



Presentation primarily by Taylor Cremo and Jennifer Rhodes, UF Design, Construction and Planning students, Fall 2012. Barbara Haldeman, PREC, added and substituted materials as needed. Reviewed by Ramona Madhosingh-Hector, Urban Environmental Sustainability, Pinellas County and Maia McGuire, Sea Grant/Marine Science, Flagler County.

Introduce self

Creatively split class into small groups

Mention completed homework:

- Watch *The Story of Stuff* (21:25)  
Video link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorgroigqM>
- Be prepared to share the life cycle assessment of a product...or at least the information you were able to find

And just how many advertisements *are* there in Times Square? You can see (and count) for yourself: professional photographer David Friedman posted a photo essay called "Every ad in Times Square" at [http://www.ironicsans.com/2007/01/every\\_ad\\_in\\_times\\_square.html](http://www.ironicsans.com/2007/01/every_ad_in_times_square.html)

Photo:

Scott Beale, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/laughingsquid/383433646/sizes/o/in/set-72157594524062811>

# Circle Question

- What does “American dream” mean today?
- or
- What is the good life?



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This should be a circle, round robin quick sharing and not a discussion of ideas. A statement from each participant. No questions or comments from others.

# Purpose

*To cultivate an appreciation for and a shift toward sustainable consumptive patterns*

## Objectives

- Describe the roots of our consumption culture
- Critically consider and compare life cycles
- Consider alternatives to purchasing and consumption
- Identify more environmentally friendly products
- Recognize the value of the dollar
- Associate new consumptive alternatives with benefits beyond financial



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Today, we're going to talk about U.S. role in consumerism, our personal role, a little group discussion, life cycle assessments, thought approaches to reducing consumption and finally, alternatives for a new economy.

Note: Life cycle assessments are defined in the NWEI book, pg. 105, as "A tool or technique used to assess the environmental impacts of all the stages of a product's life, from raw material extraction, to production, to transportation, to use, to disposal or recycling."

# The Big Problem: A Crisis of Lifestyle

- Consumerism: the idea that the more you consume the better your life will be

*“Today, Americans are sleep-walking into an age of ecological crisis.”*

–James Howard Kunstler



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## Consumption, Over-Consumption & Consumerism

- **Consumption:** Buying/using what you need
- **Over-consumption:** Buying/using more than you need
- **Consumerism:** \$\$\$ = Believing that happiness is based on what you consume



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While consumption is essential to survival, history also provides the beginnings of over-consumption. In order to prepare for times of stress or insecurity, it was necessary that we over-consumed when resources were available. However, over the last sixty years, this idea of over-consumption has transformed into the unsustainable and unconstrained act of consumerism.

# Consumerism

Nothing more nor less than the sum total of countless little everyday choices made in the name of our needs and desires and preferences.

— *Michael Pollan*



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Not only is the strength of our economy defined by how much we consume, but the entire American lifestyle as a whole is defined by consumerism.

# Carrying Capacity

- “The maximum population of a given species that can survive indefinitely in a given environment.”

— *The Sustainable Scale Project*

- The United States: an exception?
  - U.S. consumption rates and carrying capacity



Image: <http://goo.gl/KA9HA>

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We're starting with one of the core concepts of sustainability and how that directly relates to consumption. Today, rather than focusing on global consumption, we're going to focus on U.S. consumption, and in particular, Florida.

The U.S. has 5% of the world's population but consumes 30% of the world's resources  
<http://www.no-burn.org/section.php?id=89>

The U.S. accounts for:

- 22 % of fossil fuel consumption
- 24 % of carbon dioxide emissions
- 33 % of paper and plastic use

[http://www.sierraclub.org/sustainable\\_consumption/tilford.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/sustainable_consumption/tilford.asp)

Many less-developed country's idealize our lifestyle. Imagine if all people act as we do—could the planet support it?

By now we all know the detrimental environmental effects of fossil fuels, plastics, etc. Let's focus on the reasons behind our current state of consumerism.

Image: NASA Earth Observatory, <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/IOTD/view.php?id=885>

# A Wasteful Economy

Americans make up 5% of the world's population yet...

- Used 1/3 of the world's resources in the last 3 decades
- Produce 1/2 of the world's hazardous waste



If everyone lived like this, we would need 3.6 planets.

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Our world cannot support our current consumption habits.

# A Wasteful Economy

- Consumer spending represents 70 percent of our economy



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What are some other idioms associated with shopping?

- Shop 'til you drop
- Shopping therapy

Others?

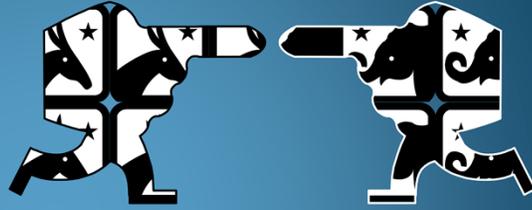
What are some counter-idioms?

- You can't take it with you

Others?

# It's Not (all) Your Fault!

- The political arena...what's the main topic of concern?
- "People don't know what they want until you show it to them"
- American lifestyle



Let's point fingers for a second!



Images: Microsoft clipart

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Recent election topics... what have you heard? Answers: job growth, the deficit, etc. All about increasing GDP, for a healthy economy. You always hear about growth, they make it seem as if growth is the only option. Is growth inherently sustainable?

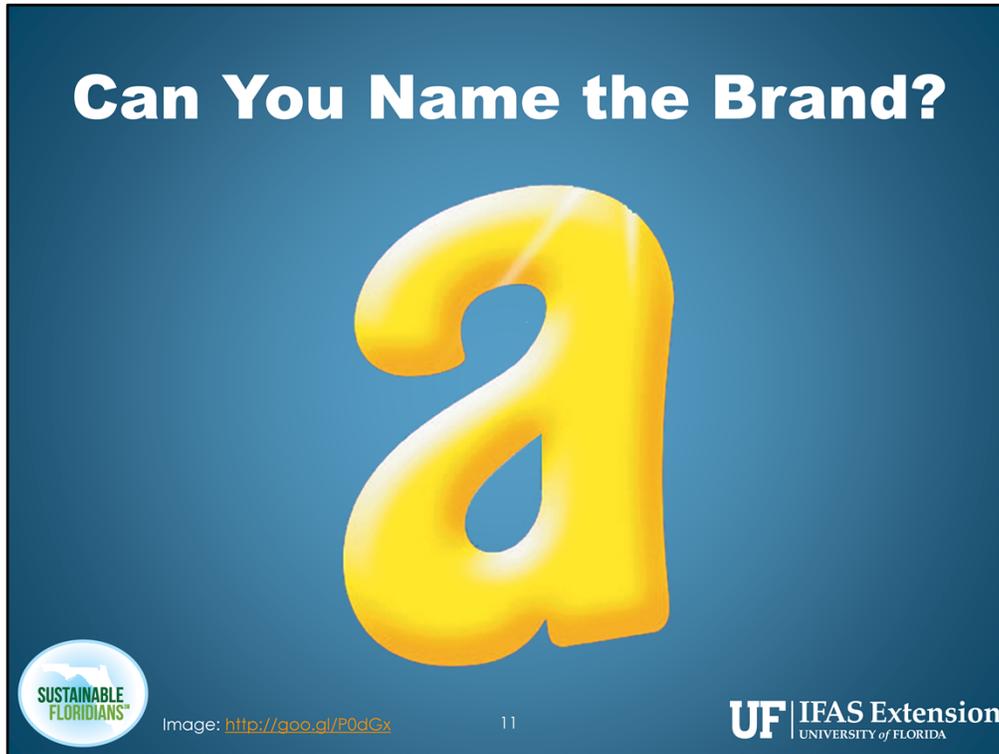
*"People don't know what they want until you show it to them."* Who said this?

Steve Jobs, Apple

<http://www.wired.com/gadgets/mac/commentary/cultofmac/2006/03/70512?currentPage=all>

Shopping, it's what we do! How we identify ourselves, distinguish ourselves. It shows wealth, status, musical taste, uniqueness, all things we value and that are unique to the United States.

Now let's try a short game.



Present the slide and ask if they can name the brand.

All detergent

Image: theMomBuzz.com, <http://themombuzz.com/2010/07/13/remove-clothing-stains-with-all-oxi-active-laundry-detergent-win/>

# Can You Name the Brand?



Image: <http://goo.gl/shLZ4>

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Bubbalicious gum

Image: Celtic's E-juice Shop,

[http://www.celticsejuiceshop.com/index.php?main\\_page=popup\\_image&pID=32&zenid=i3c7875pdfan62g8jfe6628is1](http://www.celticsejuiceshop.com/index.php?main_page=popup_image&pID=32&zenid=i3c7875pdfan62g8jfe6628is1)

# Can You Name the Brand?



Image: <http://goo.gl/8PwTB>

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Campbell's soup

Image: GreenerPackage.com,

[http://www.greenerpackage.com/source\\_reduction/campbell\\_soup\\_proves\\_size\\_does\\_matter](http://www.greenerpackage.com/source_reduction/campbell_soup_proves_size_does_matter)

# Brand Alphabet



Image: <http://goo.gl/0xNJK>

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Can you name them all? Some are old! Should we reward the person/small group who can name them all? Our best consumers!

A = All (detergent)

B = Bubbalicious (gum)

C = Campbell's (soup)

D = Dawn (detergent)

E = Eggo (waffles)

F = Fritos (chips)

G = Gatorade (drink)

H = Hebrew National (wieners)

I = Icee (drink)

J = Jello (dessert)

K = Kool-Aid (drink mix)

L = Lysol (cleaner)

M = M&M's (candy)

N = Nilla (wafers)

O = Oreo (cookie)

P = Pez (candy)

Q = Q-tips (grooming)

R = Reese's (candy)

S = Starburst (candy)

T = Tide (detergent)

U = Uncle Ben's (rice)

V = V8 (juice)

W = Wisk (cleaner)

X = Xtra (detergent)

Y = York (candy)

Z = Zest (soap)

Image: <http://matthewbalancarodrigues.wordpress.com/lesson5/>

(See link #5 under "Procedures" at this site as it contains links to additional brand alphabet quizzes.)

## Consumerism & Advertising

- How many advertisements do you think you see a day?
- Look around your home or office—
  - How many product labels do you see?
  - How many ads do you hear on the radio?
  - How many billboards do you see as you drive around town?
  - How many ads do you see in the newspaper? On television? Online?



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One very-widely quoted estimate is 3,000 ads per day—but this number originally came from a 1999 article written by columnist Ellen Goodman in the newspaper *Albuquerque Journal* (even the American Academy of Pediatrics quotes Goodman as the source of this particular statistic). How accurate do you think this is? Would this be considered a reliable source?

Take a minute to think about how many labels and advertisements you see or hear in a day.

### Note:

These questions, as used in this slide, are rhetorical in nature. If you have research-based information as to accurate numbers, please email them to Kathleen Ruppert at [kr@ufl.edu](mailto:kr@ufl.edu)

# Consumerism & Advertising

- Blurs and confuses your actual desire.
- What is that ad really trying to sell you?



Image: Microsoft clip art

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Advertisers are paid a lot to create these images to blur your desires. Advertisements are constantly telling us to be unhappy about what we have and that shopping and buying some product will fill this void and bring you greater happiness. Think of some of the more famous advertisements that stick out in your head. Get in a group and discuss what they were actually marketing to you...was it more friends? A happier family? Beauty?

# Consumerism and You

- Small group discussion



Image: Microsoft clipart

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Discussion, part 1

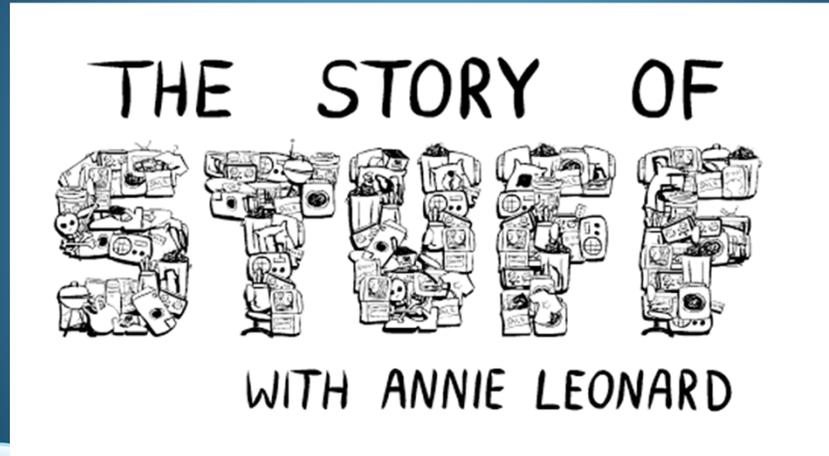
Please print and distribute the following slide for all small groups.

# Consumerism and You: Discuss

- Part 1
  - Consumerism: a way of defining self? How do you define consumerism?
  - How do you encounter advertising on a daily basis? Think beyond commercials.
  - How has marketing changed over time? Think of an effective ad (from childhood, the Super Bowl, etc.) – what made it effective?
  - How has the American Dream changed within the last decade? How has the “good life” changed? Why?



# Consumption: Behind the Scenes



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Discuss *The Story of Stuff* Project

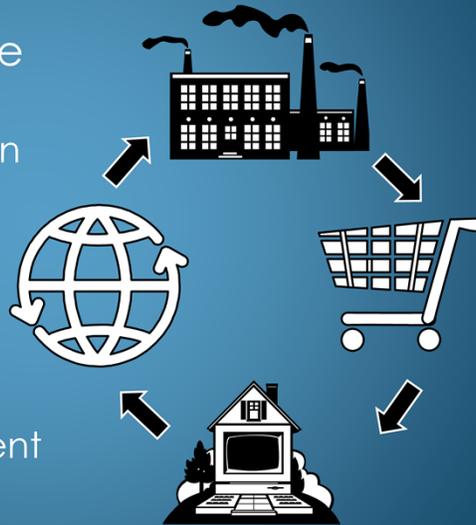
Reactions?

(Maybe assign this as homework...to view this video before class?)

Video link: *The Story of Stuff* (21:25) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM>

# Life Cycle Assessment (LCA)

- Steps of a life cycle
  - Extraction: raw material acquisition
  - Materials manufacture
  - Production
  - Use/reuse/maintenance
  - Waste management



Images: Microsoft clipart

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Annie Leonard took you through some of the shortcomings of industry by visualizing the steps. This is a process called **life cycle assessment (LCA)** and it is used to measure the impacts of specific products. Here are the general steps.

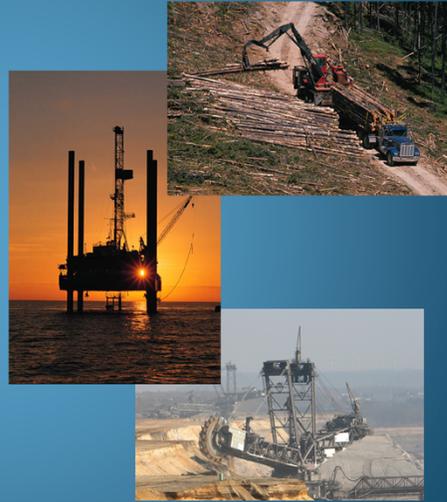
<http://www.epa.gov/nrmrl/std/lca/lca.html>

Note:

The word “consume” doesn’t make us think of the before or after life. Only the actual “consuming.”

# Extraction

- Withdrawing resources from nature
  - Expensive
  - Unsustainable rate
    - ◆ Depletion and economic insecurity



Photos: Microsoft clip art

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Everything you buy starts from raw resources that are extracted from various places all over the globe. This is an energy intensive process, and currently we are taking more than can be replaced for the next generation's use—from which we can already begin to see consequences of resource depletion. Relying on these resources from other countries also creates economic insecurity.

# Production



SUSTAINABLE  
FLORIDIANS™

Photo: Microsoft clip art

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- Manufacturing goods from raw materials
  - Jobs sent overseas
  - Chemical pollution
  - Sweatshops and child labor
  - Quantity over quality

The next step we often don't think about is production, where the manufacturing of the good takes place. Many problems as well as ethical issues arise from mass production such as...listed on slide.

# Distribution



- Shipping and dispersion to corporations
  - Extremely high energy costs
  - Ecological footprint



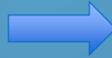
Photo: Microsoft clip art

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# Consumption

- Flow from corporation to consumer



Photos: Photographer: Ian Britton, Freephoto.com; Microsoft clip art



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This is the only part you usually think about.

# Disposal

- The act of throwing away or getting rid of
- Live in a world of fast and cheap goods
- Average American creates 5 pounds of trash per day
- Hazardous waste and carbon emissions from landfills
  - Landfills filling at an unsustainable level
  - More items are packaged than ever before
    - ◆ Individual wrappers, shrink wrapped fruits and vegetables



*"Whatever is produced in haste goes hastily to waste."*



Photo: Microsoft clip art

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Last comes disposal. While there has been a recent movement to reduce, reuse, and recycle, which postpones this step in the cycle, this does little to offset our vast amounts of “trash” Americans create.

Split class into small groups.

Part 2 of discussion. 10 minutes. Please print and distribute the following slide.

Note:

We also need to think about the “raw” materials that go into the making of all of the things/materials we use and the waste often created as a result of the processes used to extract these “raw” materials.

# LCA: Discussion Part 2

- Part 2
  - What was the last product you purchased for yourself? Why did you purchase it? Did anything influence you to purchase that item in particular?
  - What did you learn from your research? Share either facts or assumptions for your product's LCA. How did you find this information?
  - What role can LCAs play in America?
  - How would your purchasing habit change if you were aware of the LCA of products?



# Thinking Through LCA: The Alternatives

## Reduce

- Reduce water used in production
- Reduce packaging
- ?
- ?

## Reuse

- Crafting: Terracycle
- Seed paper
- ?
- ?

## Recycle

- Use recycled materials
- Ability to send back to manufacturer
- ?
- ?



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These are both actions and components embedded in products. Consider each “R”, how do they contribute to a product being “green” ? Ask the class to think of other ways we can incorporate all “R’s” in each process of the life cycle. Repeat the steps of the life cycle and ask them to consider sustainable option in each.

Note:

Terracycle (<http://www.terracycle.com/en-US>) provides national recycling systems for previously non-recyclable or hard-to-recycle waste.

## LCA: Packaging choices matter!

- Glass containers are a better choice than those of aluminum or plastic.
- Cardboard packaging is a better choice than plastic.
- But...
  - Plastic grocery bags are a better choice than paper bags (this didn't use to be true), provided you recycle them.
  - Bringing your own bags to the store is the best choice of all.



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A simple online game showing which packaging choices make the most recycling sense:  
<http://web.mit.edu/civenv/K12Edu/game/game.swf>

# Packaging choices

- Packaging made of recycled material is a much better choice than packaging made of virgin material.
  - Packaging made of recycled materials requires less energy to be produced; in some cases, much less energy:
    - ◆ Aluminum cans made of recycled aluminum use 95% less energy to produce.
  - Glass is readily recyclable
  - Certain kinds of paper and plastic



## Make sure!

- Look for the words “post-consumer content” on the label—this ensures not only that the packaging is *truly* recycled—that is, made from recycled materials, not simply that it can be recycled—but also helps create demand for post-consumer materials.



# Vote with Your Dollar



“Every dollar you spend is a vote for how you want the world to be and who you want to control it.”



Images: Microsoft clipart

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Quote: <http://inspiredeconomist.com/2010/08/19/vote-with-your-dollar-its-that-simple/>

One personal story of realizing this fact: Francis Moore Lappé (*Getting a Grip*), Every time you buy, you say “I want more of all of this”.

Have you considered this form of power before?



This is a short “green labeling” game. Ask the class to name the labels.

Show them the answers.

Explain that labels such as these help us purchase more sustainably. These labels have considered the processes of products, some of those steps and the three R’s

Note that not all labels are true indicators of what they “appear” to represent. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has attempted to help marketers avoid making misleading environmental claims through their revised “Green Guides.” See <http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2012/10/greenguides.shtm> for more information.

Images:

ENERGY STAR: [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

U.S. Green Building Council: [new.usgbc.org](http://new.usgbc.org)

Forest Stewardship Council: <http://us.fsc.org/logo-use.249.htm>

Green Seal: [http://colormegreen.areavoices.com/files/2012/01/green\\_seal\\_logo\\_1.jpg](http://colormegreen.areavoices.com/files/2012/01/green_seal_logo_1.jpg)

Green-e: [http://www.green-e.org/about\\_logos.shtml](http://www.green-e.org/about_logos.shtml)

USDA Organic:

[http://www.de.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/2010/USDA\\_Organic\\_200px.jpg](http://www.de.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/2010/USDA_Organic_200px.jpg)

# Consumerism: The New Alternatives

*“One of the primary results—and one of the primary needs—of industrialism is the separation of people and places and products from their histories.”*

—Wendell Berry



Image: <http://goo.gl/mf6t>

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A quote by Wendell Berry: If separation is the problem...localizing is the solution.

Image:

Buy Local North Central Florida Independent Businesses,  
<https://sites.google.com/site/buylocalncf/Home>

# Consumerism: The New Alternatives

**Buy Local  
Eat Local**

**We're In This  
Together**

**FREEGAN:  
IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER**

**Buy Fresh  
Buy Local**

- New trends
  - “Locavore”
  - “Commoning”
  - “YO-YO ethic” to “WITT”
    - Collaborative consumption
  - “Freeganism”



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Locavore – eating a local diet

Commoning – sharing the commons

YOYO – you’re on your own

WITT – we’re in this together

Freeganism – not participating in consumerism/capitalism. Living without buying, also dumpster diving!



There is an alternative movement to the consumerism we know well. It's happening all around us!

Yes, we can purchase and look out for those “green” labels...but there exists some alternatives that don't require purchasing at all!

Images explained:

- Buy Nothing Day, as opposed to Black Friday
- No Impact Man: the story of Colin Beavan and his family as they attempt to have no impact for an entire year! Trailer can be found here  
Video link: (running time 2:30) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9Ctt7FGFBo>
- YES! Magazine is a nonprofit publication that features alternative lifestyle choices, and many of them on consumerism! This cover asks whether the “financial crisis is a crisis or an opportunity.”
- Original Maker’s Club: This is a “club” in Louisville, KY that creatively promotes the local, artistic businesses around Louisville. It is a true celebration of the uniqueness of the city.
- Farmer’s markets: This is an image of a farmers market.. a new way to buy food! Local means less distance for food to travel. Also, building a relationship between consumer and farmer.
- The Occupy movement: This is an example of the amount of people who are tired of the old system and ready to start new.

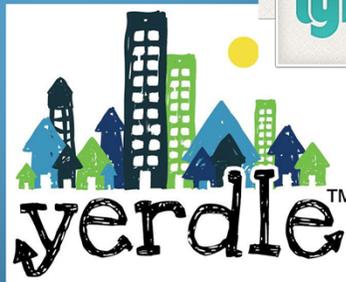
Finally, all these movements are about relationships and banding together for a new lifestyle. With industrialism (as Berry said), we’ve separated the process; by getting closer to each other, we can create a better world.

# Alternative in depth: Collaborative Consumption

- “Share Economy”
  - Me → We
  - Under-used asset available for rent or to borrow
- Technology



SKILLSHARE



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Images: <http://goo.gl/n0UKw>, <http://goo.gl/uhxnp>, <http://goo.gl/PziGn>

Here is a TED talk to familiarize yourself with collaborative consumption (not necessary for students).

Video link: *Rachel Botsman: The Case for Collaborative Consumption* (16:35)

[http://www.ted.com/talks/rachel\\_botsman\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_collaborative\\_consumption.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/rachel_botsman_the_case_for_collaborative_consumption.html)

Here is a video to show to the class before introducing the topic.

Video link: *Share Spray: A New Way to Do Everything* (5:34)

<http://www.newdream.org/resources/videos/share-spray>

Technology has enabled us the ability to find information quickly, finding people, places, things...everything! The social media aspect also allows us to be safer.

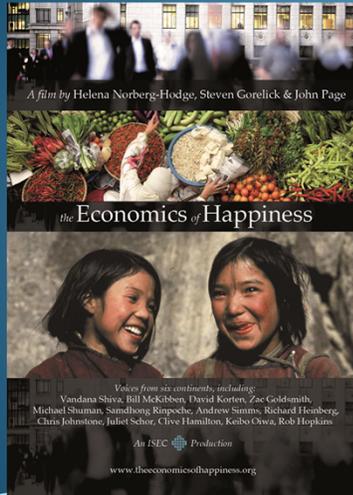
Images:

Skillshare: <http://www.skillshare.com/about/press>

Yerdle: <https://www.facebook.com/yerdle>

Lyft: <https://www.facebook.com/lyft>

# Benefits



- Relationship between happiness and GDP
- The economics of happiness



Images: <http://www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org/>, <http://www.happycounts.org/>

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Video link: Official trailer for *The Economics of Happiness* (running time 3:25)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VkdnFYDbiBE>

This is a time to discuss the additional benefits to consuming less. We've all heard that money doesn't buy happiness, but it's true! Data shows that increased money and "things" does not increase happiness continually. There is a certain threshold to comfort and happiness. Some of the happiest places on earth have less things (Bhutan, for example).

Should we measure Gross National Happiness instead of GDP?

Images:

The Economics of Happiness: <http://www.theeconomicsofhappiness.org>

The Happiness Initiative: <http://www.happycounts.org>

## What Can You Do?

- Think about what an advertisement is really telling you
- Love and appreciate the stuff you already have
- One day a week of no consuming
- Collaborative consumption:
  - Textbook rentals
  - Zimride
  - Rent The Runway
  - Websites like getable.com



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- Zimride (<http://www.zimride.com>) – a spin on ridesharing, using social networks to enable real connections
- Rent The Runway (<http://www.renttherunway.com>) – making high-end fashions much more accessible
- Getable (<http://www.getable.com>) – rent many different types of items

See *11 sites that want to rule the share economy* at

<http://money.cnn.com/gallery/magazines/fortune/2012/10/03/share-economy.fortune/index.html> for more information on collaborative consumption.

## Call To Action

- Register on a collaborative consumption website. What do you have to share (skills? Items?)
- Go beyond “Buy Nothing Day.” Try “Buy Nothing Weekend!”
- Watch *The Story of Change*
- Extra credit: dig deeper into research on your products, Life Cycle Assessments



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These are some ideas for students to involve themselves in beyond the classroom. Encourage them to delve into any area that most interested them.

*The Story of Change* (6:29)

Video link: <http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-change/>



Leave with this thought!

What can *you* do?