

Wearing a Cause: Personal Motivations  
for Expressing Beliefs through Dress

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
BY

Jean Elizabeth McElvain

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Kim K. P. Johnson, Ph.D.

December 2008

© Jean Elizabeth McElvain, December 2008

## Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Dr. Kim Johnson for guiding me through the dissertation process and for the many contributions she has made to my dissertation.

I'd like to thank Dr. Joanne Eicher, Dr. Barbara Martinson, and Dr. Gil Tostevin for serving as dissertation committee members and offering insight and expertise into my research.

I'd like to thank my parents for their unwavering confidence in my abilities.

I'd like to thank my husband, Ty, for his support and encouragement throughout my graduate school experience.

## Abstract

This qualitative research used data collected during 35 free response interviews to explore personal motivations of individuals who wear dress items that have text, images, or symbols that state an opinion or affiliation with a cause. The review of literature focused on researchers who had addressed issues of the self and symbolic interaction, the printed t-shirt as a social dress object, identity creation and postmodern theory, the impact of consumerism on identity creation, meaningful dress objects, and stylistic messaging through dress. Five research questions developed out of the review of literature that addressed concepts of self, validation strategies relative to wearing cause representational dress, how individuals established boundaries around appropriate opinions to voice through dress, and how individuals viewed the ability of mass produced objects to relay meaningful messages. Transcribed interview text was analyzed to identify recurring themes that were relevant to the posed research questions. Because of the large volume of data collected, NVIVO 7<sup>TM</sup> was used to organize and manage analysis. Themes, described as nodes in NVIVO 7<sup>TM</sup>, were refined over time and reviewed by a second party for validity. Themes that surfaced out of the data indicated that the self is impacted by heightening an individual's awareness of the relationship between personal beliefs and the dress that he or she wears. The process of validation was found to be situational and grounded in a participant's ability to find dress that accurately reflected his or her personal beliefs and concerns. Participants were overwhelmingly concerned about offending others with derogatory sentiments communicated through their dress. Additionally, participants exhibited a tendency to

assess social situations ahead of time and gauge how others were likely to react to the cause representational dress that they considered wearing. Finally, it was found that individuals can find meaning in cause representational dress that is produced as a good, but that the integrity of the dress item representing the cause does break down with mass production and mass adoption by others.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	p. 1
Goals and Purpose	p. 1
Impetus for Research	p. 2
Rationale	p. 3
Definitions	p. 4
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	p. 7
Symbolic Interaction	p. 7
The Role of the Printed T-shirt in Cause Representational Dress	p. 11
The Effectiveness of Dress as a Communicative Device	p. 14
Stylistic Categories of Dress and Relationships to Context	p. 17
Postmodern Theory and Wearing Cause Representational Dress	p. 20
Consumerism's Role in Wearing Cause Representational Dress	p. 30
Examples of Cause Representational Dress in Context	p. 37
Review of Literature Summary	p. 47
Research Questions, Assumptions, and Limitations of Research	p. 49
Chapter 3: Methodology	p. 52
Population and sample	p. 54
Instrumentation, data collection procedures, validity	p. 55
Data Analysis	p. 61

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion	p. 63
Research Question One	p. 64
Research Question Two	p. 76
Research Question Three	p. 86
Research Question Four	p. 96
Research Question Five	p. 101
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations	p. 110
Conclusions: Research Question One	p. 110
Conclusions: Research Question Two	p. 113
Conclusions: Research Question Three	p. 115
Conclusions: Research Question Four	p. 117
Conclusions: Research Question Five	p. 119
Limitations and Areas for Further Research	p. 121
References	p. 123
Appendix A: Class Announcement Script	p. 130
Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer	p. 131
Appendix C: Interview Questions	p. 132
Appendix D: Figure Captions followed by Figures	p. 135
Figure 1	p. 137
Figure 2	p. 138
Figure 3	p. 139
Figure 4	p. 140

Figure 5	p.	141
Figure 6	p.	142
Figure 7	p.	143
Figure 8	p.	143
Figure 9	p.	144
Figure 10	p.	145
Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter	p.	146
Appendix F: Listing of Items Worn by Participants	p.	147

## Chapter 1

### *Introduction*

Most of us in contemporary United States society give some thought to how we present ourselves through dress. Many of us present ourselves to others within a relatively acceptable range of conformity, selecting items that garner some individual attention but avoid being an affront. Some of us, however, present ourselves to others with bolder intentionality. As Hebdige explained,

...the conventional outfits worn by the average man and woman in the street are chosen within the constraints of finance, “taste”, preference, etc...if nothing else, they are expressive of “normality” as opposed to “deviance”....However, the intentional communication is of a different order. It stands apart – a visible construction, a loaded choice. It directs attention to itself; it gives itself to be read (1979, p. 101).

Those who either intentionally or inadvertently make their personal views public through dress risk opposition.

### *Goal and Purpose*

The overall goal of my research was to identify personal motivations behind wearing dress items that have text, images, or symbols that state an opinion or affiliation with a cause. The specific purpose was to investigate why individuals use cause representational dress to display beliefs and how they mediate its use in different social environments. Integral to understanding personal motivations behind wearing cause

representational dress is exploring how people view their right to wear potentially controversial beliefs in public settings.

### *Impetus for Research*

My research began with a couple of key observations. First, the Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF) wristband had developed a wristband to raise money for cancer awareness and research. The wristband, a ½” wide band of silicone rubber with the word “LIVESTRONG” imprinted in it, was introduced in the summer of 2004 and grew out of a relationship between Lance Armstrong’s cancer survival story, his subsequent success as a professional athlete (7 time Tour de France winner), and his sponsorship with Nike. The commercial success of the wristband brought forth numerous copy-cat wristbands that displayed a wide variety of messages and meanings. Second, there were also occasional news stories and popular culture articles on politically charged or controversial t-shirt messages but few researchers investigated reasons why individuals used this type of dress to express personal opinions and beliefs.

Cause representational dress of the aforementioned nature converges on a common point; it can be worn with the intention of relaying a personal message. However, it also seemed probable that this type of dress was used by some in a manner that was not based on ideological or personal beliefs but on stylistic aspirations. One could, for example, wear a friend’s t-shirt with the words “FREE MUMIA” printed on it because the shirt had a comfortable worn look rather than knowing anything about Mumia Abu-Jamal. For my research, identifying the difference between ideological representations and stylistic aspirations was critical in understanding personal

motivations behind wearing dress items that represent causes. Also critical to my research was exploring why individuals felt a need to make their beliefs known to others through dress.

### *Rationale*

Understanding the motivational factors effecting individuals who wear cause representational dress is important for a number of reasons. Wearing cause representational dress is a phenomenon that has had increasing presence in recent decades. Many late 20th century researchers have explored controversial dress in reference to a defined subculture (Hebdige, 1979; Hodkinson, 2002; Muggleton, 2000) but did not address the way that those grouped as the majority expressed their personal beliefs. The wide availability of products that relay succinct messages about viewpoints and group affiliations have provided relatively mainstream individuals with a way to make potentially controversial beliefs known. Individuals who wear this type of dress can be analyzed with the same rigor as members of subcultures and their use of dress. Findings from my research contribute to dress studies by providing conclusions about why individuals wear cause representational dress and how they view others who engage in this appearance management strategy.

Cause representational dress also provides a salient example of communication through dress. Important to the field of dress studies is understanding new phenomena within established theories such as symbolic interaction. Emerging research that is analyzed through tenets that are foundational to a field of study provides a point of reference for drawing relationships between common components of appearance

management over time and within shifting social contexts. An examination of cause representational dress within the framework of symbolic interaction clarifies how individuals perceive their dress to be received by others, as well as the types of interferences that they detect when trying to relay a personal belief or opinion through dress.

Finally, my research assists in clarifying issues related to an individual's perceived right to publicly express beliefs that he or she wishes to through dress. Establishing boundaries for one's self and others is typically difficult; the process of establishing boundaries can challenge personal ethics and social mores. Insights into individual motivations for wearing cause representational dress provides a clearer picture of the way in which individuals balance notions of social acceptability and cause representational dress.

### *Definitions*

To begin my investigation, two key concepts are defined: dress and cause representational dress.

**Dress:** I began from the basic assumption that dress has the ability to relay information about the person wearing it. Dress is defined by Roach-Higgins and Eicher as follows:

Dress of an individual is an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body. Dress, so defined, includes a long list of possible direct modifications of the body such as coiffed hair, colored skin, pierced ears, and scented breath, as well as an equally long list of garments, jewelry, accessories,

and other categories of items added to the body as supplemental (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1995, p. 7).

**Cause representational dress:** Cause representational dress indicates an item of dress that is either sold by a manufacturer or constructed by an individual to display an explicit message beyond that of a brand. In some instances, where an organization is directly associated with a cause (i.e., The Sierra Club), the brand alone is considered cause representational dress with a limited range of interpretations. This definition does not imply that the message being emitted by the object is being read as the sender intends, only that the message could guide a focused response from potential receivers.

Cause representational dress has content that is not neutral. For example, a t-shirt with a screen print of a flower and text that reads “chrysanthemum” is not indicative of an item of cause representational dress. A t-shirt with a screen print of a flower and text that reads “GIRL POWER!” is an item of cause representational dress.

Terms similar to cause representational dress have been developed by others. For example, sociologist Gregory Stone (1981) paraphrased Harry Stack Sullivan’s description of meaningful dress in the following manner: “when one’s dress calls out in others the ‘same’ identifications of the wearer as it calls out in the wearer, we may speak of the appearance as meaningful” (p. 193). While this description of meaningful dress is similar to the intentions of cause representational dress, it refers to a broader range of dress items than the term cause representational dress indicates.

Rubinstein’s (2001) discussion of Goffman’s term, *tie-sign*, is closer to my notion of cause representational dress. “Attire that is a tie-sign has only one meaning and can be

easily 'read.' ...The ensemble is carefully conceived by the group's decision makers to convey an image that counteracts the ideas of the dominant culture; wearing such attire encourages a sense of belonging and supports feelings of worth" (p. 253). This definition indicates that those who employ tie-signs belong to a well defined sub-group which is not consistent with my definition.

Rubinstein's discussion of *tie-symbols* was the most consistent with my use of the term cause representational dress. As noted,

Displaying personal preferences for an idea, ideal, or a group, clothing tie-symbols became visual expressions that made it possible for 'like to find like.' A continuing interest in a particular issue like protecting the environment or finding a cure for breast cancer or AIDS has kept the political T-shirt, the pink ribbon, and the inverted red ribbon alive (Rubinstein, 2001, p. 269).

Rubinstein did not discuss how the two terms relate to one another. For example, tie-symbols may be understood as a sub-category of tie-signs or a restatement of Goffman's earlier work. This uncertainty, along with the fact that her term has not been adopted by others researching dress, led me to create a definition for the term cause representational dress.

## Chapter 2

### *Review of Literature*

The review of literature is organized into three main sections: Theoretical Framework, Examples of Cause Representational Dress in Context, and Research Questions, Assumptions and Limitations. The theoretical framework integrates tenets of symbolic interaction and postmodernism. Both theories are used to further discussion on cause representational dress with a focus on the following; personal motivation and validation, how social context and consumerism influence identity creation choices, and how boundaries are established relative to cause representational dress. Additionally, the personal value of the dress objects used to represent causes is discussed because objects that represent personal beliefs can assume a value that lies outside of their monetary worth. The second section illustrates instances in which individuals have worn dress that represents a cause in a way that closely relates to my research. The final section outlines the major research questions that were investigated as well as assumptions and limitations associated with my research.

#### *Symbolic Interaction*

*Gregory Stone: Contributions to symbolic interaction.* During the 1960s sociologist Gregory Stone contributed to an existing body of knowledge on symbolic interaction which helped organize and facilitate research dealing with personal identity and appearance management. Stone (1981), whose work built on that of Herbert Blumer's (1969), emphasized that appearances are manipulated by individuals to express personal identities in social contexts. As Stone described, "When one has identity, he is

*situated* – that is cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of his participation or membership in social relationships” (p. 188). Stone posits that having an *identity* is the result of being placed as a social object by others; the term *self* is used by Stone to refer to an aspect of individuality that is generated internally. Thus identity and self are not synonymous terms (Stone, 1981). Instead, the self is considered to be comprised of many identities. This perspective is a trajectory that others within the dress discipline have followed. Roach-Higgins and Eicher, for example, reemphasized the relationship between identity and self when they noted that “We define self as a composite of an individual’s identities communicated by dress, bodily aspects of appearance, and discourse, as well as the material and social objects (other people) that contribute meaning to situations for interaction” (1992, p. 5). An individual draws on a many external sources in appearance management whose origins are social and evolving; for example, popular culture, cultural background, and familial ideals. Therefore, construction of identities and the resultant self shift as an individual’s relationship to external sources shift over the course of his or her life.

In addition to discussing the concepts of identity and self, Stone (1981) developed terminology that is useful in analyzing how individuals use dress to both send out visual cues about their identities and make assumptions about others based on visual cues. Stone identified those who emit appearance messages as having experienced a *program* at some point in the appearance management process and those who receive and interpret appearance messages as engaged in a *review*. Programs are defined as “responses made about the wearer by the wearer” and reviews are defined as “responses

made about the wearer of clothes, by others who, we shall say *review* his clothing” (Stone, p. 187). The program likely involves reconciling presumptions about the identity the wearer was trying to create and the identity that he or she sees before him or her. As suggested by Stone, as part of program wearers of dress ensembles engage in an internal dialogue with themselves about the appearance that they have created.

Wearing a representation of a cause, such as a political t-shirt, allows individuals to create an appearance that intentionally expresses ideological beliefs to others. Wearers of cause representational dress are not literally speaking but their appearance has been manipulated to reveal personal views on topics that can be controversial. Expressing an affiliation with a particularly divisive cause through dress may be offensive to some and reveals an individual’s willingness to categorize him or herself with others who have similar beliefs. The internal dialogue the wearer has about his or her appearance likely acknowledges engagement in a potentially controversial action; that is, the potential controversy and reaction that the dress item may elicit is part of his or her program. As Stone noted, “To have an identity is to join with some and depart from others, to enter and leave social relations at once” (1981, p. 189).

*The impressions of others.* If the individual wearing cause representational dress wants to successfully reveal a personal connection to the cause represented, he or she must be perceived by others as selective and thoughtful about his or her appearance. For example, someone who wears a t-shirt reading “Vegan for Life” along with leather shoes risks an incongruous and disparate review by others. Although the contradiction between the “Vegan for Life” t-shirt and the leather shoes reveals only one identity aspect of this

individual's self, it can cause others to question the wearer's self as a whole. That is, one contradictory aspect of an individual's dress can lead an onlooker to make a negative overgeneralization concerning that person's entire self. Mixed dress messages can cause a reviewer to not only doubt the claim of an item of cause representational dress but cause him or her to question the integrity of the person wearing it. Stone explained,

When programs and reviews tend to coincide, the self of the one who appears (the one whose clothing has elicited such responses) is validated or established; when such responses tend toward disparity, the self of the one who appears is challenged... (1981, p. 187-188)

Johnson, Schofield, and Yurchisin's (2002) research relates to intentionality in that they sought to understand the extent to which individuals used dress and appearance to control others' impressions of them. Through data collected from 39 free-response interviews they found that "people consciously attempt to control the impressions that others form about them on an everyday basis" (Johnson, Schofield, & Yurchisin, p. 135). All but one participant admitted to making assumptions about others based on dress and appearance cues. As Johnson, Schofield, and Yurchisin explained, "Participants stated that in an impression situation they made inferences about another's personality traits, physical and biological characteristics, demographic and social position, attitudes and emotions, occupational role, and intentions or motives based on that other person's appearance and dress" (p. 135). Those who wear cause representational dress may be prone to categorization by others in regard to personality traits, social positions, attitudes and emotions, and intentions and motives. That is, the focused nature of messages

related through cause representational dress may enable receivers to make presumptions about others based on the single belief that they express through their dress.

Dressing with intentionality implies that individuals have goals relative to the way in which they dress and how others perceive them in that dress. Thompson and Haytko (1997) described how dependent an individual's program is on anticipated responses and stated that "The perceived individuating and transformative power of clothing is ultimately contingent upon a belief that others will notice and care about one's appearance" (p. 22). For example, the wearer of cause representational dress may imagine that the cause he or she represents through dress will elicit serious thought and introspection from others. Stone suggested the importance of anticipated responses as well when he noted that "A third mode of response [in addition to program and review] is relevant, but will not be considered here – the wearer's imagination of other's responses to his dress" (1981, p. 187). This projection of one's program onto the receiver is a key part of the dress communication process. Those who wear cause representational dress may be prone to the assumption that others interpret the message they are wearing in a particular way. This, in turn, may impact how they manage their appearances through types of dress that are considered to be cause representational.

#### *The Role of the Printed T-shirt in Cause Representational Dress*

Printed t-shirts are a common form of cause representational dress. Darden and Worden noted that "the imprinted T-shirt is a relatively new innovation worthy of study not only for its place in announcing identity to other individuals, but also for the manner in which it indicates this articulation between the individual and the larger mass-

consumption society” (1991, p. 68). Thus, researching individuals who wear printed t-shirts can lend insight into a heavily used component of identity creation in United States’ society.

Several researchers (Cornwell, 1990; Darden & Worden, 1991, Young, 1994) explored t-shirts and their ability to transmit personal messages. Cornwell researched dress relative to consumption and cultural functions and focused on the printed t-shirt because it was an item of dress for which “...communication is a primary function” (Cornwall, p. 375). Cornwall analyzed five individuals’ t-shirt collections to establish categories of messages. The following four groups were arrived at: t-shirts showing affiliations and loyalties, t-shirts showing activities, t-shirts with personal meaning, and t-shirts that were impersonal (Cornwall). Affiliations and loyalties included messages that referenced teams, groups, work, and institutions. Activities included messages that referenced sports participation, event attendance, or travel. Personal meanings included messages that expressed opinions and beliefs, such as a t-shirt promoting a presidential candidate. Lastly, impersonal t-shirts included messages that referenced the company that produced them or a fashionable brand name. Cornwall’s exploration of t-shirts was confined to a small sample and she did not engage participants in discussion about their perceptions of the communicative functions of printed t-shirts.

Darden and Worden (1991) researched t-shirts and individual identity within mass culture with the idea that

...the imprinted T-shirt is a relatively new innovation worthy of study not only for its place in announcing identity to other individuals, but also for the manner in

which it indicates this articulation between the individual and the larger mass-consumption society (p. 68).

Students (n=350) enrolled in an introductory sociology course at a public University in the United States were asked to describe their favorite t-shirts on 4x6 index cards including attributes such as color, design, wording, how they got them, and why they liked them. From this data, Darden and Worden proposed four categories of imprinted t-shirts: idiosyncratic, commercialized, utilitarian, and elitist. Idiosyncratic t-shirts were those worn to show uniqueness and a lack of affiliation with others. They were also described as having the potential to dissuade others from socially engaging with the wearer. Commercialized t-shirts included those with brand names, logos, and travel destinations. Elitist t-shirts signified associations with a group that was somewhat exclusive. Finally, utilitarian t-shirts were those with no printing or logo at all. This classification system provided Darden and Worden's research with a sound structure for discussing relationships between t-shirts and early 20th century dress theories advanced by researchers including George Simmel (1904) and Gregory Stone (1981). However, their t-shirt categories were not transferable to my research as they did not identify a category of t-shirts that expressed beliefs and opinions.

Young's (1994) research was based on a three day period of t-shirt observation conducted by students in his sociology class at Colorado State University. Young provided a specific classification system made up of the following groups: "brand names, exotic vacation places, morality messages including religious sentiments, sexual concerns and action, and youth culture themes oriented to music" (p. 151). Young's research

assessed t-shirts that had cause representational messages, advertised products, and relayed geographic place names. His research did touch on key issues such as mass cultural contexts, consumerism, and individual understandings of what is acceptable to wear in public. Conclusions drawn, however, were limited in that they were often not substantiated with frequency of occurrence and often read as conjectural. As with Cornwall, Young also did not discuss the objects directly with those who wore them.

*The Effectiveness of Dress as a Communicative Device*

McCracken (1990), an anthropologist and writer on material culture, questioned dresses' readability and noted that it provides "a relatively impoverished means of communication" (p. 69). He also asserted that "when clothing as a code is most like language, it is least successful as a means of communication." This claim was illustrated by research in which participants in a classroom setting were asked to respond to slides showing individuals in a variety of North American dress ensembles. Images that elicited common responses, such as "hippie" and "business man," did not provoke analytical thought or in-depth discussion from participants (McCracken). Instead the images provoked stereotypical responses and students were satisfied with the label that they used to describe the image. That is, the students were not compelled to discuss other reasons why the individuals in the slides were wearing the dress that they were in these instances.

Goffman (1972) echoes similar observations concerning categorization by others based on appearance. As he explained,

If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with

individuals roughly similar to the one before them or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him (1972, p. 234).

This sentiment may indicate that those who construct a relatively mainstream appearance for themselves inaccurately envision a narrower range of interpretations by reviewers than those who dress otherwise. In my research, it is assumed that those who wear cause representational dress are narrowly defined and categorized whereas those who dress with less obviously expressed opinions require complex analysis.

Like McCracken (1990), Muggleton (2000) discussed the veil of ambiguity that overlays even the most seemingly easy to interpret dress. He emphasized that even when one wears something as identifiable as a business suit, it is impossible to interpret anything conclusive about the person wearing it. Campbell also raised questions about reading meaning from clothing, pointing out that “Just because observers (academic or otherwise) find it relatively easy to ascribe meanings to [dress related] products it should not be assumed that these correspond to those meanings that inform the actions of individuals when making use of those products” (1996, p. 95). Thus, like other types of dress, cause representational dress has the potential to be ambiguous and not wholly representative of the individuals wearing it.

Young (1994) concluded that those who wear t-shirts with text have the ability to seek out social alliances that promote discursive engagement with others. That is, t-shirts with text communicate effectively in social settings. Young’s perspective reads as antithetical to McCracken’s (1990) who posited that dress with language like attributes is ineffective in communication. However, Young can also be understood to corroborate

McCracken because both indicated that dress closely related to language leads to generalizations. Individuals are more apt to align themselves with others who wear a t-shirt slogan that they identify with even though they knew nothing about that individual on a personal level. As Young stated,

The anonymity of mass events strips one of most of the language systems one could use....The tee shirt can be seen from afar. It can speak over the din of a concert, a party, or a sport event. It can carry a concise and lucid message in ways body and behavior cannot (Young, p. 153).

Wearing cause representational dress could elicit a stereotypical reaction as McCracken (1990) warned, but at the same time it could socially draw those with similar beliefs together.

Dress, communicative effectiveness, and stylistic messaging converge with a discussion on symbolic interaction in that they are components of social transactions and individual intentions within those transactions. Additionally, the communicative framework offered by researchers such as McCracken (1990) and Stone (1981) focused on visual culture and ways in which visual cues are transmitted and read by others.

Visual cues are often used to transfer information in 21<sup>st</sup> century global culture and the interpretation of them requires research and attention. As Freedman noted,

The new conditions of visual culture illustrate that personal freedoms no longer only involve matters of free speech....People cannot only speak freely; they can visually access, display and duplicate, computer manipulate, and globally televise. Visual culture images and objects are continuously seen and instantaneously

interpreted, forming new knowledge and new images of identity and environment (2003, p. 3).

The way in which individuals interpret boundaries of visual culture compared to boundaries of socially appropriate speech is very much a part of understanding the phenomenon of wearing cause representational dress.

### *Stylistic Categories of Dress and Relationships to Context*

Cause representational dress has the potential to assert a personal opinion or concern that could otherwise be unknown to strangers, acquaintances, or even friends. Wiessner's (1983) work on stylistic messaging described objects of personal meaning within a social context which is useful to discussions about the level of clarity intended by an item of cause representational dress. Two categories of stylistic messages that might be related are identified by Wiessner; *emblemic style* and *assertive style*.

Emblemic style is defined as "formal variation in material culture that has a distinct referent and transmits a clear message to a defined target population" (Wiessner, p. 257). In this definition the message lacks ambiguity and communicates clearly to a known and defined receiver or group. For example, stripes and stars awarded in the United States military reference a specific rank which is recognized by others in the military.

Additional meaning is added to these symbols by the limited nature of their distribution and a general awareness about the accomplishments associated with receiving them. This is emblemic style because meaning is readily perceptible to those in a defined group (the United States military). Those who are not in the military likely know that stars and stripes are related to military rank but may not be sure of their exact meanings.

Assertive style is defined as “formal variation in material culture which is personally based and which carries information supporting individual identity, by separating persons from similar others as well as by giving personal translations of membership in various groups” (Wiessner, 1983, p. 258). For example, a high school student who wears a popular brand of jeans cannot likely be associated with a specific friendship group based on the jeans alone. While there may be tacit understandings within a school environment indicating possible associations between a brand of jeans and social groupings, the stylistic choice is personally based. Many individuals have access to the same brands and the way that he or she creates an ensemble around a pair of jeans speaks to personal style making absolute categorization difficult.

Depending on the social context, cause representational dress could be either emblematic or assertive. For example, a t-shirt promoting a party endorsed candidate in a presidential election year will likely be understood by a large percentage of Americans as supporting the election of that candidate which supports the notion of emblematic style. If the candidate loses and the same t-shirt is worn six months later abroad, the t-shirt may have transferred to assertive style. This is because in the later instance the audience for the t-shirt is diverse and less apt to recognize the name of the candidate and what office he or she was running for. Even if worn in the United States where many still recognize the candidate’s name, wearing the t-shirt of a defeated candidate could cause confusion about the wearer’s intentions. Wiessner indicates that responses to cause representational dress might be dependent upon the social, historical, and physical proximity of the receiver to the item worn.

Wobst (1977) provided additional discussion on the efficiency of stylistic messages. To maximize the communicative effectiveness of an item of dress, one should wear the item with individuals that are “not too close – since the message usually would be known already or generally could be more easily transmitted in other communication modes, and not too distant – since decoding or encountering the message could not be assured” (Wobst, p. 325). To Wobst, wearing cause representational dress within a close group would lack effectiveness as would wearing a localized message abroad; there is no need to tell people who you know intimately what you believe because they presumably already know your beliefs, and a message completely out of the realm of recognition would not result in sound communication.

Wobst’s (1977) perspective that stylistic messaging within intimate social groups is ineffective is strengthened when considering cause representational dress that is worn to signify a unified social movement. For example, social and cultural events like the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure promotes the collective wearing of the color pink as a sign of solidarity. Race for the Cure is an annual 5k run that takes place in many U.S. cities and has had over one million participants in its 25 years of existence. The event is promoted by the organization Susan G. Koman for the Cure which was started in 1982 by Nancy Brinker after losing her sister, Susan, to breast cancer. The Race for the Cure provides a setting in which individuals can easily see that they are not alone in their fight to cure breast cancer. Cause representational dress in this instance provides the opportunity for easy identification with others outside of one’s typical context, and makes a large support system visible through the wearing of pink t-shirts. Both Wiessner (1983)

and Wobst indicate that successful communication through stylistic messages is not as contingent on the transmitting object as it is on the socio-cultural context in which it is placed.

*Postmodern Theory and Wearing Cause Representational Dress*

*Individual identity and social context.* Morgado explained that postmodern theory, "...is highly abstract, is laden with complex language common to philosophy and aesthetic criticism, and has, as well, a vocabulary unique to its own enterprise" (1996, p. 41). Despite its complexity, this theory is helpful in facilitating a discussion that touches on a range of influences that effect how an individual understands his or her place in society.

Hebdige's (1979) seminal work, "Subculture: The Meaning of Style," foregrounds much of the discussion on dress and postmodern theory, forming some assumptions that have gained relevancy since it was written. Hebdige described contemporary society as laden with media influences which impact how individuals perceive others and interact within society. He explained,

Now, the media play a crucial role in defining our experience [of ideologies and how they are expressed through dress] for us. They provide us with the most available categories for classifying out the social world. It is primarily through the press, television, film, etc. that experience is organized, interpreted, and made to cohere in contradiction as it were (Hebdige, p. 84-85).

The contradiction Hebdige references is a tension that exists between subcultures such as punk that dress to rebuke dominant culture and dominant culture's tendency to pick up on

theses subcultural styles and market them to a broader audience. Hebdige described this irony as follows:

...commodities can be symbolically 'repossessed' in everyday life, and endowed with implicitly oppositional meanings, by the very group who originally produced them. The symbioses in which ideology, social order, production and reproduction, are linked is then neither fixed nor guaranteed (p. 16).

Multiple media venues disseminate subcultural style and dilute original intentions by selling styles to those who are unaware of the ideological positioning or meaning of the dress that they are wearing.

Hebdige (1979) identified some characteristics of subculturalists that are similar to those who wear cause representational dress. He suggested that subcultural styles are "gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus" (p. 28). Those who wear cause representational dress may also challenge the acceptability of certain views or opinions within the context of the dominant culture. Their willingness to make these beliefs public reminds observers that differences of opinion exist within local settings. That is, those who have different opinions are not just those seen on television; they are our neighbors, friends, and those we work with.

Morgado's (1996) description of the merger between the media and wearable ideologies builds on Hebdige's (1979) discussion. She indicated that individuals who use wearable ideologies cannot make the distinction between personal beliefs and media-influenced beliefs. Therefore, there is no ideological subculture or actual cause which

people are following; as they adopt this dress they are simply participating in fashion. As Morgado explained, “Fashion transforms radical politics and critical social issues, advertising re-presents the issues as commodities, and consumers are redirected to purchase more apparel – as though the concerns and issues have thus been resolved” (p. 49-50). Morgado positioned fashion as dominant and the cause represented as subsequent. She contended that media sources provided an ironic blend of excessive stylistic variety and limited prepackaged causes.

Freitas et al.’s (1997) discussion on appearance management in mass culture is contrary to the perspective Morgado (1996) described in which individuals construct appearance solely in response to external influences. Freitas et al. suggested that, although individuals use disparate sources of inspiration in appearance management, the identities individuals create are well thought out and take personal history into consideration. As they explained,

In making sense of one’s self, the effort required to elucidate the ever-changing fashioning of identities reflects more than a simple temporal break. Rather, this effort entails a reminiscence of who we were as a backdrop for understanding how and why we have changed (Freitas et al., p. 328).

The freedom to manage multiple identities for oneself through dress allows for personal reinterpretation and experimentation.

Wiessner (1984) explored the relationship between style and behavior within a non-industrialized social context. However, her conclusions are relative in that she explores how items of dress, such as beaded headbands, are used by Kalahari groups for

both individuality and social affiliation. Wiessner (1984) contended that identity is generally created on a socially comparative basis; however, she explained that “Even though identity relations have been argued to have personal and social components, under most circumstances daily comparison will occur at the level of the individual, not at that of a group acting as a whole” (p. 225). Wiessner’s perspective emphasized that questions related to “who am I” are generally considered by individuals to be somewhat removed from social structures and hierarchies. That is, most individuals create identities in response to localized and personal contexts. For example, an individual wearing a Lance Armstrong Foundation yellow wristband decides to do so because of a personal association with the cause it promotes versus wearing it because it stylistically describes the attributes of a larger social group.

There are researchers that caution against making assumptions about individual identity based on appearance (Campbell, 1996; Feinberg, Mataro, & Burroughs, 1992). Dress conveys information about an individual that is potentially in contrast to an individual’s true identity. Campbell asked

...is it reasonable to assume that all people are in the position to make a choice concerning what they wear? Or could it be that many are constrained to wear what they do, and in effect have little or no choice in the matter?...it should not simply be assumed that the clothing worn by individuals necessarily reflects a choice made from a range of suitable alternatives (1996, p. 97).

There is validity to Campbell’s claim that an individual’s ability to create meaningful identities is limited by parameters such as financial means and societal expectations.

However, Campbell (1996) discussed dress in terms of garments only. There are permanent elements of dress that have long term intentionality such as hair style, tattoos, comportment, and weight to height ratio. Thus, Campbell fell short of proving that financial and societal constraints necessarily remove the wearer's ability to express personal identity through dress. Additionally, researchers rarely claim to understand definitive identities based on dress but rather seek to understand the role of dress in social contexts. As stated by Wiessner, "...style is not just a means of transmitting information about identity, but an active tool used in social strategies, because in the process of presenting information about similarities and differences, it can reproduce, disrupt, alter, or create relationships" (1984, p. 194).

Identities created by the use of cause representational dress are not necessarily considered to be enduring, steadfast, or absolute. Hunt and Benford point out that personal descriptions or discussions about identity should not be "interpreted as an exact rendering of 'facts' that reveal 'actual' identities....Identity talk is defined as a discourse that reflects actors' perceptions of a social order and is based on interpretations of current situations, themselves, and others" (1994, p. 492). As indicated, not only are the perceptions of individuals constantly updated with new information but society itself is updated with new situations. Therefore, those that wear cause representational dress will likely choose to display issues that reflect concerns that currently play a part in their personal lives. For example, those in their late teens are unlikely to wear cause representational dress with messages relating to social security benefits. Additionally, attitudes toward the appropriateness of wearing fixed messages in public are likely tied to

an individual's place in life and the social context in which he or she is typically part of. Factors such as age, peer groups, and current work environment may be more conducive to wearing fixed messages than at other times in their lives. Just as an individual's identity is temporal, motivation to promote a particular cause is temporal.

*Criticisms of combining symbolic interaction and postmodern theory.* Combining theories of symbolic interaction and postmodernism in identity related research has received some criticism. Kaiser, Nagasawa, and Hutton (1991) noted that symbolic interaction's 1960s inception and associated terminology predates significant discussion on postmodern topics such as mass media and consumerism. And Callero (2003) specifically calls out a rift between postmodern theory and symbolic interaction, stating that "the symbolic interactionist tradition has, for the most part, failed to develop a sophisticated conceptual understanding of the self in which relations of power are presumed to be constitutive" (p. 120). Callero explained that "This is problematic in that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to theorize the possibility of emancipation through organized resistance and political intervention if actors are conceived to be mere subjects of discourse" (p. 118). I interpret Callero's primary concern to be that researchers who apply tenets of symbolic interaction unquestioningly give individuals the ability to express their inner selves through appearance identities. Thus, Callero implies that researchers who apply tenets of symbolic interaction commonly neglect to consider the impact that contemporary society has on an individual's ability to create meaningful identities.

Callero suggests that the socially constituted postmodern individual lacks agency of his or her own. That is, an individual constructs identities in response to external factors such as media, mass consumerism, and popular culture. As Negrin explained,

In the postmodern era, rebellion has primarily taken the form of adopting a certain style...rather than engaging with the economic and political structure which produce social inequality as evidence by the various youth subcultures which first made their appearance in the postwar period (1999, p. 112).

Those who consider themselves to dress alternatively and contrary to societal norms are particularly subject to the type of criticism which implies that stylistic identities are superficial.

Muggleton (2000) described the perspective of those who consider style to not only be insufficient for expressing meaningful identities but detrimental to ideological movements. Media sources and commercialism have contributed to a situation in which subcultural dress is a meaningless discourse. The issue of subcultural dress and its ability to “authentically” represent an individual’s self is pertinent to my research. It is assumed that those who wear cause representational dress do so with the intention of exposing ideological stances. Individuals who feel a deep level of involvement with cause they represent through dress have the potential to feel marginalized by those who they perceive as being trend followers.

Muggleton refutes the perspective that subcultural dress is a meaningless discourse by noting two ways in which a level of authenticity can be present. First, the concept of bricolage is employed. Kaiser describes bricolage as “...finding solutions to

problems by examining, using, and combining cultural signs in ways in which they were not initially intended” (1998, p. 468). Muggleton (2000) referenced previous work by Hebdige (1979) and later work by Kaiser et. al. (1991, 1995a, 1995b) which credits individuals with self awareness and the ability to create interpretations of personal beliefs through dress. As Muggleton explained, “the postmodern proliferation and fragmentation of style involves the reassembling, juxtapositioning and blending of elements, thus implying at least a minimum degree of creativity, originality and uniqueness in the resulting ensembles” (2000, p. 45).

The second way Muggleton noted that subcultural dress has personal meaning is that the dress worn is tied to context. Individuals often assume that their lives are more encumbered by controlling agencies than was true of individuals living in previous times. Muggleton believes this to be a misconception explaining that there “never was a privileged moment of ‘authentic’ subculture inception untainted by media, commercial and entrepreneurial influences in the manner that modernist theory suggested” (2000, p. 45). Thus, both bricolage and historical context considerations have the potential to lend a credible perspective to those who claim to wear meaningful cause representational dress.

Thompson and Haytko (1997) also consider individuals to be effective in manipulating meaningful identities. Rather than focus on the negative tension between social influences and individual identities, they discussed how individuals use dress identities as temporary markers of who they are throughout their lives. These mutable dress identities directly relate to personal ideas about who he or she is at a given time in relation to society as a whole. As Thompson and Haytko described,

By using fashion discourses to create localized social categories...the participants [of their research on consumers and identity construction] gain concrete reference points from which to understand more abstract issues of social-class dynamics, gender relations, and the tension between personal autonomy and social dependencies (p. 35).

This perspective credits the individual with understanding dichotomies between himself and how society contributes to decisions about who he or she is. In other words, individuals are considered to be reflexive (Callero, 2003; Entwistle, 2000).

Despite well considered concerns, Kaiser et. al. (1991) ultimately advocate for a combined use of symbolic interaction and postmodernism in dress research arguing that the former addresses a micro level, or individual, understanding of dress and appearance management and the latter addresses a macro level, or cultural, understanding of dress and appearance management. Kaiser, Nagasawa, and Hutton (1995a) also credit the individual with expressive ability and state that “Through an active manipulation of symbols, combined in personally constructed ways, individuals can strive to create continual images of self so as to glean some understanding of who they are in a complex and changing societal context” (p. 180). They describe the individual as someone who is in control of self discovery through dress identities. The ambiguity of visual sources from which one draws on in identity creation is seen as leading to “the richest constructions of meaning, by calling upon the most interpretive thought processes” (Kaiser et al., 1991, p. 178).

*Summary of issues related to symbolic interaction and postmodern theory.* There are some inconsistencies between symbolic interaction and postmodern theory. The primary inconsistency seems to involve the individual and his or her ability to use dress to create meaningful identities. Callero (2003) indicates that symbolic interaction has not adequately approached individual agency which reduces the credibility of dress as a reliable means of expressing authentic identities. Symbolic interaction has purportedly neglected to question all of the external influences affecting an individual's understanding of who they are. However, researchers such as Kaiser et al. (1991, 1995a, 1995b, 1996) and Freitas et. al. (1997) suggested that symbolic interaction does provide a critical base for exploring identities of integrity. As explained by Freitas et al.,

A symbolic interactionist approach to appearance management offers a nexus of concepts that are vital to identity construction: agency, emergent meanings, and negotiation. It also fosters an awareness of actions and transactions that enables individuals to vie for preferred identities in the face of stigmatizing social labels. (1997, p. 324).

Understanding the tension between personal agency and social constituency was relevant to my research on cause representational dress and individual identity because of the insight it lent to some key questions. For example, is an individual wearing a representation of a cause because it gives him or her feeling of participation and agency in a cause or because he or she is following a trend? While my research does not purport to solve the theoretical rift between symbolic interaction and postmodern theory that

Callero (2003) describes, it does attempt to understand the strengths and weaknesses of applying both theories' tenets to individuals who wear cause representational dress.

*Consumerism's Role in Wearing Cause Representational Dress*

*Consumerism's conflicting values.* Consumerist criticism became particularly vocal with the advent of mass production. Early 20th century writers Adorno and Horkheimer (2000), for example, reflect the ire of many who found the rationality of modernism and drive for mass-production detrimental to society. To them, modern culture promoted a mass culture which sold uniform products and contrived experiences to people. Lasn (2000) described how mid 20th century Situationists perceived the inroads media and consumerism had made on modern life. The Situationists believed that "Everything human beings once experienced directly had been turned into a representation, a show put on by someone else. Real living had been replaced by pre-packaged experiences and media-created events" (Lasn, 2000, p. 416).

Firat and Dholakia (1998) also noted the socially transformative nature of modernism and mass production. Around the middle of the 20th century individuals began to develop different types of relationships with products and services. Firat and Dholakia stated that "The fulfillment or satisfaction of the subject's (human) needs and goals, the improvement of human life, was accomplished primarily through objects – namely, products made available to the subject by...industrial mass production" (p. 64-65). Not only was object ownership equated with an improved life but individuals began to allow the objects themselves to carry greater meaning (Firat & Dholakia, 1998).

The growing relationship between people and products has led to a contradictory consumer society in the United States; individuals are both esteemed and challenged for the objects that they own. Consumerism can have negative connotations. As Felski explained, "...consumerism has often been seen as a sign of human enslavement, or at least stupefaction, and closely linked to the feminine and irrational..." (2000, p. 68). Active involvement in consumerism bolsters the economy which is central to our perceived success as a nation (Firat & Dholakia, 1998). It has been reported that the consumer accounts for 70% of the gross domestic product in the U.S. (Wolf, 2006). This statistic indicates that people are generally willing to engage in a consumer economy. The increasing variety of products, services, and advertising campaigns that successfully co-exist in markets across the world support consumerism's dominant presence.

In addition to economic benefits, consumption patterns can be used to research cultural behaviors and social structures. McCracken (1988) challenged consumerism's stigma and emphasized the important role it plays in society. He asserted,

We "know" from popular opinion and social scientific study that our materialism is one of the things that is most wrong with our society....This familiar, and entirely wrongheaded, idea has helped keep us from seeing the cultural significance of consumption plainly (1988, p. xi).

McCracken is not a proponent of excessive spending. Instead, he seems to suggest that researchers should stop criticizing people for buying things and start understanding how the availability of products and the application of their use affect cultural behaviors. From McCracken's perspective, an individual who wears cause representational dress

might do so because he has engaged in the thoughtful observation of societal issues and considered how consumer products could be used to express personal convictions.

*Consumerism, identity, and cause representational dress.* Identity construction is closely tied with consumption in the United States. Firat and Dholakia (1998) discuss the relationship between consumption and identity without obvious concerns regarding consumerism's morality. They stated that "It is through what they consume or are able to consume, and through the process of construction of their consumption experiences that postmodern consumer-citizens lay claim to their identities and signal their worth to society" (1998, p. 77). Those who wear cause representational dress use consumer products that have been specifically manipulated to relay a message about their beliefs. The message that an individual wears may be viewed by others as meaningful or as an inappropriate commercialization of something that is meaningful. It could be seen as an affront or challenge to wear cause representational dress as ideological beliefs are often intentionally suppressed in social settings such as work to avoid confrontation.

Campbell's (2005) perspective on consumerism is less negative than those such as Adorno and Horkheimer (2000) and Schor (1998). He proposed an archetype of consumer which he called *the craft consumer* who buys things in a way which ...does not foreground rational self-interested conduct, nor does it presume, as is the case with the postmodern model, that the consumer has an overwhelming concern with image, lifestyle, or identity. Rather, the assumption here is that individuals consume principally out of a desire to engage in creative acts of self expression (p. 24).

Campbell makes a moral distinction between those who have “overwhelming concern about image, lifestyle or identity” and those who engage in “creative acts of self expression.” The former are implied to have superficial concerns while the latter are considered to be astutely reflective about who they are and able to express personal identity through material culture. From Campbell’s (2005) perspective, creativity serves to legitimize the efforts of individuals who strive to express themselves through appearance.

Campbell’s (2005) discussion of the craft consumer falls short in that there is only a theoretical claim that these consumers do not have an overwhelming concern about image, lifestyle, or identity. There is no way of knowing the degree to which consumers are concerned about identity issues without discussing the issue directly with them. A better understanding of the consumer could come from research on why there might be a preoccupation with image, lifestyle, and identity versus assuming that individuals do not have these overwhelming concerns.

*Consumer objects: meanings and value.* Consumer goods are an inherent part of any society (Kopytoff, 1986). Despite the straight forward appearance of price tags and service fees, assessing the values of commodities can be ambiguous and is dependent on social context. Monetary worth and personally assigned value are not always distinctly parsed out by our economic system and can cause confusion. Kopytoff describes the inherent confusion regarding worth in complex societies such as the United States by noting that there are “two different systems of values: that of the marketplace and that of the closed sphere of personally singularized things, both of which happen to converge on

the object at hand” (p. 80). For example, a 14 carat gold cross has competing values, that of religious devotion and that of a societal devotion to precious metals as status items.

To reduce complications of equating economic worth with personally assigned worth I limited my research to dress items that have relatively little monetary worth. A focus on dress objects that are imbued with personal meanings by the individuals wearing them helped accomplish the goal of understanding motivations behind wearing objects that reference a cause or belief. Additionally, this focus revealed ways in which objects gained personal value. In the context of my research *value* was not be considered to be equal to Merriam Webster’s definition of value as “the monetary worth of something,” but rather similar to their definition of value as “something intrinsically valuable or desirable” (1993, p. 1305).

Value is added when a noted personal experience or history is individually or collectively associated with an object. That is, objects can have individual biographies which affect perceptions of their value (Kopytoff, 1986). For example, a gown worn by the First Lady during a presidential inauguration would have more value than the same gown found in an unknown woman’s closet. This example implies that there is some collective agreement that the notoriety of the person and the context in which it was worn increases the object’s social and monetary worth. In their research on irreplaceable possessions, Grayson and Shulman (2000) explained why people associate a particular item with a meaningful life experience. They stated,

Retaining a possession that is incontrovertibly and physically linked to a memorable past event helps to verify for them that the event actually occurred.

Without this linkage, informants reported that their personal connection with past events is diminished (Grayson & Shulman, p. 21).

In the same way that respondents from Grayson and Shulman's research found strong associations between events and objects, dress objects used to represent a cause could be connected to a specific time in a person's life in which they are particularly concerned about a certain cause or belief. Additionally, an individual may have more attachment to a representational object than they do to an object that is used for utilitarian purposes.

Consumers must creatively negotiate meaning within the context of advertisers who intentionally sell to their emotions; they know that creative identity construction is vulnerable to mass marketing and cooptation. In cause representational dress, this has been obvious in philanthropic endeavors such as LAF wristbands for cancer awareness, red ribbon pins for HIV awareness, and the color pink marketed by many retailers for breast cancer awareness. The widespread use of items or colors such as these can make it difficult to look at individuals who represent a cause via dress as doing so in an authentic or unmediated manner. Murray explained,

What starts out as a concrete, local, and contextualized fashion, something that may be perceived as not yet commercial and therefore authentic, is drained of its original sign value as it is marketed and mainstreamed (2002, p. 439).

Once concepts are picked up by marketers and sold back to consumers on a large scale the value of the item to an individual could be compromised. This compromise relates back to personal identity; widespread adoption threatens the uniqueness of the item which consequently threatens the uniqueness of the individual. Grayson and Shulman noted

that “the ubiquity and disposability of commodity products reduce consumer confidence in not only a durable world, but also in a centered self (Cushman 1990)” (2000, p. 28).

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton noted that “In almost every culture, objects are chosen to represent the power of the bearer. More than any other trait, the potential energy of the person, his or her power to affect others, is one that is symbolically expressed” (1981, p. 26). This notion supports the idea that individuals transfer issues of personal importance to objects, which include dress objects. Since dress is the mobile casing that individuals take into social situations, as opposed to a teapot collection for example, dress must be specially manipulated if an individual wishes to wear an item that explains something specific about their beliefs.

Of course the object itself does not actually have meaning. This makes an individual’s attachment to an object especially interesting when the object coveted does not have particular monetary worth. As Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton described, “There is nothing in the object itself that helps to restore order in the psyche, it is not an object in its concreteness that produces a symbolic transformation but the object as an abstraction” (1981, p. 23). Material objects provide something tangible to attach memories and feelings to and help us form images of who we believe ourselves to be (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

Production of a dress object, such as a political t-shirt, is a fairly blatant way to attach individual beliefs and affiliations to an object. Wearing it in public, however, can personally satisfy more than the desire to promote a particular candidate or cause. Wearing the t-shirt speaks to an individual’s willingness to be public with their beliefs.

The item of cause representational dress can be said to give shape to an ideological identity that otherwise might remain unknown to others.

*Examples of Cause Representational Dress in Context*

*Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District.* On Thursday, December 16, 1965, Christopher Eckhardt, John Tinker, and Mary Tinker pinned home-made black bands to their sleeves to mourn the casualties of the Vietnam War and support Senator Robert Kennedy's proposal for a Christmas truce (Johnson, 1997; Zirkel, 1999). The teens, attending three different schools within the Des Moines Independent Community School District, had gotten the idea from a meeting they attended at the Eckhardt's home earlier that week (Johnson). Ross Peterson, a student who worked on the Roosevelt High School newspaper, wrote an article for the upcoming paper announcing the students' intention to wear the black bands (Johnson).

Administrators pulled the article from the newspaper prior to press and students were told over the public address system that they would not be permitted to wear the black bands. Johnson (1997) contended that the school officials' primary fears were that wearing the black bands would spawn violence and, on a less dangerous note, that it would disrupt classes. Many students, however, felt that the prohibition on black bands was unfair (Johnson). One student who was interviewed at the time of the incident said,

What a joke! Only last year we were all asked to wear black armbands to mourn the loss of school spirit at basketball games. Even a black coffin was marched through the halls! Nobody was afraid of that disrupting the educational process. (Johnson, p. 7)

This quote illustrates why physical and historical context is critical to symbolic messages – messages and symbols tend to morph over time, carrying different meanings for different groups of people. In this case, a black band that had previously been used to bolster school spirit was reconstituted to symbolize unease with U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam. This case is also an interesting precedent in that the item in question was something that was not labeled with words; it was merely a piece of black fabric. Its potency came from a publicly negotiated meaning. With the help of the local media and school administrators, significant meaning was effectively transferred to a valueless object.

Eckhardt, Tinker, and Tinker wore the bands to school, were sent home, and told to return only after they removed them. Although there were others that wore a black band these three became the most well known as they were involved with a law suit filed against the Des Moines Independent Community School District in January 1966. That all three children had the support of their parents was particularly important because the defense argued that parents were using their children to further their own political agendas (Johnson, 1997). However, all three of the children indicated that although their parents had beliefs similar to their own, they had not suggested or encouraged the use of the black bands to promote their beliefs (Johnson). As described by Johnson, 13 year old Mary Beth Tinker testified that

...wearing the armband to school had been her decision and that she had definitely not been talked into it by either of her parents. She also testified that

she had found the cloth for the armband herself and had cut and affixed it to her sweater without help or encouragement (p. 83).

Social movement theory suggests that wearing something like the black bands worn by Eckhardt and the Tinkers can “implicitly involve the construction of personal identity by conveying that the teller is the type of person who does not support such injustices but, rather, is sensitive to the plight of victims and wishes to do something to end their suffering” (Hunt & Benford, p. 499). This concurs with the Tinkers who indicated that “the armband-wearing students regarded the mourning of the casualties of war to be as important a motivation for their symbolic act as their calling for the Christmas truce” (Johnson, 1997, p. 73). For these young people, wearing a cause likely gave them a feeling of power or involvement in a situation they felt otherwise unable to affect.

ICLU (Iowa Civil Liberties Union) attorney Dan Johnston, the attorney representing Eckhardt and the Tinkers, stated his clients’ objection to the arm band ban as follows:

Christopher Eckhardt and the Tinker children were “lawfully and peacefully engaged in the exercise of the right of free speech secured for them by Amendments One and Fourteen of the United States Constitution” and that, by depriving the plaintiffs of their right to free speech, the defendants were in violation of these amendments and section 1983 of Title 42 of the U.S. Code (Johnson, 1997, p. 68).

The U.S. district court initially sided with the defendants ruling that “the right of the school district to act reasonably to maintain order outweighs the students’ right to symbolic expression” (Johnson, p. 221). However, Eckhardt and the Tinkers’ actions on December 16, 1965, did not incite the violence and chaos that the defense’s case rested on. Therefore, Dan Johnston pursued the case insisting that the ban encroached upon the First Amendment’s right to free speech (Johnson). The defendants prepared for an appeal and after a series of tied court cases, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* finally reached the U.S. Supreme court.

In 1969, the Supreme Court ultimately ruled that it would be a violation of the First Amendment to suspend students for wearing black armbands to protest the Vietnam War as long as it did not cause “substantial disruption of or material interference with school activities” (Zirkel, 1999, p. 34). This case surfaces difficult questions regarding personal freedom and it is notable that a small black armband was responsible for instigating a thorough analysis of constitutional rights. In 1999 the 30th anniversary of the *Tinker* decision was marked with an interview of both the prosecuting and defense attorneys who had been involved with the case (Zirkel). Zirkel contended that the following quote by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Abraham Fortas was likely

...the most often quoted dictum in modern education litigation: First Amendment rights, applied in light of the special characteristics of the school environment, are available to teachers and students. It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitution rights...at the schoolhouse gate (p. 34).

The attorneys involved in this 1960s case, Dan Johnston and Edgar Bittle, also noted that the political climate is considerably different at the end of the 20th century than it was then. The conservative power of the Supreme Court and the moral issues that are integral to political strategizing at the beginning of the 21st century make wearing a cause risky for anyone despite the victory of Christopher Eckhardt, Mary Beth Tinker, and John Tinker (Zirkel).

*Controversial t-shirts.* The last half of the 20th century saw t-shirts transform from undergarments to mobile billboards that advertise consumer products, endorse sports teams, and state personal beliefs. Many newspaper and magazine articles have since described situations in which individuals were required to remove t-shirts with messages that someone of authority deemed inappropriate or risk punitive action. As expected, students have challenged these restrictive dress ordinances, citing an infringement on their right to free speech which is guaranteed in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. I review a number of cases that are germane to this topic.

In November 2004 Brad Mathewson, a public school student in rural Missouri, sued the Webb City school district “after administrators ordered him to stop wearing t-shirts supporting gay rights, including one proclaiming, ‘I’m gay and I’m proud’” (Hendrie, 2005, ¶10). While this might seem to be a blatant infringement on an individual’s rights, the superintendent compellingly pointed out that “If you have no governance of messages that a student might be wearing, then what happens when somebody comes in with a shirt saying ‘I hate gays’” (Hendrie, 2005, ¶13). As mentioned earlier, wearing a cause can cause social unrest and possibly initiate

retaliations by those with opposing viewpoints. In addition, complex questions are raised regarding the difference between personal expression and the support of destructive stereotypes. Edgar Bittle, the defendants' lawyer in *Tinker v. Des Moines*, provides some clarification about what people are and are not permitted to say (or wear) when he stated that "threatening people and threatening violence is not protected speech" (Zirkel, 1999, p. 59). However, there are still many ambiguities about an individual's constitutional right to wear cause representational dress.

A 1986 high court ruling in *Bethel School District v. Fraser* provides some additional clarity when the justices established that "school officials can discipline students for lewd and indecent speech" (Hendrie, 2005, ¶22). This does not make a strong case for an administration's decision to ban gay pride t-shirts as many would not consider this lewd or indecent. The defendants in cases that I reviewed (Johnson, 1997; Hendrie, 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2006) tended to rely on the defense that it is within a school district's right to control behavior that is disruptive to learning and to guard against violence. This tactic is not, however, always successful. Hendrie's discussion with Houston lawyer Christopher B. Gilbert who has represented school districts in student-speech cases reveals that when you use this defense "You are predicting that it's going to cause a disruption, and the word 'predicting' implies that sometimes you're going to get it wrong" (Hendrie, 2005, ¶25).

Some schools have done what civil liberties lawyers such as Johnston and Gilbert have advocated all along; use controversial rulings within school as an opportunity for discussion and learning. In 1988, for example, students at Tigard High School in Oregon

were sent home for wearing t-shirts with beer logos while other t-shirts of questionable taste were allowed (Blodgett, 1988). A female student was, for example, permitted to wear a t-shirt reading “Objects under this shirt are larger than they appear” (Blodgett, 1988, p. 22). Students objected to the seemingly inconsistent restrictions. The principal responded by organizing a mock trial in which nine local attorneys served as the Tigard Supreme Court (Blodgett, 1988). Students debated their position at an all-school assembly and the principal agreed to comply with the decision of the Tigard Supreme Court who “unanimously held that the dress code was unconstitutionally vague and violated the Oregon constitution” (Blodgett, 1988, p. 22).

T-shirt issues are not relegated to schools. On January 31, 2006 Iraq War protester Cindy Sheehan was removed from the House visitors’ gallery during President Bush’s State of the Union speech for wearing a t-shirt reading “2,245 Dead. How Many More?” (Kirkpatrick, 2006). The message, although clear and to the point, says much more than how many U.S. troops had been killed in Iraq up to that time. It was only one piece of Shehan’s nationally recognized protest that included camping out in front of President Bush’s Texas ranch. The five words on her t-shirt spoke to the personal pain of a mother who has lost a child in the Iraq War, her compassion for those still serving in the armed forces, her opinions on the Bush Administration’s course of action, and likely many other concerns as well. Her high public profile may have heightened the reaction of the White House security staff who found her t-shirt disruptive and potentially dangerous.

*The Lance Armstrong Foundation wristband.* In recent years the United States has witnessed a proliferation of health-related dress items that are worn both during

fundraising events and for everyday dress. Examples include a pink ribbon in support of research to cure breast cancer and a red ribbon in support of HIV awareness. Mass media's role in reporting on disease and illness has brought objects associated with curing them into the everyday experience of many Americans. One particularly successful product that helped support this trend was the Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF) \$1 wristband. Proceeds for this wristband are donated to the Lance Armstrong Foundation which implies that the purchase of a wristband is similar to making a donation. Armstrong's success as an athlete proved to be very conducive to media coverage and helped to facilitate the engagement of people in the cause on both an individual and social level.

This strategy of providing the public with an inexpensive product that referenced a serious cause proved successful. There were 70 million wristbands sold and 63 million dollars raised by the summer of 2007 (Ruibal, 2007, p. 8C). Since that time, many other organizations have imprinted silicone rubber wristbands with messages of their own. For example, a pink wristband in support of breast cancer research was available, as was another yellow wristband in support of American troops. Retailers also seemed to recognize the wristbands widespread appeal and co-opted them for their own marketing purposes. For example, Izzy's Ice Cream parlor in St. Paul, Minnesota sold a brown wristband with the name "IZZY'S" imprinted on it.

Objects with relatively little monetary worth, such as the LAF wristband, can be viewed as valuable due to the social contexts in which they are created and used. The fact that these items have been widely accepted does not make them valuable in and of

themselves. Actually, their proliferation likely reduces their individual value. Unlike other objects with rich cultural biographies, such as Joe DiMaggio's baseball jersey, the wristband is not singularized. If, like DiMaggio's jersey, the wristband Lance Armstrong wore in the Tour de France was identified and sold, it would likely garner a higher exchange value than a brand new wristband. Unlike the jersey, the uniformity of the mass produced item has removed any sign of individuality from it, making it difficult to verify the original wearer. This does not preclude the real possibility that any one individual may be particularly attached to their specific LAF wristband.

As with most pandemic causes, the LAF website promotes a collective engagement of cancer awareness and creates a nationwide support group of sorts in the process. On the LAF website people are encouraged to describe their reasons for wearing the LAF wristband. Examples are as follows: "I've worn the yellow wristband because I am a survivor and it reminds me that I don't have to live in fear anymore" (Lemke, 2005); "I've worn the yellow wristband because it symbolizes the widespread recognition that cancer must be dealt with unequivocally" (McNeil, 2005); and "Wearing the band is a constant reminder of those who have gone on, those who have survived, and the work that still needs to be done" (Warner, 2005). It is noted that responses on this particular website clearly tend to support the perspective that individuals believe the LAF wristbands to be meaningful items of dress. The Lance Armstrong Foundation website also highlights responses from individuals who appear to have focused intentions about why they wear this particular item. Nevertheless, the quotes are helpful in arriving at some initial contentions about the role of cause representational dress.

These quotes, as well as many others not recorded here, often imply a level of personal empowerment. I contend that wearers such as the ones quoted above wear the band because it gives them a sense of agency over a disease which they might otherwise feel helpless to fight. In this way the wristbands are similar to the black armbands worn in the *Tinker v. Des Moines* case study. Despite its low material value, the wristband has a publicly negotiated meaning. The yellow wristband represents a high profile individual who recovered from an advanced form of cancer, and his success is likely encouraging to those who live with cancer.

While some individuals may value an item such as the LAF wristband, it is anticipated that others will either be ambivalent or strongly object to wearing items of dress that symbolize a cause. Ambivalent and negative reactions do not necessarily indicate a lack of belief in supporting the referenced cause but rather may reveal an attitude about what should and should not be symbolized through dress. Objections to wearing representations of causes may partially be rooted in the widespread use and co-optation of wristbands to reflect a multitudinous of causes. As previously implicated, the ubiquity of goods can be associated with unbridled consumerism which has an air of impropriety or lack of morale about it. Thus the wristbands' direct associations with a life threatening disease may seem cavalier to some, minimizing the gravity of the situation. Ultimately, grave illness and the struggle for life itself is an intensely existential and personal matter that is typically not discussed on a conversational level.

*Review of Literature Summary*

Tenets of symbolic interaction and postmodern theory have been applied to setting up a conceptual framework about wearing cause representational dress. Stone's (1981) contributions to the development of symbolic interaction offer useful terminology for identifying participants' roles in appearance related communication. Consideration of the concepts of program and review helped to establish a foundation for researching the impact of social interaction on motivations and decisions related to wearing cause representational dress. Stone also offered insight into relationships between individual identities and self and this served as a point of departure for an extensive discussion on identity creation.

Because representations and symbolizations of causes blend issues of dress with issues of graphic display, information specific to stylistic messaging was also introduced in the review of literature. Wiessner's (1983) definitions of emblematic style and assertive style provided a way to understand stylistic messages discussed by research participants. Prior to collecting data it was thought that there would be some variety in the way that participants interpreted the basic concept of wearing cause representational dress. Wobst's (1977) discussion on effective stylistic messaging also contributed to an understanding of cause representational dress by emphasizing the importance of social and physical proximity of individuals within a communication setting.

Postmodern theory was introduced because many researchers within the discipline of dress (Hebdige, 1979; Hodkinson, 2000; Morgado, 1996; Muggleton, 2000; Kaiser et al, 1991, 1995a, 1995b, 1996) employ tenets of postmodern theory. Concepts such as

identity construction, symbolic meaning, and contemporary culture were discussed relative to issues of media influence and consumerism by postmodern researchers which were pertinent in understanding motivations for wearing cause representational dress. Also included were conclusions made by researchers that discussed differences between individual agency and stylistic servitude (e.g. Hebdige, Hodkinson, Morgado, Muggleton, Kaiser et al.).

The effectiveness of dress as a language was emphasized in the discussion of identity creation and communication. There was some criticism (McCracken, 1990; Campbell, 1996) that dress researchers' overstep reason and make assumptions that individuals are trying to convey messages that they are not actually trying to convey. However, dress researchers generally support the idea that dress does send out some indicators of an individual's social situation regardless of an individual's intent to do so.

Identity construction through dress in the beginning of the 21st century is typically dependent on consumerism. The discussion on consumerism provided two primary views on consumerist practices; the first emphasized excessive and thoughtless spending and the second emphasized the potential of consumerism's cultural significance. My discussion provided a base from which to discuss potential relationships that those who wear cause representational dress have with their respective consumer dress objects. Consumer objects and the meanings people imbue them with is relevant in that objects used to symbolize affiliation with or belief in an issue potentially carry greater meaning than dress objects with utilitarian functions.

Finally, I described three examples of wearing representations of causes. These examples were used to provide clarification on the types of dress objects I researched and to illustrate ways in which wearing cause representational dress can impact one's social context. First, *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* offered an example of a do-it-yourself object that was quickly transformed into a controversial object. Second, controversies related to t-shirt messages and an individual's perceived right to wear or "say" anything in public was discussed through a variety of cases. Third, the LAF wristband was described as a highly successful dress object that has personal meaning to some despite its low monetary worth. Also implicated in this discussion on the LAF wristband is the question of personal value and how this is affected when an object becomes ubiquitous.

The research questions developed for my dissertation reflect primary issues discussed in my review of literature. While many questions could have been raised, the following five relate to my specific research goals.

### *Research Questions/Assumptions/Limitations*

#### *Research Questions*

1. How does wearing a dress item that represents a cause contribute to a person's sense of self from a symbolic interaction perspective?
2. What is the process for validating cause-related dress as it relates to identity?
3. How does an individual establish boundaries around what is considered appropriate or inappropriate when wearing a dress item that represents a cause or opinion?

4. What environmental/contextual constraints do individuals who wear cause-related dress experience?
5. Consumer options could be viewed as heterogeneous and multitudinous or homogenous and confining. How does an individual who wears a dress item that represents a cause perceive the market's ability to offer products that promote individual expression?

### *Assumptions*

There is a basic assumption that individuals use dress to create identities that are expressive of personal characteristics. Individuals are assumed to read one another's dress and draw conclusions about others based on appearance management choices. There is also an assumption that people who wear cause representational dress do so with varying degrees of involvement with the issue or belief they are supporting through their dress. For example, there are those who are unaware that the representation they wear is affiliated with a social or political issue, those who follow fashion trends, and those who have a personal attachment to the causes, values, or beliefs that they support. Finally, there is an assumption that the examples of cause representational dress discussed in the review of literature can be used to inform the habits of participants in my research whether by likeness or contrast.

### *Limitations of the Research Design*

My research is limited to participants from the upper Midwest which has regional idiosyncrasies; therefore, results are not widely generalizable. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of my study does not yield the large number of participants that would

be needed for research that could be considered generalizable. However, the insights sought will add to an overall understanding of personal motivations behind wearing cause representational dress.

## Chapter 3

### *Methodology*

My research sought to reveal personal motivations for wearing symbols or representations of causes. While motivations were not presumed to have causality, they were considered to elucidate topics broached through the five primary research questions. As revealed in chapter one, my research also contributes to an understanding of personal boundaries that participants place around what they consider to be acceptable social behavior in regard to wearing cause representational dress. Literature that addressed identity construction and consumerism was reviewed due to the potential roles that they would play in understanding motivations for wearing cause representational dress. Equally important was gaining an understanding of the process by which individual's assign personal value to cause representational dress items, thus imbuing them with a worth that extends beyond their economic value.

A qualitative approach was selected for my research for two primary reasons. First, this approach allows for open-ended interviews which, in turn, allows for individualized explanations. Van Manen explained that, "Human science, in contrast [to natural science], studies 'persons,' or beings that have 'consciousness' and that 'act purposefully' in and on the world by creating objects of 'meaning' that are 'expressions' of how human beings exist in the world" (2003, p. 4). A focus on purposeful action and using objects of meaning as personal expressions is consistent with my goals. Second, qualitative methods are common to the field of cultural studies and my research's focus on social interaction is similar to cultural studies.

A qualitative approach indicates that a researcher's interest in the topic and interaction with participants impacts the way in which the data is collected and interpreted. Seale et al. explained that,

...it is essential that we attempt to understand the subjectivities through which our research materials are produced. When doing research this means being aware of how our own experiences, knowledge and stand-points inform our behaviour [sic] with and interpretation of our informants, (2004, p. 397).

I attempted to minimize preconceptions and personal views, but inherent in a qualitative approach is a responsibility to acknowledge the interaction between researcher and participant. During interviews, my responses to participants' comments were kept to a minimum with phrases such as "I hear what you're saying." Projecting biased responses was avoided.

Within the broader category of qualitative research, my approach incorporated concepts associated with grounded theory methods. Charmaz encouraged a *constructivist* grounded theory approach, and explained that, "Emphases on action and process and, from my constructivist view, meaning and emergence within symbolic interactionism complement grounded theory" (2000, p. 513). This approach supports the way in which my research questions stress how and why individuals wear cause representational dress. Also related to my research is Charmaz's assertion that, "The social world is always in process, and the lives of the research subjects shift and change as their circumstances and they themselves change. Hence a grounded theorist.... constructs a picture that draws from, reassembles, and renders subjects' lives," (2000, p. 522). Constructivist grounded

theory responds to the social complexities that exist between an individual and the changing world around them. I presumed that participants were responding to interview questions from the perspective of an individual who is affected by many external factors. However, responses were considered to be truthful and psycho-analysis of them was avoided. That is, conscious efforts were made to avoid drawing conclusions that were not supported directly by the data.

### *Population and Sample*

My research benefited from discussing cause representational dress with those who engaged in the activity of wearing it in public settings. Therefore, a purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants. As described by Silverman, “Purposeful sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested.... [It] demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are studying and choose our sample case carefully on this basis,” (2005, p. 129). Individuals had to meet two requirements for participation: first, they had to have worn cause representational dress in public at some point, and second, they had to be between the ages of 18-36 years.

An 18 year age range was selected out of a desire to focus the sample to individuals within the same approximate generation. From an academic perspective, *generation* is a term that is contingent on many external factors. A generation is described by one sociologist as “...made up of people who, born during the same time period, feel the impact of common historical events and cultural forces, and develop a shared consciousness or identity around these experiences” (Smelser & Baltes, 2001, p.

6045). Given the complexity of the concept of generation, I elected to simply use the number of years that, in the United States, are generally understood to separate childhood from adulthood.

Participants were recruited from a Midwestern metropolitan area between June 15 and December 31, 2007. Permission was requested from selected professors at an urban state university to recruit participants by making a brief announcement at the beginning of one of their lectures (see Appendix A). I also created 8.5”x11” recruitment flyers that were posted around the University campus, as well as throughout coffee shops in urban areas (see Appendix B). The interview process also provided the opportunity to use snowball sampling techniques. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) recommended that researchers conducting grounded research interview between 30 and 50 participants. In total, I conducted 35 interviews for data collection. Participant responses began to become redundant after approximately 30 interviews were conducted.

Participant traits’ such as age, gender, political affiliation, educational background, religious tendencies, and degree of urban or rural upbringing have the potential to affect the way a person thinks about wearing a cause. While some of these factors may be influential, it was beyond the scope of my research to study the entire socio-cultural make-up of any one participant.

#### *Instrumentation, Data Collection Procedures, Validity and Reliability*

Depending on the parameters of the research question, one to three interview questions were developed to correspond with each of the five research questions (see Appendix C). The three interview questions developed for research question one

attempted to elicit responses from participants that revealed why they wore cause representational dress. The questions also encouraged participants to discuss how, and if, they felt connected to the items of dress on a personal level. The interview questions for research question one were as follows:

1. Do you think that there is a relationship between your personal identity and the clothes you wear on a day when you wear a representation of a cause? Describe why you do or do not consider there to be a relationship.
2. How do you feel that you benefit from wearing a representation of a cause versus knowing in your mind that you support that cause?
3. Do you feel that people view you differently when you wear a representation of a cause? If yes, how?

Participants were not likely to be aware of theoretical differentiations between the terms identity and self. Therefore, the term identity was used in the wording of interview question one as it seemed to be accessible to participants and get at a general idea that the question was asking them to consider the relationship between personal beliefs and visual ways of expressing them (dress items with representations of causes in this case).

Encouraging participants to talk about the benefits of wearing cause representational dress and how they perceived others to react to them in this dress would, I had hoped, provoke responses that would provide some link between an individual's personal beliefs and how he or she employs those beliefs in identity construction.

Validation was thought to have possible implications for the continued use of cause representational dress by participants. The following three interview questions were developed to correspond with research question two.

4. How would you, or how do you feel when someone comments negatively on the cause related dress you are wearing?
5. How do you feel when someone comments positively on the cause related dress you are wearing?
6. How do you feel when no one comments on the cause related dress you are wearing?

Interview questions four, five, and six were posed to encourage participants to discuss how interactions with others impacted their decision to wear cause representational dress. I had hoped that these questions would elicit responses that revealed ways in which participants experienced validation for the cause representational dress that they wore.

Research question three developed out of a desire to know how individuals viewed wearing cause representational dress that was potentially controversial or offensive. The following two interview questions were developed to elicit discussion about the type of boundaries that participants might establish for themselves or others relative to cause representational dress:

7. Describe types of causes or opinions, if any, that you think might be inappropriate to wear in public settings?

8. Now I'm going to show you ten t-shirt images that I pulled off of the internet.

I'm asking you if you think they are appropriate to wear in public and if you would wear them in public if they represented your beliefs or opinions.

Interview question seven was posed to get participants thinking about potentially offensive items of cause representational dress; however, it was limiting in that it required them to conjure up possibilities within the immediacy of a face to face interview.

The term appropriate was used in the wording of interview question eight because of its general nature. That is, the question intentionally avoided asking participants if the t-shirts shown in Figures 1-10 (see Appendix D) definitively should or should not be worn in public. More critical than yes or no responses regarding the appropriateness of a garment was eliciting discussion on how the content and tone of controversial items of cause representational dress informed an individual's appearance management boundaries.

Pulling images of t-shirts from existing websites and showing them to participants during the interview encouraged participants to comment in depth on cause representational dress and boundary creation. T-shirts selected for review were generally paired by cause and represented two sides of an issue. For example, Figures 1 and 2 illustrated extreme sides of the abortion debate while Figures 3 and 4 illustrated somewhat more controlled sentiments representing both sides of the abortion debate. The t-shirt in Figure 9 was selected for review because it had a racist tone which seemed to be a possible limitation for some participants. Not all shirts were emphatically divisive or

offensive which confused participants; that is, they had difficulty forming responses to t-shirts with relatively neutral statements (Figures 3, 4, 7, 8, and 10).

Research question four ties in closely with research question three in that they both address ways in which participants created boundaries relative to cause representational dress. While research question three focused on causes that participants felt were either appropriate or inappropriate to express through dress, four focused on physical locations or social situations in which individuals feel both hesitant and apt to display their beliefs through cause representational dress. Participants were asked to discuss this issue through the following interview question:

9. What type of place might you be apt to wear a representation of a cause, and conversely, what type of place might you be hesitant to wear a representation of a cause?

Through research question five, I sought to understand how individuals who wore cause representational dress viewed the ability of mass produced products to express concepts that were presumably meaningful to them. Interview questions relative to research question five developed out of portions of the review of literature that dealt with issues surrounding consumerism and the intrinsic value that an individual imbues consumable objects with. The two corresponding interview questions were as follows.

10. How does mass acceptance of an item like the LAF LIVESTRONG wristband, which promotes cancer research and awareness, influence your decision to wear it?

11. Describe similarities or differences in how you feel about disposing of a utilitarian piece of clothing such as a plain t-shirt versus a piece of clothing or accessory that has a representation of a cause.

Through interview question 10 I had hoped to elicit discussion that addressed the impact of fashion trends on personal beliefs expressed through cause representational dress. I developed interview question eleven to approach this discussion from a slightly different angle; that is, I asked participants to talk about ways in which they gave meaning to mass produced clothing or cause representational dress.

All interviews were conducted on an individual basis by me and audio recorded. To determine a reasonable time frame for the interview and test the clarity and appropriateness of the interview questions, a pilot test (in this case, a preliminary interview) was conducted with two participants. I explained to the pilot study participants that they were there not only to answer the questions, but also to comment on the clarity of the interview questions themselves. Minor alterations were made to interview questions 5, 10, 11, and 13. Interviews conducted for data collection took between 20 and 45 minutes.

Approval for using human subjects was sought through the Institutional Review Board at the University of Minnesota. The topic and associated interview questions posed minimal risk to participants and approval for the research was granted and assigned the number 0703P03603 (see Appendix E). Participants were given a \$10 cash incentive for a one time interview in which their anonymity was guaranteed. The only demographic identifiers collected for this research were age and gender. All participants

were assured verbally and in writing that they could stop the interview process at any time with no penalty. They were given a random number that coordinated with their interview data which allowed them to contact me anonymously and request to have their interview data struck from the research within a week of the interview if they had second thoughts about participation.

To establish coding validity a second party reviewed thematic structures that surfaced out of the interview text. Themes that seemed spurious were discussed and adjusted accordingly. The reliability of the instrument was achieved by providing an internal consistency check; research questions were approached in at least two ways through the development of interview questions. This was thought to limit misunderstandings that surfaced between the wording of an interview question and the meaning of an interview question.

### *Data Analysis*

Grounded theory and much qualitative methodology in general, strive to find common and prominent themes in interview text. Charmaz refers to this process as coding, and asserts that,

...grounded theorists code our emerging data as we collect it. Through coding, we start to define and categorize our data...Coding helps us gain a new perspective on our material and to focus further data collection, and may lead us in unforeseen directions, (2000, p. 515).

To begin the coding process, data was transcribed and reviewed thoroughly to gain a sense of what legitimate themes might develop from the interview text. Van Manen's

qualitative research echoes this process of analyzing interview text, explaining that the codes we seek can, "...unearth something 'telling,' something 'meaningful,' something 'thematic' in the various experiential accounts – we work at mining the meaning from them" (2003, p. 86).

The objective of analyzing interview text was to uncover relationships between like ideas and explore how they informed the posed research questions. To do this, transcribed text from the interviews was grouped with each respective interview question. This text was then analyzed to identify recurring themes that were relevant to the research question that the interview questions referenced. Because of the large volume of data collected, NVIVO 7™ was used to organize and manage analysis. Themes, described as nodes in NVIVO 7™, were refined over time as they sometimes proved to be duplicative. The frequency with which particular responses occurred contributed to the conclusion that any one theme was essential. However, it was not feasible to adhere to numerical litmus regarding the number of responses required for a sentiment to become a theme. This was due to the fact that themes sometimes split more or less evenly across certain interview questions. Conclusions to research questions were then drawn from thematic information.

## Chapter 4

### *Data Analysis and Discussion*

Chapter four begins with a brief description of participant make up to provide a general understanding about the types of issues and beliefs recruited individuals expressed through their dress. I then address each research question and corresponding interview questions. Themes that developed out of participants' responses to interview questions are posited and supported by quotes from the interview text. Themes are also discussed relative to topics that were raised in chapter two's review of literature.

Thirty seven participants were interviewed for my research; 12 males and 25 females. Two participants were interviewed during the pilot study phase; therefore, 35 interviews were transcribed and used in the data analysis. All participants were between the ages of 18 and 36, with an average age of 23.9, and lived within a large Midwestern metropolitan area. While an examination of the specific dress items that individuals wore was not central to my research, introductory interview questions asked participants to discuss dress items worn to gain insight into participants' experience of wearing cause representational dress. Background questions relative to their experiences were also useful in establishing rapport with participants.

Twenty five participants discussed more than one item of cause representational dress and all but five used t-shirts as examples of their cause representational dress (see Appendix F for complete list of objects worn by participants). Silicone wristbands, bracelets, pins, patches, handkerchiefs, necklaces, and buttons were also used by participants to express beliefs. While there was some overlap in issues supported through

dress, distinct categories did not surface. The two most commonly occurring general issues represented through dress were items expressing political beliefs ( $n=13$ ) and items promoting the research and awareness of health related issues ( $n=12$ ). Many others topics were broached through cause representational dress including religious beliefs, women's rights, child abuse, gay rights, and the legalization of marijuana.

*Research Question One: How does wearing a dress item that represents a cause contribute to a person's sense of self from a symbolic interaction perspective?*

Research question one was developed with the perspective that the self is a composite of many identities and that these identities are a product of social interaction (Stone, 1981). Through research question one I sought to discover if those who wear cause representational dress do so because it creates a notably strong identity for them; that is, the individual considers the identity expressed to contribute something significant about their self as a whole. The relationship between personal identity and how an individual intends other to interpret that identity had the potential to provide insight into motivations behind wearing cause representational dress.

*Interview Question One: A Relationship Between Identity and Cause Representational Dress*

Participants' responses to interview question one fell into two primary themes: I feel a connection between the cause representational dress that I wear and my identity, and I feel minimal relationship between wearing cause representational dress and my identity.

*Theme one: connection between cause representational dress and identity.*

Twenty-two out of 35 participants responded in a way that indicated some relationship between what they wore and their identities. Many of them drew direct relationships between personal beliefs, experiences, concerns and the term identity. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F18** I do think there's a big relationship between how I view myself and my identity and the causes because I think a lot of - as far as schooling goes, as far as my internship goes, as far as any extra-curricular stuff that I do - it's pretty solidly based in politics and human rights and causes that I wear....It was something that my parents cultivated in me; political awareness. So that and just wearing those buttons and those t-shirts is just kind of like that one extra thing that I do, you know, and that one thing that is just like an outward representation of it right away.

**F20** Yes, I'll refer to the one [t-shirt I wear] about God because it's this huge part of my life so I, like, want people to know that's where I am.

**M01** I would not wear something that I do not believe in. I'm sort of like inclined towards vegetarianism but I'm not a vegetarian so I will not wear, you know, a vegan or vegetarian t-shirt. I have to be one with the message to be able to wear it.

**F13** I do think there's a relationship [between wearing items of dress with representations of causes and one's identity]. I think that the way you choose to decorate your body is one of the most individually expressive, I mean it's one of

the best ways you can choose to express yourself. It's almost one of the only ways you have and t-shirts with slogans on them are another way.

These four quotes illustrated ways in which participants described the relationship between the representations of causes that they wore and what they understood their identity to be. Participants' responses were indicative of Stone's (1981) term program. That is, an individual has an internal reaction to what he or she is wearing and makes assessments about ways in which it presents his or her identity to others and to his or her self.

Many responses to interview question one also considered the perspective of others who might view them wearing cause representational dress. For example, M01 did not want to wear something that belied his true feelings, thus he stipulated that he "had to be one" with the message in order to wear it. M01 assumed that others would believe he was a vegetarian based only on what his shirt said. F20 also projected that those reading her t-shirt would know where she stood in relation to religious beliefs. These participants' responses illustrated what Stone described as a third mode of response in addition to program and review in which "...the wearer's imagination of other's responses to his dress" (1981, p. 187) affects social interaction.

*Theme two: minimal relationship between cause representational dress and identity.* Eight of the 35 participants indicated that they felt a minimal relationship between wearing cause representational dress and their identity. The following responses are representative of this perspective.

**F15** ...I still believe the same things I believe regardless and would have the same response to questions about my beliefs or things like that....My own sense of personal identity doesn't change or it's not underscored or affirmed by the clothes I'm wearing. I have the same opinions regardless.

**M03** ...not every part of my identity is represented on a shirt or anything like that. So I don't feel like they represent my whole being but I definitely feel like certain times if I'm in the mood to express part of what I'm feeling than clothing can help me do that.

**M04** I don't want [to] have my identity in with my clothes really...you can't say much [with clothes] I don't feel like. You know, maybe wear something kind of [like] more hemp clothing or something but I don't know. I think that it's [clothing for expression] used so much but it's pretty superficial so that's probably one of the reasons why I don't wear those shirts [with representations of causes] more often...

**M08** I mean not really. I mean look at me. Obviously I'm homeless. I don't think I'm doing it [wearing a t-shirt supporting an independent candidate for a mayoral election] for my identity. I mean it was honestly for Leslie. I honestly wanted Leslie to be voted mayor of the goddamn city.

F15, M03, and M04's responses reflected McCracken's (1990) concern that clothing has limitations as a communicative medium. Dress that represents causes cannot relate subtle nuances of an individual. F15's response made a clear distinction between identity and dress, stating that there is not a relationship between them. F15 implied that

identity is stable while her dress is transient. M03's response indicated that cause related dress is used as a tool to express identity but cannot do so in a comprehensive manner. M04's response associates superficiality with appearance management practices which implies that he accepts, to a certain extent that there is an external dialogue between program and review as Stone (1981) suggested. That is, he acknowledges that people do make assumptions about one another based on appearance. M08's response was unique in that it did not intimate a concern for superficiality but rather stated that wearing the t-shirt was not about his identity but about advancing the cause of someone else. He made a distinction between wearing cause representational dress as part of an individual's appearance management strategy and wearing that item for purely promotional reasons. That is, the t-shirt he wore did send an intentional message that supported Leslie for mayor but it did not send an intentional message about his identity.

*Interview Question Two: The Benefits of Wearing Cause Representational Dress*

Responses to interview question two fell into three themes: wearing a representation of a cause reinforces my personal beliefs, wearing a representation of a cause allows me to form bonds with like-minded people, and wearing a representation of a cause provides a way for me to actively participate in a cause.

*Theme three: reinforcement of personal beliefs.* Fifteen out of 35 participants felt that they benefited from wearing a representation of a cause in that it reinforced a personal belief or served as a key reminder to an issue that was important to them. The following quotes reflect this perspective.

**F02** ...it really brought to mind how valuable life is. Like if I would have lost one of my really close friends like that it's like losing a part of you. It's one thing to lose like a family member that maybe you didn't know too much about, but losing like your best friend, it's different.

**F08** It definitely solidifies it [the cause], without a doubt. For me personally I know that if I were to put one of any of these shirts, of a Saint or a pro-life shirt or any belief that I had, if I were to wear it that I'd be self conscious of it and it would help me to grow in an outward way in that belief.

**M03** I think it's actually a reinforcement of that belief. The practice of putting them on and wearing them out in public is really not only signal to others that I support this cause, but gives me a chance to reflect how I feel actively supporting that cause which is very different than just thinking on how I support that cause.

**M10** It's a daily reminder rather than I surf the internet one time and see like "Oh yeah, that's right, AIDS in Africa." Like this [the bracelet] is a [reminder that] I'm lucky to be where I am and I'm lucky to have the things that I have and I should also support things like this to help other people.

F02, F08, M03, and M10's statements indicated that some individuals feel that wearing cause representational dress increased the amount of introspection that they engaged in about their respective causes. Participant responses that fell within this theme also tended to consider individualized meaning versus collective meaning in their decision to wear cause representational dress. That is, although an individual reacts to his social surroundings he makes decisions about identity construction based on information

that he has internalized on an individual level (Wiessner, 1984). Responses also revealed that some individuals opted to wear cause representational dress because it was a successful appearance management strategy; that is, wearing representations of causes made them feel good about themselves. As Thompson and Hirschman noted, "...fashion apparel...and other vehicles of consumer-based identity construction are essentially self-directed consumer choices that enable individuals to accomplish goals and feel more contented with their lives" (1995, p. 149).

Emergent themes four and five, wearing a representation of a cause enables me to bond with like-minded people and wearing a representation of a cause provides a way for me to actively participate in the cause, are related in that they both deal directly with the social benefits of wearing a representation of a cause. However they were themed separately because bonding with others is related to connecting with others who have like ideas while active participation is focused on a feeling involved with solving a crisis.

*Theme 4: bonding with others.* Seven out of 35 participants made direct reference to bonding with others in response to this question. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F09** When I put it on every morning it makes me think of our child somewhere out there and when I take it off at night and look at it during the day. And then I feel connected to others in the community that also wear it. I feel like we have this kind of bond or something.

**M03** It also lets me feel like I'm part of a community or a group of people who support a particular cause. It's also a conversation starter....If you're wearing a

cause in an environment where other people aren't then it gives you a little feeling of special-ness or that you actually have something to say. If you're wearing it in a group where people are wearing either that cause or another cause it gives you a feeling of connection with those other people that are advertising for that cause as well.

**M07** Other people that identify with the cause might, especially if it's a religiously inspired shirt, identify with you more. It can drive a topic of conversation.

M03 and M07 both considered the potential conversation starting aspect of wearing a representation of a cause a benefit. This benefit is also noted in the research done by Young (1994) who contended that wearing t-shirts with messages on them in crowds may help create social alliances. F09's response indicated a tacit understanding between herself and others who wear the red bracelet in her community. This bond relied on visual communication through the recognition of a particular style of bracelet. As Wiessner (1984) stated, "...style is not just a means of transmitting information about identity, but an active tool used in social strategies, because in the process of presenting information about similarities and differences, it can reproduce, disrupt, alter, or create relationships" (1984, p.194). Wearing a representation of a cause may bring those with similarities together.

*Theme five: active participation.* Nineteen out of 35 participants felt that wearing a representation of a cause was equal to active involvement in the cause. Responses indicated that participants considered their cause representational dress to notify others of

critical issues with the possibility of causing them to be active in the cause. The following responses are representative of this perspective.

**F18** Hopefully it makes people think of something that they might not normally have thought of...it's like one more dot in the puzzle that helps people kind of say, "You know, everybody's been talking about this anti-torture stuff lately. I've seen it everywhere." Maybe that's because they saw it on T.V. and they saw a poster and they saw it online but then also they saw it on my button and if I can be one dot, like one of my buttons or a t-shirt, can be one dot in that larger puzzle I feel like that's helping kind of just raise awareness.

**F19** I guess it is all about making a commotion and getting attention promoted towards the cause. If you can cause sort of a chain reaction then perhaps something will happen.

**M01** I feel that when I wear something which talks about child sexual abuse, like I have a t-shirt that says "Child sexual abuse is a crime: Break the silence," to me I truly feel that I am contributing in breaking the silence because I have been able to, you know, generate some interest. I'm not saying that...the agenda is not to brainwash people. The agenda is only to sort of like bring the issue out into the open to people to pay attention and to probably start discussing something about it.

**M06** I mean people they're, you know, nobody looks you in the eye. They all got little headphones in. Their all off in their own little world, you know? And you kind of want to push people. Get them to sort of look up. Not to be so self involved so if somebody says, "Hey you're a terrible person. I can't believe you

support that cause,” or “how could you possibly wear that...it’s so tasteless?” At least they’ve sort gotten out of their little bubble, you know?

F18, F19, M01, and M06 said that they wore representations of causes because doing so created the possibility of eliciting responses from others. M01 and M06 made allusions to the fact that they had effectively drawn verbal responses from others, while F18 and F19 expressed the hope that they were affecting others. Verbal responses received from others that M01 and M06 experienced provided feedback that made them feel actively involved in the causes that their dress represented.

*Interview Question Three: Do People View You Differently?*

To understand how wearing a representation of a cause contributes to an individual’s sense of self from a symbolic interactionist perspective, I researched how participants felt that their dress was perceived by others in society. Two themes were developed out of responses to this interview question: wearing a representation of a cause led others to make assumptions about me as a person, and wearing a representation of a cause led others to think I was a caring person. Only four out of 35 participants indicated that wearing a representation of a cause did not lead others to form different opinions about them. These four participants generally considered their cause representational dress to have greater personal benefits than impact on others. That is, they assumed a minimal level of control over the reactions of others. This sentiment was not strongly recurrent, thus it was not developed into a relevant theme.

*Theme six: others make assumptions about me.* Twenty five out of 35 respondents indicated that they felt others did make assumptions about their personality

characteristics when they wore cause representational dress. The following quotes are representative of those with this perspective.

**F07** But with especially the GLBT, stuff like that, I do definitely feel like people are like “Oh.” Whether it be “Oh that’s bad” or “Oh that’s great.” But I do feel like people are definitely recognizing that they notice it.

**F14** I mean, anyone’s going to stereotype anyone so I bet people, when they see me wearing this have their little, like, “Oh, she’s probably one of those psycho hippie girls” or whatever, you know? I definitely feel like people probably judge me on it...so sometimes it can be positive like “Oh it’s really great that she’s supporting that” or it can be negative where people are just, you know, just sort of apathetic.

**F18:** ...definitely if I’m going to a family function I don’t usually bring all the buttons because they’re kind of like sticky liberal-ish ones. And if I’m going to something that’s more professional or people that I really want to impress, I hate to say it, but I actually sometimes leave the buttons off because you never know how someone’s going to react and there are always people that kind of think you’re trying to be a preacher...

Responses indicated that participants perceived critical interpretations from others when wearing cause representational dress. For example F7, F14, and F18 projected that the message they wore could be received positively by some and negatively by others. This discursive understanding of oneself within society is noted by Blumer to be “...a moving communicative process in which the individual notes things, assesses them, gives

them a meaning, and decides to act on the basis of the meaning” (1972, p. 147). During the interview, research participants whose responses fell within this theme exhibited the type of self evaluation that Blumer discussed by assessing how others might react to their dress and either adjusting it or making the decision to proceed with wearing it. F18, for example, noted that she removed certain items when she knew she would be around a particular social group. Many other responses that fell within this theme also exhibited an awareness of appearance management strategies and how they are used to navigate through different social spheres.

*Theme seven: others think I am a caring person.* Although a smaller contingent, eight out of 35 respondents indicated that they felt others thought of them as caring or socially responsible for wearing cause representational dress. The following quotes are representative of those with this perspective.

**F10** ...[when you wear a RED t-shirt from the Gap promoting awareness of AIDS and HIV in Africa] you show other people that it’s part of who you are and that you’re socially aware of things and that’s just the kind of person you are, projecting that kind of self image to the world.

**F11** This probably sounds a little selfish but it [wearing t-shirts from volunteer events such as ‘Race for the Cure’] makes you look like someone who’s giving back and is charitable. Maybe even, I don’t know necessarily more approachable, but like a gentler, kinder person. I don’t know it just gives you positive traits because...or perceived positive traits because people, I guess, draw an assumption from that that “Oh, this person cares.”

**M09** I suppose a little there is because I made the choice to wear it [a Lance Armstrong Foundation LIVESTRONG wristband] and support it – you know, support his cause. So I think as a person in a way it's reflecting that...it's reflecting my support. And so I'm hoping that people will see that and see that I'm that type of person that supports good things and causes for other people.

All three quotes above indicated that these individuals considered their cause representational dress to say something positive about who they are. Participant responses that fell within this theme typically wore representations of causes that were associated with either health issues or depressed populations. Participants also indicated that wearing cause representational dress of this nature was somewhat philanthropic which was presumed to be well received in social settings.

In brief, research question one had three corresponding interview questions which elicited seven themes relative to symbolic interaction and self conception. Themes revealed that individuals generally understood there to be a relationship between the dressed self and the society in which they circulate. Participants also implied that they typically made conscientious choices relative to wearing cause representational dress, as it affected others behaviors and judgments towards them.

*Research Question Two: What is the process for validating cause representational dress as it relates to identity?*

The first research question asked how wearing a representation of a cause contributed to an individual's sense of self. Research question two intended to build on an understanding of self by focusing on identity validation strategies.

*Interview Question 4: How Do You Feel When Others Make Negative Comments?*

Through interview question four I sought to understand how, if at all, negative comments impacted participants' use of cause representational dress in identity construction. Responses to this interview question fell within three main themes: negative comments about my cause representational dress did not offend me, negative comments about my cause representational dress caused me to experience some degree of discomfort, and negative comments about my cause representational dress prompted a verbal response from me.

*Theme eight: not offended by negative comments.* Since many had not experienced negative feedback, most participants responded to this question by imagining how they might react if put in a situation in which another gave them negative verbal feedback about their cause representational dress. Nineteen out of 35 participants indicated that they were not offended by another's negative comments. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F13:** My mantra is kind of "To each their own" so I can understand if they were against the legalization of marijuana but I don't think they could back it up as much as I could, but to each their own....and I think that's sort of the point of wearing controversial things. Scaring squares, as it were.

**F22:** I don't know, I guess it's kind of a shock. I never expected to have a reaction like that. Um...but then again everybody is open to their beliefs so it's a learning experience and, you know, it's interesting I think.

**M06:** That's good....I think it's very much a relativistic turn our society's taken, you know, because if all the answers are right then there's really no point arguing something or debating it or even thinking critically about it because somebody else's opinion about it is just as good as yours. So if somebody steps up and says, "That's a terrible shirt" or "I hate that band" or "I hate that group" or "That's incredibly tasteless" at the very least they've thought about something.

**M09:** ...I'm a pretty easy going person so if somebody says something like that or makes a comment...you know I'm comfortable with my decisions and why I'm doing it so it's not that big of a deal to me because what they're saying isn't going to have that big of an impact because I know why I'm doing it and what it stands for. I'm confident in that choice.

F22 had mixed reactions to negative feedback about the cause representational dress she wore; she was initially shocked by the negative comment and then reasoned that this type of response might have served as a learning experience. M09's self assurance about the representation of a cause that he wore discounts the other's negative comments. F13 and M06's responses indicated that part of the reason they wore cause representational dress was to elicit responses from others regardless of whether they were positive or negative in tone. That is, those who wear their beliefs through cause representational dress may create identities that seek validation either through conformity or individuation. For participants such as F13 and F16, a desired outcome of wearing cause representational dress is knowing that their dress has been viewed by another. This is similar to Thompson and Haytko's idea that stated that "The perceived individuating

and transformative power of clothing is ultimately contingent upon a belief that others will notice and care about one's appearance" (1997, p.22).

*Theme nine: negative comments cause some level of discomfort.* Twelve participants discussed some level of personal distress that did or would occur when another commented negatively on the cause representational dress that they were wearing. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F07:** It [receiving negative comments] would blow your self-esteem a little bit. Well that's not okay but I don't think it's going to change me not to wear it again. It hurts but, you know, people have their views and I have mine and I guess I'm a strong person.

**F14:** I'd probably be upset but I don't think I'd be upset to where I'd try to talk to them about it because I feel like most people have their minds made up and if someone comes up to me and comments negatively on my shirt it's probably a person who's just apathetic and isn't really concerned....I'm not the type of person who is going to pick at people or sit there and try to get into an argument with them. It's disappointing basically.

**F24:** Oh yeah. I guess frustrated obviously and like, it's kind of funny. I'm like "Why do you even care?" a lot of times. Especially with the meat eating stuff, "Like why do you care what I eat?" But if they have to sit there and read something that I have on my shirt then maybe that's why they care.

Responses ranged from those who were hurt to those that were frustrated by others who voiced opposition to their cause. F07 projected that a negative comment would impact her self esteem while F14 and F24 were frustrated by others comments but not enough to stop wearing representations of causes. Responses that fell under this theme often took the other's perspective into consideration; that is, they attempted to imagine why those who comment negatively would do so. F24, for example, noted that the act of wearing a representation of a cause opened her up to criticism. Many participants noted that aggressive negative comments were not worth responding to for either reasons of personal safety or a perceived inability to change the minds of those that were emotionally reactive to their cause representational dress.

*Interview Question Five: How Do You Feel about Positive Comments?*

Interview question five was used to get participants to discuss how positive feedback impacted their use of cause representational dress in identity construction. Social interaction between the participant and others was explored to increase understanding of validation strategies relative to cause representational dress. Participant responses to this question fell under two themes: positive verbal feedback feels like a reinforcement of my efforts and positive verbal feedback is fine but not necessary.

*Theme 10: reinforcement of efforts.* Thirty of the 35 participants expressed that positive feedback reinforced their decision to wear cause representational dress. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F5:** I feel really good and then I know that someone supports what I support and then it feels kind of like we're bonded by something. And maybe if it's a stranger

who comments on my shirt who I've never met before, you know I realize even though I know there are people who care about women's rights out there then that person is right there and I can really talk to them.

**F13:** ...the sense of solidarity is wonderful. If you see someone walking down the street and you wouldn't know them from Adam, but if they're like "Right on" ...it's a brotherhood or a sisterhood that you wouldn't have expected but your certain statement drawing attention definitely, yeah, the unknown sense of solidarity is pretty nice.

**M01:** It feels good because you feel that, while you're wearing it, it's reached somewhere. People are cognizant of it and the fact that people want to talk about it sort of affirms the very basic notion of why I would want to wear something. And it's not just for people that I wear it but I wear it for myself...like an expression of my own identity and self.

Bonding and social ties were prominent aspects of this theme. F5 and F13's responses illustrated ways in which individuals felt social connection when someone said something positive about their cause representational dress. Descriptions of social connections experienced by participants aligned with conclusions drawn by Young (1994) who indicated that t-shirts with messages have the ability to seek out others with like ideas in densely populated environments where intimate interaction is improbable. M01's response indicated that positive feedback on cause representational dress reinforced personal perceptions of identity. This sentiment ties in with Stone's (1981) perspective that validation or qualification of identity is "accomplished in appraising and

appreciative responses to appearance” (p. 190). Positive verbal responses surfaced as an integral part of validation on both a personal and social level for those who wear cause representational dress.

*Theme 11: fine but not necessary.* Five out of 35 participants indicated that they were fine if someone did comment positively but that it was not the reason why they wore the representation of the cause that they supported. While five responses do not represent a majority, it was a recurring theme that warranted mention due to its contrary nature. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F22:** I think it’s pretty cool. But then there’s that whole thing where they might be superficially commenting on like, the fad, you know of wearing a cause or something. Do they really connect with what I’m trying to express or are they just sort of like into it because it looks cool or something like that? It’s kind of like an internal interpretation of what they’re...how they’re reacting. But usually it’s like “Cool. Right on. Let’s go hang out. Let’s rant for a while.”

**M04:** Um, that’s fine. The positive comment is fine but I’d rather maybe have a bit of a discussion even if it was just brief.

Participants whose answers fell within this theme exhibited skepticism about the true interests of those who responded positively. F22, for example, questioned the connection that another felt to the issues she put forth in her cause representational dress. This response indicated that invalidation can also occur by the same remarks that another might consider validating. Concerns about false camaraderie and converting meaningful

dress into fashion trends were not overwhelming among participant responses to this interview question.

*Interview Question Six: What if No One Comments at All?*

Interview question six was put forth to explore the degree to which the validation processes relied on communication with others. Responses to this question fell within two main themes: I am accepting of situations in which no one comments on my cause representational dress and I am somewhat upset when no one comments on the cause representational dress that I am wearing.

*Theme 12: accepting of no comments.* Twenty-six out of 35 participants felt fine about wearing a representation of a cause and receiving no verbal feedback about the item. The following quotes represent this perspective.

**F03:** ...I feel like either in Minnesota or in the groups that I tend to associate I don't have the expectation that there would be a ton of commentary generally....You know, I think you kind of infuse whatever you see with your own meaning so even if there were no comments positive or negative I would naturally think that there was some sort of mental reflection that someone had on that basis. So very optimistic I guess.

**F15:** I didn't really feel anything or I didn't even really notice it. Like I wasn't going home going, "Darn! Nobody said anything about the fact that I read banned books" and I'd get torn up about it. It just didn't even occur to me. I think I felt very staunch in my opinion of the banned books...I just felt that was enough.

**F18:** Yeah, it happens kind of frequently. It doesn't really bother me because, especially being on a college campus you get kids who are pretty passionate about their causes or you get a lot of people who are really apathetic....I had, like two years ago, a button about "Ask me about the situation in Darfur" and people were like "Oh Darfur, that's terrible what's going on in Asia" and you're like "Dude, wrong continent. Come on people. Get it together." So sometimes you just take that with a grain of salt because people at our age, I'm 22, they're young and they're kind of self involved and they're kind of apathetic and that's a terrible generalization but it has a lot of weight so I probably wouldn't take it that seriously.

F03, F15, and F18 indicated that they did not wear the representation of the cause with an expectation that others would comment on it. Participants' also offered a variety of ideas about why there was no response. F03 assumed that others understood and internalized the message to some degree even though they provided no verbal confirmation of that. F18 assumed that the message was too far out of most people's purview for correct interpretation. This viewpoint echoed Wobst's (1977) concern that transmitting a visual message to a group that is too distant or varied may result in an inability to accurately decode the message. Participants' cause representational dress habits did not appear to be impacted by a lack of verbal feedback.

*Theme 13: somewhat upset with no commentary.* Nine of the 35 participants indicated that they would experience some level of disappointment if they wore a

representation of a cause and no one commented on it. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F10:** That happened to me actually so I was just kind of wondering like “Do you guys know about this? Do you [know that] people are dying?” I don’t know. I definitely wondered if they either just didn’t care or it just wasn’t their thing to go out and buy something that displayed a cause. It made me wonder how much people care about things as much as I do. I was kind of like, “Maybe people aren’t that in to saving the world like I want to.

**F09:** I’d be kind of sad. I wear it because I love to talk about the adoption and so if no one ever wonders about it or asks about it then I’d feel like; I mean I can’t imagine a stranger’s going to ask about it. But I mean if some people at work or friends never asked about it I’d be like “fine” [be that way]. Because I like to ask people about their jewelry, bracelets, or clothing that they wear a lot.

**M10:** I wouldn’t feel as good about myself, to be completely honest. But, I mean, I’d still feel good. It’s still not necessarily for my own ego, it’s also to remind me of where I am and, like I said, how lucky I am and how I should support other people.

All responses indicated that participants used cause representational dress with an expectation that it would elicit verbal responses from others. Participants wanted to influence how others viewed them as well as control the tone of the response. That is, participants imagined positive feedback from individuals who correctly interpreted the cause representational dress that they had on. This finding parallels that of Johnson,

Schofield, and Yurchisin (2002) who found participants "...attempted to control their appearances so that others would make the 'right' judgment about them" (p. 135).

Johnson, Schofield, and Yurchisin's (2002) findings were different from mine in that participants in their research did not necessarily expect to receive verbal validation from other's regarding the relationship between personality characteristics and their dress.

However, like the aforementioned research, participants' responses did suggest that they wanted to coax out opinions from others about the cause representational dress that they were wearing.

In brief, research question two had three corresponding interview questions which elicited six themes. Responses indicated that many participants were affected by the way in which others reacted to appearances that they had constructed to express their viewpoint or a cause.

*Research Question Three: How does an individual establish boundaries around what is considered appropriate or inappropriate when wearing cause representational dress?*

*Interview Question Seven: Inappropriate Cause Representational Dress.*

Interview question number seven was asked to initiate discussion about possible boundaries related to the content of cause representational dress worn in public settings. The phrasing of the question indicated that participants were to imagine topics that would challenge the respect of individuals or groups. Responses to this question fell into two primary themes; there are potentially inappropriate messages expressed through cause representational dress and any message is permissible because an individual has the right to wear what he or she wants to.

*Theme 14: there is inappropriate cause representational dress.* Twenty seven of the 35 participants verbalized some aspect of potentially inappropriate cause representational dress. Twelve participants felt that cause representational dress with sexist or racist remarks was not appropriate to wear in public settings, five mentioned that young children should not be exposed to inappropriate language communicated through cause representational dress, and the remaining ten discussed a variety of topics that were inappropriate for public settings. The following responses are representative of responses that fell within this theme.

**F01** ... like something really blatantly racist or homophobic... there's a lot more behind it and actual violence behind it and could maybe incite violence I guess...I would say that is something that people just should not wear just for the safety of others. I think that's [safety to others] more paramount than their right to wear something [that is racist, homophobic, violent, etc].

**F13** I'm against what I call "hate mongers." I don't think that hate should ever be advertised or advocated... You do have a right to say it and I would respect someone's right to say "Fuck whities" or whatever. They have the right to say that but I would probably punch someone in the face if they said that shit.

**M01** I once saw this person wearing a shirt which had a very sexist joke on it...I don't approve of [that]. But at the same time I'm not militantly against people not wearing it but would prefer them not to. But then I think there is dignity in how we want to express ourselves and expressing yourself in a way which hurts

others...and I'm not talking about political differences...what I'm trying to differentiate between is the offense of opinion and violation of somebody's rights.

Over 75% of participants exhibited some apprehension about unilaterally declaring all cause representational dress to be appropriate for wearing in public settings. Many respondents, such as M01 and F13, did not resolutely say that controversial cause representational dress should not be worn, but instead indicated distaste for clothing with derogatory sentiments. F01 expressed concern about the potential for violent responses to controversial cause representational dress. Specific topics that other participants were wary of being expressed in cause representational dress included religion (F07), support of the War in Iraq (F23), unethical or unlawful behavior (F20), and pro-life graphics that illustrated aborted fetuses (F18).

*Theme 15: all cause representational dress is permissible.* Ten participants indicated that all cause representational dress was permissible. The following responses are representative of this perspective.

**F16** ...my gut reaction is to say no [that there are not causes that are inappropriate to wear in public]. You know, freedom of speech and how do we push the boundaries with, you know; hip-hop clothing pushed far, punk clothing pushed far....I would never want to say people shouldn't wear something because...we need to keep moving forward.

**F25** I guess I'm not real conservative and traditional so I'm not offended by a lot of things. I think I'm really behind the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights; freedom of speech.

**M08** I'm sure there is plenty of things that would offend the shit out of me, but I mean it's your right, right? As an American I get to sit on a street corner [and] I don't have a job. Wear your shirt.

F16, F25, and M08 associated hypothetical restrictions on cause representational dress as a restriction on personal rights. These participants equated the printed message of the t-shirt with a verbalization of the message. M08 admitted to being offended by others' dress, but he was also willing to tolerate an offense in order to secure his own rights. Responses that fell within this theme prioritized an individual's right to express himself or herself over prohibiting potentially offensive dress.

*Interview Question Eight: T-shirts Considered Appropriate or Inappropriate?*

Interview question eight was developed to gain insight into how participants viewed real life examples of controversial cause representational dress with regard to establishing boundaries (see Figures 1-10). Four main themes relevant to boundary creation surfaced from data collected for this interview question: items of cause representational dress that contain profanity are inappropriate to wear in public settings, items of cause representational dress that are confrontational or divisive are inappropriate to wear in public settings, the design of an object contributes to its level of appropriateness, and items of cause representational dress that do not intentionally attempt offend others are appropriate to wear in public settings.

*Theme 16: profanity is inappropriate for public settings.* Ten out of 35 participants expressed concern about wearing t-shirt images that contained profanity in

public. T-shirts shown in Figures 5 and 6 were referenced most frequently in this theme. The following responses are representative of this perspective.

**F23:** I don't think either of those t-shirts (Figures 5 and 6) is appropriate because even though Figure 6 has an actual swear word on it, [on] Figure 5 anyone could figure out what that means and I really don't think that either of them are appropriate with the curse words on them.

**M01:** I'm not sure how comfortable I am wearing the word 'fuck' on my shirt. And even though it doesn't say that it says that, right?...Part of it is, and I'm trying to unpack my own identity here, part of it is probably my upbringing and socialization and part of it is also...a feminist analysis of it as well; about how the word 'fuck' has come to be associated with power and male privilege and dominance and stuff like that.

**M06:** ...if I miss a bus or if I stub my toe on the curb or if I hit my head on a street sign I'll swear but I don't just wander around in public, you know, swearing like that. Because there's [sic] small children around and people don't want to hear that. It's kind of classless.

Responses that fell within this theme did not typically address the political causes associated with Figures 5 and 6, but instead mentioned the t-shirts' inappropriate use of profanity. M01's response was an analysis of the politicization of the word 'fuck' which indicated that he viewed the t-shirt as having more than one layer of meaning. That is, wearing the Figure 5 t-shirt not only demonstrated anti-President Bush sentiments, but also revealed something about an individual who was willing to wear this expletive.

Despite participants' disapproval, the majority of people who had responses that fell within this theme did not resolutely believe that others should be prohibited from wearing the items shown in Figures 5 and 6.

Establishing boundaries, in general, requires an individual to believe that others are concerned about, or at least aware of their appearance. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) described that, "...individuals develop, in advance of interaction, notions of how other people are likely to react to their dress." Participants seemed to have a predetermined idea about how individuals would react to dress items that contained profanity. Because profanity has historically been regulated by adults, television, movie rating systems, and the like, it is a likely parameter for establishing a boundary.

*Theme 17: confrontational or divisive dress is inappropriate for public settings.*

Twenty one out of 35 participants expressed concerns about wearing cause representational dress that had a socially negative tone. While confrontation and divisiveness are somewhat distinct expressions, they were combined in this theme because they both were perceived as negative. Participant responses within this theme used terms such as "aggressive," "insensitive," "extreme," "violent," and "offensive." The following responses are representative of this perspective.

**F16:** Figure 9 is pretty aggressive and is making such a strong statement that it really serves no purpose other than confrontation. So, you know, it's a certain kind of person that wants to wear something that only serves the purpose of offense and confrontation.

**F17:** Both of these [Figures 5 and 6] are very confrontational. It wouldn't be my style and I actually probably would kind of see it negatively if someone's wearing things like that...I mean, when I'm with my friends I do swear too so I understand that it's part of life. But I don't know, it's just very aggressive and I'm more about conversation...

**M03:** [Referencing Figure 9] I think it's inappropriate to wear things that are joking about physical confrontation and if your Jesus can beat up my Allah, well I don't think so, I think my Allah can beat up your Jesus. Well where does that get us?

Social concerns about aggressiveness, violence, and bipartisanship appeared to influence how individuals established boundaries related to cause representational dress. T-shirts that were repeatedly discussed as being confrontational and/or divisive (Figures 1, 2, 5, 6, and 9) were often considered to be on the borderline of appropriateness.

Participant's who considered confrontational messages or beliefs inappropriate for public display indicated that cause representational dress of this nature challenged the unspoken rules of the social context in which they operate. For example, the blatant image of the gun in Figure 1 was frequently perceived as questionable which may be, in part, due to social issues surrounding the misuse of fire arms. That is, individuals may have difficulty finding the two dimensional image of a gun acceptable because it goes against a natural inclination that one should not take another's life. This is part of a shared social understanding that individuals have when they "... become immersed in a shared understanding whereby the culturally contingent aspects of social life (such as

common cultural associations, social practices, or power relationships) are seen as being the natural order of things” (Thompson & Haytko, 1997). As Thompson and Haytko stated, problems in perceptions of actions can arise when “...a social practice or cultural representation deviates from naturalized conceptions and hence is interpreted as a problem in need of censure and/or correction” (1997, p. 20). The data analyzed under this theme indicated that participants were willing to consider the possibility of establishing boundaries or censure to protect the sensibilities of others.

*Theme 18: the design of the t-shirt contributes to its appropriateness.* Twenty out of 35 participants cited a design related issue as contributing to the appropriateness of wearing objects shown in Figures 1-10. Size of text, color, and style were discussed in regard to the appropriateness of Figures 1-10. Many also considered vague images appropriate due to the fact that they didn’t understand what the t-shirt was trying to say. The following responses are representative of this perspective.

**F06:** Personally I’m not really into guns but I wouldn’t care if someone else wanted to wear it [Figure 4]. I probably wouldn’t know what it meant if they were just walking down the street so, you know if I don’t really know what they’re saying – all right. Ignorance is bliss.

**F07:** I feel like it’s [Figure 3] kind of the same [as Figures 1 and 2] but this is smaller. I feel like it’s not drawing as much attention. The print is smaller and it’s almost getting the same type of point across but different.

**F08:** That is totally not what I believe and something that is so disrespectful to everyone, particularly those that do believe in Allah and its red. I don't like that [use of color] because of blood.

**M03:** Yea, these [Figures 5 and 6] I think I probably would wear if they supported my cause because they've got a nice retro design.

The symbols displayed in Figure 4 contain meanings that are often associated with politically conservative values; however, the variety of meanings invoked by the symbols made the overall statement of the t-shirt vague to many participants. F06's response indicated that she was not confident in her interpretation of Figure 4's intent which contributed to its propriety. As F06 said, "Ignorance is bliss."

F07 indicated that smaller text size and a subdued graphic quality contribute to the appropriateness of an item of cause representational dress. This observation also addressed concerns about abrasive and offensive messages. That is, aggressive and extreme statements combined with large text and bold graphics amplifies the offensiveness of the t-shirts in question. Participants' ability to identify the impact of design choices echoes Freedman's (2003) assertion that individuals of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century have facility with reading and interpreting visual images. Participants also noted associations between design choices and social meaning. For example, F08 associated the color red in Figure 9 with blood despite the common use of red in clothing. The abstract relationship drawn by F08 between red, blood, and anti-Muslim sentiments combined to establish a boundary.

*Theme 19: not intentionally offensive to others.* Thirteen out of 35 participants indicated that t-shirts that were not intentionally offensive to others were appropriate to wear in public. The following responses are representative of this perspective.

**F12:** I personally think both of them [Figures 3 and 4] are very appropriate to wear and this person's [Figure 3] obviously stating their opinion but it's not an inappropriate opinion to have. People cannot agree with that and not feel like they've been threatened by that shirt...

**F18:** Well Figure 3 I like. I would wear it probably because it reflects my views but also because it's not offensive to anyone. Even if you disagree with what it's saying it's not showing you something disturbing.

**M01:** I have no problem really with people wearing it [Figure 4]. I have a problem with the ideology, at the same time I respect people's rights to believe in what they want to believe and express their beliefs. And I don't see it violating someone else's space.

These responses are compatible with previous responses in that participants continue to establish boundaries for cause representational dress based on the principle that the message relayed does not intentionally offend or threaten others. Participant M01, for example, indicated that it is acceptable to express an opposing viewpoint as long as it does not violate another's space. While the phrase "violating someone else's space" is an inconclusive statement in itself, M01's previously voiced opposition to wearing cause representational dress with sexist or racist remarks is telling. That is, M01 draws a relationship between violating someone else's space and making derogatory comments.

F12, F18, and M01 are representative of those who indicated that Figures 3, 4, 7, and 8 do not offend, threaten, or disrespect others which contributed to their appropriateness.

In brief, research question three had two corresponding interview questions which elicited six themes (themes 14 through 19). Responses generally indicated that individuals are sensitive to offending others and consider where boundaries could be established relative to this. However, participants sometimes made distinctions between their own ethics and how they would choose to regulate others.

*Research Question Four: What environmental or contextual constraints do individuals who wear cause representational dress experience?*

*Interview Question Nine: Where do you Wear Cause Representational Dress?*

The following three themes developed out of data that was collected for interview question nine: I am hesitant to wear cause representational dress in formal or professional settings, I am hesitant to wear cause representational dress in environments where I know that my opinion is contrary to the majority, and I am comfortable wearing cause representational dress in environments where I know that my opinions will be respected by many.

*Theme 20: hesitant in formal and/or professional environments.* Eleven of 35 participants cited professional or formal settings as places that they would not wear cause representational dress. While eleven participants do not reflect a majority, the theme was one of three that did have a relatively strong reoccurrence. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F07:** ...at a job maybe not. Like especially a public job that you're working with people....Like maybe a restaurant or, you know, something where you don't want to offend people or detract from business.

**F14:** I don't think I would wear it in the workplace, especially a job interview, obviously [a] bad idea. Places where you're trying to make an impression...Like you don't want to polarize people and don't know that it's going to be a crowd that's comfortable with it so I probably wouldn't wear it to church.

**M03:** [At] work I am very cognizant of what I'm wearing...So the work place, certainly going to church or something like that. Anytime that you dress more formally I'd be more selective about what message my clothes were giving off.

Participant responses that fell within this theme expressed concern that their beliefs might affect others in negative ways. For example, F07 noted that an expressed opinion, if contrary to that of a customer, could negatively affect business. The type consciousness exhibited by participants here echoed the point made by Thompson and Haytko (1997) that individuals use dress to understand and negotiate subtle nuances of social-class dynamics. F07, F14, and M03 intuited that personal beliefs expressed through cause representational dress had the potential to challenge other's beliefs which could be detrimental to work relationships. Social environment boundaries such as work are established because the individual has a greater desire to conform than to depart from the norm. From the viewpoint of participants whose responses fell within this theme, personal beliefs and opinions are potentially offensive to others and, therefore, should be avoided in settings where an individual's social acceptance is critical.

*Theme 21: hesitant where my opinion is in contrast to the majority.* Twelve out of 35 participants indicated that they would be less apt to wear their cause representational dress in situations where their opinion was presumed to be in contrast to the majority.

The following quotes are representative of this opinion.

**F01:** ...like the [Howard] Dean shirts I still have I wear for working out. I was part of a more conservative gym in the suburbs and I never wore it there to work out just because there were a bunch of old ladies who were very, you know, like for the war and I just didn't want to upset them.

**F22:** ...my partner's Dad's family is super conservative, Christian. Like that shirt that you showed me with the gun and the flag and the baby [Figure 4], they're that. They are that. And I wouldn't wear something that would immediately offend them. I don't think they'd appreciate that at all.

**M09:** I suppose if you were going to a rally you wouldn't want to wear something that supports the opposite side of the rally.

Participant responses, like the last theme, suggested that individuals who wear cause representational dress were not trying to offend others with their view points. For example, F01 refrained from wearing a t-shirt that endorsed a democratic candidate to a suburban gym because she presumed that members of this community would not only be republican, but offended by her opposing party alignment. Similarly, F22 and M09 indicated that wearing cause representational dress to a place where there are individuals with a known allegiance to an opposing viewpoint is uncomfortable.

The tendency for relatively mainstream individuals to be concerned with others feelings when wearing cause representational dress is somewhat divergent from conclusions drawn in research on dress within subcultures (Hebdige, 1979; Hodkinson, 2002; Muggleton, 2000). Muggleton (2000), for example, asserted that those who are affiliated with subcultures do not like to be labeled as such because it makes them feel conformist which is exactly what they are trying to reject. On the contrary, those participants who wear cause representational dress often expressed a desire to fit in with both those who agree and disagree with their perspective.

*Theme 22: I feel comfortable in situations where I know that my opinion is respected.* Sixteen out of 35 participants indicated that they were comfortable wearing cause representational dress in situations where they knew that their opinions were respected by others. Participants felt others did not have to agree with their viewpoints, but it did suggest that participants were comfortable wearing cause representational dress in situations where they presumed others to be empathetic to their perspective. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F01:** I probably wouldn't do it [wear cause representational dress] alone just to shove it in someone's face. But if there was like a planned protest, like a bunch of people were going to go and show that they were against what they were doing, I probably would.

**F06:** I think if you know that you'd be going to a place where a lot of people have the same belief or cause, like I went to the National Catholic Youth Conference a

few years ago and we were all wearing shirts because we knew everyone there would be and would be receptive to that kind of thing.

**M04:** I'm probably more likely to wear it in the city; Minneapolis or St. Paul. But then I [do] wear it in the suburbs and in my home town out in farm country in Minnesota, but I might be a little bit more apt to wear it in the city. I think [there is] a better chance of starting up a good conversation [in the city] rather than people just making me feel a little awkward because they don't know what Darfur is. They're just like "He's political. Oh my gosh. I can't believe it."

While Theme 20 offered specific places that participants felt hesitant to wear cause representational dress, themes 21 and 22 established boundaries that are rooted in the varying social environments which participants occupied. F01, F06, and M04 indicated that they were comfortable wearing cause representational dress in social environments where there were others that likely had similar beliefs. Although not all had been part of an organized protest, participants were encouraged by the type of collective thinking that is indicative of those involved in a protest. As Blumer noted,

...participants [of collective protest] are very dependent on a sense that they are being directly supported by one another. Without being sustained by such a realization that there are many others who share their feelings and approve their purposes and practices, participants lose fervor... (1978, p. 42).

Being in environments where one is not likely to have any unifying experiences appears to detract from the experience of wearing cause representational dress.

In brief, research question four had one corresponding interview question which elicited 3 themes (themes 20-22). Responses generally indicated that participants did not wear cause representational dress with the intention of offending others and were thoughtful about social situations in which they chose to wear them.

*Research Question Five: Consumer options could be viewed as heterogeneous and multitudinous or homogenous and confining. How does an individual who wears cause representational dress perceive the market's ability to offer products that promote individual expression?*

*Interview question 10: Mass Acceptance and Cause Representational Dress*

Two primary themes developed out of participant responses for interview question ten: I am less inclined to wear cause representational dress that can be associated with a trend and I am neither more or less inclined to wear cause representational dress that can be associated a trend.

*Theme 23: less inclined to wear trends.* Nineteen out of 35 participants indicated that they were less inclined to wear cause representational dress that was associated with a fashion trend. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F07:** As soon as a lot of people have it it's like I don't want to [wear it], you know? Every other person's wearing it. I don't need one too because every single person is wearing it. The opinion is out there.

**F18:** At first when they were kind of popular, and I have some personal family background with cancer issues, I really supported it [the Lance Armstrong Foundation LIVESTRONG wristbands]. But then seeing everyone wear it I kind

of felt like “Oh, I don’t know if this means that much to me as it used to just because I’ve seen it so many times.” I still have mine, it’s in my dresser, but I don’t really wear it.

**F25:** Right away when so many people were wearing the LIVESTRONG bracelet I did too, but then more and more and more and more people started wearing it and then I think it kind of diminished the meaning. It was just wearing a bracelet so people could conform to everybody else and then I stopped wearing it.

Fashion trends were generally perceived to have negative connotations by participants. F07 indicated that oversaturation of the LAF wristband made it unnecessary for her to support cancer funding and research because many others were already supporting the cause by wearing the wristband. F18 and F25 had worn the LAF wristband but felt that their associations with the cause were weakened by its wide acceptance. Fashion trends initially invite users, but then tend to alienate consumers. As Richins described, “...public meaning shift occurs when a product that previously had been valued for its uniqueness becomes common” (1994, p. 518). Participants indicated that not only would oversaturation make them hesitant to wear the item, but it could also stymie their personal relationship to the cause that the item represented a link to. Similarly, Grayson and Shulman supported the notion that “...the ubiquity and disposability of commodity products reduce consumer confidence in not only a durable world, but also a centered self” (2000, p. 28).

*Theme 24: neither less nor more apt to wear fashion trends.* Nine out of thirty five participants indicated that they were neither more or less inclined to wear cause

representational dress that was associated with a fashion trend. The following quotes are representative of this perspective.

**F01:** It [mass acceptance] probably wouldn't be like something like I'd jump on the bandwagon but if it was a cause that I really believed in that was good and something that a lot of people should support, like cancer research, I probably wouldn't stop wearing something [if it became ubiquitous].

**M01:** I would not wear it in order to be part of a herd; like everyone's wearing it so I should wear it too. I would not do that. But if I truly believe in it and I feel that the Lance Armstrong Foundation is doing a great job and they have a message which I believe in and I think that message should go forward I would be very open to wearing it.

**M09:** No, I don't think it [trendiness] matters. It [the cause representational dress that I wear] is just a reflection of what I'm thinking or what I'm supporting. For the most part I don't have a lot of sensitivity to what other people think or [what] they think about me. It's personal for me.

While the majority of participants indicated distaste for fashion trends, participant responses revealed a separation between their beliefs and their participation in consumption trends. Integral to these responses was an awareness of consumer culture. That is, participants indicated that they understood what a fashion trend was and that participation in a trend could be viewed by others as meaningless consumerism. Thompson and Haytko (1997) also found that participants "were able to use conventional fashion meanings to sustain a sense of self-autonomy within a field of affiliative

relationships and to adopt a critical stance toward specific facets of consumer culture” (p. 38).

*Interview Question 11: Disposition and Cause Representational Dress*

Two primary themes developed out of participant responses from interview question two: it is more difficult to dispose of cause representational dress than dress that is purchased for more utilitarian reasons and it is no more difficult to dispose of cause representational dress than it is to dispose of dress accepted for other reasons.

*Theme 25: more difficult to dispose of cause representational dress.* Twenty out of 35 participants indicated that it was more difficult to dispose of cause representational dress than dress that they wore for other reasons. The following quotes are indicative of this perspective.

**F04:** Yeah, it’s probably harder [to get rid of cause representational dress] because you feel like if you’re doing it, if you’re getting rid of it, you’re giving up on it [the cause it represents] maybe almost because of symbolism.

**F16:** ...these things are kind of part of my personal identity, even if my identity has changed and shifted or the cause has grown and changed and shifted because time has passed. I get a little nostalgic and sentimental about myself and my past or the things that I engaged in....And you don’t just want to throw your identity in the trash the same way you would a generic shirt that you had no emotional attachment to.

**M01:** Usually the activist shirts that I would wear have memory attached to it.

Chances are that I have not really bought it, but even if I bought it it was part of a memory. I was part of a rally and everyone was wearing it so I was wearing it too....So it's a little difficult so I cannot let go of them.

F4, F16, and M01 indicated that the items of cause representational dress that they had possess a level of worth in addition to their monetary value due to memories associated with the object. F16 and M01 both indicated that the objects they had trouble disposing of were emotionally linked to past events or memorable times in their lives. Research by Grayson and Shulman (2000) also supports this idea as their participants reported that they found meaning in objects that are associated with a person's past.

Despite having personally experienced the events, our informants said that they themselves value physical evidence of their past experiences. Retaining a possession that is incontrovertibly and physically linked to a memorable past event helps to verify for them that the event actually occurred. Without that linkage, informants reported that their personal connection with the past events is diminished (Grayson & Shulman, p. 21).

Grayson and Shulman also found that individuals were not willing to have the item replaced with an exact replica; the object had to have been worn by them in context for it to have this personal worth.

The concept of personal worth is echoed in Kopytoff's (1986) research on the way in which an object's biography impacts its monetary value. Kopytoff indicated that an object can increase in personal value when an individual has a personal attachment to

the object. This, in turn, can impact an individual's perception of the object's monetary value. For example, a scarf hand knit by someone's friend is worth more to the original owner than it does to someone who finds it on a bus. Participants' memories and personal associations created a biography for an item of cause representational dress that will likely not add monetary value back into the object; however, participants assigned the object an irreplaceable worth.

The following quotes are examples of events participants associated with the items of cause representational dress that they described during the interview.

**F01:** Well the first thing that comes to my mind is actually was when I was a freshman in college and I was working on the Howard Dean campaign in Iowa.

**F02:** Okay there was this one item that I don't have in my possession any more but it was a pink bracelet. It was for a girl that had died at our high school in a car accident. And her name was Sarah so they were called...they were advertised as "Sarah bracelets" and they were bright pink because that was her favorite color.

**F22:** I can think of during the 2004 election I was supporting John Kerry unfortunately. And me and some of my friends marched in a parade with t-shirts that spelled Kerry if we walked along side each other.

While these quotes do not illustrate a strong emotional attachment between the participant and the object described, they do show how individuals discuss objects through memories. This phenomenon is also noted by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) who posited that we attach meaning to tangible objects because it helps us form images of who we believe ourselves to be.

*Theme 26: no more difficult to dispose of cause representational dress.* Ten out of 35 participants indicated that it would be no more difficult to dispose of cause representational dress than dress worn for utilitarian reasons. The following responses are representative of this perspective.

**F15:** I'm fine getting rid of them. It's not like I burn them symbolically or anything like that, but they slowly move from being a shirt you wear all the time in your daily wear and then they move to like a pajama shirt or a painting shirt or something and then they move to a rag....So in terms of its actual disposal there's nothing different, but you may pause briefly during the act of its disposal or just reflect on what was once important.

**M06:** Well, like I said about the t-shirt that said "Great American Ass Kickers" on it; I've had that t-shirt for about 5 years and it's getting pretty raggedy and eventually I'm going to have to throw it out or use it as a paint rag or something. And, you know, I'm not going to shed any more tears over that than I would over a plain white t-shirt. Because, you know, my ideals or my beliefs are not bound up in the t-shirt.

These participants indicated that there was little to no personal value assigned to the items of cause representational dress that they wore. F15 described a path of disposition that tracked her t-shirt from being worn in public settings, to being worn in private settings to, finally, its reconstituted use as a rag. F15 did indicate that she paused at the point in which the object was discarded, but that its status as an item of cause representational dress did not secure it from entering into the disposal process. M06

described the disposition of his cause representational t-shirt as uneventful. Participants with responses in this category indicated that they were not emotionally attached to previously owned items of cause representational dress. There was also the suggestion that they formed a distinction between consumer objects and ways in which they are used to express identity characteristics. That is, they were not individuals who "...come to associate the good with their own personal properties" (McCrackin, 1988, p. 87). They did not need to engage in a divestment ritual because they did not imbue the commodity with a lot of personal meaning (McCrackin).

Reasons behind a lack of emotional attachment to objects are only speculative. There is, for example, the possibility that consumer society offers enough products that individuals can replace cause representational dress objects with little challenge. These responses also indicated that participants had the ability to adapt to new identities and use cause representational dress to relay messages that they understood to be somewhat temporary. This interpretation echoed Firat and Dholakia's ideas (1998).

The consumers of (post)modernity seem to be...increasingly seeking meaning and to 'feel good' in separate, different moments by immersing themselves in a variety of experiences and partaking of the associated images. In a market system this is achieved by (re)producing self-images that are marketable, likable, and/or desirable in each moment (Firat & Dholakia, p. 83).

In brief, research question five had two corresponding interview questions which elicited four themes (themes 23 through 26). Generally, participants were somewhat hesitant to find personal meaning in consumer objects that had become ubiquitous.

However, participants were generally open to using mass produced items to express personal beliefs.

## Chapter V

### *Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations*

Chapter five is organized into sections discussing each of the five research questions. Each question is addressed separately, followed by a discussion of the implications of the drawn conclusions. Limitations of my research are addressed in one comprehensive section following discussion of all five research questions. Limitations also include a discussion on opportunities for future research.

#### *Conclusions: Research Question One*

Research question one asked the following: how does wearing cause representational dress contribute to a person's sense of self from a symbolic interaction perspective? Emergent themes integrated with one another to provide support for the conclusion that wearing cause representational dress impacts an individual's sense of self by heightening an individual's awareness of the relationship between personal beliefs and the dress that he or she wears. That is, the wearer consciously links the cause representational dress they wear with their personal beliefs and assumes that others will make the same associations.

Relative to symbolic interaction, wearing a representation of a cause provided a salient way for participants to understand themselves as involved in the communication dyad of program and review (Stone, 1981). Participants generally assumed that an unspoken dialogue existed between themselves, the cause representational dress they had on, and the potential impressions of others who viewed them. Participants' tendency to

believe that other's form opinions about their character based on how they dress echoed Goffman's (1972) research which indicated that appearance affects how individuals perceive the character of those that they are unacquainted with. Regardless of whether participants had experienced verbal feedback from others or not, wearing a representation of a cause was recognized by participants to be an action with the potential of provoking both internal and outward reactions from others.

Also reflective of tenets of symbolic interaction, a majority of participants found a connection between the cause representational dress that they wore and their identities. The cause representational dress that they wore reflected key aspects of their identity such as political leanings and religious beliefs. A greater sense of individuality was sometimes reliant on a participant's knowledge that others might have potentially contrasting views. Some participants asserted that they knowingly wore items of cause representational dress that were potentially divisive. Participants leveraged their potentially divisive political views and personal beliefs for the opportunity to display unique identity characteristics to others which reinforced their own concepts of self. Provoking a reaction from others through the conscientious expression of personal beliefs, whether it is an outwardly expressed reaction or an assumed inward thought, was found to be a key motivator in wearing cause representational dress.

Participants were able to discuss identity and cause representational dress by imagining themselves as reviewers of themselves. This process of projecting responses onto others is directly applicable to Stone's third mode of analysis (1981). The act of creating identity through cause representational dress and imagining others' assumptions

about the individual in this dress is indicative of a reflective overall self. Individuals' tendency to be reflective in the aforementioned manner relates back to Callero's (2003) concern that individuals do not reflect on why they construct certain identities; that is, Callero is concerned that individuals create identities that do not consider the impact of such things as others in society, mass media, and consumerism. Callero posited that researchers applying symbolic interaction to identity creation issues often failed to address how the concept of self is impacted by societal forces. Participants indicated that they do reflect on ways in which the opinions of others influence decisions related to identity construction and cause representational dress. This finding does not prove that individuals are fully conscious of external forces impacting their identity creation habits; however, it does address a way in which individuals are reflective about the relationship between identities and self.

*Implications: research question one.* Cause representational dress is a critical category of dress to consider in identity creation because it can challenge social mores and ethical boundaries. An individual does not have to be a member of a subculture to say something controversial or intensely personal through their dress. Understanding personal motivations behind wearing cause representational dress clarifies how and why individuals feel a need to express specific ideological beliefs in public settings. My findings also illustrate the relevancy mid-20<sup>th</sup> century theoretical groundwork to dress studies. Tenets of symbolic interaction reinforce conclusions that cause representational dress creates salient relationships between dress and identity for both wearers and observers.

*Conclusions: Research Question Two*

Research question two asked the following: what is the process for validating cause representational dress as it relates to identity? Participants offered a variety of perspectives on issues related to validation and invalidation when wearing a representation of a cause. Some participants seemed to experience validation when they received positive verbal feedback, some participants seemed to feel validated when others criticized their cause representational dress, and some participants seemed to experience validation just by wearing cause representational dress. There were also instances in which participants felt a lack of validation when wearing cause representational dress. However, when wearing cause representational dress, participants generally worked towards an appearance management strategy that provided others with salient and readable cues about his or her identity. As Stone (1981) suggested, individuals wanted corroboration between the message that they emitted through their dress and the way in which it was perceived by others.

Participants felt that positive feedback about their cause representational dress reinforced their personal beliefs. This finding echoed Stone's (1981) assertion that when program and review coincide, self validation is achieved. A majority of participants said that they were not offended when others made negative comments about their cause representational dress. This finding also aligns with Stone's (1981) definition of validation in that those who made negative comments presumably made them from the perspective of someone who understood what the message intended to say. That is, the self would still be validated with criticism as long as the appearance related message was

interpreted correctly and the criticisms were pertinent to the message that the individual had intended. While participants exhibited some distress regarding a lack of feedback and/or negative feedback, there was not overwhelming concern about this aspect of wearing cause representational dress. That is, participants were generally not deterred by others comments and continued to wear their cause representational dress in public.

The process of validation relative to cause representational dress did not appear to be linear. An individual did not, for example, go out in search of a meaningful item of cause representational dress, wear it in public, hear verbal feedback, and feel validated. Validation was revealed to be situational and grounded in a participant's ability to find dress that accurately reflected his or her personal beliefs and concerns.

*Implications: research question two.* Validation is an integral part of understanding identity construction because it guides how and when individuals take action in repairing or augmenting particular identities. Invalidation was not found to be rooted in negative verbal feedback but rather in feedback that indicated a misunderstanding of the intended message. My findings on validation processes provide insights into how and why individuals engage in this somewhat quotidian expression of beliefs. The opportunity to be heard (or seen, in this case) by others through dress is an integral part of contemporary society in the United States, and should be explored on this qualitative level in order to understand broader implications about how individuals perceive agency through dress. Researching validation relative to those who wear cause representational dress adds to the depth to the understanding of the phenomenon within a symbolic interaction framework.

*Conclusions: Research Question Three*

Research question three asked the following: How does an individual establish boundaries around what is considered appropriate or inappropriate when wearing cause representational dress? The majority of participants were hesitant to state that all cause representational dress should be permitted in public settings regardless of tone and content. The overriding concern among participants was the potential of offending another individual or group with derogatory statements. Participants established boundaries around cause representational dress that exhibited sexism, racism, aggression, and profanity. This sentiment was reinforced by participants who felt that cause representational dress that was not intentionally offensive to others was appropriate.

Topics that participants deemed to be inappropriate to wear in public generally ran in opposition to their personal beliefs and understanding of social ethics. The case of *Tinker v. the Des Moines Independent Community School District* demonstrated how three plaintiffs successfully debated their right to wear controversial cause representational dress in public despite the fact that others found it immoral. Recent examples of court cases dealing with cause representational dress illustrate confusion regarding the boundaries of personal rights and what is considered moral on a societal scale (Hendrie 2006, Kirkpatrick, 2005). Participant responses indicated that there is a general confusion about how to allow for personal rights and guard against derogatory statements. Most participants established a personal boundary relative to cause representational dress by excluding dress that communicated derogatory sentiments, but were generally uncomfortable setting boundaries for others. While there were those who

felt that there were items that should definitely not be worn, most were not willing to suggest that it should be illegal to wear offensive items of cause representational dress.

Many participants considered aspects of design when assessing the t-shirt's level of public appropriateness. Large text and bold graphics used in cause representational dress added to the level of inappropriateness of an offensive message. This finding relates to Wiessner's (1983) research on stylistic information and its effect on social relations. Wiessner (1983) concluded that a person who uses style to transmit information about individual identity is interested in representing herself uniquely within a larger social context. An individual who selects an item of cause representational dress with a controversial sentiment and large scale graphics is less concerned about fitting into moral boundaries established by a larger society and more conscious about presenting others with a unique identity (Wiessner, 1983). That is, boundaries are relaxed on an individual level in order to challenge constrained social boundaries.

*Implications: research question three.* Individuals have varying perceptions about what is ethically correct and incorrect to voice in social settings. Research about how individuals establish boundaries relative to wearing cause representational dress reinforces how difficult it is to find consensus on what is appropriate and inappropriate to wear in public. However my findings do indicate that, despite a lack of legal restrictions, participants were generally opposed to offending others. Revealing this common sentiment is beneficial in that it provides a basis for understanding disciplinary action that has been taken relative to cause representational dress. Legal cases related to Civil Liberties and dress, like *Tinker v. the Des Moines Independent School District*, are

difficult to litigate and my research can provide some groundwork for understanding popular opinion.

*Conclusions: Research Question Four*

Research question four asked the following: what environmental constraints do individuals who wear cause representational dress experience? Work and formal settings were identified as places where many participants felt hesitant to wear cause representational dress. Responses indicated a concern for expressing an opinion that differed from those in supervisory positions as it could detract from an ability to be hired or to thrive in the work environment. There was also a sense of responsibility exhibited by participants in work environments to present themselves to the public without bias.

Generally, participants were apprehensive about confronting others with opinions that were potentially divisive. Participants avoided wearing cause representational dress to places when they presumed others with divergent opinions would be present. Participants indicated that they avoided wearing cause representational dress to general regions, such as rural areas, and specific places, such as a friend's house. The process of predetermining what types of opinions would prevail in particular social settings is illustrative of Mead's concept of the generalized other which refers to a "... set of standpoints which are common to the group" (Meltzer, 1972, p. 10). The set of standpoints or perspectives are only assumed to be similar among group members by an individual acting in society. The main sentiment related to findings from research question four indicated that being intentionally offensive to others through cause representational dress was deemed inappropriate; participants consciously avoided

wearing cause representational dress to locations where they perceived that there would be a high likelihood of offending others.

Those who wear cause representational dress have personal goals involving the establishment of unity with others which affected decisions related to propriety and social environments. Like the collective expressions experienced by those involved in collective protest, participants strived for some solidarity with others (Blumer, 1978). However, unlike collective protest, participants were generally opposed to extreme measures such as coercion and violence (Blumer, 1978). This distinction between unity and coerciveness contributed to participants' perspectives on appropriate settings for cause representational dress. Generally, participants exhibited a tendency to assess social situations ahead of time and gauge how others were likely to react to the cause representational dress that they considered wearing.

*Implications: research question four.* Because there are many perspectives on what is considered appropriate behavior, it is important to understand how young adults gauge their abilities to speak through dress in a variety of social situations. My research clarifies that the overriding concern about offending others was still subsequent to an individual's right to offend someone. Individuals are more apt to think of place relative to social place than geographic place. This contributes to an understanding of our social landscape and how it is perceived and navigated by individuals who are comfortable expressing ideological beliefs through dress.

Finally, the discussion of contextual constraints on cause representational dress promotes an understanding of the overlap between social context and symbolic

interaction. Concepts such as program and review (Stone, 1981) imply that individuals act within a social context; however, researchers have not typically explored the role that context plays on identity creation. My research reveals that context is a key part of an individual's decision making process relative to cause representational dress.

*Conclusions: Research Question Five*

Research question five asked the following: consumer options could be viewed as heterogeneous and multitudinous or homogenous and confining. How does an individual who wears cause representational dress perceive the market's ability to offer products that promote individual expression? As described in the beginning of chapter four, only one of the 35 participants discussed cause representational dress that they had handmade. Despite the rare occurrence of cause representational dress that had been hand crafted, the majority of participants were hesitant to express beliefs through consumer products that had become ubiquitous; however, they were not opposed to wearing items that were made by an entity outside of themselves.

Supporting a cause that one believed in became secondary to concerns about wearing cause representational dress that had reached the point of oversaturation. This sentiment may indicate that causes which are promoted through products and marketing have bell curve diffusion patterns much like that of any product. Relative to causes and trends, Firat and Dholakia explained that "For growing majorities of people, interest in grand causes is sporadic and short-lived. Belonging to or supporting a cause is increasingly 'a thing to do,' a consumption experience, rather than something to be completely and unwaveringly committed to" (Firat & Dholakia, 1998, p. 123). Some

participants made a distinction between their beliefs and trends and felt comfortable wearing trendy objects if they actually expressed an issue that they felt strongly about. The combination of these findings leads to a general conclusion that individuals can find meaning in cause representational dress that is produced as a good, but that the perceived integrity of the cause does break down with mass production and mass adoption of a dress item.

Many participants formed emotional attachments to consumer products used to represent causes. The consumable item possessed worth to participants because of its association with beliefs that either still held true or that they remembered with some degree of fondness. Participants seemed to believe that the market does contain products that can be personalized after the point of purchase by using them in memorable contexts or during memorable periods of their lives. Additionally, it is concluded that items that are perceived as trendy are devalued with their cause representational message diluted.

*Implications: research question five.* These research findings are valuable in that they add insight into how consumers at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are able to navigate high levels of mass production and find meaning in dress. Creating identity through cause representational dress becomes a creative act much like Kaiser et al. (1991) and Muggleton (2000) suggest. Cause representational dress is a relatively minor component of contemporary dress; however, it presents an opportunity for individuals to discuss beliefs in public settings. Manufacturers have the ability to create and market products that consumers find meaningful but products have to be reinvented frequently by manufacturers to keep consumers feeling sufficiently individualistic.

*Limitations and Areas for Further Research*

Relative to the topic of validation, my research was limited in that I only asked participants to discuss verbal responses to their dress. There are likely additional forms of communication that might be validating such as non-verbal communication or seeing the item of dress that one wears in mass media contexts. For example, cause representational dress seen on a model or actress in a fashion magazine may impact validation. Exploring non-verbal validation cues may be a promising area for future research in relation to cause representational dress because of its potential for revealing ways in which consumers achieve satisfaction.

Relative to boundary creation, my research was limited in that it did not explore literature directly related to design and its influences on perception. Further exploration of existing research on design and perception could provide greater clarity in issues of stylistic messaging and how individuals determine visual messages to be either offensive or inoffensive. Because offending others surfaced so strongly as inappropriate behavior, further exploration related to Civil Liberties could be done to continue the dialog of what is appropriate or inappropriate in public settings. Those in positions of authority, such as school administrators, may benefit from research that establishes varying levels of appropriateness and how this relates to an individual's right to freely express him or herself.

While participants were required to be between the ages of 18 and 36 years old and have experience wearing cause representational dress in public settings, their participation was not dependent on any other demographic parameters. Personal

information, such as educational background and lifestyle characteristics, likely impacts how and why individuals use cause representational dress. For example, two of my participants were homeless. Their interviews were successful in that they responded to interview questions in thoughtful ways; however, their experiences with cause representational dress were different than that of participants who were, for example, students. Therefore, it may be helpful to require focused demographic attributes so that the responses are relatively comparable.

Finally, related to consumerism, my research could be used to research dress that is considered to have philanthropic ties and how wearers of this type of cause representational dress view their involvement in causes versus involvement in the fashion cycle. Marketer's ability to sell objects that become meaningful carriers of beliefs could be explored relative to product development and consumer satisfaction.

## References

- Adorno, T.W., & Horkheimer, M. (2000). The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception. In J.B. Schor & D.B. Holt (Eds.), *The consumer society reader* (pp. 4-19). New York: New York Press.
- Appadurai, A. (1986). Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value. In A. Appadurai (Ed.), *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (pp. 3-63). Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Blodgett, N. (1988). Law suits students to a t-(shirt). *ABA Journal*, 74(5), p. 22.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Blumer, H. (1972). Society as symbolic interaction. In J.G. Manis & B.N. Meltzer (Eds.), *Symbolic interaction: A reader in social psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 145-157). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Blumer, H. (1978). Social unrest and collective protest. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, 1, 1-54
- Callero, P.L. (2003). The sociology of the self. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29, 115-133.
- Campbell, C. (1996). The meaning of objects and the meaning of actions: A critical note on the sociology of consumption and theories of clothing. *Journal of Material Culture*, 1(1), 93-105.
- Campbell, C. (2005). The craft consumer: Culture, craft and consumption in a postmodern society. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1), 23-42.

- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *The handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509-533).
- Cornwell, T.B. (1990). T-shirts as wearable diary: An examination of artifact consumption and garnering related to life events. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 17, 375-379.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Rochberg-Halton, E. (1981). *The meaning of things: Domestic symbols and the self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Darden, K., & Worden, S.K. (1991). Identity announcement in mass society: The t-shirt. *Sociological Spectrum*, 11, 67-79.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Entwistle, J. (2000). *The fashioned body: Fashion, dress and modern social theory*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Feinberg, R.A., Mataro, L., & Burroughs, W.J. (1992). Clothing and social identity. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 11, 18-23.
- Felski, R. (2000). *Doing time: Feminist theory and postmodern culture*. New York: New York University.
- Firat, A.F., & Dholakia, N. (1998). *Consuming people: From political economy to theaters of consumption*. London: Routledge.

- Freitas, A., Kaiser, S., Chandler, J., Hall, C., Kim, J., & Hammadi, T. (1997). Appearance management as border construction: Least favorite clothing, group distancing, and identity...not! *Sociological Inquiry*, 67, 323-335.
- Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P., & Borg, W.R. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction* (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Goffman, E. (1972). The presentation of self to others. In J.G. Manis & B.N. Meltzer (Eds.), *Symbolic interaction: A reader in social psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 234-244). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Guy, A., & Banim, M. (2000). Personal collections: Women's clothing use and identity. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 9(3), 313-327.
- Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. New York: Methuen & Co.
- Hendrie, C. (2005). T-shirts on gay issues spur lawsuits. *Education Week*, 24(16), p.1-16. Retrieved September 10, 2006, from the Academic Search Premier database.
- Hodkinson, P. (2002). *Goth: Identity, style and subculture*. Oxford, England: Berg.
- Hunt, S.A., & Benford, R.D. (1994). Identity talk in the peace and justice movement. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22, 488-517.
- Johnson, J.W. (1997). *The struggle for student rights: Tinker v. Des Moines and the 1960s*. Lawrence, KA: University of Kansas.
- Johnson, K.K.P., Schofield, N.A., & Yurchisin, J. (2002). Appearance and dress as a source of information: A qualitative approach to data collection. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 20, 125-137.

- Kaiser, S.B. (1998). *The social psychology of clothing: Symbolic appearance in context* (2nd ed.). New York: Fairchild.
- Kaiser, S.B., Nagasawa, R.H., & Hutton, S.S. (1991). Fashion, postmodernity and personal appearance: A symbolic interactionist formulation. *Symbolic Interaction, 14*, 165-185.
- Kaiser, S.B., Nagasawa, R.H., & Hutton, S.S. (1995a). Construction of an SI theory of fashion: Part 1. Ambivalence and change. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, 13*, 172-183.
- Kaiser, S.B., Nagasawa, R.H., & Hutton, S.S. (1995b). Construction of an SI theory of fashion: Part 2. From discovery to formalization. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, 13*, 234-244.
- Kirkpatrick, D.D. (2006, February 2). Two t-shirts, two messages and two capitol ejections. *The New York Times*, p. A20.
- Kopytoff, I. (1986). The cultural biography of things: Commoditization as process. In A. Appadurai (Ed.), *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective* (pp. 195-235). Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Lasn, K. (2000). Culture jamming. In J.B. Schor & D.B. Holt (Eds.), *The consumer society reader* (pp. 414-432). New York, New York Press.
- Lemke, A. (2005, November 17). Message posted to <http://shareyourstory.livestrong.org>.
- McCracken, G. (1990). *Culture & consumption: New approaches to the symbolic character of consumer goods and activities*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.

- McNeil, K. (2005, November 17). Message posted to <http://shareyourstory.livestrong.org>.
- Meltzer, B.N. (1972). Mead's social psychology. In J.G. Manis & B.N. Meltzer (Eds.), *Symbolic interaction: A reader in social psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 4-22). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). (1993). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.
- Morgado, M.A. (1996). Coming to terms with *postmodern*: Theories and concepts of contemporary culture and their implications for apparel scholars. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 14, 41-53.
- Morris, A.D., & Mueller, C.M. (Eds.). (1992). *Frontiers in social movement theory*. New Haven, CT: Yale University.
- Muggleton, D. (2000). *Inside subculture: The postmodern meaning of style*. Oxford, England: Berg.
- Murray, J.B. (2002). The politics of consumption: A re-inquiry on Thompson and Haytko's (1997) "Speaking of fashion." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29, 427-440.
- Negrin, L. (1999). The self as image: A critical appraisal of postmodern theorists of fashion. *Theory Culture Society*, 16, 99-118.
- Richins, M.L. (1994). Valuing things: The public and private meaning of possessions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 504-521.
- Roach-Higgins, M.E., & Eicher, J.B. (1992). Dress and identity. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 10(4), 1-8.

- Roach-Higgins, M.E., & Eicher, J.B. (1995). Dress and identity. In M.E. Roach-Higgins, J.B. Eicher, & K.K.P Johnson, (Eds.), *Dress and identity* (pp. 7-18). New York: Fairchild.
- Rubinstein, R.P. (2001). *Dress codes: Meanings and messages in American culture* (2nd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Ruibal, S. (2007, July 17). Armstrong wristbands yield \$63M. *USA Today*, p. 8C.
- Schor, J. (1998). *The overspent American: Why we want what we don't need*. New York: Harper Perrenial.
- Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J.F., & Silverman, D. (Eds.). (2004). *Qualitative research practice*. London: Sage.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Simmel, G. (1904). Fashion. *International Quarterly*, 10, 130-155.
- Smelser, N.J., & Baltes, P.B. (Eds.). (2001). International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences (Vol. 9). Oxford, UK: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Stone, G.P. (1981). Appearance and the self: A slightly revised version. In G.P. Stone & H.A. Faberman (Eds.), *Social psychology through symbolic interaction* (2nd ed., pp.187-202). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Thompson, C.J., & Haytko, D.L. (1997). Speaking of fashion: Consumers' uses of fashion discourse and the appropriation of countervailing cultural meanings. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 15-42.

- Thompson, C.J., & Hirschman, E.C. (1995). Understanding the socialized body: A poststructuralist analysis of consumers' self-conceptions, body image, and self care practice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 139-153.
- van Manen, M. (2003). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2nd ed). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: The Althouse Press.
- Warner, D. (2005, November 17). Message posted to <http://shareyourstory.livestrong.org>.
- Wiessner, P. (1983). Style and social information in Kalahari San projectile points. *American Antiquity*, 48, 253-276.
- Wiessner, P. (1984). Reconsidering the behavioral basis for style: A case study among the Kalahari San. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, 3, 190-234.
- Wobst, H.M. (1977). Stylistic behavior and information exchange. In C. Cleland (Ed.), *For the director: Essays in honor of James B. Griffin* (pp. 317-342). Anthropological Paper of the University of Michigan 61. Ann Arbor: Regents of the University of Michigan.
- Wolf, D. (2006). Lost in America. *Canadian Business*, 79(2), 23.
- Wright Mills, C. (1972). Situated actions and vocabularies of motive. In J.G. Manis & B.N. Meltzer (Eds.), *Symbolic interaction: A reader in social psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 393-404). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Young, T.R. (1994). Dress, drama and self: The tee shirt as text. In P. Kollock & J. O'Brien (Eds.), *The production of reality: Essays and readings in social psychology* (pp. 147-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Zirkel, P.A. (1999). The 30th anniversary of Tinker. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(1), 34-40, 58.

## Appendix A

### *Class Announcement Script*

My name is Jean McElvain and I am a graduate student in the College of Design working with Dr. Kim Johnson on a dissertation that researches why people wear things that make their personal beliefs or political leanings known. The item worn could be a t-shirt, a wristband, or anything else that intentionally reveals something about the wearer's beliefs. I would like to interview people between the ages of 18 and 36 who have intentionally worn something that represents a personal belief to a protest, organized event, or public setting. The interview will last between 20 to 45 minutes and will be audio recorded. It is a confidential interview – you will not be identified by name in any publication that comes out of my research. There is a \$10 cash incentive that will be given out at the beginning of the interview.

If you think you might be interested in participating or have further questions about the research you can contact me by email, telephone, or mail. I will leave my contact information on a card in the front of the room for interested people. Thank you.

## Appendix B

*Recruitment Flyer*

## Have you ever **WORN A CAUSE?** Looking for Interview participants

- WHO AM I? I am a graduate student in the College of Design at the University of Minnesota ([www.cdes.umn.edu](http://www.cdes.umn.edu))
- I AM LOOKING FOR THOSE THAT: are between the ages of 18 and 35 who have intentionally worn something that represents a personal belief to a protest, organized event, or public setting.
- Confidential 20-40 minute, one-time, audio-recorded interviews
- \$10 in cash and a chance to talk about yourself and support research
- WHEN? Between now and October 31, 2007. Actual interview times will be scheduled for the convenience of the participant
- WHERE? At an on campus location or alternate public place per the participants request and convenience.

Please let me know if you might be interested!!



<p><b>Researcher:</b> Jean McElvain, CDes  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:jmceivai@umn.edu">jmceivai@umn.edu</a>  *please type 'wearing a cause' in the subject line  <b>Phone:</b> 612-978-2878  <b>Address:</b> U of MN, 240 McNeal Hall,  1985 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108</p>
<p><b>Researcher:</b> Jean McElvain, CDes  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:jmceivai@umn.edu">jmceivai@umn.edu</a>  *please type 'wearing a cause' in the subject line  <b>Phone:</b> 612-978-2878  <b>Address:</b> U of MN, 240 McNeal Hall,  1985 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108</p>
<p><b>Researcher:</b> Jean McElvain, CDes  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:jmceivai@umn.edu">jmceivai@umn.edu</a>  *please type 'wearing a cause' in the subject line  <b>Phone:</b> 612-978-2878  <b>Address:</b> U of MN, 240 McNeal Hall,  1985 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108</p>
<p><b>Researcher:</b> Jean McElvain, CDes  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:jmceivai@umn.edu">jmceivai@umn.edu</a>  *please type 'wearing a cause' in the subject line  <b>Phone:</b> 612-978-2878  <b>Address:</b> U of MN, 240 McNeal Hall,  1985 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108</p>
<p><b>Researcher:</b> Jean McElvain, CDes  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:jmceivai@umn.edu">jmceivai@umn.edu</a>  *please type 'wearing a cause' in the subject line  <b>Phone:</b> 612-978-2878  <b>Address:</b> U of MN, 240 McNeal Hall,  1985 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108</p>

Note: Actual flyer measured 8.5x11 inches

## Appendix C

### *Interview Questions*

#### *Introductory Questions*

1. Describe a time when you wore something that represented a cause or opinion?
2. How often do you typically choose to wear clothing that has a representation of a cause on it?

*Questions Related to Research Question One: How does wearing a dress item that represents a cause contribute to a person's sense of self from a symbolic interaction perspective?*

1. How do you feel that you benefit from wearing a representation of a cause versus knowing in your mind that you support the cause?
2. Do you feel that people view you differently when you wear a representation of a cause. If yes, how?
3. Do you think that there is a relationship between your personal identity and the clothes you wear on a day when you wear a representation of a cause?  
Describe why you do or do not consider there to be a relationship.

*Questions Related to Research Question Two: What is the process for validating cause representational dress as it relates to identity?*

4. How would you, or how do you feel when someone comments negatively on the cause related dress you are wearing?
5. How would you, or how do you feel when someone comments positively on the cause related dress you are wearing?

6. How do you feel when no one comments on the cause related dress you are wearing?

*Questions Related to Research Question Three: How does an individual establish boundaries around what is considered appropriate or inappropriate when wearing cause representational dress?*

7. Describe types of causes or opinions, if any, that you think might be inappropriate to wear in public settings.
8. Now I'm going to show you ten t-shirt images that I pulled off the internet. I'm asking you if you think they are appropriate to wear in public and if you would wear them in public if they represented your beliefs.

*Questions Related to Research Question Four: What environmental/contextual constraints do individuals who wear cause-related dress experience?*

9. What type of place might you be more apt to wear a representation of a cause, and conversely, what type of place might you be hesitant to wear a representation of a cause?

*Questions Related to Research Question Five: Consumer options could be viewed as heterogeneous and multitudinous or homogenous and confining. How does an individual who wears cause representational dress perceive the market's ability to offer products that promote individual expression?*

10. How does mass acceptance of an item like the LAF LIVESTRONG wristband, which promotes cancer research and awareness, influence your decision to wear it?

11. Describe similarities or differences in how you feel about disposing of a utilitarian piece of clothing such as a plain t-shirt versus a piece of clothing or accessory that has a representation of a cause.

## Appendix D

*Figure Captions followed by Figures*

*Figure 1.* T-shirt with text “I’m pro-choice and I shoot back” and image of gun.

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

<http://www.kersplebedeb.com/images/tshirt/tgallery.html>*Figure 2.* T-shirt with text

“American holocaust, Hitler 12 million killed, Stalin 20 million killed, Roe Vs. Wade 30 million killed.”

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

<http://www.arizonacap.com/Gifts/pro-life.htm>

*Figure 3.* T-shirt with text “Keep abortion safe and legal.”

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

[http://www.cafepress.com/buy/prochoice/-/pg\\_2/go\\_1](http://www.cafepress.com/buy/prochoice/-/pg_2/go_1)<http://www.shopmetrospy.com>

*Figure 4.* T-shirt with symbols that indicate the following: “faith in God, traditional family values, sanctity of life, Love of Country, and the right to protect our freedoms and liberties.”

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

<http://www.shopmetrospy.com/cgi-bin/sc-v4/catprod2.pl?catid=16&client=shopmetro>

*Figure 5.* T-shirt with text “Buck Fush.”

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

<http://www.newhumanitee.com/progressive-liberal.php>

*Figure 6.* T-shirt with text “In 2008 we will kick your ass again. Republicans 2008.”

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

<http://www.roadkilltshirts.com/ProductInfo.aspx?productid=ASS-AGAIN>

*Figure 7.* T-shirt with text “Any republican 2008.”

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

<http://www.roadkilltshirts.com/ProductInfo.aspx?productid=ANY-REPUBLICAN>

*Figure 8.* T-shirt with text “Any democrat 2008.”

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

<http://www.roadkilltshirts.com/ProductInfo.aspx?productid=ANY-DEMOCRAT>

*Figure 9.* T-shirt with text “My Jesus can beat up your Allah.”

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

<http://www.shopmetrospy.com/cgi-bin/sc-v4/catprod2.pl?catid=16&client=shopmetro>

*Figure 10.* T-shirt with text “I may be strange but I’ll never change” and animated image of girl carrying a Bible.

*Image reprinted from a website:* Retrieved December 11, 2006, from

[http://www.religioustshirts.co.uk/design\\_detail.asp?des\\_id=507](http://www.religioustshirts.co.uk/design_detail.asp?des_id=507)



Figure 1



Back of Shirt Logo

**AMERICAN  
HOLOCAUST**

**holocaust** n: 1: a thorough destruction 2: a mass slaughter of people

**Hitler**

**12 Million Killed**

**Stalin**

**20 Million Killed**

**Roe Vs. Wade**

**39 Million Killed**

Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

## Appendix E

*IRB Approval Letter*

## UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Twin Cities Campus*

04/10/2007

Jean E McElvain  
 Design, Housing, and Apparel  
 240 McNeal Hall  
 St Paul Campus

*Research Subjects' Protection Programs*

*Institutional Review Board: Human Subjects Committee (IRB)  
 Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC)*

*Mayo Mail Code 820  
 D-528 Mayo Memorial Building  
 420 Delaware Street S.E.  
 Minneapolis, MN 55455*

*612-626-5654  
 Fax: 612-626-6061  
 irb@umn.edu  
 iacuc@umn.edu  
 http://www.research.umn.edu/  
 subjects.htm*

RE: "Wearing a Cause: Personal Motivations for Expressing Beliefs through Dress"  
 IRB Code Number: **0703P03603**

Dear Ms. McElvain

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) received your response to its stipulations. Since this information satisfies the federal criteria for approval at 45CFR46.111 and the requirements set by the IRB, final approval for the project is noted in our files. Upon receipt of this letter, you may begin your research.

IRB approval of this study includes the consent forms dated March 28, 2007 and recruitment materials received March 6, 2007.

The IRB would like to stress that subjects who go through the consent process are considered enrolled participants and are counted toward the total number of subjects, even if they have no further participation in the study. Please keep this in mind when calculating the number of subjects you request. This study is currently approved for 50 subjects. If you desire an increase in the number of approved subjects, you will need to make a formal request to the IRB.

For your records and for grant certification purposes, the approval date for the referenced project is March 20, 2007 and the Assurance of Compliance number is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Research projects are subject to continuing review and renewal; approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date. If you would like us to send certification of approval to a funding agency, please tell us the name and address of your contact person at the agency.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Unanticipated problems or serious unexpected adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur.

The IRB wishes you success with this research. If you have questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

Sincerely,



Cynthia McGill, CIP  
 Research Compliance Supervisor  
 CM/egk  
 CC: Kim Johnson

## Appendix F

*Listing of Items Worn by Participants*

- F01** (22 yrs.) Howard Dean campaign t-shirt and a Betty McCullum campaign t-shirt.
- F02** (19 yrs.) Pink silicone wristband reading “Sarah 23” indicating high school student who died and the number of her athletic jersey.
- F03** (23 yrs.) T-shirts reading “Go buy a bike”, “Burn fat not fuel”, “Race for the Cure”, and a Jim Ramstad campaign t-shirt.
- F04** (18 yrs.) T-shirt reading “Walk American” for the March of Dimes, and a t-shirt with a religious based message.
- F05** (21 yrs.) T-shirt with a feminist message and an image of the female symbol.
- F06** (20 yrs.) T-shirt reading “Amen” and “I do believe” which formed a cross on the front and a quote from St. Francis of Assisi reading “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words” on the back, and another t-shirt reading “Finding Nemo” on the front and “I was lost but now I’m found” on the back.
- F07** (20 yrs.) T-shirts reading “Gay Ally”, “Lesbian Ally”, and “Bi-sexual Ally.”
- F08** (22 yrs.) T-shirt with a pro-life message.
- F09** (36 yrs.) Bracelet made from red silk cord and a disc shaped jade bead worn to symbolize the participant’s China adoption process.
- F10** (18 yrs.) T-shirt from the Gap’s *Product RED* line which supports awareness of AIDS in Africa.

- F11** (24 yrs.) T-shirt reading “Race for the Cure” to support breast cancer awareness and many other t-shirts obtained through volunteer efforts relative to health awareness issues.
- F12** (18 yrs.) T-shirt reading “Got Free Press” on the front and “Not at B.H.S.” on the back. T-shirts were created in response to a ban on the student newspaper that disallowed high school seniors from printing year end “Most likely…” lists (for example, “Most likely to get married 8 times”).
- F13** (25 yrs.) T-shirt reading “Legalize marijuana.”
- F14** (20 yrs.) T-shirts reading “Stop Genocide in Sudan” and “U.S. out of Afghanistan.” Silicone wristbands supporting breast cancer awareness and other health related concerns.
- F15** (33 yrs.) T-shirts reading “I read banned books” and a t-shirt with an image of a cigarette in a circle with a slash through it and the phrase “There are cooler ways to die.”
- F16** (30 yrs.) T-shirt from a music tour supporting DFL presidential candidate John Kerry, and from the music band REM reading “Understand Change Begins with the Individual.” A patch reading “Punk Rock isn’t just for your boyfriend.” A button reading “War is not an effective energy policy.”
- F17** (20 yrs.) T-shirt made by a gay rights activist who was part of an organization that made t-shirts with pejorative synonyms used to reference homosexuals. F17’s read “Fruitcake: noun, a rich cake that contains nuts, raisins, citron, etc.”

- F18** (22 yrs.) Buttons reading “Stop discrimination” and “Torture destroys us all.” T-shirts reading “Stop genocide in Sudan” and “Amnesty International.”
- F19** (18 yrs.) T-shirt purchased to raise money for issues in Darfur. Buttons with messages encouraging others to vote and buttons that endorsed gay rights.
- F20** (19 yrs.) T-shirts with religious messages containing different names for God and bible verses, and t-shirts raising awareness for cancer.
- F21** (31 yrs.) Pins, t-shirts, and handkerchiefs promoting awareness of different medical issues and youth activism.
- F22** (20 yrs.) T-shirt supporting DFL presidential candidate John Kerry, and a t-shirt reading “Get out and vote.” A skirt made by the participant from army fatigues with “Anarchy” and a peace symbol written on it with black ink.
- F23** (18 yrs.) Necklace with a peace sign pendant. T-shirt with image of George W. Bush reading “Not my President.”
- F24** (34 yrs.) T-shirts reading “Don’t eat animals,” “Rats have rights,” “Vegetarian Society of Colorado,” and “Racism is a disease.”
- F25** (19 yrs.) Silicone rubber wristband reading “I pray for baby Caleb” who is a victim of shaken baby syndrome.
- M01** (27 yrs.) T-shirts and wristbands related to violence against women and children. Examples include “Say no to child sexual abuse,” and “Stop violence against children now.”
- M02** (21 yrs.) T-shirts related to health issues, and a t-shirt reading “F\*ck Television.”

- M03** (33 yrs.) LAF silicone wristband supporting cancer awareness and research, Jeff Hall wristband supporting an independent cyclist trying to raise money to train for the Olympic games, a t-shirt that reads “Cars are coffins,” and another t-shirt that reads “I’m blue” showing affiliation with DFL.
- M04** (26 yrs.) T-shirts that read “Free Tibet,” “Save Darfur” “Project Homeless Connect,” as well a campaign t-shirt for Howard Dean.
- M05** (32 yrs.) T-shirt reading “Support our Troops,” a t-shirt with an image of John Kerry sitting on a sailboat with text “Which ever way the wind blows,” and a campaign t-shirt endorsing George W. Bush.
- M06** (27 yrs.) T-shirt reading “I support gay marriage if both chicks are hot,” and a pro-republican t-shirt reading “Great American ass kickers.”
- M07** (21 yrs.) T-shirt criticizing smokers with a message reading “You’re killing me,” and several t-shirts with Christian emblems such as a fish and biblical verses.
- M08** (29 yrs.) T-shirt reading “Vote for Leslie” which endorsed a homeless man for mayor in an Austin, Texas election.
- M09** (31 yrs.) Lance Armstrong Foundation silicone wristband supporting cancer research and awareness, and a Jeff Hall wristband supporting an independent cyclist trying to raise money to train for the Olympic games.
- M10** (18 yrs.) Bracelet from the Gap’s *Product RED* line which supports awareness of AIDS in Africa.