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Honors Thesis

From Past to Present: How Garment Workers Continue to Pay the Price for our Clothing

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Abstract

The internationalization of garment production is a complex system influenced by consumers, international trade, multinational companies, and many other factors. The purpose of this research is to examine the impact globalization has had on the ready-made garment industry and garment workers worldwide. This paper will examine the working conditions many garment workers in low-income countries experience because of the liberalization of trade, the standardization of the fashion industry, and production and consumer pressure to reduce costs. An examination of the United States garment industry in the early 19^{th} century will be conducted to understand the trends in today's globalized garment industry. Thus, this research will explain how the exploitation of garment workers in many low-income countries has led to the shift and demand for fast-fashion clothing.

Introduction

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, a workplace incident that occurred on March 25, 1911, killed 146 garment workers (Stolley, 2011). The shirtwaist factory produced inexpensive blouses on the top three floors of a ten-story building in New York City (Stolley, 2011). Before this tragedy, the lack of labor reforms primarily allowed factories to exploit female immigrant workers through dangerous working conditions. Long and burdensome work shifts, crowded workspaces, and low pay were typical conditions that many U.S. garment workers experienced. For many Triangle Shirtwaist workers, poor working conditions increasingly deterred the health of the workers who dealt with stress, fatigue, and workplace injuries (McCormick, 2011). Before the factory fire, numerous claims were made about the need for ventilation, fire escapes, and improving working conditions ("Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire," 2004). In 1909, a thirteen-week strike held by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union aimed to address these issues but found no success in improving the working conditions for the Triangle workers (Stolley, 2011).

Many factors contributed to this disastrous workplace event. The source of the fire came from piles of oil-soaked clothes and scraps left over from months prior (Stolley, 2011). The factory had many structural problems, explaining why the fire claimed the lives of many young workers. The building's inadequate fire escapes obstructed many workers' access to haven. Moreover, many workers were confined by the locked stairway doors secured to prevent the theft of garments or textiles (Stolley, 2011).

We see history repeat itself on April 24, 2013, when one of the most tragic workplace disasters occurred. The collapse of an eight-story building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, claimed the lives of about 1,132 people and injured at least 2,500 workers (International Labour Organization

[ILO], 2017; Motagh, 2014). The day prior, an inspector of the building warned of the hazardous cracks that extended through many of the building's floors. Amidst these warnings, factory workers were reported to enter the building and assume their regular duties (Motlagh, 2014). The Rana Plaza building housed five factories where clothing for Western retailers like Walmart was produced (ILO, 2017; Begum & Solaiman, 2016). The building had inadequate inspections and had four floors that were added without ordinance (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). Following the collapse, rescuing the survivors and removing the building debris took 21 days (Pramanik et al., 2015).

This research seeks to understand why garment workers in many low-income countries continue to experience appalling working conditions even after fatal workplace incidents have occurred throughout history. The following research questions will help guide this research: What factors led to the shift from national to international textile/garment production? What international barriers prevent labor reforms from occurring in low-income countries? How has the internalization and growth of the garment industry continued to impact garment workers in the 21st century? How is asymmetric bargaining power evident in the relationship between foreign direct investors and garment producers? Upon completing this research, I expect to understand better why worker exploitation in the garment industry continues to occur.

The current research is organized as follows: the first section explores the garment industry's history during the industrial revolution in the United States. I analyze the internationalization of garment production in the second section, describing how the Multi-Fiber Arrangement and Export Processing Zones (EPZs) contribute to the liberalization of the garment trade. The third section analyzes how asymmetric bargaining power exists between foreign direct investors and garment producers using international theories to understand this conflict. The fourth section addresses how the subcontracting of workers, the standardization of clothing production, and fast fashion contribute to the ongoing challenges that garment workers experience in the 21st century. The last section presents conclusions addressing why the garment industry is still largely unregulated.

Literature Review

History of Garment Production in the United States:

The industrial revolution was a pivotal movement in history that changed the perception of the consumer goods industry that still exists today. Like most other goods, clothing has transitioned from being made at home to being purchased at ready-made clothing stores. Consumer perception towards custom-made clothing began changing in the mid to late 1800s. In 1910, the shift from custom-made to ready-made garment production was evident when the U.S. Census Bureau released a report stating that the value of the garment industry increased from 1869 to 1909 by approximately $288,000,000 (Wolfe, 1975). Advancements in factory production and equipment are attributed to this increase as the transition from using foot-powered machines to "mechanically driven machines" occurred (Hapke, 2004). Furthermore, the change in fashion trends met by the rise of immigrant workers accounted for the acceleration of the garment industry (Bender, 2004).

In 1893, the House of Representatives Committee on Manufacturers released a report on sweatshops in the United States in search of unweaving the complexities of the garment industry and interstate commerce. The garment industry was heavily influenced by the contracting and subcontracting of ready-made garments. Typically, a manufacturer did not see the entire production cycle of a garment. Instead, the fabrication of clothing involved seeking specialized contractors who produced the clothing from the pre-cut materials the manufacturer or retailer provided (U.S. Congress House Committee of Manufacturers, 1893). Without adequate production standards and explicit supply chain processes, the challenges garment workers experienced were exacerbated.

A manufacturer or retailer taking ownership of the clothing and its brand did not oversee the conditions in which the clothing was produced. Once materials were outsourced, the contractor had the freedom to subcontract the work received from the manufacturer. In fact, according to the U.S. Congress House Committee of Manufacturers, on average, nearly half of the work a contractor received was distributed to subcontractors (1893). Having the capital to work directly with the manufacturer, the contractor profited from distributing the work and paying workers inadequately. As mentioned by the U.S. Congress Committee of Manufacturers (1893):

> As to these subcontractors, it is the exception that a tolerable workshop is provided or that their work is done under tolerable conditions. From them, in the first place, must be sweated the profits of the first contractor, while the subcontractor's compensation must be sweated in turn from employees who will work for less wages than those employed in the larger shops and under conditions generally inconsistent with comfort and cleanliness (p. VI).

The cycle that permitted subcontracting further "sweated" the workers' wages. Moreover, the workers' earnings and working conditions were further exploited as the number of intermediaries between the manufacturer and the garment worker increased.

The subcontracting of garment production increased the lack of supervision from inspectors and manufacturers. The United States House of Representatives intervened in this industry, explaining that it was one of the largest industries requiring congressional action because of the large workforce employed. Garment production took place in both sweatshops and within tenement apartments, with the contractor or subcontractor influencing the work given to the worker. However, working in a tenement apartment was different than in an established shop as there was no distinction between the workspace and the home living space.

The contracting business often took advantage of the immigrant population that was employed. As the U.S. Congress Committee of Manufacturers (1893) mentions, immigrant workers, the predominant workers in tenement sweatshops, received low earnings and were mistreated by the supplier's demand to work extended hours. This system created a dependency between the garment worker and the contractor, where the garment worker relied on their contractor for their source of income. Italian female immigrants overwhelmingly held much of the homeworking industry, with estimates that in New York City, 98 percent of this industry pertained to this group (Carnevale, 2005). Home finishing, or home working, was a branch of garment production where workers in their homes performed the final touches on outsourced clothing (Carnevale, 2005). The work environment of a homeworker mirrored the image of a sweatshop:

> Apartments tended to be dirty, with little fresh air or light. Poor sanitation facilities, limited to either outhouses in the courtyard or a single toilet for numerous apartments, along with so many people living in such close quarters and the use of courtyards, cellars, and even hallways for the disposal of foodstuffs all contributed to a pervasive stench. In warm weather, tenement dwellers would sleep on fire escapes to get some relief from the overpowering odors of the building (Carnevale, 2005, p. 157).

As addressed by the United States Congress Committee of Manufacturers (1893), the inadequate hygiene and lack of sanitation found in the tenement apartments contributed to the many diseases like "whooping cough, diphtheria, scarlet fever and typhus" that were transmitted from the garment worker to the consumer. The lack of regulations during this period allowed for these labor practices to occur since there was no system to oversee garment production in the United States.

Internationalization of Garment Production

Today's interconnected garment industry traces its roots to a complex interplay between developed and under-developed countries. As ready-made garment companies began outsourcing their production abroad, they continued to insource central and operational departments that contributed to the financial success of their organization. As Palapacuer (2005) suggests,

> This contrasting landscape can be seen as a miniaturized version of the global apparel industry, in which manufacturing has become increasingly dispersed to factories located in newly industrialized and developing countries, while product development, branding, and retailing activities are predominantly performed by large firms in developed countries (p. 45).

As we will continue to see in this research, many companies today continue to use the same exploitative working practices that were used in the United States during the industrial revolution. However, these working practices primarily exist in low-income countries where workers earn the least. In contrast, companies from the United States and other high-income countries profit from low-cost garment production. In 2021, the countries with the highest revenue from the apparel market were the United States, China, the United Kingdom, Japan, and India (Statista, 2021).

Post-World War II, trade liberalization expanded the flow of goods coming in and out of the United States. In 1944, the signing of the Bretton Woods Agreement was the catalyst for the liberalization of trade. The ready-made garment industry, however, has a complicated history. Protectionist policies and the rise in garment production from low-income countries contributed to a long period of trade restrictions, primarily impacting garment exporters in low-income countries. During the 1950s, garment production was a prominent industry in the United States, as 1 in 25 garment pieces were produced abroad. However, by the 1960s and 1970s, "domestic manufacturers began moving operations to Asia and South America in search of cheaper labor" (Hayashi, 1992, p. 196). The United States' primary trading partners then became Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan. This period of expansion led to the transition from domestic to foreign garment production.

History of the Multi-Fiber Arrangement

The regulation of garment production began in the mid-1900s when two trade agreements were established. In 1961, the Short-Term Arrangement Regarding International Trade in Cotton Textiles and the 1962 Long-Term Agreement Regarding International Trade in Cotton Textiles introduced textile trade and market access liberalization while enforcing trade restrictions and limiting excessive trade growth from low-income countries (Heron, 2012; Kowalski & Molnar, 2009). Following this period, in 1974, the Multi-Fiber Arrangement (MFA) replaced the previous agreements. The MFA was one of the most comprehensive trade agreements that regulated apparel and textile exports from many low-income countries (Bender et al., 2003; Anner, 2019, Grennes, 1989).

This arrangement created binding quotas where an established limit was set on various textiles, including cotton, wool, and synthetic fibers. As new artificial fibers emerged, the MFA expanded its quota limit to include these synthetic materials. These quotas, however, varied by country, product, and timeframe (Grennes, 1989; Singh & Kathuria, 2006). The MFA, endorsed by many developed countries, including the United States, Japan, and many countries in the Eurozone, determined the number of textiles and apparel that low-income countries could export (Grennes, 1989). Proponents of the MFA argued against low-income countries' competitive advantage in producing textiles at a lower cost. Unlike the United States and other industrialized countries, developing countries produced synthetic materials at a significantly lower cost through weak wage regulations and low production costs (Singh & Kathuria, 2006; Rutherford, 2013; Heron, 2012).

Moreover, many low-income countries could provide inexpensive clothing of lower quality than domestic producers (Rutherford, 2013). Thus, quotas on imported textiles were justified to protect the domestic garment industry and to increase the cost of foreign garments so domestic companies could compete in the market (Singh & Kathuria, 2006). However, even after the establishment of the MFA, the U.S. garment industry's employment rate was declining (Grennes, 1989). In 2005, several factors led to the phasing out of the updated Multi-Fiber Arrangement, where the expansion and growth of the garment trade further reduced domestic apparel demand (Kowalsk & Molnar, 2009).

Ending the MFA in 2005 increased the competition for foreign direct investment (FDI) among low-income countries. As new countries like China and Vietnam were admitted into the World Trade Organization, low-income countries competed to produce textiles and garments at the lowest cost (Anner, 2019). Upon entry into the international garment industry, China's market share increased. Their weak labor laws, advanced technological capacity, and large workforce made it an attractive area for foreign direct investors (Berik & Rodgers, 2010). In the United States, "[…] China's growing share of the U.S. import market […] increased from 13.55% in 1989 to 41.97% in 2010" (Anner et al., 2013, p. 8). As Anner et al. (2013) mention, the removal of trade restrictions on low-income countries and China's entry into the garment industry has made it easier for investors to move around countries in search of the highest return.

Export Processing Zones (EPZs)

The introduction of EPZs in the international market occurred in the mid-1900s when countries used this trade incentive to attract foreign companies. EPZs expanded in 1975 when 79 were established (Palpacuer, 2005). The number of EPZs continued to grow as "in 1997, there were 845 EPZs, with 22.5 million workers" (Gerbracht, 2007). However, the liberal reduction of trade restrictions and increased EPZs imply labor issues (Gerbracht, 2007). EPZs intended to encourage trade by reducing trade restrictions often attract foreign direct investors by reducing taxes, providing financial assistance, and other incentives like reducing trade quotas (Khanna, 2011). In EPZs, workers are met with many limitations, including the prohibition of unionization in some countries (Gerbracht, 2007; Khanna, 2011). The countries where EPZs exist often have weak institutional systems that prevent the enforcement of labor laws. Hence, the lack of enforcement allows companies to exploit garment workers who receive low wages and experience meager working conditions.

Globalization and International Trade Theories

The movement of manufacturing centers based on the political and economic ties a foreign manufacturing company has with a U.S. company is captured by the phrase "global race to the bottom" (Bender & Greenwald, 2003, p. 142). This concept refers to companies moving their manufacturing locations in search of the country that offers the fewest trade restrictions, the weakest labor laws, and the lowest labor costs. Garment production is one of the most accessible industries for countries to enter because of its "low startup costs and capital investments" (Brooks, 2007, p. 4). Companies can transition from country to country with no repercussions. The asymmetric bargaining power that foreign direct investors gain from garment production is achieved by the countries that weaken their labor regulations to incentivize FDI and discourage investment in other countries. Low-income countries compete for FDI and often develop policies that negatively affect garment workers. As countries attract FDI, they weaken their labor laws and production wages to increase their competitive advantage. Bangladesh and Cambodia, for example, heavily rely on garment production. "Garment production is the main source of wage employment for women in Bangladesh and Cambodia, where over two-thirds of the workforce in the garment sector is female" (Berik & Rodgers, 2010). Berik & Rodgers (2010) mention how low labor costs and weak labor regulations are the key factors that contribute to Bangladesh's and Cambodia's competitive advantage. Thus, improving labor regulations in these countries would impact their access to FDI.

The benefits of FDI depend on the country, region, and industry where the investment is made. Depending on the development of a country, the amount of FDI varies. Garment production is an industry that differs from other industries in that developing countries depend, to a large extent, on foreign companies. Unlike the tech industry, where countries can reap the benefits of technological advancements and knowledge spillover, the garment industry is highly labor-intensive and limited to geographical areas with weak growth opportunities (Narula & Dunning, 2000). Food and personal goods industries are limited in their ability to grow because of the low value of the goods and a "relatively low-income elasticity of demand" (Narula & Dunning, 2000, p. 151). Ready-made garments are classified under the personal goods category because clothing and their prices are elastic and depend on consumers' demand. Moreover, countries specializing in garment production cannot grow and gain economic independence. Through the MFA, EPZs, and other trade initiatives, a system has been developed where low-income countries depend on high-income countries for investment and income. Ready-made garments are a primary export for low-income countries, whereas companies from high-income countries profit from low production costs and weak labor regulations. In 2011, the top five countries that the United States imported apparel units were China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Honduras *(USFIA, 2012).* These countries all have common poorly enforced labor laws and low production costs.

World Systems Theory

When addressing the question of how asymmetric bargaining power exists between foreign direct investors and garment producers, several theories from the field of international relations seek to bring clarity to this complex question. The World Systems theory, developed by Immanuel Wallerstein, serves as one of the closest frameworks to address this phenomenon. Wallerstein (2004) suggests that the current world economy, functioning as a capitalist system, is made possible through the division of labor across various states. Wallerstein (2004) argues that a capitalist system, seeking endless accumulation of capital, requires entering and seeking large markets. Furthermore, the accumulation of capital is made possible by core countries outsourcing to peripheral or semiperipheral states—foreign markets offering lower production costs due to cheap labor. In *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction,* Wallerstein (2004) explains that the difference distinguishing core states and peripheral states results from the variance in production activities.

> Core-like processes tend to group themselves in a few states and constitute the bulk of the production activity in such states. Peripheral processes tend to be scattered among a large number of states and to constitute the bulk of the production activity in these states. Thus, for shorthand purposes we can talk of core states and peripheral states, so long as we remember that we are really talking of a relationship between production processes. Some states have a near even mix of core-like and peripheral products. We may call them semiperipheral states (p. 28).

Babones and Chase-Dunn (2012) advance the world systems discussion by suggesting that the status of a core or peripheral state is not dictated by its geographical position but rather its "[…] relationships of surplus transfer" (p. 198). Hence, core countries engaging in economic activity obtain surplus or profits by engaging in low-cost production in peripheral countries.

As Wallerstein (2004) suggests, the current global economy is composed of "loosely tied" political units functioning in an interrelated system. Adding another dimension to the World Systems theory, I argue that governments from core countries play an important role in encouraging multinational corporations to engage in FDI. By encouraging FDI in peripheral countries, core countries obtain not only a more substantial economic bargaining power, but also political influence in that region of investment and domestically. This concept can be supported by the study of international political economy, which suggests that "[...]multinational corporations and other powerful actors attempt to use their power to influence the nature of international regimes" (Gilpin & Gilpin, 2001, p. 78). In conjunction with multinational companies seeking to increase profits, governments gain economic and political influence from the asymmetric bargaining relationship existing between foreign direct investors and garment producers abroad.

As this research presents, the United States, and many countries in the Eurozone, are the core countries that have economic influence over garment production in low-income countries. EPZs and the MFA are active ways governments have engaged in the garment industry to support their domestic corporations and economy. Moreover, as seen by both the MFA and EPZs, core countries will engage in protectionist and trade-liberating policies depending on their current economic and political status. Gilpin and Gilpin (2001) suggest,

> […] As Albert Hirschman pointed out in National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade (1969), while economic interdependence may be characterized by mutual dependence, dependence is frequently not symmetrical. Trade, investment, and markets establish dependencies among national societies that can be and are exploited. Integration of national markets creates power relations among states, as Hirschman notes, economic power arises from the capacity to interrupt economic relations among states almost always involve power relations (p. 81).

In other words, a core country uses its asymmetric bargaining power to enhance its political and economic world influence. As previously discussed in this research, governments have engaged in the garment industry by developing different economic policies to influence their global political status. Moreover, when considering the garment industry, countries like Bangladesh that specialize in this industry are often susceptible to becoming dependent on foreign direct investors for their source of income. Countries that rely on foreign direct investment often have limited margins for economic growth and independence. As such, the interdependence existing between corporations and governments is reflected by the asymmetric bargaining power that exists today in the relationships between foreign direct investors and garment producers.

Challenges of Labor Regulations Enforcement

The International Labor Organization (ILO), a U.N. agency, is a regulatory institution that seeks to establish a global framework for protecting workers in all industries. One of its strategic objectives is to protect workers' fundamental rights and increase opportunities that provide decent employment and income ("Mission and impact of the ILO", n.d.). However, the ILO is limited by its governing capacity and ability to impose economic sanctions or restrictions on the country failing to abide by the guidelines. Considering how labor regulations vary by nation and each country's different legal codes, the ILO cannot enforce a global legal framework.

With each nation having different regulatory institutions, manufacturing companies can move their production wherever labor regulations are the least enforced. Moreover, the absence of a governing framework that oversees the enforcement of labor laws on a global scale address how a country's labor laws often unprotect garment workers. As suggested by Berik & Rodgers (2009), the ILO often "…uses moral suasion and public embarrassment to bring about voluntary compliance by signatory country governments" (p. 58). Its inability to directly influence governments into enforcing adequate labor regulations contributes to the perpetuation of company misconduct. The lack of a global regulatory framework that can penalize a company for misconduct often leaves companies to establish their labor regulations at their discretion.

Standardization of Clothing

With increasing trade growth and consumer demand for garment apparel, understanding the impact of the standardization of clothing styles and production is essential. In the mid-1900s, companies began standardizing garment production by different styles of clothing. As Palpacuer (2002) suggests, "High specialization meant that firms designed and marketed one type of product, such as dresses, coats, blouses, or suits, in a particular price category, ranging from "popular," "moderate," and "better" to "design" and "couture" in the industry's terminology" (p. 55). The standardization in design and production allowed companies to sell one product, limiting variation and production expenses. Companies have achieved economies of scale by focusing production on limited clothing styles. The concept of economies of scale suggests that by producing garments in large quantities, the production costs are spread across the garments produced. Furthermore, the standardization of production has contributed to mass consumption, where consumers can purchase clothing that companies provide at a low price while selling their clothing in various stores globally (Paulicelli et al., 2008; Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

The competition clothing companies encounter and the demand for maintaining clothing at a relatively low price, however, exposes the issue of proper worker compensation. For example, consumer demand to purchase inexpensive clothing is then reflected by the clothing companies that pressure their suppliers to reduce production costs (Palpacuer, 2005). The clothing manufacturers then pass this cost to garment workers by reducing their earnings and working conditions. Anner (2019) depicts this concept by describing the challenges a garment worker encounters,

> […] Buyers seeking to maintain or increase their market share are having greater recourse to predatory purchasing practices, using their leverage over suppliers to demand lower prices, quicker speed to market, and abrupt changes to order specifications. In response, suppliers squeeze wages, increase workers' production targets, and often subject workers to verbal abuse when targets are not met, demand extensive overtime work during peak production cycles, and turn to non-standard forms of employment that allow them to keep costs low and quickly adjust workforce allocation needs (p. 706).

The leverage clothing companies have over suppliers establishes a power structure where suppliers limit their negotiating abilities in exchange for production rights. As described by Anner et al. (2013), "Negotiations with potential suppliers focus not on what a specific producer's cost might be to make an item, but rather the price that the brand or retailer is willing to pay" (pp. 10–11). Furthermore, if a manufacturer does not accept the price the company offers, the company can easily find another supplier. This reliance on the company suggests that even if suppliers wanted to increase the garment workers' earnings, they could not.

The Piecework Compensation Model

Suppliers have taken additional measures to reduce production costs. In many cases, garment workers are paid by the piece they produce instead of an hourly wage. Tran (2000) concludes that the piecework compensation model requires garment workers to be skilled in their work, as the income they receive will be reflected by the work produced. In most cases, workers are required to complete detailed tasks such as embroidery or adding additional elements to the garment (Anner, 2019). Thus, being paid by the piece is another challenge many garment workers face because they do not have a reliable and steady income to depend on.

Subcontracting

Suppliers have also taken the subcontracting approach due to the pressure to reduce costs. As seen in the United States industrial revolution, this process limits the enforcement of labor laws and the assurance of adequate working conditions. Furthermore, the subcontracting system also hinders the legal protection garment workers may receive because "workers may be paid in cash and off the books, and thus receive no benefits" (Anner, 2019). Subcontracted workers do not have the same rights as those working for an established facility. Most suppliers hide information on their subcontracted facilities (Bonacich, 2002), stating confidential and competitive reasons.

However, these reasons are inaccurate: Keeping subcontractors hidden makes it difficult for inspectors to know who is working (Bonacich, 2002). Subcontracting prevents workers from unionizing because they cannot unify and protest their working conditions. Given the cost pressures, subcontracting is one of the easiest ways for the supplier to achieve the low-cost production expectations and standards imposed by the foreign company.

Fast Fashion

The homogenization of fashion styles and clothing has allowed companies to obtain a global presence. Factors including the globalization of garment production, the standardization of clothing styles and production, and technological advancement have created a demand for mass-produced clothing at a low cost. Garment production motivated by these factors is considered fast fashion. Today, the internationalization of the garment industry has created a new trend where the mass production of inexpensive clothing is recognized as fast fashion. Fast fashion can be defined as the rapid production of clothing to meet the ever-changing trends consumers demand (Tokatli, 2008). The growth and demand for fast fashion clothing have increased in recent years. In fact, "It has been estimated that there are 20 new garments manufactured per person each year and we are buying 60% more than we were in 2000" ("The Price of Fast Fashion", 2018, p. 1). Companies like Zara, H&M, and Mango have stores established worldwide to reach consumers who are encouraged to buy limited edition and inexpensive clothing. Companies can instantly meet consumer demand through fast production cycles, rapid prototyping, and streamlined logistics (Tokatli, 2008). Consumers engage with this industry because of the ongoing trends constantly introduced into the market. However, with the increase in trends, garment workers are affected the most as they are pressured to meet production deadlines.

To keep production costs low and meet production demand, Anner et al. (2013) find that most suppliers do not hire new workers but require their existing workers to work extended hours. Moreover, many suppliers have shifted their production capabilities to meet this demand. In an interview conducted by Anner (2019), one worker from Delhi, India, commented that in recent years, their supplier required them to meet hourly production quotas instead of daily quotas. In the interview, the author mentions how the production supervisors allowed their workers to use the bathroom only if they met their hourly quotas. The following comments were made, in an interview conducted by Anner (2019):

> Another worker interviewed concurred that, in addition to the stepped-up pace of work, supervisors yelled at workers more often than in the past. She noted that some workers had begun talking back, saying: We can't do this. This is a new style. Give us time to learn the new style. We are already doing so much work for you. Why are you yelling at us?" (Worker interview no. 3, Bengaluru, July 2018). This worker added that the pace of work had become so intense, sometimes her body just could not take it anymore. At such times, she would put on a sweater to start to sweat. She would then tell her supervisor that she was ill. He would see that she was sweating, so he would send her home (p. 722).

The accelerated production cycle required by the fast fashion industry is made possible by workers who earn minimal wages while working extensive and rigid hours. The garment worker is the most affected by the heightened consumer desire to wear clothing that meets the new trends that are constantly released in the market. The uncertainty in trends, however, is also reflected by the garment worker who operates in both low and high-peak production seasons (Anner et al., 2013).

Fast Fashion and the Consumer

Marketers use clothing, products consumers use to identify themselves and give meaning to others, to promote consumer spending (McNeill & Moore, 2015). As described by Le Bon (2014), fashion companies play on the consumer's desire to establish an identity by creating "new apparel, new accessories, and new looks" (p. 21). Le Bon (2014) advances this discussion as she describes how fashion serves as a "symbolic language," communicating to others who they are through the clothing they wear (p. 23).

Fast fashion often uses consumers' vulnerability and desires to encourage purchases. As previously mentioned, the fast fashion industry can be classified as the consumer demand for short-lived clothing products that are offered at low prices. The perceived benefits consumers receive from fast fashion clothing have increased the demand for garment workers and the poor working conditions many workers in low-income countries experience. To understand the relationship between fast fashion consumption and the impact this industry has on garment workers, I will first analyze the impact clothing has on the individual. In a study performed by Guy and Banim (2000), 15 women were interviewed using three methods: "a personal account, a clothing diary, and, finally, a wardrobe interview" (p. 15). The study found a common theme between the subjects. The women and their relationship with clothing impacted their perceived self-image, identifying three themes:

> Firstly, there were descriptions of how clothes were identified or used to enhance or project a positive image. Secondly, and conversely, there were revelations about when clothes had either failed to create a desired look or unintentionally rejected a negative self-presentation. Finally, there were ideas about 'general' appearance and how women

> thought about themselves in their everyday relationship with their clothes (Guy & Banim, 2000, p. 316).

This research highlights how clothing is used to develop a self-image that we want for ourselves and the image we want to show others. As described by Le (2014), companies use the concept of creating an "ideal" self-image to create clothing that adheres to the consumer's desire to create an image for themselves that also "reassure[s] people in their social environment" (p. 23). Thus, combining inexpensive clothing with new trends affects the garment worker who pays the price of fast fashion apparel.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study has explored the following questions: What factors led to the shift from national to international textile/garment production? What international barriers prevent labor reforms from occurring in low-income countries? How has the internalization and growth of the garment industry continued to impact garment workers in the 21st century? How is asymmetric bargaining power evident in the relationship between foreign direct investors and garment producers?

By examining the factors that influenced the internationalization of the garment industry, I gained an understanding of how, from a macro perspective, international relations influence a garment worker's working conditions and access to labor reform. As explained by the World Systems Theory and the study of international political economy, core countries, like the United States, obtain surpluses or profits by engaging in low-cost production in peripheral countries. Furthermore, governments from core countries play an important role in encouraging multinational corporations to engage in FDI. By encouraging FDI in peripheral countries, core countries gain a greater economic bargaining power and political power abroad and in domestic markets. Thus, these theories explain why asymmetric bargaining power exists in the relationship between foreign direct investors and garment producers.

When looking at this issue from a production standpoint, several factors, including the standardization of clothing, the piecework compensation model, and subcontracting, further speak to how the internationalization and growth of the garment industry have led to the continued exploitation of garment workers. The growth of the garment industry has developed into the fast fashion industry, which seeks to capitalize on the rapid production of clothing and the release of ever-changing trends (Tokatli, 2008). The fast fashion industry that exists today most directly impacts the garment worker, who pays the price for inexpensive clothing.

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