Concerns for the natural environment
- Concerns for the species which inhabit these natural environments
- Concerns for people who may have less material wealth
- Advertising and marketing aimed at youth markets
- Levels of consumption or over-consumption in our society

If you see other connections that can be made, please feel free to make them. This list does not include all of the possibilities.

It is up to you to decide what type of service project you will complete. Your project can range from doing volunteer work for an organization to conducting a survey in your community and publishing the results in a paper or on a website. Your project must include a minimum of 12 hours of service time. It is up to you to document that time and send it to your instructor upon completion of your project. Your project must be approved by your instructor before you begin.

Need some ideas? Here are some things to try ...

- Do a web search on service learning. Visit some of these sites and see if they can give you examples or ideas for your service project.
- Look for books on service learning at your local library. One good one is [The Complete Guide To Service Learning](#) by Cathryn Berger Kaye. If they don't have the one you are looking for ask them if they can get it from another library (often called interlibrary loan).

Do you have some ideas now?

- Go to the class discussion board for "Service Project Ideas" and write at least two different ideas for a service project that you have found or thought of. Read as many ideas from your classmates as you can. Respond to at least two of the ideas that you read.
  
- Write a proposal for your service project and email it to your instructor. In your proposal include what you plan to do, how you plan to accomplish your goals, what problem in your community will you be addressing through your project, how does it relate to the topics in the course, why you chose this particular service activity, and what you hope to accomplish through completing your service project.

## Section C: Reflecting on Your Service Project

While you are working on your service project, you will write several “journal entries” which you will email to your instructor as you complete them. Each entry should be at least three paragraphs long. Your journal entries should be spread out over the time that it takes you to complete your project.

Entry 1: Have you been exposed to any people or ideas that are different than those that you have been exposed to before? How has this affected you or your thoughts?

Entry 2: In your project proposal you stated what problem your project was going to address. What are some of the underlying issues or causes of this problem?

Entry 3: How do you feel about the contributions that you are making through your service project? What do you feel that you are gaining through your service project?

Entry 4: What could others do to help address the need that you are addressing through your service project?

Entry 5: A closer look – this journal entry will relate to a question that your instructor will send you, based upon your project. Email your instructor when you are ready to receive this question.

Entry 6: At what points in time during your service project have you felt frustrated? What have you done (or can you do) to overcome these feelings of frustration?

Entry 7: Do you plan to participate in service to your community in the future? If yes, why and what do you hope to do? If no, why not?

At the conclusion of your service project, write a one page paper reflecting on the experience. Email this to your instructor.

Choose one thing that you experienced or learned through completing your service project and share it with your classmates on the discussion board under “Service Project Experiences”. Read the other entries there and respond to at least two of them.

## Section 1: Tracking Those Shirts

Now we will begin looking at those t-shirts.

What you need to get started:

Shirt tracker form  
Blank world map

Look through your closet and your drawers and pull out all of your t-shirts. You can use just short sleeved ones or both short and long sleeved – it's up to you. For each shirt, fill in all of the columns on your tracking sheet that you can.

After completing the tracking sheet for all of your t-shirts do the following:

- Write down any patterns that you notice, or anything else of interest that you find while completing your chart. Were many of your shirts made in the same country? How many were made in the US? Are most of your shirts the same brand(s)? Do you use all of your shirts often? Send the answers to these questions to your instructor.
- For each t-shirt put a point (or star, or whatever symbol you like) on your map in the country where the shirt was made.
- Pick one country (not the US) from which at least one of your T-shirts has come from. Do some research on this country- find out whatever you can about working conditions in this country, environmental regulations, income and poverty levels, and any other things of interest that you might find about this country. How do these things compare with conditions in the U.S.? Send the results of your finding to your instructor.
- Section 1 Discussion Board Topic: What surprising or interesting things did you find while doing the shirt tracker and mapping activities? Post your own response to this question, read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

**Remember that anytime you are asked a question or to write something in the course (unless it is for the discussion board) you should email your responses to your instructor. Save all of your work for each section and send it when you finish the whole section.**

## Section 2:

From the book Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things, read the prologue and the T-shirt chapter. After completing the reading respond to the following:

- What are three new things that you learned from the reading?
- After reading the “What to do” section at the end of the T-shirt chapter, state whether there are any of these things that you already do? Are there any of the suggestions you would be willing to try to do? Why or why not?
- Was anything in the reading surprising or upsetting to you?
- What are your thoughts and/or feelings after reading this information?
- Together with you group/partner pick one of the other chapters in Stuff. Read it and discuss it with your group/partner. You can use email, online chat, or a phone call. After you have discussed what you read – write about this experience. Be sure to include the main points of your discussion, on what did you agree, on what did you disagree, etc.

### **My Choices – My Footprint**

Visit [www.myfootprint.org](http://www.myfootprint.org) and do the “calculate my footprint” activity. After completing this activity (remember to do this with your results still on the screen) answer/do the following:

- How does your footprint compare to the average in your country? How many planets would be needed if everyone lived in a similar way? In what area is your usage the largest?
- Go to “Take Action”. Fill out the form you find there. Are you surprised by any of the possible actions listed there? Are you interested in or excited to try any of them? Which ones?
- Obviously the questionnaire for “Calculate My Footprint” is very simplified. Write one or two additional questions - with the multiple choices - that could be possibilities to add to the questionnaire.
- Take your footprint measurement (in acres) and draw it out on a map of your city with your house near the center. How many people live in your city? If everyone’s footprint was a similar size could they all fit on your city’s map? What are any possible implications or worries that the answer to this question might point to?
- Section 2 Discussion Board Topic: After going to “Take Action” on [www.myfootprint.org](http://www.myfootprint.org) write about one action that you would be willing to try to take during the remainder of this course. Post your own response to this topic, read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

### Section 3:

Read the article “Problems with conventional cotton production”. You can find this article at [www.panna.org](http://www.panna.org) – click on “Contents” then “Resource Library.” Follow the cotton link and find the article title.

Read the “Pesticides” section (pg. 65-66) in the book, [This Planet is Mine](#).

Visit [www.simplelife.com/organiccotton](http://www.simplelife.com/organiccotton) and read/take the tour

- What did you find to be the most interesting from the above readings? Why?
- Why do you think that images of war are used in dealing with insects? Do you feel that this is appropriate? What are possible benefits and drawbacks to this?
- Do you think that paying more for an organic cotton shirt is different than paying more for a shirt of a particular brand name? Why or why not? This is your discussion board question for Section 3. Post your own response to this question, read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.
- Think about the section that mentions cottonseed oil as an ingredient in food. Do you feel it is more important to be concerned about pesticide use on cotton with relation to its use in clothing or its use in food? Explain your reasoning.
- The presentation on organic cotton was made for employees of the company Patagonia. Visit a Patagonia store or their website [www.patagonia.com](http://www.patagonia.com). Find/read their opinions and policies on using organic cotton. What is your response to this?

#### ***What’s in your cabinet?***

- Look through your household (or if you can’t find anything you may visit a local store). First look to find food items containing cottonseed oil. Did you find any? What products did you find it in? Were these items that you normally eat? How does this make you feel?
- Next look for household chemicals – you might look for gardening chemicals, cleaning products, etc. Look for the active ingredients in these products and keep a list of what you find. You may either pick one of these chemicals – or use one from the T-shirt chapter in [Stuff](#). Aldicarb, chlorine, and formaldehyde are all listed in the T-shirt chapter – can you find where they are used in the process? Pick one of these three chemicals (aldicarb, chlorine, or formaldehyde) – or one that you found around your home and do some research about it. Find out why, when, and where this chemical is generally used. What are possible benefits and drawbacks to its usage in relation to people, animals, and the environment? Can you think of any other effects it might have? Upon what or whom?
- Visit the website of the company that manufactures that chemical or product, or read a pamphlet from the company. How does this information compare with other information you found about the chemical or product?

## Section 4:

Watch the video “Sweating for a T-Shirt”

- Was Honduras one of the countries that your t-shirts came from?
- Write a one page paper reacting to the show. You may discuss your thoughts about what you saw and learned. You may also want to discuss the contradictions between what different people were saying in the film. Who were these people? How did they contradict each other? Why do you think that is? What parts do you agree/disagree with and why?
- Visit [www.coopamerica.org](http://www.coopamerica.org) and go to their sweatshop section.
  - Read through the FAQ’s
  - Look at the information on the “*sweatshop scorecard*”
  - Read their “Guide to ending sweatshops”
- Review the chart you made with your t-shirts. Look at the countries and stores where your t-shirts came from. How do they rate on the scorecard? How does this make you feel? Are there any steps that you can take that will help those working in the sweatshops?
- Visit [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org) and go to their section on sweatshops. Read the information that they have available. Visit their links page.
- Visit at least two of these links and report on what you find out at each one.
- Look carefully at Handout 1B “Hire Rosa for 57 Cents an Hour!” Write your thoughts and feelings with regard to this advertisement.
- Complete the “Work and Basic Necessities” worksheet. Write 2-3 paragraphs about your findings and your thoughts and feelings about what you found.
- Section 4 Discussion Board Topic: Read the personal story of Quang Thi Vo in Co-op America’s “Guide to Ending Sweatshops”. How do you think you would feel if you were in a similar situation? Post your own response to this question, read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

## Section 5:

In the section above you watched and read information that was mostly from people or organizations that did not support “sweatshops”. In this section you will read some different viewpoints. When looking at any issue it is important to look at all sides of the story (there are practically always more than just two). Only after understanding the differing viewpoints can you then begin to make your own decisions based on a wide variety of information.

- Go to [www.globalenvision.org](http://www.globalenvision.org) and read the article “Don’t Sweat It”. You can type “sweatshop” into the search bar on the website and it should pull the article up.
- Visit [www.aworldconnected.org](http://www.aworldconnected.org) and read the articles “We need these jobs” and “Two cheers for sweatshops”. You can find these by clicking *Articles and Stories* and then *Labor*. This website has information from multiple sides of the sweatshop debate. Feel free to read any of the other articles you find there as well to help you learn more about the issue.
- After reading these articles, and with the information from the previous section, fold a paper in half and list on the first half “Possible benefits” and on the second “Possible Drawbacks”. Put as many things under each half as you can in relation to sweatshops. You can think about benefits and drawbacks in relation to the workers, their families, the stores that sell products, the consumer (you), the economy, the environment, etc.
- Think about the workers and their families. What things do you feel are important for them to have from their jobs? Examples may include making enough money to feed their family, having health benefits, etc... Make a list. Come up with some ways that you can help the workers to get these things. This can include actions that you can take (or not take) as well as how you can help with choosing your clothing purchases carefully, or any other ways you can think of that would help to work towards this goal.
- Section 5 Discussion Board Topic: Come up with at least three ideas for solving the problems created by sweatshops. Post them in response to this topic, read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

## Section 6:

Many people think that sweatshops are a problem only in other countries. Many also think that by looking for the “Made in the USA” label, that they are not supporting sweatshops. In this section we will look at this issue more closely.

Visit [www.aworldconnected.org](http://www.aworldconnected.org) once more. After clicking on *Articles and Stories* and then *Labor* click on “Globalization’s Sweatshops” near the top of the page. Scroll down to the bottom. Click on the link to go to “Between a Rock and a Hard Place”. This is a museum exhibit of the history of sweatshops in the United States. Go through the entire exhibit. (You may have to do this in more than one sitting) Take notes on anything that you find that seems important to what you are learning, or that seems particularly interesting to you.

Read the article “Sweatshop Pay Hurts Los Angeles County, California Economy Report Says”

Visit [www.sweatshopwatch.org](http://www.sweatshopwatch.org). Type “made in the usa” into their search bar and perform the search. You are looking for “Is This The USA? Behind the Trusted “Made In The USA” Label” a 20/20 report from March 13, 1998. Read this report.

- What information from the above readings and activities shocked or surprised you?
- Does this new information change the way you view the “Made in the USA” label? Why or why not?
- Are there labels that you can look for on clothing that will help you to know if it was made without sweatshop labor? What are these labels? Who checks to see what clothing can be labeled “sweatshop free”? You might need to do some research to find this out. You can start with some of the links provided within this course.
- Using what you’ve learned in sections 4, 5, and 6 of this course, along with other ideas and information that you might have, state your own opinion and ideas on the issue of sweatshops. Are there any changes you might need to make in your own life to help you live in alignment with these ideas and values? Why or why not? If there are – what are these changes and how do you see yourself making them?
- Section 6 Discussion Board Topic: What did you feel was your favorite, or the most important piece in the museum exhibit “Between a Rock and a Hard Place”? Why? Post your own response to this question, read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

## Section 7:

- It's time for a field trip! Take a friend and visit your local mall and/or discount store. Look at the tags on the clothing for sale there. Take note of what country the clothing was made in, the price of the clothing, what store the clothing is located in. Ask a store manager – or ask via email to the store's website, if they can tell you what kind of conditions the people who sew/make their clothing work in. Can they answer your questions? What is their response to your questions?
- Visit [www.coopamerica.org](http://www.coopamerica.org) once more. This time go to “Responsible Shopper” Look up at least three companies – one must relate to your shopping field trip, one must relate to your own t-shirt collection, and the other may be from either of the above categories – or from another company – perhaps the one that made your CD, your car, your cell-phone, your cereal... you decide. Report what you find out about these companies. Choose one of these companies and write a letter/email to them. In it, be sure to express your opinions about things that they may be congratulated on as well as any concerns that you may have about their policies or practices. Be sure to use information that you've learned in this course to back up your opinions.
- We visited Patagonia's website earlier to see where they stood on organic cotton. See what else you can find out about them using “Responsible Shopper”. Where do they stand on sweatshop labor? Do you think these two issues are related in any way? Explain your reasoning.
- Section 7 Discussion Board Topic: What types of reactions did you get from the workers in the stores when doing the first assignment for this section? Post your own response to this topic, read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

## Section 8:

Read Marketing Madness – Chapter 1: Targeting Children – Section 1: The Littlest Consumers

- Did reading this section make you feel or think any differently than before? If so, why – if not – why not?
- Do you think that it is fair, or right, for companies to target their commercials at children? Explain your reasoning.
- What are some reasons that companies might aim their commercials at children?

Find 2 or 3 ads aimed at people your age (teenagers). These could be from magazines, the newspaper, or television commercials. Make sure that one of your ads is related to clothing.

- What product are they advertising?
- How are they advertising this product?
- Where did you find this advertisement?
- What do you think of this ad?
- Is the advertisement effective? In what ways?
- Is the advertisement trying to promote a specific product, a specific image, or both?
- What image is the advertisement promoting, or what emotion is the advertisement trying to use to its advantage, if any?
- Is there anyone who might feel excluded by this ad?
- What are the effects of the product or service that the ad is selling on people, other species, and the environment?
- How has completing this exercise changed how advertisements might possibly influence you? What can you do to decrease how advertisements influence you? Do you have any interest in decreasing the affect advertising has on you? Why or why not?
- Group/Partner Project:** Read section 2 of chapter 1 in Marketing Madness – Schools Go Commercial. Discuss the chapter with your group/partner. What do you all think about it? Are there things that you agree on? What things do you disagree on? Report on this experience for your Section 8 discussion topic. Read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

## Section 9:

Read No Logo – Chapter 3: Alt. Everything – The Youth Market and the Marketing of Cool. In addition, go to Chapter 16: A Tale of Three Logos - just read the section on the swoosh.

- Write a two page paper on your reactions to the readings and information in the chapters. You may want to discuss the following in your paper. What surprised you? What did you find upsetting? Exciting? What information was new to you? On page 379 there is a quote “Don’t look at us, we just make shoes.” Should a company like Nike be held accountable for how its product is produced? Why or why not? How does this quote make you feel?
- At this time revisit [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org) and go to the Nike section on their sweatshop page. What updates are there? How does the information on the website compare with the information presented in No Logo? You may also do your own research to see if Nike has made any changes in this area.
- What brands/logos are represented in your own T-shirt collection? Did you have any particular reasons for selecting these brands? If so, what were they? Do you think you would still use the same reasons to pick out a t-shirt after reading this information? Why or why not?
- Section 9 Discussion Board Topic: After completing the assignment above, look at the reasons you have used for picking particular brands of t-shirts. Post your own response to this topic, read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

## Section 10:

Watch the video *Affluenza*

- What in the video relates to things that you've done/talked/or read about in this course?
- Where there any new ideas presented? Which ones?
- What in the show do you agree/disagree with?
- What was your favorite part of the video? What was the message of this portion of the show?
- Find and visit one or two (or more) local thrift stores or second hand/consignment clothing stores.
- What did you find at these stores?
- What are the possible benefits (to you, other people, the environment, animals) of making your clothing purchases there instead of at the mall/discount stores?
- What are the possible drawbacks?
- Do you think you will ever shop at any of these stores for clothing (or anything else) in the future? Why or why not?

The following activity has been adapted from the book Your Money or Your Life.

Do you work? If so, use your own experiences and wages. If you do not, look around at the typical wages in your area for the after-school jobs that teens in your area might work at. Think about a typical week (or month) of work. How many hours do you work? Now take that – and also add to it any time that you spend getting ready for work, getting to and from work, etc. Now this is the total number of hours that you use for working. Write that number here \_\_\_\_\_ (hours)

How much is your check (per week or per month depending on what you used above)? That's how much money you made – however – you also spent some money for work didn't you? So take your original money amount and subtract any money you spent for work – like on work clothes, gas to get there and back home, car payment and insurance, bus fare, etc) Write that dollar amount here \_\_\_\_\_.

Now take the dollar amount and divide it by the number in the first blank for hours. Put that number here \_\_\_\_\_.

This amount is your real “hourly wage” – now I know this is not what you make “per hour” according to your job description – but this is how much money you get to keep for the amount of time you spend on working.

- Now, look at the prices that you paid for some of your t-shirts. Or look at the prices that you found for the ones at the local stores. How many hours would you have to work to buy each of those t-shirts? Is that shirt worth the time it took to earn the money? How often do you wear that shirt? Do you consider that particular shirt a *want* or a *need*? Are there other ways that you’d rather spend that time that it took you to get the money for that shirt? Or are there other things that you’d rather do with that money you worked so hard for?
- Visit [www.ibuydifferent.com](http://www.ibuydifferent.com) and take their shopping quiz. What are your reactions to or thoughts about this quiz – or anything else that you see on this website?
- Pick five things in your room or house. For each object, explain why you feel that each one is a *want* or a *need*. How could you use the ideas of wants and needs the next time you are at the store thinking about whether or not to buy something?
- Section 10 Discussion Board Topic: Post at least two examples of wants and two examples of needs. Read the responses of your classmates, and respond to at least two of them.

## Section 11: Group Project

Go to the class website and look at “Section 11: Ingredients Card Examples”. Then, together with your group, create a list of both potentially positive and negative “ingredients” for the T-Shirt “ingredients” card. Give reasons and explanations for each ingredient that you include. Send your group’s finished **T-Shirt Ingredients Card** and your **Reasons and Explanations Page** to your instructor.

## Section 12: Final project and evaluation

Final Creative Project:

Design and create a project (some examples might be a poster, brochure, video, commercial/public service announcement, song, poem, play, story, drawing, painting, sculpture, game, etc) that reflects the information that you’ve learned in this course. Within the project you must also provide three positive choices that people can make and/or actions that they can take in relation to their clothing choices or purchases.

Create an evaluation form for your project – make sure that it contains all of the parts of your project that you feel are most important. Share your project with a few close friends, family members, or other trusted adults. Ask them to fill out the evaluation forms for your project. Share these evaluations, your reactions to them, and your project with your instructor and fellow students in The Shirt of My Back course.

Fill out the course evaluation form and send it to your instructor.

**Congratulations on completing the course!!**

## **Some Course Materials**

The next few pages are materials that are used in the delivery of the course.

- Initial Student Survey
- Student End of Course Survey
- Ingredients Card Examples
- Shirt Tracker Form

## Student Entrance Survey

### **Introductory Questions:**

Why did you choose to take this course?

What do you hope to learn by taking this course?

### **Questions related to the coursework:**

Do you know how many t-shirts are in your closet and/or drawers at home right now?

What or how much do you feel you know about ...

- the use of pesticides?
  
- sweatshop labor practices?
  
- the consumption of goods and its effects on the environment?
  
- marketing that is aimed at youth and teenagers?

How much do you feel you know about the above topics with respect to your t-shirts?

Use this scale of 1 to 5 to answer the following set of questions.

1-not at all 2-seldom 3-about half the time 4-most of the time 5-all of the time

When you purchase a T-shirt or other article of clothing how often to you think about:

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| - how it was made                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - who made it                          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - of what it is made                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - where it is made                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - who benefits from its being made     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - who might suffer from its being made | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## **Student Course Evaluation Form: The Shirt Off My Back**

What was(were) the most important thing(s) that you learned from your participation in this course?

What activities did you feel were the most valuable? Please state the reasons why you think so and give suggestions for improvement.

What activities did you feel were the least valuable? Please state the reasons why you think so and give suggestions for improvement.

Did this course meet the expectations that you had for it? Why or why not?

Compare your knowledge now with your knowledge at the beginning of the course in the following areas:

-the use of pesticides?

-sweatshop labor practices?

-the consumption of goods and its effects on the environment?

- marketing that is aimed at youth and teenagers?

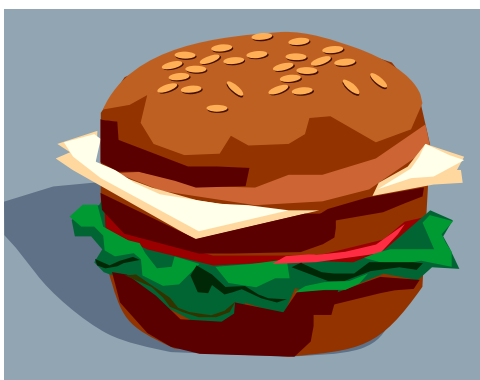
Did this course change your thinking in any areas? If so, what and how?

Do you plan to change any behavior or take any action as a result of any information presented in this course? Please explain.

Would you recommend this course to others? Why or why not?

## Ingredients Card Examples

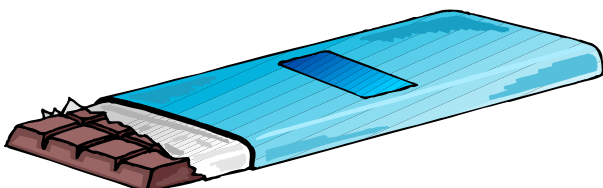
Each time you buy a product you are buying more than just a pair of shoes, a hamburger, or a chocolate bar. Look at the “ingredients” cards below to see what else you may be spending your money on when you buy these products.



When you buy this item, in addition to getting a tasty, convenient meal, you contribute to creating jobs for people and economic growth. But you may also contribute to rainforest destruction, species extinction, the suffering of cows, pesticide use, water waste, pollution, increases in heart disease, cancer, obesity, and strip mall development.



When you buy this item, in addition to getting the shoes themselves, you contribute to creating jobs for people and economic growth. But you may also contribute to sweatshop labor, pollution, and animal suffering.



When you buy this item, in addition to getting a delicious dessert, you contribute to creating jobs for people, to economic development, and to world trade. But you may also contribute to child and slave labor.

Now it's your turn. With your group create an “ingredients” card for a t-shirt. Try to use all that you've learned in this course to make it as complete a list as is possible.

A special thanks to Zoe Weil and Dani Dennenburg for the use of the examples above.

### Shirt Tracker

	Shirt 1	Shirt 2	Shirt 3	Shirt 4
Shirt Description				
What country was the shirt made it?				
What brand is the shirt? Is there a logo on it?				
What material(s) is the shirt made from?				
What was the price of the shirt?				
Where did you buy/get the shirt?				
How often do you wear this shirt?				
	Shirt 5	Shirt 6	Shirt 7	Shirt 8
Shirt Description				
What country was the shirt made it?				
What brand is the shirt? Is there a logo on it?				
What material(s) is the shirt made from?				
What was the price of the shirt?				
Where did you buy/get the shirt?				
How often do you wear this shirt?				
	Shirt 9	Shirt 10		
Shirt Description				
What country was the shirt made it?				
What brand is the shirt? Is there a logo on it?				
What material(s) is the shirt made from?				
What was the price of the shirt?				
Where did you buy/get the shirt?				
How often do you wear this shirt?				

## Chapter 4

### Statement of Learning

Developing the course “The Shirt Off My Back” for this project has allowed me to utilize learning that has occurred in each of the courses that I’ve taken in the M.Ed. program. The research for the project helped me to look at various viewpoints related to each of the topics included in the course in great depth. This will be helpful when dealing with comments and questions that the students may have in the future when the course is being delivered. Also, in developing the format of the course I was able to learn more about the methods and theory of distance learning and service learning, both of which helped to shape the course as it stands now.

It is important that this culminating activity for the program resulted in a curriculum that is immediately useful as I embark on a new career as a humane educator. Not only can I use this curriculum in future programs, but the process of research and development can be replicated for courses on other topics in humane education as well. I know that this course, as well as future courses, will always be works in progress as new information becomes available, both related to the topics at hand and the methods of delivery.

Comprehensive humane education is a relatively new field. As I launch myself into this new domain, I am confident that I can create course materials and learning opportunities for my students. Completing this Independent Learning Project has helped to strengthen my skills and knowledge in these areas, but it has also added to my confidence that I can develop quality contributions to this budding program.

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