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English Composition 2
2/24/2020
Word Count: 1914

<u>My Discourse Community of the "Fashion Enthuanists"</u>

        Growing up, I used to be known as the "spunky" one in my family. I was always looking for new things to experience, get involved in and learn about. I was never stuck doing one thing I always was once I mastered in on to the next. One thing though that I still find myself finding ways to master and continuously learning and picking up new things to learn about it is the concept of fashion. I am constantly evolving and changing my own views of fashion as a member of the fashion enthusiast community. What makes this a discourse community exactly is because there are so many different kinds of fashion whether it be kid's clothing aimed fashion design, unisex clothing aimed fashion design, or, one of my personal favorites, engineered focused fashion design but the goal is clear no matter any of those u come from. Fashion or clothes to better say is created to express an idea you have or to express parts of yourself. The community of fashion enthusiasts shares common basic values such as fashion is an essential way to express an idea or yourself and that fashion is very vital to life and they all share a way of communicating these values such as social media pages, blog posts, sketches of their ideas, articles of writing, television shows, etc. My initial feelings about this community were well they just like seeing in their eyes or to their individual perception a well put together outfit. But I realized as I started following more fashion pages and models and fashion designers through my research that it's much deeper than that. Fashion to them is a way of life. Fashion to them, as told by Emily Gonalez, a fashion sketch artist and fellow enthusiast herself, " is like an art. Just like how an artist may express how they feel or see something through a painting, fashion way to express your persona or ideas to the world even through a simple sketch". It's also, to me, showing how you can use basic concepts for example colors, textiles, body types and sometimes persona to change someone's life. I say this due to the belief that one shoe or piece of clothing can change completely one person's perception of themselves. Literally it's proven by science if you feel as if you look good then you end up feeling good about yourself. That's one of the prominent reasons why I'm so involved in this community because of the power of perception. If I could make one person feel good by a simple blog post about this cool dress I found online or even give my opinion on whether or not this shirt goes with those shoes then I could hopefully help someone feel better about themselves and that alone can make my day.

Now I admit researching this group proved tricky at first due to my community being how they are which is very analytical based on how they are every day looking into and breaking down looks but I managed to put together some main ideas concerning my research. I researched this community basically through the use of the media (internet, social accounts, magazines, videos, articles) and reflecting on the ways I became more and more attached to the community and how I got into it myself. The members usually primarily communicate through making a blog for others to follow or a social media page. They also host fashion shows and workshops to get people involved. For the outside world, they mostly stick to videos and creating segments on television shows or magazine articles. What I learned in the process is a lot about how the members of this community exactly express their own ideas about what's considered fashion and I also learned in the process the different types of fashion there is. I also was able to expand on my own knowledge of fashion. Before I go deeper into this let me reflect a little on my own experience with fashion. I went through different periods in my life concerning fashion. When I was little I loved dressing up. The topic of appearance was and still is very important to me but I mostly loved seeing how different colors and patterns can go together. I still to this day sit and think about the clothes in my closet and wonder "Can this jacket go with this or maybe I should try those boots with that pants". I was always visualizing things together but that's also a testimony to how much of a visual learner I am. I went through phases with fashion of enjoying more fluffy seemingly feminine types of clothing to streetwear but ultimately I say now my style is very universal. Universal in the sense that I'll wear anything as long as it looks good to me and especially on me. Going back to what I learned through my research, I was able to obtain some information about the different fashion groups of design that exist. Firstly I didn't know that there was such a thing as engineered fashion. Basically engineered fashion pushes the usage of combining fashion design and technology by using tech programs like Adobe Photoshop to make textiles or even wearable technology. I learned about this through my exploration of a fashion school's page and their post by a student showcasing a shirt that uses circuitry and LED lighting to show texts on the front of the shirt. I knew clothes were used as a form of expression but I didn't know literally it can be used to express words and using technology. That was so cool to me seeing as I was a tech student myself and had no idea fashion can be combined with it to make an actual career. I also went on the internet and found an article writing about a shirt a designer made to help the deaf feel sound. Both of these creations completely amazed me because it's kind of reinstated the importance of clothing to me. Clothing is essential, of course, but it can also be essential to how it can, now with the help of a shirt, help the deaf be able to enjoy music just like everyone else. It also showed me how much my community is needed because these people in it by following the trends every day and their overall passion about it can pave the way to create greater, innovative ideas like those mentioned above. We can use technology, something that is quickly taking over our world, to make life easier and more accessible.

Now what I think what makes this community so unique is the broad stem of ideas we all have, the diversity and innovation in our ideas and how we go about expressing them. For example, in my community, we have roles to get our goals across. Some may, for example, write about fashion on a blog to get the word out to other fashion enthusiasts about trends or a certain brand/concept (fashion bloggers) and another may use sketches and post it to their social media accounts to push forward a specific outfit they may consider nice (fashion designer). Additionally in my community, we all have different opinions on what works and can even lend some insight on what may make an even better outfit. After all it's all about perception and what may look good to you may not look good to me. Moreover, all of us come from different styles, for example, some of us may like dressing chic and then some of us may prefer streetwear and we all may have a certain story that explains why. Furthermore, we all have a different way of formulating the looks whether it be just using already made clothing to put together a look for a person or sewing together an article of clothing themselves using pieces of fabric. Or using an old piece of clothing they have as fabric, known as upcycling, or using a computer program to create fabrics. Lastly the diversity of ideas for fashion pieces such as a shirt that helps the deaf feel sound or simply a shirt filled with different pieces of patchwork. The possibilities are endless!

There isn't a specific language they use within their communities because all of us come from different backgrounds and cultures just maybe some very specific wordings contributing to different styles like bohemian chic etc. and the word textiles may come up a lot which means a woven or knit cloth. Also, they are likely to talk about sewing patterns which are pieces of paper used to outline parts of a piece of clothing a designer wants to make so they are able to cut it out and sew it together. According to Moyra A., a budding fashion designer "In the fashion enthusiast community only one thing matters and that's really the importance of using and understanding that fashion is a way of expression and that it is revolutionary. I say that seeing how we progressed so much with style throughout the years from women wearing long skirts dragging on the ground to now displaying pants, shorts, and mini skirts. The members value the importance of how much it's changing and additionally the wide varieties of ideas that comes with it. They value its subjectivity.". One doesn't have to do much to become a member; it's more of an informal process. Maybe start by creating a page showcasing your personal ideals and reach out to other fashion enthusiasts and share ideas and try to curate or go to events amplifying how much fashion matters to get more involved in the community. You can do this and someday maintain a huge impact on how someone sees the action of picking an outfit or somehow get yourself into the fashion world amongst "the great" many designers and models.

In conclusion, this project very much further expanded my knowledge of the fashion enthusiast community. It helped me learn about new ideas and therefore expanded my views of

fashion and what it means and even how I can change up some of my own looks. What surprised me about the group is the tech aspect. I didn't know that circuitry could be used on clothing. I always thought it was very dangerous to have a battery or electricity-powered things so close to the body but it's was interesting how they used the coverage that clothing provided to make it a little less dangerous. What confused me about this topic was how they were explaining how they made certain tech work with the clothing, for example, how to exactly make certain textiles using programs like Adobe Photoshop. But I guess I didn't understand fully due to not being familiar with the program myself and how to use it. What made me rethink the project the way I initially looked at the group was basically the evidence I collected through my research and the interviews. Hearing the passion in the interviewees' voices and the knowledge about the different concepts of fashion made me realize how much more to the world there is and how much exactly I have left to learn and experience. It is subjective like art and it's evolving and expanding. I'm glad this project gave me the opportunity to fuel my inspiration and aspiration to continue imagining more of what I can do with it.

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