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COM243G

#### Reader Response: Week 4

This week's readings and videos cover the human and environmental cost that the age of affluenza brought with it. Despite the abundance of commodities many felt empty in the age where they had everything and the cost of this over consumptionist mindset had dire consequences for the environment. And while affluenza can bring you a lifestyle that you may think is beneficial, the information about the true costs that this lifestyle has on your psychological well-being, the human cost of labor and the damage that the lifestyle's popularity poses to the environment may have you rethinking whether or not this is truly the world that you want. But all is not as bad as it seems as through responsible and sustainable consumption habits, combined with a determination to minimize your negative impact on the world you can help to mitigate the negative costs associated with living in this age of affluenza.

The human cost, both psychological and physical, are detailed throughout the 6th chapter. As the great depression in the 1930s spurred on by the overspending and fast money of the times had led many young men without jobs, but through the Civilian Conservation Corps or CCC they were able to find a purpose working day in and day out making many of the public works that we still use today. Through their hard work and dedication they built the future of America and created "true and lasting value" (61) that they could take pride in which is becoming a scarce commodity these days. These days of fulfilling work is truly rare as the wealth, power, and prestige that many

contemporary conservatives seek today lacks the true fulfilling satisfaction leading to this idea of poverty of the heart and soul of these rich and empty people. We as a society are almost in an “unnatural” state of affluenza where we are constantly surrounded by needless things to a point where we rarely derive satisfaction from gaining or making new things and rather feel disconnected from and isolated from our selves and others due to this lack of “moral meaning in life”. (64) to break free of this cycle of emptiness we must self reflect on where we find the value in life and a meaning that “transcends” the “flow” (65) of the market economy, and where we can be individuals rather than a cog in the machine that only seeks making the number in the banks go up. For me personally the way that I believe you can find some sort of meaningful expression under the current organization of the economy is finding your own personal outlet for creativity. For me that takes the form of ceramics where I enjoy making personalized hand made sculptures or items where I can have some sense of fulfillment and individual work, so I believe finding this outlet is essential to breaking free of the heart failure that is the consumer economy.

It's not just the human cost that is at stake for the current consumer economy, but also the health of the planet and its resources that are in danger if we keep up this careless overconsumption. The videos and chapter 8 reading do a good job at explaining the environmental costs associated with the current overconsumption seen in our society. The videos detail the crisis of mass extinction and the impacts that the extinctions have on the ecosystem, as well as depletion of all of the earth's natural resources. As noted in the readings, as we continue our current approach to extracting and using natural resources, the resources become more and more scarce and hard to

obtain. Meaning that the easy and less damaging resources have already been taken long ago so we must resort to more damaging and less sustainable ways of getting what we need further eroding the little clean natural land we have left. We are scraping the bottom of the barrel when it comes to our natural resources and because of our ecological footprint being “1.3 times” (79) what nature can restore we are heading head first towards an ecological crisis. We continue down this path as we keep justifying our issues or saying that they can be fixed later down the line and that thought process has put us where we are today where the rapid extinction and lack of resources is leaving the world's natural balance, in danger of completely collapsing. I fear that we are already to the point of no return and that it is inevitable that we continue to go down this path unless drastic changes are made to the system under which we live.

The final chapter for this week covers the ways that the industrial damage caused by the consumer culture of today has been normalized and that through the lens of good propaganda made by the industrial machine the fallout of toxic chemicals that are a result of the current manufacturing process has gone unchecked. The supposed “acceptable risk” (88) that has been allowed to run rampant in the toxic chemicals that leach into the environment as a result of processes like nuclear power, commercial pesticides, and construction, have dire consequences and while we know that nothing has been changing due to the conveniences and money that these processes generate. New chemicals are discovered every day and the testing is not as extensive as it may seem to be, for the chemicals used for things like cleaning products and cosmetics. These chemicals leach out into the water and poison not only the animals around us but us humans as well. These chemicals can mess with the animals' natural ways of life and

things like GMOs in our own food supply could be messing with the animals and humans whom we feed with it. The changes that need to be made are drastic if we are going to be trying to change the current industrial revolution style manufacturing processes and to do so we need to “bring in a new era of civic oversight and ecological design” (95). I believe to do so we first need to shift the culture as the sweeping changes and oversights needed to enact such drastic changes to our current way of production is seemingly impossible without changes to how we view an ethical consumption level and prices for commodities.

I learned a great deal this week about the true impact that our current consumerist culture is having on us and the planet. From the current mass extinction of many of the world's species, to the depletion of our natural resources. I was shocked at the true depravity we are willing to accept to just continue our current commodity driven economy. The human cost to continue this lifestyle was also an aspect that I thought is often overlooked when reviewing the current costs to the world that consumerist culture brings with it and I was glad to see it be explored in chapter 6. And while I believe that without changes to how we view an ethical consumption level and prices for commodities we will not bring in a new era of civic oversight and ecological design to the way the world runs I am unsure as to how the best course of action will take shape. So I would like to ask what the best way is to limit the influence of advertisements to better show or acknowledge the current stakes that are being raised everytime another meaningless purchase is made. And also ask the best course of action to take in limiting our consumption of products that directly affects the current extinction of animals that

we are seeing world wide, which is having hugely negative impacts on the carefully balanced ecosystem we are living in right now.