A Community Economies Approach to Consignment Clothing in Guelph, Ontario

By

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ABSTRACT

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Most studies on economic globalization and commodity chains discuss the economy as exclusively capitalist. Drawing on the works of Gibson-Graham (2006), this study utilizes a community economies framework to investigate consignment clothing sales, consumption and ownership of shops in Guelph, Ontario. The community economies literature encourages a re-imagining of the economic landscape to see diverse economies. Consequently, it is possible to see a plethora of alternative and non-capitalist economies, proving the economy is not inevitably capitalist. A mix of shop owners, seller and consumers of consignment were interviewed, using feminist research methods. Findings suggest that participants experienced consignment in ways that reflect many tenets of community economies as outlined in the literature. For example, participants believed consignment clothing is environmentally sustainable, and ethical. However, complexities arose when participants attempted to discuss the separation of consignment from the larger fashion industry, reflecting the blurring between community economies and the mainstream economy.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................... iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .............................................................................................. iv
LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................ vii
LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................................................... viii
LIST OF TERMS ........................................................................................................... ix

Chapter 1. Introduction .............................................................................................. 1

Chapter 2. Literature Review ................................................................................... 5

2.1 Diverse Economies .......................................................................................... 5
2.2 The Community Economies Framework ....................................................... 7
2.3 Empirical Examples of Community Economies Research .............................. 9
2.4 Why Studying Community Economies Matters ........................................... 11
2.5 Critiques of Gibson-Graham and the Community Economies Framework .. 12
2.6 Feminist Approaches to Fashion .................................................................... 14
2.7 The Significance of Second-hand Fashion ...................................................... 16
2.8 Conclusion and Conceptual Framework ......................................................... 17

Chapter 3. Methods .................................................................................................. 20

3.1 Study Site .......................................................................................................... 20
3.2 Store Profiles ..................................................................................................... 21
3.3 Feminist Research Methods ............................................................................. 24
3.4 Sample Size ........................................................................................................ 25
3.5 Data Collection .................................................................................................. 26
3.6 Recruitment and Budget .................................................................................. 28
3.7 Data Analysis ...................................................................................................... 28
3.8 Summary of Methods and Analysis ................................................................. 32

Chapter 4 Findings ................................................................................................... 33

4.1 Spatial .................................................................................................................. 33
  4.1.1 Shop Local .................................................................................................. 34
4.1.2 The Opposite of Consignment and Shopping Local: Shopping Global ………………….35
4.1.3 Uncertainty around the meaning of ‘local’ …………………………………………………………….37
4.1.4 Summary of Spatial Findings ………………………………………………………………………………38

4.2 Economic ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………39
  4.2.1 Locally Self-Reliant and Recirculating Value Locally ……………………………………….40
  4.2.2 Complications surrounding the acquisition of Consignment Clothing ………………….42
  4.2.3 Consignment Clothing as a Long-Term Investment …………………………………….43
  4.2.4 Summary of Economic Findings ………………………………………………………………….46

4.3 Social ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………46
  4.3.1 Socially Embedded ………………………………………………………………………………………………47
  4.3.2 Consignment as Culturally Distinctive and Community Led ………………….50
  4.3.3 Summary of Social Findings ………………………………………………………………………………….52

4.4 Ethical ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….53
  4.4.1 Consignment as Environmentally Sustainable and Ethical ………………………………….53
  4.4.2 Tensions around Feeling Guilty ……………………………………………………………………………….58
  4.4.3 Mindful Consumption …………………………………………………………………………………………60
  4.4.4 Summary of Ethical Findings ………………………………………………………………………………….61

Chapter 5 Discussion …………………………………………………………………………………………………….63
5.1 Review and Summary ………………………………………………………………………………………………63
5.2 The Consignment Compound Economy ……………………………………………………………………………65
  5.2.1 Local/Global Tensions and the Subjective Notion of Value ……………………………………….66
  5.2.2 Accessibility and Privilege ……………………………………………………………………………………69
  5.2.3 Consumer Politics and Emotions ……………………………………………………………………………71
5.3 Summary of Consignment as a Compound Economy ………………………………………………………75

Chapter 6 Conclusions: Contributions, Limitations and Future Research ………………….77
6.1 Contributions ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………77
  6.1.1 Community Economies Scholarship and Practice ………………………………………………….77
  6.1.2 The Compound Economy Model ………………………………………………………………………….78
  6.1.3 Consignment and Second-hand Clothing ……………………………………………………………….79
6.2 Limitations ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………79
6.3 Future Research Paths …………………………………………………………………………………………….81
References ........................................................................................................................................83

Appendices .....................................................................................................................................82
Appendix 1: Recruitment Poster .....................................................................................................87
Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Owners .........................................................................................88
Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Consumers ..................................................................................90
Appendix 4: Interview Guide for Sellers .........................................................................................92
List of Tables

Table 1: A Diverse Economy ................................................................. 4
Table 2: Community Economies Framework ............................................. 7
Table 3: Conceptual Framework ............................................................. 17
Table 4: Community Economies Coding Framework ................................. 26
Table 5: Mainstream Economy Coding Framework ..................................... 27
Table 6: Spatial Framework .................................................................. 30
Table 7: Spatial Framework with Participants' Responses ............................ 35
Table 8: Economic Framework ................................................................. 36
Table 9: Economic Framework with Participants’ Responses ...................... 42
Table 10: Social Framework .................................................................. 43
Table 11: Social Framework with Participants’ Responses .......................... 49
Table 12: Ethical Framework .................................................................. 49
Table 13: Ethical Framework with Participants’ Responses ........................ 58
Table 14: The Conceptual Framework with Participants' Responses .......... 60
List of Figures

Figure 1: The Iceberg.......................................................................................................................5
Figure 2: The Compound Economy................................................................................................11
Figure 3: Map of Downtown Guelph..............................................................................................18
Figure 4: Wild Rose Storefront......................................................................................................19
Figure 5: The Patch Storefront......................................................................................................20
Figure 6: Nu Consignment Storefront...........................................................................................21
Figure 7: The Consignment Compound Economy........................................................................73
List of Terms
Taken from Gibson-Graham (1997; 2002; 2006).

Capitalism
This research relies on the writings of Gibson-Graham and therefore, her understanding of capitalism based on Marx’s theory is used here. Her definition is as follows,

“a system of generalized commodity production structured by (industrial) forces of production and exploitative production relations between capital and labor. Workers, bereft of means of production, sell their labor power for wages and participate in the labor process under capitalist control,” (Gibson-Graham, 1996, p.3).

Capitalocentrism
Capitalocentrism refers to the hegemonic hold capitalism has on the way the economy is viewed, discussed and practiced both in and outside of academics.

Community Economy
A community economy, sometimes also known as an alternative community economy, is a type of diverse economy that prioritizes community and environmental well-being, often attempting to reduce global and national dependencies.

Diverse Economies
According to Gibson-Graham, the economy is made up various diverse economies that may encompass alternative or non-capitalist modes of enterprise, exchange and labour. Examples of diverse economies include: gift giving, volunteering and consumer or producer cooperatives.

Mainstream Economy
The mainstream economy refers what is commonly thought of as ‘the economy’, which is exclusively made up of capitalist industries, relying on capitalist modes of production, exchange and labour.
Chapter 1. Introduction

Researching, theorizing about and practicing diverse economies critically challenges capitalocentrism (Gibson-Graham, 1997). Capitalocentrism as discussed by Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham¹ (2006) is the hegemonic hold capitalism has on the way the economy is viewed, discussed and practiced both in and outside of academia. Consequently, the economy is viewed as exclusively capitalist, and those activities that comprise the economy which do not reflect capitalist modes of enterprise, transaction and/or labour, are rendered invisible.

Similarly, several feminist geographers (Nagar, Lawson, McDowell and Hanson, 2002; Pratt and Yeoh, 2003) have criticized the narrow economic frameworks used to study economic globalization. Economic globalization can be understood as the expansion of capitalist industries globally (Nagar et al., 2002). Nagar et al. (2002) argue that economic globalization is tightly linked with racial and gendered systems of oppression, and understanding the experiences of women is crucial to researching the economy. Women have been pivotal to economic globalization, as many industries were able to expand because of their inclusion in the work force (Dedeoglu, 2010; Sassen, 2000). Sassen (2000) calls this a feminization of survival, because entire communities have come to rely on women’s labour in many areas. Consequently, using a critical feminist framework to study economic activity is crucial to understand it more comprehensively.

Diverse economies, an ongoing project of theory and practice led by Gibson-Graham, are economic activities that do not necessarily reflect capitalist modes of production, exchange or labour. In other words, diverse economies are comprised of alternative and non-market economies. Gibson-Graham’s (2006) work is grounded in a critical feminist sensibility, attempting to make visible the plethora of economies that are often discarded as unimportant and therefore, made invisible. Community economies,
are more specifically alternative economies that focus on care of the local community and the environment (Gibson-Graham, 2006). Researching and practicing community economies is important to expand our ideas about what the economy looks like but also to minimize harms done through capitalism.

The global clothing chain or fashion industry is one sector that has rapidly expanded with the onset of globalization, and has had many environmental and social consequences (Claudio 2007; Kozlowski, 2012; Leslie, 2012). It is also an interesting vantage point from which to explore the connections between gender and diverse economies, because it is highly gendered. Women make up the majority of the labour force within production of clothing, and are predominantly the consumers, despite men occupying the majority of the positions of power, including designers and factory supervisors (Leslie, 2012). Economic globalization has created the rise of a specific type of fashion, named fast fashion or ready-made garments (Kozlowski, 2012). Fast fashion is named for the speed at which it goes in and out of style, and travels from design to the retail floor (Leslie, 2012). Due to this speed, there is immense pressure for a flexible work force, and to sell clothing as quickly as possible resulting in vulnerability of workers throughout the commodity chain (Ibid, 2012). Women as well as young adolescent and children labourers consistently face threats and mistreatment (Claudio, 2007). Additionally, the pay is poor. For example, Chinese clothing labourers have been recorded to make as little as 12-18 cents per hour in highly unsafe labour conditions (Ibid, 2007). The fast fashion industry has also damaged the environment, through production practices and clothing waste. For example, the manufacturing of polyester and other synthetic materials for fast fashion clothing requires large amounts of crude oil, and releases many harmful toxins into the air (Claudio, 2007). On the consumption side, Americans throw away an average of 68 pounds of clothing and textiles per person per year (Ibid, 2007).

It is evident and well known that the fashion industry results in many environmental and social consequences, but less is known on how the second-hand industry may either reinstate problematic patterns, or disrupt them. Second-hand
clothing exchange often reflects alternative and non-capitalist economies in practice. This is because second-hand clothing is often exchanged through donating, 'hand-me-downs' and trading (Gregson and Crewe, 2003). It is therefore possible that the second-hand clothing industry may be a form of community economy that would avoid some of the problematic aspects of capitalist economies or fast fashion. This study focuses on one form of the second-hand clothing industry, consignment clothing in Guelph, Ontario, to determine the extent to which it reflects a community economy, according to the literature by Gibson-Graham.

The conceptual matrix that guided the research process for this study was adapted from Gibson-Graham (2006) community economies framework. A total of 36 semi-structured and in-depth interviews were performed with women who shop, sell and own consignment shops in Guelph, Ontario. Exclusively women-identified people were chosen to interview because not only is the clothing industry gendered, but it was also of interest to investigate the ways women experienced second-hand clothing in Guelph. In addition, the majority of the consignment shops in Guelph sell only women’s clothing so it is a women dominated industry. Feminist research methods were used for this study because the community economies literature is built on feminist research, and the clothing industry is predominantly women centric.

This thesis aims to understand the ways consignment sales, consumption and shop ownership in Guelph reflects a community economy through the opinions and experiences of women in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. Four main research objectives guide the research process:

1. To determine how consignment reflects a community economy spatially.
2. To determine how consignment reflects a community economy economically.
3. To determine how consignment reflects a community economy socially.
4. To determine how consignment reflects a community economy ethically.

The specific spatial, economic, social and ethical dimensions of community economies were drawn explicitly from the framework created in the 2006 book by Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*. 
The thesis contains six chapters. Chapter two is the literature review which introduces the community economies scholarship, including exploring why it matters, outlining empirical examples of research and engaging with several criticisms. A brief review of feminist approaches to fashion and second-hand clothing consumption is outlined as it also provides the foundation for this thesis. Chapter three goes over the methods of data collection and analysis that were used in this research project, including feminist research methods. In depth, semi-structured interviews were performed with 36 women in Guelph, Ontario. Next, a detailed outline of the results from the data analysis are discussed in Chapter four, summarizing each subsection separately in the following order: spatial, economic, social and ethical. Chapter five elaborates on the complexities and tensions that arose during interviews, and considers these issues in light of the compound economy concept. Chapter six concludes arguing that the relationship between the mainstream economy and community economies in consignment clothing is largely not dichotomous, and potential directions for future research. This thesis has both theoretical and practical contributions, which will be also established in the conclusion.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

The following section begins with a discussion of the community economies literature, including a review of the main ideas, two examples of empirical studies and an outline of several criticisms. Directly after is a review of the most relevant literature on gender, fashion and second-hand clothing, most of which employs a feminist framework. Outlining feminist perspectives in the literature is important to note here because the community economies approach was founded upon feminist principles of making the invisible, visible and the personal, political (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Additionally, the fashion industry is of interest to feminist researchers because it is highly gendered.

2.1 Diverse Economies

Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson (known as the singular Gibson-Graham) are the most prominent writers and researchers on community economies and have been heavily relied upon for this study. Much of her writing is focused on challenging the hegemonic hold capitalism\(^2\) has on the economy, both in theory and practice. She calls this ‘capitalocentrism’ and argues that discussing and researching the economy as exclusively capitalist marginalizes economic activity\(^3\) that does not reflect capitalist transactions, enterprise and labour (Gibson-Graham, 2003). In the monolithic ‘capitalist economy’ the transaction is market-based, where the consumers use money to purchase goods, the enterprise is a capitalist firm and the labour is waged. However in reality, the world is already made up of diverse economies, which reflect alternative and non-capitalist modes of transaction, enterprise and labour (See Table 1 below). Examples of these diverse economies that do not reflect mainstream capitalist

\(^2\) Gibson-Graham (1997) briefly acknowledge that their work is grounded in a Marxist definition of capitalism, which is, “a system of generalized commodity production structured by (industrial) forces of production and exploitative production relations between capital and labor. Workers, bereft of means of production, sell their labor power for wages and participate in the labor process under capitalist control,” (p.3).

\(^3\) Gibson-Graham do not clearly define what economic activity, but it can loosely be understood as activities that involve some form of enterprise, transaction and labour, whether capitalist, alternative or non-capitalist.
Characteristics include: cooperatives (which reflect alternative labour and enterprise), volunteer work, house work, bartering, the underground market and gift giving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSACTIONS</th>
<th>LABOR</th>
<th>ENTERPRISE</th>
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<td>MARKET</td>
<td>WAGE</td>
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<td>Alternative Market</td>
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<td>Sale of public goods</td>
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<td>Ethical “fair-trade” markets</td>
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<td>Local trading systems</td>
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<td>Green capitalist</td>
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<td>Alternative currencies</td>
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<td>Underground market</td>
<td>Reciprocal labor</td>
<td>responsible firm</td>
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<td>Co-op exchange</td>
<td>In-kind</td>
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<td>Barter</td>
<td>Work for welfare</td>
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<td>Informal market</td>
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<th>NONMARKET</th>
<th>UNPAID</th>
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<tr>
<td>Household flows</td>
<td>Housework</td>
<td>Communal</td>
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<td>Gift giving</td>
<td>Family care</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>Indigenous exchange</td>
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<td>Feudal</td>
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<td>State allocations</td>
<td>Neighborhood work</td>
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<td>State appropriations</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Slave</td>
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<td>Gleaning</td>
<td>Self-provisioning labor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunting, fishing, gathering</td>
<td>Slave labor</td>
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<td>Theft, poaching</td>
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*Table 1: A Diverse Economy (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p.71).*

Gibson-Graham argues throughout her works that representing the economy as exclusively capitalist marginalizes and excludes alternative and non-capitalist forms of economic activity, including various forms of alternative and non-capitalist enterprises, markets and transactions. Because these types of economic activities do not follow capitalist modes of labour and exchange, they are often overlooked as being legitimate forms of economic activity, and having any sort of legitimacy or power. Figure 2, which is the image of the ice berg, illustrates the relationship between capitalist and diverse economies. On the top of the iceberg are the visible areas which reflect mainstream capitalism, including wage labour, and produce for a market in a capitalist firm. On the bottom of the iceberg is a list of examples of diverse economies that reflect both alternative and community economies. They are depicted as being below the water.
because they are rendered invisible and marginalized by capitalocentrism. It is possible to see that there are a large number of diverse economies that are already in existence, but are often invisible because they do not reflect mainstream capitalist processes.

**Figure 1: The Iceberg (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p.70).**

### 2.2 The Community Economies Framework

According to Gibson-Graham (2006) community economies\(^4\) differ from alternative and non-market economies because they are more politicized, and deliberately focused on community well-being and resiliency. Table 2 below is the community economies framework, illustrated in Gibson-Graham’s (2006) book, *A Post Capitalist Politics*. The framework separates the mainstream economy from the alternative community economy according to differing values. The mainstream capitalist tenets include elements such as a-spatial/global, large scale, non-local ownership and export-oriented. Whereas, community and alternative economies reflect oppositional

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\(^4\) Community economies are also often called alternative community economies interchangeably within the literature, but will be referred to as community economies here for simplicity purposes.
qualities to the mainstream, including place-attached, small-scale, local ownership and ethical. Gibson-Graham’s various works focus on much of the theory behind capitalocentrism, and creating a new language and landscape for diverse and community economies. However, they also attempt to materialize much of the theory by researching and practicing community economies throughout the world. They attempt to mobilize community efforts to change mindsets and encourage resiliency through less dependence on damaging global and national industries. This framework has been adapted and heavily relied upon for this study, but it is important to note that no definitions for these tenets have been provided within the literature. These characteristics of both the mainstream and alternative community economy are fluid concepts assembled by Gibson-Graham (2006), as a result of their own, and others works on community economies.
Table 2: The Community Economies Framework (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 87).

2.3 Empirical Examples of Community Economies Research

Through the Community Economies Collective (CEC) and the Community Economies Research Network (CERN) Gibson-Graham run a website that houses community economies research and practice throughout the world\textsuperscript{5}. The website contains open access information and both theoretical and empirical research on community economies. A current example of empirical research done within the community economies framework is a dissertation by Jara Hicks. Hicks (2009) utilized a diverse economies framework to uncover local level responses to climate change.

\textsuperscript{5} http://www.communityeconomies.org/Home
Essentially, she isolated the tenets of diverse economies and connected them to several already ongoing projects to investigate a relationship. The diverse economies framework, adapted to focus on climate related responses, enabled Hicks to explore economic possibilities as well as social and ethical commitments to climate change. She writes, “the diverse economy framework offers the potential for increased visibility of a multitude of economic practices as being effective in the climate response context,” (Hicks, 2009, p.19). Hicks applied a thematic analysis of some of the more dominant themes present in Gibson-Graham’s writing to projects being undertaken by a mix of community climate action groups and small renewable energy businesses. She found that climate change initiatives are using diverse economies in various ways. Specifically, her case studies revealed that public and private funding of these small businesses and organizations reflected alternative and non-market economic practices such as government rebates, gift giving and volunteer labour. Her research and findings are important to review because they are similar to those conducted in this thesis, as I have also adapted Gibson-Graham’s framework and related it to a material case study.

Hick’s university advisor, Jenny Cameron (2009) is a well-known writer within the community economies sphere, including a most recent collaborative book with JK Gibson-Graham and Stephen Healy titled Take Back the Economy. Much of her research has focused on diverse economies within food and agriculture, including a 2009 study on community enterprises within the food sector in New South Wales, Australia. She looked at several different food enterprises including community gardens, organic markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives. Cameron (2009) found that alongside mainstream capitalist market mechanisms of labour and exchange, the food enterprises she looked at also practiced many diverse economic interactions, including gift giving, discounted produce and a large reliance on volunteer labour. She found that CSA shares have a commitment that go beyond economic interests, to focus on the ethical and environmental benefits to communities. Both Cameron (2009) and Hicks (2009) explored the extent to which diverse economies are practiced, and showcased how interesting and useful this research can be.
2.4 Why Studying Community Economies Matters

Community economies are an important area of study because of its scholarly and practical contributions to researchers and society as a whole. Firstly, re-framing the world to make diverse economies visible, allows for new ways of thinking and being in the world (Gibson Graham et al., 2013). This ideological shift reveals that the economy is not inevitably capitalist, and there is power in these small-scale economic practices. Therefore, this framing can begin to challenge dominant mainstream capitalist understandings of the economy both in and outside of academia. Secondly, many of these alternative and community economies challenge capitalist modes of production based on growth and profitability, by prioritizing dimensions such as fairness, wellbeing and sustainability instead (Gibson-Graham, 2011). Consequently, the more research and practice done to expand and create new community economies, the increased ability to see positive environmental change and resilient communities.

Investing the ways consignment clothing operations and consumption in Guelph, Ontario reflects a community economy, contributes to the scholarly and practical contributions of community economies. Researching empirical examples of community economies assists with the scholarly implications of challenging capitalocentrism in academic literature and encouraging mindset changes in how the economy is viewed as monolithic. Focusing specifically on consignment clothing however, is important because of the material implications it may have for the entire clothing industry. The global clothing/fashion industry is responsible for environmental damage and poor treatment of workers within garment factories, the majority of which are women (Kozlowski, 2012; Leslie, 2012). Specifically, the sheer amount of clothing that is made for large retailers is very hard on the environment, and many garments are made of non-renewable resources, use harmful dyes and a large number end up in landfills (Kozlowski, 2012). In addition, the work conditions for garment factory workers are often very poor, including low or no wages for workers, precarious work, health and safety issues and exposure to harassment (Ibid, 2012). Understanding more closely the motivations behind consuming second-hand contributes to encouraging dependence on healthier businesses, and economies based on care for the environment, and people. In
addition, progressive research on community economies can begin to inform policies and future practices to create an economy based on equality, health, and generate new ideas to help each other make a better world.

2.5 Critiques of Gibson-Graham and the Community Economies Framework

Despite the positive focus of much of the community economies framework, Gibson-Graham and the community economies framework has not gone without critiques. The majority of the criticisms of Gibson-Graham are directed towards her representation of the relationship between alternative economies and the mainstream capitalist economy as dichotomous (see Table 2). For example, Fuller, Jonas and Lee (2010) challenge Gibson-Graham’s relation of the mainstream capitalist economy to the alternative ‘other’. They argue that the ‘alternative community economies’, is still contingent on the object: mainstream capitalist economy, and therefore, not a separate other. Essentially, they explain that alternative community economies cannot be disconnected from capitalism and studied as a separate and contained entity, as they depend on the existence of capitalism itself. Fuller et al. (2010) are concerned about the ways alternatives are approached, discussed and researched because of this relationship. They suggest a relational rather than binary approach to studying diverse economies will result in more accurate analysis.

Similarly, Heley, Gardener & Watkin (2012) critique Gibson-Graham’s alternative community economy framework as being overly simplistic and consequently, limits the ability to comprehensively view, research and understand the wide variety of economic activities in existence. They build on Gibson-Graham’s binary framework to suggest a new model they call the compound economy model (see Figure 2 on p.11). The model illustrates the compound economy in the centre of the alternative economy and mainstream economy with arrows at each other side depicting the connection to both. Their concept of compound economy is informed by culture, and illustrates its influence on the ways local, regional and global economic development exists and interacts. This model is more complex, and able to showcase more detail than the previous binary model therefore, enabling a more thorough view of the different economic activities.
occurring. Heley et al. (2012) want to push past the binary model of either ‘capitalist’ or ‘non-capitalist’ economic occurrences by also including the ability to see the “multiple drivers, relations and logics that combine in complex ways to produce, reproduce and transform local and regional economic space,” (Heley et al., 2012, p.368). Heley et al. (2012) argue that the compound economy framework is intended to reveal and address the complexity already existing in various economic activities. However, it is important to note that Gibson-Graham did not argue that the diverse economies framework is the only way to see the economy, but rather it is a starting point to begin seeing the economy in a more complex way. They warn against viewing alternative and mainstream economic activity as exclusively dichotomous, but needed to put forth a framework to begin research in this field (Gibson-Graham, 2006).

![Figure 2: The Compound Economy (Heley et al., 2012).](image)

Beyond Gibson-Graham’s framework itself, Fickey (2011) critiques the diverse economies literature for not engaging enough with gender, race or class. This is excluding Wright’s (2010) study in which she utilized an ethnographic analysis of the ways diverse economies influence the lives of residents in Puno, Philippines. Her study
points to the importance of including gendered analysis within community economies, and studies on economic activity more generally. Therefore, there is a need for exploring gender within diverse economies in a variety of ways. This thesis uses Gibson-Graham’s (2006) framework in relation to consignment clothing, while also addressing those critiques around the compound economy and lack of gendered perspectives.

2.6 Feminist Approaches to Fashion

Feminist approaches to the economic dimensions of fashion are limited, but there are some influential writers whose ideas are important to review when researching consignment clothing and women’s experiences. Angela McRobbie has been a prominent feminist writer on women’s fashion and consumption. McRobbie (1997) brought attention to the generalized way consumption is discussed, and how much disparity and exclusion occurs within consumption based on race and class. This also reveals privilege within consumption, and those with disposable income to consume in certain ways have their experiences speak louder than those that do not. McRobbie (1997) also notes that feminist academics often dismiss the enjoyment that women feel when shopping as false consciousness, which is problematic:

“…the academic left including feminists too often felt the need to disavow their own participation in some of the pleasures of the consumer culture for the reason that these were the very epitome of capitalism and also one of the sources of women's oppression. This produced a culture of puritanism giving rise only to guilty pleasures.” (McRobbie, 1997, p.75).

The importance of emotions, both positive and negative in terms of consumption, is relevant to this thesis as participant’s motivations for shopping and selling consignment were often grounded in both good and bad emotions. McRobbie assisted to reveal the details of these concepts and force a critical discussion of the relationship between gender, fashion and consumption.
Beyond feminist approaches to the consumption of fashion, there are feminist commodity chain approaches that look at both consumption and production. Priti Ramamurthy (2004) first introduced the approach of a feminist commodity chain (FCC) analysis through a critique of the global commodity chain framework (GCC) for excluding gender, especially at a time when women’s labour has been pivotal to the expansion of economic globalization across several industries. She argued, globalization centered on trade “is as much female-led as it is export-led (Ramamurthy, 2004, p.740). Her work emphasizes the inability to disconnect women’s labour from economic globalization. Ramamurthy’s work (2004) connects to the community economies framework because she focuses on a critical reading of economic globalization, illustrating how large economic processes influence individual’s everyday lives and experiences, and therefore should not only be studied from a narrow focus on capitalist economic growth. Ramamurthy (2004) also argued that studying consumption alongside production is necessary and important because they reinforce one other, and are gendered. She states that studying consumption “is necessary to map how commodities connect people in distant locations and enable them to imagine and perform their place in the world,” (Ramamurthy, 2004, p.742). This analysis is important for this thesis research, because women’s consumption choices in the Global North are tightly wound to women’s labour and production conditions in the Global South, which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Deborah Leslie (2012), up to this point, is the only other academic to utilize the feminist commodity chain analysis within the field of human geography. As this research is situated in the field of human geography, Leslie’s (2012) scholarly contributions have shaped this study. Leslie (2012) notes the importance of using the FCC framework because it helps to illustrate “the mutually constitutive link between production and consumption, the material and the symbolic,” (p.68). Therefore, it not only focuses on the production of commodities, but the important immaterial consequences, including discourse and the construction of identities. She utilized the feminist commodity chain framework to analyze fashion designing and retailing in Toronto, Ontario. Her study revealed the feminized and insecure nature of fashion designing, and also reinstated
the important overlooked connections between women, fashion and the capitalist economy more broadly.

Leslie (2012) also explored the phenomenon of fast fashion, which rapidly expanded with economic globalization, and is highly gendered throughout the commodity chain. Fast fashion is often thought of as clothing that is poorly made, falls apart easily, and is inexpensive. There are numerous negative consequences to the production and consumption of fast fashion, ranging from environmental waste and pollution to unsafe labour conditions and extremely low pay (Claudio, 2007; Kozlowski, 2012; Leslie, 2012). It is possible that alternative fashion economies could interrupt the harmful practices of fast fashion. The second-hand clothing industry is one example.

2.7 The Significance of Second-hand Fashion

The second-hand clothing industry refers to a few different types of second-hand clothing, including consignment, thrift and vintage. This study exclusively looks at consignment clothing, but it is important to define the latter two as well as consignment as much of this is not considered to be common knowledge, and the categories are often more blurred than rigid in practice. Consignment clothing is used clothing that the owner sells, using the consignment shop as a ‘middleman’ (Weil, 1999). The shops have various standards on what clothing they accept, mainly those styles that are not older than two years, and those in very good condition. If the shop accepts clothing brought in by the seller and that item sells, the seller can expect to receive a payment of 40-60% of the price that the garment sold for. Consignment shops often operate around a trade system, where sellers may choose to receive their payment in the form of store credit rather than cash. Consequently, because there is fluidity around this exchange process, and because the clothing is going through a second use cycle, consignment can theoretically be considered a type of alternative economy rather than mainstream economy. The purpose of this research is to look at what extent consignment represents a community alternative economy in practice.
Thrift clothing is different than consignment, in that it is donated and the income received from the sales often go towards community efforts, but not always (Weil, 1999). Some examples of large not-for-profit companies include the Salvation Army, Goodwill and Value Village. The clothing that comes into thrift shops are not curated the same way they are at consignment, and thrift shops are usually much larger than consignment shops. Thrift shops often accept clothing of all brands and styles regardless of durability or quality. Both consignment and thrift shops can carry a specific category of used clothing called vintage or retro clothing. Many of these items are one of a kind and reflective of a specific era (Weil, 1999).

It is important to acknowledge that the consumption of second-hand clothing often looks different than that of new clothing consumption. Gregson and Crewe (2003) discuss consumption of second-hand goods more generally, but do focus some of their writings on second-hand clothing. Firstly, they draw attention to the reality that consumption exists beyond solely the act of ‘purchase’, including how commodities are used (Gregson and Crewe, 2003). Second cycle use revolves around a different individual with a particular body type and lifestyle than first individual’s use cycle. In addition, second-hand goods are often gifted, or handed down, reflecting differing consumption, use and value characteristics than clothing bought new (Gregson and Crewe, 2003). According to the literature, these patterns of exchange within the second-hand industry at large mirror alternative and non-market economic economies. Second-hand goods are often associated with donation and trade, which reflect non-capitalist modes of transaction, but consignment specifically utilizes an alternative form of exchange. Gregson and Crewe (2003) also draw attention to the reality that consumption of second-hand clothing is directly connected to its first cycle consumption, through the durability of the garments, and interest in acquiring the garments based on designer or brand (Gregson and Crewe, 2003). Women are often in search of clothing that is significantly reduced in price when used, but still at a ‘bargain’ because it has only been gently worn and reflects a brand that can be considered ‘higher-end’ or more expensive.
2.8 Conclusion and Conceptual Framework

This literature review has outlined the most important and relevant aspects of the literature on community economies, fashion and second-hand clothing. This research aims to understand the ways consignment sales, consumption and ownership of shops in Guelph, Ontario reflects a community economy through the experiences and opinions of women in Guelph, Ontario. There are several gaps in the current literature which this thesis attempts to fill. Although there are several studies on economic globalization and gender, there is an absence of research on how consumption is linked to production and affects women across this commodity chain. There is a lack of literature on the motivation for women to shop second-hand clothing, specifically consignment. Finally, there is a deficit of community economies studies that incorporate gender, have empirical case studies and those that specifically explore clothing. This study attempts to fill these gaps, beginning first with the construction of a conceptual framework to guide the research process. The conceptual framework was created in attempt to fulfil the aim of this

The conceptual framework for this study was developed using the community economies framework first introduced by Gibson-Graham (2006). The most relevant tenets of the mainstream economy and community economies were chosen from the original framework (See Table 2) and then further organized into four major categories: spatial, economic, social and ethical (See Table 3 below). The logic behind organizing the sections in this way, was to make the creation of interview guides more efficient, as questions were generated based on the four major components. In addition, this organization assisted in understanding the tenets more clearly and set parameters around them, as there are no clear definitions of them within the literature. Further details on interview guides and the research methods for this study will be discussed next in Chapter 3.
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spatial</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Ethical</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative Community Economy</strong></td>
<td>Place-attached</td>
<td>Values long-term investment</td>
<td>Socially embedded</td>
<td>Ethical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small scale</td>
<td>Recirculates value locally</td>
<td>Culturally distinctive</td>
<td>Environmentally sustainable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Locally self-reliant</td>
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<td>Community led</td>
<td>Harmonious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mainstream Economy</strong></td>
<td>a-spatial/global</td>
<td>Privileges short-term return</td>
<td>Socially dis-embedded</td>
<td>Amoral</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Non-local ownership</td>
<td>Private appropriation and distribution of surplus</td>
<td>a-cultural</td>
<td>Environmentally unsustainable</td>
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<td>Large scale</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Export-oriented</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
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*Table 3: The Conceptual Framework adapted from Gibson-Graham (2006).*
Chapter 3. Methods

This chapter will outline the methods used for this thesis. I will begin with a review of the City of Guelph and why it was an appropriate study site. I will then review the three main consignment shops. Following this is a justification of why feminist research methods were used for this study, as well as a discussion of data collection, project budget and data analysis.

3.1 Study Site

Guelph, Ontario was chosen as the study site for this project because of its strong sense of community and abundance of consignment stores. According to 2011 census data, Guelph’s population is 121,688, which grew almost six percent since 2006 (“NHS Profile,” 2011). The total visible minority population is 18,920 in, which is approximately 15% of the total population (“NHS Profile,” 2011). Average personal household income is $78,057, and the largest industry in Guelph is the manufacturing sector (“Community Profile,” 2012). Guelph is home to several private businesses selling a range of commodities, and many pubs and restaurants that actively encourage Guelph residents to shop locally. The downtown core of Guelph is where many independent shops and restaurants are located, while the largest mall as well as big box stores are situated outside the downtown core and in the outskirts of Guelph. Figure 3 below displays a map of the greater area of Guelph, with the downtown squared in red. Possibly because Guelph is also a university city, there are several social justice organizations and movements that are fostered within the city. For example, there are strong alternative food movements that attempt to provide locally sourced food, and support of local farmers (“Why Buy Local,” n.d.). Guelph has a reputation for having a strong ‘green’ community and therefore, was an appropriate site to conduct this research.
3.2 Store Profiles

There are a total of six shops in downtown Guelph that sell either consignment or vintage, or a mix of both. Three shops were focused on for this study. These three shops were chosen to allow for a variety of perspectives from owners/managers as they vary in whom they market to and the types of clothing and accessories they sell.

The first shop included in the study is Wild Rose. Wild Rose is the oldest consignment shop in downtown Guelph, and arguably the most popular. It opened in 1992, and is currently owned by two women that both live in Guelph and work at the shop. Wild Rose sells a mix of high-end and good quality mall brand clothing, as well as shoes, accessories and jewellery. They cater to a wide variety of age groups, but only sell women’s clothing. Sellers receive 40% of clothing sales in either cash or store credit. For clothing that does not sell, sellers have the option of picking up their clothing or have it donated to a local women’s shelter.
The second store included in this study is The Patch. The Patch sells a mix of consignment and new clothing, vintage clothing, as well as new jewellery and accessories. It exclusively sells women’s clothing, and caters towards a younger crowd than the other two consignment shops of focus for this study. It is considered very ‘on-trend,’ with some of the clothing being up-cycled to fit certain styles. Up-cycled clothing in this shop are usually t-shirts or jeans that have been bought second-hand, and then altered to reflect a specific trend. The consignment process works slightly different at The Patch than traditional consignment shops, because clothing sellers must accept profits from their first sale in store credit rather than cash. Following this if sellers build up a rapport with the shop, they can begin receiving cash back instead of store credit. The Patch also has two other locations in Cambridge and Peterborough, Ontario.
The last shop included in this study is Nu Consignment. It began as used goods shop specializing in vintage housewares, but eventually became exclusively a consignment clothing shop. Nu consignment is the only shop in this study that sells both men’s and women’s clothes. However, the men’s section is much smaller and on a trial basis for the shop. Nu largely sells high-end designer clothing, as well as shoes and accessories. The shop markets to more of an older crowd than the former two consignment shops.
3.3 Feminist Research Methods

This study utilized feminist research methods to obtain in-depth perspectives, emotions and stories from women who participate in the consignment clothing industry in Guelph. Feminist methods seek to “get at subjugated knowledge of the diversity of women’s realities that often lie hidden and unarticulated” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, p.111). In addition, feminist researchers attempt to link the theoretical to the practical (Ibid, 2007). This is pertinent for this study because community economies as discussed by Gibson-Graham et al. (2013), involve connecting the ideological and the material. Additionally, the community economies concept was born out of feminist ideas and critiques, suggesting the importance of including a critical feminist lens within this research. Lastly, this project is highly gendered, as the clothing and fashion industry itself is highly gendered. It has been established that the global apparel chain disproportionately involves women from production to consumption, where women consistently comprise the factory and retail workers, and men encompass the majority of factory managers and successful clothing designers (Leslie, 2012). Interviewing exclusively women for this study, privileging women’s personal stories, experiences and opinions about clothing, and attempting to make visible what is often invisible makes this a feminist research study.
The type of in-depth interviews used for this research were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews were useful because they are more effective than surveys or focus groups for accessing personal perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours from participants. They also enable flexibility in the way topics are disseminated by the interviewer, and allow open feedback from participants rather than only ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers (Clifford et al., 2010). The use of prompts was critical in the research process for expanding on certain topics, as well as asking mainly open ended questions to get at women’s personal stories (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). In addition, face-to-face interviews were used as they allowed for more in-depth answers to questions than telephone interviews (Clifford et al., 2010). The majority of participants in this study live in Guelph and so it was easy to arrange to meet for interviews.

3.4 Sample Size

There were 36 participants interviewed for this study. All participants were women-identified, at least 18 years of age and older, and had shopped or sold consignment within maximum six months prior to the interview. Within the sample size, there was a large diversity in age, income level and experience with the clothing industry in general. All 36 participants shopped consignment. Eighteen of the individuals who shopped consignment were also sellers of consignment clothing, either to local shops in Guelph or to consignment shops in other cities. Thirty-six participants were chosen because after interviewing twenty-five, it was obvious that saturation was occurring. Saturation was apparent because no new themes or insights were being generated from the interviews, a common sign to stop gathering data (Hay, 2010). To ensure rigour within the data, another eleven interviews were conducted. The sample size was intended to reflect major ideas and trends among women in Guelph who participate in the consignment clothing industry, but not reflect the entirety of the female population of Guelph.

Purposive sampling was used for this study because participants were deliberately and purposely recruited based on their experience with consignment clothing (Clifford et al., 2010). This resulted in participants who were knowledgeable
about consignment and larger retail clothing stores, and were also interested in discussing their patterns of consumption. A mix of consumers, owners and sellers were chosen, to more comprehensively understand if consignment reflects and puts into practice the dimensions of community economies. Two owners and one shop manager were chosen specifically to get an idea of how shops are run, and to access their perceptions on the relationship between their shop and the Guelph community.

3.5 Data Collection

Interview guides were created from the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 2 (See Table 3), which was an adaptation of Gibson-Graham’s community economy framework. The goal of the interview guides was to access owners, sellers and consumer’s opinions and beliefs about consignment, and gain an understanding of how they experienced and engaged with consignment more materially. Initially, three separate interview guides were created for the three major stakeholders involved in consignment (shop owners, sellers and consumers); however, after several interviews were completed it became clear that the majority of consumers had also sold consignment clothing, either in the past or on an ongoing basis. As a result, the same base research guides were used for all stakeholders to obtain data for generalized questions. However, for owners and sellers a few specialized questions were created to obtain specific data about experiences and opinions that only those who performed these duties would be able to provide. For example, sellers were asked questions pertaining to their consumption patterns and selling experience, including “how often do you sell clothing? Which shops do you sell clothing to? How long have you done this for?” Whereas owners were asked questions such as, “What are your major tasks being the owner of a consignment shop? How did you get involved in owning a consignment shop? What are your top three favourite aspects of being the owner?” The discussions that resulted from these interview questions provided both common opinions and beliefs, as well as descriptions of how participants engaged with consignment clothing, and their experiences in the shops. Interview guides are attached in the appendix at the end of the thesis. All interviews were recorded and transcribed to prepare for data analysis.
The bulk of interview questions were derived to understand if participants felt that consignment reflected a community economy, and were therefore organized into the four dominant categories of spatial, economic, social and ethical. For example, to understand how or if consignment reflected a community economy spatially, participants were asked about Guelph’s downtown core, and if consignment fit within the atmosphere of the downtown. To inquire about how consignment does or does not reflect a community economy ethically, participants were asked what they considered to be ethical consumption, and how they viewed consignment to fit within this notion. Many of the participants answered questions from these sections together, for example, many would describe how consignment was appealing both because it was affordable economically and avoided clothing waste. These types of answers overlapped in both economic and ethical sections and I was required to separate these sections and further inquire about them. Participants were also asked about how the fast fashion industry and shopping at the mall or department stores may reflect the mainstream economy. Often while answering questions about consignment, participants would discuss what the opposite was, which always fell into the category of mainstream. For example, participants would describe that they like consignment because they feel it is environmentally friendly, unlike shopping at the mall where all of the clothing is believed to be made cheaply, and contributes to waste because it is disposable. It was then possible to delve further into participant’s opinions, beliefs and experiences with the mainstream economy because they often brought it up in relation to shopping consignment.

It is important to note that the tenets associated with the mainstream economy and community economies as created by Gibson-Graham, were never clearly defined in the literature. Gibson-Graham provided numerous tables and illustrations to clearly depict the dimensions of the mainstream economy and community economies however, the tenets used in these depictions (e.g. small-scale, community led, ethical) are never explicitly defined and as such are vague and somewhat ambiguous. The tables and charts they created were used in this study to help with the research process, but because of this lack of clarity and definition in the literature, it led to struggle and
confusion at times. To work through this as best as possible, I used a lot of discretion to adequately decipher the meanings of these tenets. One way I accomplished this was to ask participants open-ended questions that fell into the four dominant categories (e.g. spatial), but to enable them to describe and define the parameters around their experiences and the terms of focus, more loosely. For example, all participants were asked what shopping local meant to them, and the majority stated that local shops were small and owned by an individual in the community. I was then able to attach the tenets of small-scale and place-attached to participant’s description of local. Some tenets were easier to define than others. How I engaged with these definitions through the research process, especially through data analysis, is discussed in section 3.7.

3.6 Recruitment and Budget

Recruitment for this project mainly relied on the use of posters and social media to invite participants to take part in the study. Two owners and one store manager who participated, were recruited by meeting with them at their respective shops. The poster used to recruit participants detailed the name of the study, requirements of participants and contact information. The recruitment poster can be found in Appendix one. The requirements for participants to be involved in this study were that they had to have either sold or bought consignment clothing within the previous six months in Guelph. To incentivize participants involved there was a draw for three $50.00 gift certificates for the shops involved with the study, which also encouraged the shops to participate. Additionally, a free beverage was provided when the interviews were conducted at cafes. Interviewed lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. The costs of the project including photocopies, gift certificates and drinks during interviews was approximately $230.00.

3.7 Data Analysis

All transcriptions were coded using Nvivo software. Coding, a form of reduction or abstraction (Hay, 2010), was necessary to make sense of the data acquired through interviews. Both closed coding and open coding was done for this project. Closed coding was done by going through each transcription and collecting all data that aligned with each of the four main dimensions of community economies and mainstream
economies: spatial, economic, social and ethical. To ensure that this process was organized and clear, a coding framework was created for both the community economies and mainstream economy as can be seen in Tables 4 and 5 below. As mentioned in section 3.6, participants used their own words to describe and define many of the tenets of community economies. To assist with the closed coding despite having no explicit definitions of the tenets, I conceptualized several actions that reflected the tenets based on Gibson-Graham’s (2006) framework, in simplistic language (see top of each boxes in Tables 4 and 5). For example, social tenets of community economies from the literature include: community led and socially embedded. I expanded on this by listing actions that coincide with community led and social embeddedness, including activities that are good for the downtown core of Guelph, good for the community and/or socially responsible business practices. Following this, I listed words and expressions that commonly arose in interviews by participants that mirrored these actions (see bottom of boxes in Tables 4 and 5). For example, I listed: appreciating shop owners’ help and customer service, being part of a community and donating to local charities. All terms related to these actions and concepts were then coded as ‘social’ dimensions of community economies’ and they were later sorted into more detailed categories. This was continued for every dimension (i.e. spatial, economic) of both community economies and the mainstream economy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Community Economy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spatial</strong></td>
<td>Denotes the spatiality of a community economy, will likely involve small-scale, local (downtown Guelph) economic practices that circulates value within the community rather than outside of it. This may involve shopping local, and local may be defined as within Guelph, Ontario or Canada, resulting in more benefits for the people living in Guelph and possibly the community as a collective. Look for: shopping locally, supporting independent stores, small businesses, supporting farmers/farmer’s markets, supporting the Guelph community, distinct and unique for Guelph (place attached).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td>Economic facets of the community economy are illustrated by money going towards local, independent business owners, locally made clothing or clothing that is being re-used by those in the community. This often involves deliberately supporting business owners who live in the community, or businesses that are smaller in which the money is going to those that need it for their livelihoods rather than large scale, corporate, fragmented businesses (therefore, more harmonious</td>
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businesses). Consuming in the local downtown means the community thrives more, and generally means better quality products.

Look for: Getting good value from the products, wanting to financially support those in the community rather than owners who do not live here, consuming locally/ downtown, wanting money to stay in the community, wanting to put money towards a smaller business, willing to pay more for smaller businesses or for better quality/local (usually all together).

Social dimensions of a community economy may reflect a broad range of activities that mainly result in a benefit for a collective of people or the larger community as a whole. This may also mean practices that are good for the downtown core, good for the city, knowing one another within the downtown core and supporting shop owners who live in the community. Additionally, social embeddedness or social connection in a community economy may reflect socially responsible economic practices; this may include a business opting for better environmental practices (greener).

Look for: appreciating shop owner’s help and customer service, being familiar with shop owner, shop owners knowing each other and surrounding shops, being a part of the downtown community, liking that consignment also donates to charities, feeling connected with the community, liking that the clothes have had a story before them (more than just an object).

The ethical dimension of community economies are often illustrated by environmentally sustainable business practices, reducing environmental harm which could be done by attempting to use products locally that require less transportation than products made abroad and therefore, minimizing greenhouse gas emissions. This may also mean sourcing materials ethically such as using natural fabrics (cotton, wool), using organic fabrics, and reusing clothing so it does not end up in the landfill. In addition, this may mean supporting businesses that prioritize socially ethical business practices, such as paying workers fair wages.

Look for: re-using clothing, re-cycling, good quality clothes, clothes that are not disposable/throw-away, wanting to avoid throw-away culture or over-consumptive culture, wanting to support a green business, disliking social and environmental business practices abroad, can get good quality clothing more often this way, keeping clothes out of landfill, better for the environment...

Table 4: Community Economies Coding Framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainstream Economy—the fast fashion or global clothing industry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spatial</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Table 4: Community Economies Coding Framework.</strong></td>
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</table>


could have several different levels of managers in between. Large scale businesses, something that is international, multi-million dollar (i.e. H&M, Old Navy).

Look for: outsourced labour, international corporations, ‘made in China, made in Bangladesh’, at the mall (not in the downtown core).

**Economic**

Economic signifiers of the fast fashion industry would largely reflect environmentally unsustainable practices due to focusing on profits, highest return for short-term investment from the corporation, and fragmented corporate structures that are un-harmonious. They are most often export-oriented, with the few at the highest making the most money and having the most power- therefore private appropriation and distribution of surplus.

Look for: large retailers, big box, customer service workers are generally young and apathetic, lower quality of service, fragmented hierarchies within companies, environmentally unsustainable fabrics, cheaply made fabrics that do not last and go into landfills, clothes are made shipped from outside of North America, workers are paid low wages to make clothing cheap, disposable, synthetic clothes, poor quality.

**Social**

Social facets of mainstream economy practices, especially the fast fashion industry are lacking due to prioritizing competition, and therefore business practices and businesses are generally socially dis-embedded. This can be seen when fast fashion factories (i.e. H&M, Old Navy, Joe Fresh) operate in places with little no social safety nets for workers and no benefits for communities in these places.

Look for: highest profits are privileged in the cheapest way possible, profits are most important, profits are more important than quality, disposability of clothing, poor treatment of workers, selling an insecurity to women to need to buy new clothes seasonally/all the time, mall is overwhelming, workers do not care about you but want you just to buy anything.

**Ethical**

Mainstream economic industries such as the fast fashion industry are amoral and generally have no ethical standards for how they conduct business. The corporate structure is so fragmented and hierarchical, there is lack of communication between different levels resulting in environmentally damaging business practices and products.

Look for: disposable clothes, poor quality, clothing rip or tear easily, harmful to the environment, harmful environmental practices within manufacturing, waste in the landfill, etc.

| Table 5: Mainstream Economy Coding Framework. |

In addition to closed coding, open coding was used in the analysis. Open coding was done to allow for common themes or topics to be included in the results that fell outside of the dominant coding framework. This is often known as thematic coding (Hay,
Most of the themes emerged from similarities in women’s responses, including identical opinions and experiences they each discussed in interviews. For instance, participants’ reflections on emotions, and specifically what felt good or bad, consistently arose in interviews and was coded as an important theme. Once all data was coded, it was further organized into relevant and important themes to allow for a clear presentation of the results through writing, that would address the overall research aim of the thesis.

3.8 Summary of Methods and Analysis

This chapter has outlined the feminist research methods, including a justification for why in-depth and semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this research. Profiles of the three consignment shops of focus were also reviewed. The analysis discussed, including the use of the coding framework, enabled the research objective to be answered and therefore, to determine the extent to which consignment clothing reflects a community economy in Guelph. The following chapter discusses the findings that resulted from the data analysis.
Chapter 4. Findings

The following chapter outlines in detail the results of the analysis, specifically the open and closed coding of interview transcriptions. The sections are organized according to the four dominant categories that have guided the research process: the spatial, economic, social and ethical dimensions of both community economies and the mainstream economy. Participants were questioned about the ways consignment clothing operations, sales and consumption in Guelph reflects a community economy. Despite this focus, though, the majority of participants were also able to provide insights into the dimensions of what they considered to be the mainstream economy as well.

4.1 Spatial

According to the literature on community economies, and specifically the framework created by Gibson-Graham (2006), community economies may be denoted by certain spatial characteristics, such as place-attached, small-scale and locally self-reliant. The spatial tenets of the mainstream economy, by contrast, are: a-spatial/a-global, non-local ownership, large scale and export-oriented. Both are illustrated in Table 6 below. It is possible to see that the relationship between the mainstream economy and the alternative community economy is dichotomous, and in many conversations participants reinforced this binary through their descriptions of fast fashion/mall shopping as oppositional to consignment. The most common responses were that shopping consignment reflected shopping locally, and shopping at the mall or ‘mainstream’ clothing/fast fashion is considered oppositional to consignment, or what can be called ‘shopping globally’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Community Economy</th>
<th>Place-attached</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small-scale</td>
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<td>Locally self-reliant</td>
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4.1.1 Shop Local (place-attached and small-scale)

The majority of participants stated that shopping consignment could be considered part of the ‘shop local’ movement, which essentially encourages consumers to purchase commodities that have been sourced as close as possible to where they are being sold. Purchasing food and clothing locally was a priority to many participants, and a strong motivator for shopping consignment, and at other local shops. The ways participants described consignment as local, and why local appealed to them, largely reflected the spatial tenets of community economies described in the literature. One participant described:

Shop locally to me, means something owned by people who live in that city. I guess [The] Patch doesn’t totally fall into that because she owns a couple of them, but since it’s still a smaller business I consider that more shopping locally. I’d say if there’s more than 60 employees it’s probably not as local, it’s turning into more of a corporation at that point (Participant 32).

For this and many other participants, consignment clothing in Guelph was considered shopping local because the shops are owned by individuals in the community, and therefore, place-attached. Supporting an owner that lives in the community was very important for many participants. In this quote, the participant suggests that perhaps The Patch cannot truly be defined as local, since the owner lives outside of Guelph, and because the shop is a franchise with other locations. However, to justify her original belief that consignment, including The Patch is local, she describes local shops as being those that are small in scale. Small-scale, as well as place-attached are community economies tenets, as identified by Gibson-Graham (2006). Although this participant subjectively chose a number that she believed reflected a ‘small’ business (in this case under 60 employees), the majority of participants also agreed with the notion that shopping local meant shopping at a small store.
Most participants described shopping local as both place-attached and small-scale simultaneously. This is largely because, they framed local shops as being independently owned. Typically, independent shops are relatively small, and within Guelph, the independent shops cluster in the downtown core. The downtown core, as mentioned in Chapter 3, also houses the farmers’ market and restaurants that source food locally, and is often considered the hub of the Guelph community. The following quote illustrates this connection between downtown Guelph and local shops:

I guess locally, I would consider that something that’s [an] independent business or not a big box store or a franchise. I like that concept. I don’t like box stores, I prefer to stay away from things like Target and Wal-Mart; they look ugly, I like that the downtown doesn’t have anything like that, or minimal franchise like that going on (Participant 19).

This participant describes local in several ways: independent store, small-scale, not big box, and located downtown. It was the case for many participants that place-attachment played out very specifically as meaning the Guelph downtown core, which is not surprising, given that it contains four major consignment shops.

4.1.2 The Opposite of Consignment and Shopping Local: Shopping Global (non-local ownership, export-oriented and fast fashion)

Many participants defined shopping local (and consignment) by describing what it is not, or its opposite. Consignment has been described as small-scale, and usually independent and locally owned. Therefore, many described the opposite of consignment to be large-scale corporations and department shops. Importantly, most participants attempted to avoid shopping at department stores and malls for a variety of reasons that will be discussed. A number of these reasons are illustrated in the following quote:

Shopping locally to me just means shopping at businesses you’re familiar with, and businesses that you know aren’t owned by a big corporate overhead company. Not that I religiously avoid that, I just prefer to shop somewhere where I know is actually benefitting members of my community rather than somewhere else that I don’t even know about (Participant 22).
This participant positions large, corporate scale retail stores as the opposite of consignment, and this was a very common belief among participants. This is because they are not only large, but also not owned by community members. This mirrors the mainstream economy tenets of a-spatial/global, non-local ownership and large scale.

Beyond large scale and a-spatial/global, department stores and corporate retail shops were consistently considered to sell exclusively cheap, outsourced, and export-oriented clothes. Some participants used the term “fast fashion” to describe this clothing, while others used terms such as “disposable fashion” or simply “mall clothing”. For participants, consignment shops sell clothing that is not fast fashion, and therefore, largely not mass-produced for export, or heavily relying on outsourced labour. In addition, participants considered consignment clothing to be high quality, while they considered fast fashion to be poor quality, as well as globally-rather than locally-produced. This is reflected in the following quote from the owner of one of the shops interviewed:

Like we always say: made in China [is] crap, kind of like an off-the-cuff thing we always say, but, it’s true. People need to look at where things are made, what they’re made of, but a lot of people outsource now. Even Diane Von Fürstenburg [high-end brand] she used to be made somewhere in Europe but she’ll still charge the same or more for her dresses and everything’s made in China now. Sometimes I’ll get a dress and I’ll be like oh its DVF, I think is silk jersey, but sometimes I’ll get her wraps and it will just be poly[ester] and made in China but it will still be a $600.00 dress. I think people need to be aware of that because I wouldn’t [buy it], if I were to buy something new which is very rare I just want to feel comfortable knowing I’m paying for the quality (Participant 3).

As evident in the quote, this consignment storeowner believes that clothing that is outsourced is often poor quality. One of the reasons she cited is because the clothing is often composed of synthetic fibres, such as polyester. Most participants agreed with this notion, and many believed that clothing brands that used to be made domestically but have since been outsourced, have dropped in quality. Some participants however, alluded to the difficulty that can arise when trying to differentiate between local as good quality and global as poor quality, since many good quality brands are still made in the Global South. Ultimately, however, the majority of participants separated consignment
clothing from what is often considered to be fast fashion, or mall/department store clothing, because the latter is considered to be sold in larger retail shops and mainly produced in the Global South for export. This data reveals that participants' ideas about consignment clothing closely mirror the key tenets of community economies: place-attached and small-scale, while their views on fast fashion/mall clothing mirrored the tenets of mainstream economies: a-spatial, non-local ownership, large scale and export-oriented.

4.1.3 Uncertainty around the meaning of ‘Local’

Most participants expressed an interest in shopping locally for a variety of goods. Some discussed their dedication to source all goods they consume locally, whereas others described their personal negotiations around sourcing some items locally but not others. Despite these variances, when asked what shopping locally meant to them, most struggled to clearly define the practice. Participants would often discuss the term local in relation to food, in an attempt to draw parameters around the term. This is illustrated in the following quote,

Here’s what I always think: I could go to a designer who lives in Guelph and sews clothes in Guelph but where does her fabric come from? And where does the thread come from? And where do the patterns come from? You could chase your tail forever. The only thing I think that’s totally controllable is food and that’s partly why we go to Ignatius [local organic farm]. I know the farmers, I know their seeds are local, their seedlings are local, the plants - I can look at them in the ground-clearly local (Participant 17).

Many participants agreed with the notion that they could more easily source food locally, but clothing it is more complicated. In order to define how shopping consignment can be considered shopping local, some participants argued that shopping local has more to do with the economic transfer of money, rather than the geographic origin of the product. In other words, because consignment shops in Guelph are small-scale, and run by owners who live in the community, participants see themselves as supporting local by spending their money there. This is described in the following quote:

My big focus is on the local economy, not necessarily the product itself. It’s hard, and I feel like it’s not fair, to consider that [the business] local per se.
But I see it as the money getting circulated and where it gets circulated (Participant 20).

It was very important to the majority of participants that they support smaller businesses and community members, instead of shopping at large retailers. However, all participants discussed the tension around using the term ‘local’ in relation to clothing, because most of the clothing they are purchasing from consignment shops is still made outside of Canada, and therefore, not manufactured locally.

4.1.4 Summary of Spatial Findings

This section revealed that according to participants’ opinions, experiences, and beliefs within Guelph, consignment largely reflects a community economy spatially. The findings also confirmed that consignment clothing is often considered to be the opposite of shopping at a mall or consuming fast fashion. Table 7 below illustrates the original framework updated with participants’ responses in bold. The words used by participants can easily be connected to the tenets of both the community and mainstream economies found in the literature. There was, however, some discussion of tensions, especially surrounding what is considered to be local and global. Evidently, the lines between local and global can often blur, especially in relation to fashion. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consignment as Alternative Community Economy</th>
<th>Place-attached (owner lives in the community, shop is located downtown)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small-scale (independent shop or a small franchise, under roughly 60 employees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locally self-reliant (see economic section 4.2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 Economic

According to Gibson-Graham (2006), two key economic dimensions of community economies include the valuing of long-term investment and recirculation of value locally. The economic tenets of the mainstream economy are described as: privileging short-term return, private appropriation and distribution of surplus, fragmented and competitive. This is reflected in Table 8 below, which is economic portion of the framework introduced in Chapter 2. The analysis revealed that participants’ discussion of consignment largely aligned with the description of community economies present in the literature. Although participants did not use the same language as present in the literature, much of what they said can be understood as having the same meanings and will be outlined below.
4.2.1 Locally Self-Reliant and Recirculating Value Locally

Discussion of shopping consignment by shoppers, owners, and sellers, revealed that consignment in Guelph coheres closely with the description of a community economy as it is outlined in the literature. The first tenet that will be discussed is that consignment is considered to recirculate value locally. This will be discussed in tandem with the spatial tenet of ‘locally self-reliant’ (see Table 7) because when focusing on consignment these two terms reflect very similar and overlapping concepts. Firstly, consignment can be considered to recirculate value locally due to the material movement of money that is circulating in and out of the shop. One store owner discussed that it is unusual that individuals will come into the shop, only to sell their clothing and do not also purchase. She stated, “I would say 20% of our consignors don’t shop here. They just bring clothing in. They probably would never buy second-hand clothing, but they’re glad to see their own good quality clothing [get used] and make a little bit of extra cash,” (Participant 36). Clearly the majority (80% by her estimation) of the individuals that sell clothing in her shop also purchase clothing. Similarly, both other participants interviewed who owned and managed different consignment shops, also stated that a high rate of women in Guelph frequently both sell and shop. As outlined in Chapter 3, sellers may opt for cash or store credit at consignment shops, and the analysis revealed that the majority of sellers opted for store credit instead of cash for their clothing sales, because they enjoyed shopping at these stores. Both the owners’ insights and sellers’ discussion of their habits, revealed that participants largely keep money within the consignment shops, instead of removing it to purchase clothing elsewhere. This demonstrates that in Guelph the consignment business plays an important role in recirculating value locally. This can also be seen as promoting local self-reliance, as the majority of women who are bringing clothing in are spending money at the shops, and therefore keeping them in business.

Local self-reliance and the recirculation of value locally was also discussed by participants in relation to the articles of clothing that go in and out of the shop. Most of the interview participants who sold clothing lived within Guelph, with the exception of one (who lived in a neighbouring town). The nature of consignment also helps
encourage this economic recirculation, as evidenced by this participant’s description of her selling and associated buying patterns:

I would sell at least 5 or 6 times a year. I find I go, I pull stuff out of my closet pretty frequently, and I would shop at least that many times. I went in last to drop stuff off probably a month ago, [so] I was thinking today I should go and see if I have any money sitting there and then I'll buy some stuff. It’s nice when you go in and you have 25 dollars credit, and you’re like “oh awesome”. Then you go and buy a bunch of stuff and don’t even think about it. It feels like a little bonus (Participant 12).

Evidently, consignment shops in Guelph largely depend on the business from sellers in both a shopping and selling capacity. Many women who sold clothing had a system like this woman’s, and regularly sold their clothing to the same consignment shops.

In addition to the recirculation of money and clothing, another way consignment in Guelph can be said to recirculate value locally is through the shops’ clothing donations. Two out of three shops of focus in this study donate the clothing that does not sell to local charities-one specifically to a women’s shelter. This is a service that some, but not all, of the women interviewed were aware of; those that were appreciated it. For example:

It’s sort of weird with women’s fashion here because everyone has so much stuff. So I like the idea that the consignment stores, if they don’t sell they donate to the women’s shelters, which is awesome. Because even when we do clothing trades with my friends it’s just my too much stuff going to someone else who has lots and lots too (Participant 11).

This participant’s appreciation of the shops’ donation activities stems from her discomfort with the amount of clothing she sees people owning. Many participants who are sellers, stated that they did not want to pick up their clothes if they were not sold within the allotted time frame, so they were happy that their higher quality, gently-used clothes could be donated to someone in need within Guelph. As a result of the transfer of money, clothing and clothing donations to local charities, consignment in Guelph reflects a community economy: one that recirculates value locally, as well as one that is for the most part economically self-reliant.
4.2.2 Complications surrounding the acquisition of Consignment Clothing

Although participants’ experiences and practices with consignment clothing largely reflected the tenets of recirculating value locally and local self-reliance, some data surfaced from consignment shop owners and managers that complicated these ideas. For example, two out of three consignment shops of focus described either regular or occasional reliance on purchasing used clothing wholesale. The third consignment shop was not questioned about this, and therefore, it is unknown whether they acquire clothing from wholesale. Wholesale buying here refers to owners’ procurement of clothing from an external seller: either a company or a large business that specializes in storing used clothing to sell to specialty shops. The clothing ranges in quality depending on the type of wholesale business. Some specialize in high-end, on trend clothing whereas others acquire clothing en masse from thrift stores, package it by weight and sell it locally, or likely ship it abroad\(^6\). The fact that the owners must rely on wholesale clothing either seasonally, or regularly, as a means to stock their stores with on trend clothing, challenges the idea that clothing is coming from local, Guelph citizens and the entire notion that consignment is locally self-reliant.

In addition, as discussed in section 4.1.3, most clothing that is being purchased in consignment shops (and sold) is not made in Canada, and is therefore, not considered to be manufactured locally. Although clothing is largely being sold and bought by Guelph citizens and can be considered locally self-reliant due to the transfer of money and clothing to and from these shops, it is important to recognize that these clothes are largely not manufactured within Canada. This challenges the notion that consignment can be considered locally self-reliant, because it is important to also acknowledge where the clothes are being made. This will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

\(^6\) This information is based on experience and personal anecdotes from participants and therefore, has not been sourced for the purpose of this study. Moreover, it largely falls outside of the scope of this study, but is important to include based on discussion of clothing being ‘local’ and how consignment shops acquire clothing.
4.2.3 Consignment clothing as a long-term investment

According to the literature, actors in community economies value long-term investment, where mainstream economies privilege short-term returns (refer to Table 8). The ways in which participants discussed the quality and durability of consignment clothing largely aligned with the tenet of long-term investment. The following section will review the ways consignment was discussed as a long-term investment, with respect to quality, brand, price, value and fabric content, and how fast fashion reflects the opposite qualities.

All participants highlighted the fact that being able to purchase high quality clothing, and specifically, for less money than it would be new, was a main motivator for shopping consignment. Participants frequently noted that consignment shops in Guelph carried brands that reflected higher quality than fast fashion clothing, and better brands than were available at malls and other retail shops in Guelph. For all participants, the major incentive to shop consignment is being able to purchase clothing that was durable, long lasting and good quality for a good price. This logic was summarized by one participant who explained that, “what I find is quality lasts longer, so I’d rather buy something that was quality, even if it was used, than buy something new that would fall apart after a few wears” (Participant 2). Shop owners also confirmed this as something important to them, maintaining they only bring in high quality clothing. As one stated, “we don’t take throwaway fashion, and I think it’s good for the customers that they know they can come in here and everything on the racks is of a better label,” (Participant 36). Quality clothing is often denoted by its brand. Participants name many of the same brands as being deliberately sought-after in consignment because they are considered to be ‘higher-end’, exhibiting characteristics of quality sewing, good colour saturation and made of natural materials. Most of these brands were also sold in shops not found in Guelph: Babaton, J-Crew, BCBG and others. Many women discussed being able to purchase these brands used, at a fair price and still in very good condition on consignment. One owner commented on this,

They [customers] can afford brands that they wouldn’t normally. For example, Babaton [high-end retailer], that would probably retail for maybe $80.00 at which I would never pay. Whereas, we might have like $19 or $22 on it. So it’s nice to
be able to afford things like that. Better quality that you wouldn’t be able to normally (Participant 3).

Although this is an owner commenting from a shopper’s perspective, all shoppers agreed that they felt great when they found a higher-end garment, that was good quality at a much lower price than it would be new. Being able to purchase good quality clothing at a fair price was reflective of getting a good deal and value for their money by all participants, and was one of the main motivations for purchasing consignment regularly.

Another reason participants believed they were getting good value, and clothing that is a long-term investment, is because a lot of the clothing (specifically many higher-end brands) contained natural fabrics. Several participants argued that they could obtain clothing with natural fabrics more easily in consignment and larger second-hand thrift stores than at new retail shops (including the mall). As one participant expressed,

If I had lots of money I would probably only be buying hemp or sustainable fibers, like organic cotton. I just don’t have the money, but I have no problem finding stuff that I do like and can wear; no problem at all avoiding polyester and acrylic (Participant 35).

This participant explicitly only wore natural fabrics because the she did not feel comfortable wearing synthetic (such as polyester and acrylic), and the only way she could afford this was shopping second-hand. Many participants often deliberately sought out clothing that was made of fabrics such as cotton, linen or wool for example, over polyester. They argued that lower quality, fast fashion clothing was made of poor quality fabrics, and thus were considered the opposite of consignment: poor value, disposable, and uncomfortable to wear.

Participants’ description of consignment clothing as high quality, durable and good value for the price reflects the community economies tenet of long-term investment. Not all women interviewed described keeping clothing they bought consignment for a long time, but they did describe how consignment clothes had to be high quality to sustain multiple use-cycles. Some participants who sold consignment clothing stated that they
could often sell back clothing they bought from consignment, if it was still considered
current on ‘on trend,’ because the garment was of such good quality it could sustain
multiple uses. Therefore, consignment clothing is a long-term investment and the shops
deliberately curate clothing that has and can sustain multiple use cycles.

As can be seen in several of the quotes in this section, consignment clothing is
often described against what is considered to be its opposition: fast fashion/mall
clothing. Fast fashion clothing is believed to not be a long-term investment because it
falls apart easily, and is considered disposable, throwaway fashion. Fast fashion
therefore, largely reflects the mainstream economy tenet of privileging short term
returns, as larger retail shops produce clothing for quantity over quality, according to
participants. Most participants argued that this was obvious because large retailers are
only interested in making sales. Therefore, it is easier to sell more inexpensive clothing
and make it lower quality so it does not last as long (which promotes even more
spending). The following participant summed this up, saying:

They’re [the retailers] saying like ‘2,4,6,8’ 2 dollars for tank tops, 4 dollars for t-
shirts, 6... [so on] I’ve heard it a couple times this week. It’s like you’re making it
easy for people to do that; and so they will, just because they’ve got that money to
spend. I, personally don’t have that kind of extra money to spend, so that is why I
do consignment. [also] Because I can find neat, good brands, but at a better price
(Participant 13).

This participant described the way that retailers advertise clothing as being so
inexpensive to encourage people to buy as much as possible. However, like most other
participants, she also feels that purchasing these types of clothing is a waste of money,
which is considered the opposite of consignment, as consignment clothing is seen as an
investment. Common brands that were associated with fast fashion were mentioned to
be from Old Navy, H&M or Joe Fresh. Participants frequently expressed that those who
shop here are interested in purchasing clothing to simply buy lots of goods rather than
seek out clothing that is high quality or lasts a long time.
4.2.4 Summary of Economic Findings

In conclusion, consignment largely reflects the community economy tenet of values long-term investment because the clothing is high quality, durable, good value, good price and often contains natural fabrics. Conversely, women described fast fashion clothing as reflecting the mainstream tenet of privileges short term returns, because retailers are interested in making ongoing profits for disposable clothing. Fast fashion clothing is also discussed as oppositional to consignment because it is considered to not be a long-term investment, as well as disposable, throw away and poor quality. Table 9 reflects the framework, isolated for the economic dimensions, with participants’ responses in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consignment as an Alternative Community Economy</th>
<th>Recirculates value locally (clothes come from women in Guelph, money made from consigning clothes is spent back in store, clothes go to charity if not sold)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values long-term investment (good quality, good value, affordable price, natural fabrics)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mall Shopping or Fast Fashion as Mainstream Economy</td>
<td>Privileges short-term return (fast fashion falls apart easily, is throw away, easy to sell and make a quick profit, not sold at consignment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private appropriation and distribution of surplus, Fragmented, Competitive⁷</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Economic Framework with Participants’ Responses in bold

4.3 Social

According to the Gibson-Graham (2006), the social dimensions of community economies include socially embedded, culturally distinctive and community led. This stands in opposition to the mainstream economy tenets of socially dis-embedded and a-cultural. Table 10 below depicts these social dimensions in the study’s framework. Analysis of participants’ responses revealed that consignment in Guelph does reflect a

⁷ The tenets of the mainstream economy: private appropriation and distribution of surplus, fragmented and competitive were not discussed because they were not strongly connected or disconnected from participants’ responses. This is largely because participants’ responses satisfied data about consumption, but detail about the business side of consignment, which these tenets strongly represent, could not be discussed in detail.
Community economy socially. This section is organized first by exploring how consignment clothing is socially embedded through feelings of familiarity, as well as the shops presenting good customer service experiences and a comfortable atmosphere. Following this is a discussion of how consignment is both community led and culturally distinctive through Guelph’s community and culture, including strong environmental values, and participants’ description of feeling part of a movement while shopping and selling consignment clothing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Community Economy</th>
<th>Socially embedded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community led</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culturally distinctive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Economy</td>
<td>Socially dis-embedded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a-cultural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 10: Social Framework*

4.3.1 Socially embedded (familiarity, customer service and relaxed atmosphere)

For participants, consignment shopping is a social practice; there is familiarity with the owners, great customer service and relaxed atmosphere in the shops. A common point of discussion for participants about why they liked shopping consignment is because they were familiar with the shop owners, so much so that many were even on a first-name basis. This familiarity means that, in many cases, the shopping environment reliably provided a social experience for customers, as can be seen in this shopper’s description of one of the stores she frequently patronizes:

The kind of shop you can walk into and know the first name of the owner, that is pretty important to me because I’m a social shopper. Shopping is a social experience for me. I like to shop alone but it’s still a very social activity. I’ll chat with people that are in the store; I’ll chat with people who own it, that’s part of the whole thing. And I like hearing stories from those people who do the buying about where things came from (Participant 5).

Although shopping in general can be a positive social experience for many, this participant described how consignment shopping in particular, is a social activity. She, alongside several other participants, expressed their interest in interacting with the shop
owner, and discussing where some of the newer items in the store had come from. For many women who shop consignment in Guelph it is obvious that this is a very socially embedded activity.

Beyond being familiar with the owners, many participants discussed the high quality of customer service in consignment shops. Some went further to describe that they rely on shop owners that they are familiar with to give suggestions or pick outfits for them. Others simply appreciated good customer service that they received every time they went in. Some participants believed that consignment shop customer service is so good because the success of the business is linked to the owner’s livelihood, as can be understood from the following quote:

Another reason I think you notice you’re shopping locally is the people in the store are more involved in your shopping experience rather than just kind of ignoring you. It’s not just their job it’s their living, and so they seem to be a little bit more attentive, the stores are a little bit more unique, a little bit more focused (Participant 32).

Through the connections she draws here, this participant demonstrates her conflation of local, small-scale shops with excellent customer service. Additionally, she appreciated an owner or employee being involved in her shopping. Similarly, many other participants described the positive experience they had when shopping consignment because of the owners or employees’ assistance and discretion when approaching them. Another participant explained:

You don’t have someone hovering over you at a consignment store, where at American Eagle [mall clothing shop], you’re like ‘I’m going to try this on’ and someone’s hovering over you the entire time. That’s just what I feel like mall associates are, but places like The Patch [downtown consignment shop] they’re actually like your friends and helping you with what you need, not putting you in a bubble or something. But it makes it more enjoyable because then you don’t feel pressured to buy something you don’t necessarily want to buy, that you’re just looking at (Participant 23).

By describing the clerks as ‘friends,’ this participant demonstrates a unique social connection that transcends clerk-customer relationships in retail settings. Consignment shop owners were able to balance customers’ needs by being attentive but not being overly pushy, as discussed by many participants. This discussion aligns with the
community economies tenet of social embeddedness, because the customer service is a social dimension of shopping, and participants consistently described being made to feel comfortable by the shop owners and employees.

The positive customer service and familiarity experienced by shoppers combined to create an overall relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. This contrasts against non-consignment retail shops, such as is depicted in the following quote: “the third reason I shop at the consignment store is it’s very relaxed. I find in retail, they’re very, you know, in your face and it’s all for the sale, right? They’re not very concerned about how it looks on you, it’s all about the sale,” (Participant 2). For this individual, the comfortable atmosphere of consignment shops she patronized was the main motivation she shopped there. The high degree of social embeddedness of consignment shops manifested in participants’ discussion of familiarity, customer service, and comfort.

In contrast to consignment shops being relaxed and providing a high-quality customer service experience, participants often described malls and larger retail shops as imposing the opposite. As can be seen in the previous two quotes, participants described their experience with customer service in consignment in relation to when they have experienced poor customer service felt uncomfortable. Both participants described poor customer service experiences as arising from overbearing clerks. This was a common opinion shared by many participants, as they described larger retail stores putting too much pressure on them and only trying to obtain a sale rather than provide genuine assistance. The following participant also explained why the customer service was not as good in malls, and how this made the entire atmosphere feel different:

[I don’t think] I’d get that same [experience], you know those [mall] clothing shops have a lot of younger girls working in there, maybe not with the same experience or advice. Maybe it’s me who’s not as comfortable with that. I definitely feel a different vibe [in consignment shops] than a big box clothing kind of store, you know Ricki’s [mall clothing shop] or something like that. It’s just not the same attention I don’t think (Participant 24).
For this individual, the customer service was connected to the employees’ being less experienced, and therefore, not being able to provide the same quality of attention. Participants’ descriptions of poor customer service and unpleasant atmospheres of mainstream retail shops largely reflect the literature’s description of the mainstream economy as socially dis-embedded. This manifested in poor customer service, as well as feeling pressured and disconnected from sales associates due to their obvious they were more interest in a sale rather than in the customer’s needs or wants. In addition, many participants described the atmosphere of large shopping malls to feel uncomfortable in terms of lighting, store organization and scents.

In conclusion, participants’ discussion of consignment shops as familiar, and providing a positive customer service experience as well as a relaxed atmosphere, mirrored the community economy tenet of social embeddedness. Conversely, participants described the social experience of larger retailers as uncomfortable, overbearing and inexperienced, and this reflects the mainstream economy tenet of social dis-embeddedness. It is important to note that it was note the case for all participants, but for most, shopping consignment is a social experience where women want to feel connected to the owners and employees. Receiving assistance in a warm and comfortable atmosphere was crucial to whether one would shop at many places. All women described a positive social experience in consignment shops in Guelph (their favourites varied) due to both the experience with owners and employees, and the physical atmosphere of the shop.

4.3.2 Consignment as Culturally Distinctive and Community Led (being part of a movement and strong community)

Participants described consignment as being about more than just shopping used clothing. They often connected consignment in Guelph to the community and the culture. Opinions, insights and experiences of participants largely connected with the community economy characteristics of culturally distinctive and community led. Firstly, consignment shopping was special to several of the women interviewed and connected them with something bigger than shopping. As one participant summed up:
[When shopping consignment] I feel happier, I feel more comfortable, I feel like I’m part of the movement of people who want to wear used clothing. I feel like I’m wearing stuff that is not sold in stores and there’s something sort of unique and special about that (Participant 26).

Beyond the social experience of feeling comfortable in the shops, and familiarity with the shop owners, participants often felt connected to their community when shopping and selling clothes consignment. Many participants described Guelph as having a tight knit community where people shared similar values about the environment, including reusing and recycling goods. This belief can be seen in the following quote:

I think [the popularity of consignment in Guelph] speaks to kind of like underlying, belief structure or philosophy of the people in this community, that value recycling, passing on loved things they value and connecting even just through just like the transfer of an object with their community; putting something in rather than just taking things out of their community (Participant 5).

Many participants described Guelph in a similar manner, depicting the community as environmentally-focused, but also a place that fosters a culture of sharing and of well-being for everyone. As the participants believed the process of consignment clothing itself reflects the values of the Guelph community, and fit in well within downtown, this aligns with the literature’s description of community economies being community-led.

The strength of the environmental values within the Guelph community is very prominent, and this might contribute to the strong consignment shopping culture in the city. Some participants described this in contrast to other cities they had lived or visited, and how consignment clothing is largely not accepted. As one participant summed up:

Here, like I said, you wear it as a badge of honour, your consignment clothes; its more laid back. I hear if you go to Toronto you’re back to high fashion again. My sister who lives in Toronto for example, I talk about whether or not I’m going to dye my hair-you can see the greys coming in, cause I don’t think I will. Well in Toronto, everybody dyes their hair. We’re a little bit more granola tree hugging types here I think (Participant 6).

The acceptance of consignment clothing is connected to a larger cultural presence in Guelph of being laid back, and more ‘tree hugging’ as described by this participant. In
the same way as she compared Guelph against, Toronto, another participant used her experience in Windsor, Ontario as a comparison, saying:

Well it’s interesting because I’m from the Windsor area, and I don’t know if I would have come to wear so much consignment clothes, because it’s less accepted there. A lot of the teachers for example were a lot more high fashion out there (Participant 6).

Again, Guelph’s cultural acceptance of wearing used clothes is contrasted against Windsor where this participant experienced new, high-end clothing being more important, specifically for a professional such as a Teacher. Several other participants also had similar experiences with other Southwestern Ontario cities, citing Guelph as having a strong acceptance of wearing used clothing. This largely connects to the tenet of culturally distinctive in the literature, as Guelph is seen as having a collective attitude that encourages consignment to thrive.

4.3.3 Summary of Social Findings

In conclusion, participants’ responses largely reflected the literature in that consignment in Guelph is believed to be community led and culturally distinctive. Guelph has a strong community, and several women stated that they felt they were part of a larger movement when shopping and selling consignment within Guelph. All participants described Guelph as having an ‘environmental’ identity, and participants believed that consignment is something special about Guelph and thrives here due to this distinct identity. Table 11 reflects the updated framework with participants’ responses in bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consignment as an Alternative Community Economy</th>
<th>Socially embedded (familiarity, positive customer experience, relaxed atmosphere)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community led (part of a movement, unique, special).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally distinctive (laid back, ‘granola’, accepting of wearing second-hand)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Ethical

The final section of the framework outlined the ethical tenets of both the mainstream and community economies (see Table 12 below). The ethical tenets of community economies are: environmentally sustainable, ethical and harmonious. Conversely, the mainstream tenets are amoral and environmentally unsustainable. Participants discussion of the ways consignment clothing is ethical mirrored the literature’s description of community economies. Additionally, participants’ description of fast fashion and/or mall shopping aligned with the literature’s categorization of the mainstream economy. Both are described with examples in the following section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Community Economy</th>
<th>Environmentally sustainable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harmonious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstream Economy</td>
<td>Amoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmentally Unsustainable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Ethical framework

4.4.1 Consignment as Environmentally Sustainable and Ethical (reusing, recycling and not contributing to new clothing production)

According to participants, a common motivation for shopping consignment is that it is believed to be environmentally sustainable or eco-friendly. This is largely because consignment involves the process of reusing clothing and is therefore, thought to limit the amount of clothing waste that goes into landfills. As one participant expressed:
Instead of [clothing] getting thrown out, somebody else is going to use it again. Until ideally, you want to buy clothes until they’re not usable anymore and then you get rid of them, instead of just passing them off because you don’t like them anymore or that fashion has come and gone. I do think there is a small role for consignment to save those clothes from going elsewhere (Participant 10).

The majority of participants believed all types of second-hand clothing is environmentally sustainable simply because it involves a second cycle of use, rather than being disposed of after only one owner. Some participants described shopping second-hand during their childhood, while others became exposed to it much later in life. Regardless of how long they had been shopping or selling, all participants believed that shopping and selling consignment clothing reflects environmentally responsible behaviour. Many specifically used the term ‘recycling’ when describing how it benefits the environment, saying things like:

It’s recycling, a whole recycling system. As well it’s taking from the community and putting it back into the community, Helping local businesses through it. So consignment definitely, I think has a lot more positives than shopping otherwise (Participant 32).

Ultimately, participants’ interpretation of consignment as environmentally friendly, reusing, recycling and limiting waste, matched the literature’s categorization of community economies as environmentally sustainable.

The rest of this section discusses both the ethical dimensions of community economies and the amoral dimensions of the mainstream economy. They are discussed in tandem because this is how participants often described them. It will be apparent after reading that participants described consignment as ethical based on what is not ethical (or its opposite), which was always fast fashion/mall shopping. To access how participants themselves defined ethical, and if they thought consignment was ethical, they were asked if shopping consignment reflected ethical consumption. They were told ethical designations for clothes often meant that it contained organic cotton or was certified fair trade. Some were more aware of the term ethical consumption than others,
but all participants expressed that consignment consumption can be considered ethical for various reasons. One owner stated,

> Even though we can't guarantee it's [the clothing in store] all fair trade or sweatshop free, if people can get good quality clothing at the prices that they're buying throwaway fashion as I call it, then I think it's totally ethical shopping. (Participant 36).

This participant explained that consignment shopping can be considered ethical because it is avoiding consumption of fast fashion clothing, which she refers to as ‘throwaway,’ because it is known for being poor quality and falling apart easily. Therefore, the first reason purchasing consignment is ethical is because it avoids supporting fast fashion, which is considered unethical. Specifically, the fast fashion industry is thought to be unethical here because it produces clothing that gets disposed of easily. Participants consistently stated that clothing available at malls and department stores were poor quality and therefore, created waste more quickly than buying well-made garments at consignment shops. In other words, consignment was argued as a means to avoid these environmentally unsustainable practices,

> I feel like thrifting and consignment can almost take that overconsumption away because it's not someone buying a lot of shit and then just throwing it away, like ending up in a landfill or something. It's being recycled now in a different way. I feel like consignment is doing something a lot bigger. Five years ago I knew what it was but I never heard of it as much as I do now. I didn't know of as many stores (Participant 23).

This participant argued that consignment and thrift clothing shopping, are able to counteract clothing waste that goes into landfills. This was a belief shared by the majority of participants.

> Similarly, participants justified consignment as ethical is because it is re-using clothing and therefore, avoids clothing waste going into landfills. Therefore, because shopping consignment is environmentally sustainable, it can be considered ethical consumption, as the following participant argues:

> You’re not throwing stuff away, you’re re-using. I mean even if it’s not your stuff but if you just brought stuff there, and you’re leaving with someone else’s stuff, it’s like a trade, right? You’re not taking extra stuff that was just made, you’re just
taking someone else’s stuff, in lieu of your own. I think that’s what makes it ethical (Participant 13).

This participant specifically described ‘optimal’ ethical behaviour as bringing in gently-used clothing to sell at the same time as shopping consignment, essentially making a trade. Additionally, she connected ethical behaviour to not purchasing more than you need.

The third reason participants described consignment as ethical is because it is removed from the socially-irresponsible manufacturing practices of larger retailers. Participants largely associated malls and department stores with forcing workers to produce clothes for very low wages, long hours and unsafe conditions. One participant described this very clearly, saying:

[When shopping at the mall] I feel like I’m contributing to things being shipped overseas and um, paying people horrible compensation for the work that they do which is skilled work a lot of times, making clothes. And people in the country’s where so much of the clothing is manufactured are not being fairly paid, the source of the fabric’s is, is always questionable, a lot if it’s made out of petroleum which is a, a non renewable resource. And I think that a lot of the manufacturing is in countries where the work conditions and the environmental conditions are not a concern, it’s a kind of a low, lowest price at all costs kind of a system and I object to that. (Participant 15)

Evidently, participants described consignment as ethical by contrast to what they considered to be very unethical: the labour and production conditions of fast fashion/mall clothing. Fast fashion is considered to rely on sweatshops and therefore, unethical labour standards and treatment of workers. Consequently, participants felt very moved and upset when discussing many of the news stories that reflected labour conditions in clothing factories. Importantly, their discussion of the circumstances surrounding the fashion industry aligned with the literature’s categorization of the mainstream economy as amoral. Amoral can include the socially unfair labour practices as well as environmentally unsustainable practices, as the following participant describes:

[The factory] collapsed and a bunch of people died and I was so angry, I was anti- Joe Fresh. But the instant I was anti-Joe Fresh, I thought every company
does this, this isn’t just Joe Fresh- it’s everywhere. Greenpeace has had campaigns against Zara for using harmful dyes, and basically being unsustainable. So my thoughts towards it [mainstream fashion] are I really don’t like it, I think that’s why I feel so guilty. I don’t know everything there is to know about it, but I think I know enough to know that it’s really something that we can’t keep up with because we just keep throwing things out all the time. Everything turns to garbage. I think that’s why consignment is so good because you’re kind of a step in the middle of it being thrown out. (Participant 20).

When discussing how they felt about the global fashion industry, several participants spoke of the Joe Fresh factory collapse in Bangladesh in April 2013. Others spoke about the use of harmful dyes, and non-renewable resources that go into fast fashion and have harmful environmental consequences. In describing consignment as ethical and environmentally sustainable, participants frequently discussed how fast fashion reflects the opposite qualities. In other words, because it is not the fast fashion industry, which is considered to be amoral, unethical and environmentally unsustainable, consignment is considered to be environmentally sustainable and ethical.

In conclusion, consignment was cited by almost every participant as being environmentally sustainable because it is reusing and/or recycling clothing and as a result, limiting waste in landfills. Consignment was considered to be ethical because it avoided contributing to the disposability of the fast fashion industry, because it is environmentally sustainable, and because it avoids the socially irresponsible production conditions of fast fashion/mall shopping. Consequently, the ways participants described and felt about consignment mirrored the ethical tenets of community economies: environmentally sustainable and ethical. On the other hand, participants’ description of the fast fashion industry as environmentally harmful through waste, use of harmful dyed and non-renewable resources, as well as socially irresponsible through forcing poor working conditions on labourers reflects the mainstream tenets of environmentally unsustainable and amoral. Many participants felt very uncomfortable and unsettled

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8 News coverage of the Joe Fresh factory collapse in Bangladesh: https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/04/25/bangladesh_building-collapse_toll_nears_200_joe_fresh_clothing_other_brands_made_at_site.html
when discussing the fashion industry due its reputation for socially and environmentally harmful practices. Often, they also felt uncomfortable in interviews when they discussed having to sometimes to rely on larger retails for certain garments. Most participants described mitigating some of their uncomfortable feelings by purchasing used instead of new, as they saw consignment as a way to not contribute to the continuation of unethical social and environmental practices.

### 4.4.2 Tensions around feelings of guilt

Although participants’ responses aligned with the literature’s discussion of community economies as environmentally sustainable and ethical, there are some complexities surrounding this. As described in the economic and spatial sections, the majority of the clothes sold to consignment shops have been originally bought first hand from malls and large retail shops that manufacture clothing in the Global South. There is very little data from high-end retailers of the conditions of the factories where their clothing is manufactured, and it is largely speculation and assumptions that leads people to believe that fast fashion clothing has worse ethical practices than those of higher-end brands. However, most participants did align quality of clothing with better ethical production practices, as can be read below:

> Even if it's secondhand, I'd rather support a brand that I feel like treats their workers well [and] makes something of good quality; or at least sources their ingredients well. I think about food the same way that I think about clothing. I want to put something good in my body that I know is from around here or that’s raised properly. And in the same vain, I want to put something on my body that looks good and is kind of doing something good for the world. (Participant 9).

Although this was a belief shared among many participants, none expressed having clear knowledge of the manufacturing practices of the higher-end brands they seek to purchase at consignment shops. This participant conflated a higher-end brand with ethical manufacturing practices, as well as with better style. This participant never verified her assumption; and it is probable that her assumption could be flawed, at least in part, because many higher-end brands do manufacture their clothes in the Global South (similar to fast fashion) and labour conditions are unknown and not advertised.
Many discussed that they purchase consignment because they feel guilty about buying new, and some argued that they feel guilty consuming in general. As one participant expressed,

Well ... I do think that [shopping secondhand] is ethical, more ethical. I mean I have clothes that I’ve bought secondhand from Indonesia, Bangladesh, but I don’t feel guilty about it because I didn’t go seek it out, or I didn’t buy it because it was just there, I wanted to fill up my closet. I seem to be drawn to these, for example, this purse I bought this at the Attic [consignment shop in Guelph], I think it’s one of those designers, I didn’t even know it. My wallet is like, Liz Claiborne, it’s 5 bucks, it’s really well made. So, If I buy [it] on consignment and it’s brand name or it’s made in another country, and I know what’s going on and I think I know what’s going on there... I think it’s more responsible (Participant 16).

As evident from this and many other participants’ discussion of clothing consumption, guilt is a major motivator for the ways many women purchase in Guelph. At the very least, guilt is a motivator for women to choose consignment over new clothing. Most participants cited that consignment clothing—because it is reusing and not purchasing new—limited their feelings of guilt. However, some participants went further to discuss this and struggled with how consignment is ethical if it often still relies on the purchase of new clothing. The following participant expressed this difficulty, saying:

I think it’s ethical because when you buy consignment you kind of like, breaking even, because you’re the second person, or maybe even more to buy that [item]. You’re not really directly supporting these sweatshops and factories, even though someone else did. So it’s kind of in the middle I think, like you’re not really supporting it but you kind of are…it’s kind of tricky (Participant 25).

Many participants had similar difficulty in describing how consignment is ethical, because of its reliance on the mainstream industry. It was hard for participants to make an all or nothing statement. Most discussed a negotiation of how some aspects of consignment are ethical, while others are more blurry and confusing. However, one of the more distinctive aspects of consignment that possibly alleviates this guilt and confusion over ethics and brands is the idea of shopping mindfully, which was mentioned by many participants and brings together many of the aspects of community economies above.
4.4.3 Mindful Consumption

Participants often described shopping consignment as mindful consumption, whereas shopping fast fashion was considered mindless consumption. Beyond the obvious reasons that consignment clothes are seen as higher quality and good value, participants also described shopping consignment as mindful because it influenced many of these women to shop ‘slower’ and minimize their wardrobe. Shopping consignment encouraged women to be mindful about how much clothing they were consuming, minimizing their consumption of unnecessary garments. One participant illustrated this point when they described the influence consignment had on them: “it’s made me a lot slower and a lot more thoughtful in my consumption of clothing, because you still consume even though you use consignment. I think it’s made me more thoughtful,” (Participant 10). Shopping consignment was considered shopping ‘slower’ which is thought to be the opposite of shopping ‘fast fashion’. Some participants that did not use the term shopping slowly, but argued that shopping consignment is based on needs rather than wants, whereas shopping mainstream was considered to be based on prioritizing wants, and equated to mindless consumption. Many women argued that shopping consignment influenced them to change their shopping habits. Where some described they used to overconsume clothing, these same participants explained that now they focused on purchasing based on needs, and significantly reduced the size of their wardrobe. As one participant expressed: “I just started to re-evaluate: do I want or need this? No. It’s just that I liked it; so then it really just had me start to build in a thought process of waste, and overconsumption,” (Participant 8).

Many participants went into detail of describing the issue of overconsumption. They believed many women shopped based on wants rather than needs, such as in the following quotation:

People just try to mask things by buying and buying and they want to have a certain image so they buy this and that. I think especially when we’re teenagers, [we think] “who do I want to be? How do I want to look like? I want to be super cool.” I think I’ve passed that phase and a lot of people have, which is good, I don’t know it’s not real, it’s not genuine. I think expressing yourself through fashion and how you present yourself is one thing, and then
shopping just because you feel like you need to [fit in] is really different. I think you need kind of the good balance (Participant 25).

This participant discussed that many women overconsume clothing to fit into a certain identity and deflect from their genuine selves. Beyond trying to fit into a certain identity, many participants theorized that other women shopped based on wants because they were bored, and wanted to fill an emotional void. As one participant argued:

I think people shop out of boredom, some people [and] I notice a lot of women [shop] out of loneliness. It’s a social activity for them or they’re unhappy in their home life so they’re feeding something in themselves. I mean I go running, we all have our little things that we do (Participant 14).

This notion of shopping out of boredom or loneliness was not an uncommon notion among participants. During interviews, it was obvious that participants felt that those individuals that consumed out of boredom, loneliness or wants were different than themselves. In other words, those who shopped consignment were different types of people than those who shop at the mall or fast fashion. For participants, shopping consignment is based on needs, and maintaining a minimal but necessary wardrobe, which can be connected to the ideals of community economies and called mindful consumption. Whereas, the mainstream economy reflects individuals who shop fast fashion, over consume, consume based on wants and not needs and often shop out of boredom or to fit into a certain identity. These notions of mindful and mindless consumption can be added to the current framework as new tenets of community economies and the mainstream economy respectively. This feedback from participants provided more detail to the existing framework from the literature, and can be seen pictured below on Table 13.

4.4.4 Summary of Ethical Findings

In conclusion, participants described consignment as ethical and environmentally sustainable because it helps to re-use clothing, which avoids the social and environmental problems associated with production of fast fashion. Consignment is also ethical because it supports local store owners and does not contribute to the production of new goods. Participant’s discussion of fast fashion largely aligned with the
mainstream economy tenets of amoral and environmentally unsustainable. This is because the fashion industry is considered to be environmentally unsustainable through the use of harmful dyes, non-renewable resources and the over-production of disposable garments. In addition, fashion retailers are thought to depend on socially irresponsible manufacturing practices, including poor treatment of workers, low wages, and dangerous factory conditions. Mindful consumption and mindless consumption were not tenets listed in the community economies literature, but were discussed here because they aligned well with the tenets, and were discussed consistently by so many participants. Consequently, mindful and mindless consumption have been added to the ethical diagram which can be seen below on Table 13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consignment as an Alternative Community Economy</th>
<th>Environmentally sustainable (recycling and reusing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical (environmentally sustainable, not supporting unethical labour conditions/sweatshops)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 Harmonious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mindful Consumption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mall Shopping or Fast Fashion as Mainstream Economy</th>
<th>Amoral (poor working conditions/treatment of workers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Environmentally Unsustainable (use of non-renewable resources, poorly made clothing that increases waste)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mindless Consumption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Ethical framework with Participants’ Responses in bold

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9 It is difficult to discern whether participants believed that consignment could be considered harmonious, as no one used this particular word to describe it, and the literature lacks a clear definition. It could be argued that participants thought that consignment was ‘a connected whole’ because those who shopped there were consciously aware that they were trying to re-use, and trying to support the store owner and therefore, attempted to make a harmonious whole with their consumption. However, there is not enough data to argue this thoroughly.
Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1 Review and Summary

The findings in this research, revealed that according to participants, the consignment clothing sector in Guelph largely reflects a community economy spatially, economically, socially, and ethically. In addition, participants’ discussion of fast fashion clothing (or what they referred to as throwaway fashion and mall/department store brand) largely reflected the tenets of the mainstream economy. Although the women interviewed did not describe their experiences and beliefs about consignment in the same language as used in the literature, it was possible to connect their language to the tenets through the coding framework, discussed in Chapter 3. For example, participants’ discussion of consignment as a way to shopping locally mirrored the literature’s description of community economies as place-attached and small-scale. Similarly, participant’s description of fast fashion as large, corporate, and not community-oriented reflected the literature’s tenets of the mainstream economy. This is illustrated below in Table 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Community Economy</th>
<th>Spatial</th>
<th>Economic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Ethical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place-attached (Owner lives in the community, shop is located downtown)</td>
<td>Recirculates value locally and locally self-reliant (Clothes come from women in Guelph, money made from consigning clothes is spent back in store, clothes go to charity if not sold)</td>
<td>Socially embedded (Familiarity, positive customer experience, relaxed atmosphere)</td>
<td>Environmentally sustainable (Recycling and Reusing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-scale (Independent shop or a small franchise, under roughly 60 employees)</td>
<td>Values long-term investment (Good quality, good value, affordable price, natural fabrics)</td>
<td>Community led (Part of a movement, unique, special, like minded beliefs)</td>
<td>Ethical (Environmentally sustainable, not supporting unethical labour/sweatshops)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Values:
- Good quality, good value, affordable price, natural fabrics
- Environmentally sustainable, not supporting unethical labour/sweatshops
Table 14: The Conceptual Framework with Participants’ Responses in bold (tenets that were not found to be connected to participants’ experiences were removed).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainstream Economy</th>
<th>a-spatial/global (Not place-attached)</th>
<th>Privileges short-term return (Fast fashion falls apart easily, is throw away, easy to sell and make a quick profit, not sold at consignment)</th>
<th>Socially dis-embedded (Overbearing customer service, inexperienced, not genuine)</th>
<th>Amoral (Poor labour conditions/treatment of workers) Environmentally Unsustainable (Use of non-renewable resources, poorly made clothing that increases waste)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non local-ownership (Not benefiting a community member)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large scale (Corporate, mass scale production, sold in department stores or large retail malls)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Export-oriented (Outsourced labour, cheap fabrics, fast fashion)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many of the participants’ responses were difficult to separate as spatial, economic, social and ethical, illustrating that these descriptors blend together. For example, in Chapter 4, the spatial tenet of locally self-reliant is discussed in tandem with the economic tenet of recirculates value locally. This is because in relation to consignment, local self-reliance and the recirculation of value locally reflect both spatial and economic characteristics that are impossible to separate. In addition, participants’ discussion of downtown Guelph as both a distinct space for local business and a community gathering spot blurred lines between the social and spatial dimensions of consignment, and community economies more generally. Lastly, many participants described economic and ethical tenets of the mainstream economy together when referring to the disposability of fast fashion, as fast fashion is considered both environmentally harmful and economically wasteful.

Arguably more important than the overlap of the subsections of spatial, economic, social and ethical, are the complexities and contradictions surrounding the
supposed oppositional relationship of fast fashion and consignment. Many complexities, contradictions and tensions that arose in interviews with participants, alluded to the inability to neatly separate fast fashion/mall shopping from consignment clothing. One example of this, as many participants pointed out, is that consignment itself is dependent on the manufacturing and consumption of new clothing, so that it may then be sold second-hand to consignment shops. Consequently, consignment cannot be argued as a separate entity from mall fashion, and therefore, the relationship between community economies and the mainstream economy is more blurred than dichotomous. These ideas that participants struggled to separate as either consignment or fast fashion/mall shopping, illustrated that symbolic beliefs about consignment do not necessarily reflect the material practices, which will be discussed in this chapter. The original binary framework, as created by Gibson-Graham (2006) and adapted for use in this study, was not able to capture the blurring of aspects between both mainstream and community economies, as it only relates them as dichotomous. The next section discusses these contradictions and complexities through the compound economy model.

5.2 The Consignment Compound Economy

This section will discuss and then illustrate the consignment compound economy model. The compound economy model created by Heley et al. (2012) allows for a more complex reading of the community economies model (refer to Figure 2), than the dichotomous model created by Gibson-Graham (2006). Specifically, it assists to illustrate how the relation between community economies and the mainstream economy is not dichotomous but often blurred and interdependent. Although Heley et al. (2012) did not apply, but only proposed the use of their model, this Chapter tackles their suggestion by utilizing their model in relation to consignment clothing consumption, sales and operations in Guelph. Specifically, the tensions, complexities and contradictions that emerged in participant interviews reflect the blurring between consignment and fast fashion/mall shopping. These complexities inform the tenets of the consignment compound economy, which will be discussed and illustrated below.
5.2.1 Local/Global Tensions and The Subjective Notion of Value

A major difficulty in classifying consignment as a community economy is clearly defining the term 'local'. The findings in Chapter 4, outlined difficulties that many participants discussed in terms of categorizing consignment as local/shopping local. For instance, consignment clothing has often been manufactured in the Global South, and often does not use locally sourced fabrics and threads. In other words, both the garment and the labour required to produce clothing, contradict the notion that consignment clothing is local. In addition, much of the used clothing that comes into participants’ favourite shops is high-end retail stores outside of Guelph. Therefore, the exact percentage of clothing that is coming from women that reside within Guelph is unknown. Additionally, it is possible women who reside outside of Guelph may be selling garments to these popular consignment shops because the shops are familiar, and are known to accept certain brands. These issues challenge the notion that shopping consignment can be considered shopping local, as well as place-attached and locally self-reliant. This is because the success of consignment clothing shops in Guelph depend on clothing that comes from outside of Guelph, possibly from women residing outside of Guelph, and has been made outside of Canada. Several participants struggled with how to reconcile these complexities of consignment clothing when trying to categorize it as local.

Scale is important for geographers, and feminist geographers in particular attempt to examine common assumptions about the separation of local and global. Many argue that they are not rigid, but actually mutually constituted (Dyck 2005; Freeman, 2001), as evident in the following two examples. Dyck (2005) believes that the materiality of everyday routine activities is shaped by what is commonly thought to be global forces, ultimately reflecting the inability to separate these terms. Freeman (2001) conducted an empirical study on people known as Higglers in the Caribbean to illustrate how globalization is affected by both large and small-scale actors through economic and cultural processes. The above studies by feminist geographers reveal that participants’ difficulty in separating local and global when referring to consignment is warranted, because these concepts are not as rigidly separated as it is commonly thought. Ultimately however, most participants in this study suggested that consignment
is local because the shops are small-scale and independently owned. However, the complexity surrounding how local is perceived symbolically and the actual material practices of local reflects the blurring that can occur between the mainstream economy and community economies. Additionally, it reveals that consignment and the mainstream fashion industry are interdependent and therefore, presenting them as dichotomous is inaccurate. Therefore, the first tenet of the compound economy model I propose below is named ‘local/global tensions’.

Similar to the complications and blurring of categories between local and global, participants’ dualistic separation between high quality consignment clothing and poor quality fast fashion clothing, is not as rigid and separated as it is often believed. Firstly, many of the clothes sold in consignment shops (and therefore brought in by individuals who also shop there) is clothing that is sold in malls and therefore, for some could still be considered fast fashion. Some consumers would argue that only certain brands are considered fast fashion (such as H&M and Old Navy brands). However, consignment shop owners still sold items from these brands if they were very gently used and on trend, reflecting the blurring between fast fashion and consignment. Many participants also argued that the main difference between fast fashion and good quality clothing was fabric content. As reviewed in the Chapter 4, participants argued that natural fabrics such as cotton, linen and wool are more likely to be found in consignment shops, and never in fast fashion stores. Participants consistently described fast fashion as cheap, poorly made and composed of unnatural materials. However, it is still possible to find garments that are made of natural materials in fast fashion stores, and many high-end garments are composed of unnatural fibers, such as polyester\textsuperscript{10}.

Arguably the only definitive way to differentiate fast fashion from high quality consignment clothing is brand. Certain brands that are considered to be high quality are sought after in consignment shops, and finding these brands secondhand often gave participants a ‘high’ feeling. This idea of ‘finding a gem,’ also called ‘thrill of the hunt’ has

\textsuperscript{10} This argument is not referenced because it is grounded in the shopping experiences of the student researcher.
been discussed by other academics, and is a common feeling associated with shopping secondhand goods of all kinds (Bowser, Haimson, Melcer & Churchill, 2015). Gregson and Crewe (2003) studied secondhand goods of various kinds including some research on clothing, discuss that consumption of second-hand clothing directly relates to its first-hand consumption. Specifically, the value in second-hand clothing depends on its first-hand brand and durability. They elaborate that this fixation of finding certain brands not only relates more to mainstream first-cycle consumption than alternative consumption, but also reflects that brand is often more important to secondhand shoppers than those who shop at malls, they explain: “finding certain brands second-hand is of even greater significance since they were constituted here through value regimes that conjoin them powerfully with the bargain,” (Gregson and Crewe, 2003, p.193). Consequently, instead of being alternative to mainstream consumption, and resembling something ‘anti-consumerist’, Gregson and Crewe (2003) argue: “for some these second-hand worlds are attractive precisely because they enable [or] even legitimize excessive consumption that confers respectability and status, the brand and the label,” (p.193).

Participants description of their shopping style (how they decided what clothing to buy) reflects many of the first-cycle consumption practices as discussed by Gregson and Crewe (2003). For instance, fixating on brand in consignment consumption stood out when participants described consignment shopping as savvy, and for those in search of a bargain, rather than purchasing second-hand because it is more affordable, and out of necessity. Participants often discussed that consignment clothing provided more value than purchasing new, but often this was related to finding a high-end brand for a low price. The subjectivity around what denotes value, including brand, fabric content, durability or other, reflects the blurring of the mainstream and the community economy. Thus, the second tenet of the compound economy model I propose below is named the subjective notion of value.

Both local/global tensions and the subjective notion of value reveal that it is not accurate to represent the mainstream economy as oppositional to community economies. The consignment industry is built upon the mainstream industry, making these categories more interdependent than dichotomous. Moreover, as several
participants mentioned, it is possible that consignment enables and encourages overconsumption of new clothing. This is because individuals may purchase clothing based on aesthetic look or seasonal trend, and then sell the item back to consignment knowing it will likely be accepted. Consignment clothing shopping also often reflects a fixation with brand and a consumption style that is closer to first-cycle/mall clothing shopping than alternative. However, for the majority of participants, consignment symbolically reflects a community economy, and therefore an ethical way of consuming. This type of consumption is ethical because it centres on reusing clothing, limiting waste in landfills and recirculating value within Guelph.

Thus, consignment addresses many of the problems associated with capitalism, which is embodied by the fast fashion industry. For instance, according to participants, the fast fashion industry increases waste, and encourages overconsumption and mindless consumption. Conversely, consignment encourages environmentally healthy mindsets through mindful consumption, supporting communities and familiarity with local shop owners. Consequently, both depends on the mainstream economy and subverts it. Moreover, consignment reflects values of both the mainstream economy and community economy. Ultimately, the compound economy tenets help illustrate the complex relationship between the mainstream economy and community economies that would otherwise be simplified or avoided in the original dichotomous model.

5.2.2 Accessibility and Privilege

As discussed in Chapter 4, the majority of participants reported consignment clothing affords shoppers high quality clothing at low prices. However, this research found a lack of discussion from participants regarding the ways in which consignment may or may not be accessible for all income levels. The topic of consignment clothes being affordable for all income levels only arose in a small number of interviews. These few participants suggested consignment shopping is accessible for everyone because prices are fair and there are usually discounted clothing racks in most shops. In reality, the accessibility of consignment to all income levels is more complicated, as consignment is generally more expensive than fast fashion clothing. Furthermore,
shopping for consignment clothing often takes much longer than shopping for new clothing at malls or department stores, which affects those who are time-poor. In contrast, fast fashion may be more accessible than consignment because it is affordable, and mall stores are a one stop-shop for when individuals are looking for specific garments.

Inequalities within consumption spaces are a reality, and many women are excluded based on race and class (McRobbie, 1997). Williams, Hubbard, Clark & Berkeley (2001) examined exclusion and inclusion within consumption spaces from a social geographies perspective, and found that material constraints affect the accessibility of consumption spaces for individuals. Moreover, consumer choice more generally is restricted by material circumstances. Therefore, various ethnic, gender, class, and age groups are seen to frequent certain shops because of their individual or group resources, mobility and social competence (Williams et al., 2001). These findings are important in relation to this study because they support this study’s argument that consignment largely still reinstates certain inclusions and exclusions with consumption, while at the same time providing opportunities for some individuals to practice alternative consumption. In the case of consignment, not only is cost a factor, but time is a resource distributed unevenly across the population. This issue of time also complicates the notion that those who shop fast fashion are only doing so mindlessly, because they do not want to be ethical, shop local, or do not prefer high quality clothing. If community economies exclude some members of society, this challenges their goal of being both ethical and community oriented. This is crucial to further understand and analyze, and this study only begins to approach this problem. Therefore, the third tenet of the compound economy I propose is ‘accessibility and privilege’, because what can be categorized as the community economy may be more privileged and less accessible for some, reflecting the blurriness between mainstream and community economies.

Contrary to the poor accessibility of consignment in terms costs and time availability, consignment was found to be more accessible for different body types according to participants’ discussion of body size and clothing fit. Before beginning
interviews, I assumed that consignment would be discussed as not being able to cater to a variety of women’s body types and sizes because the stores usually only have one of each specific item as opposed to a range of sizes that are available for each item, as seen in at malls. However, the opposite was consistently true, as many participants said they chose to shop consignment because they had difficulty fitting into sizes of new clothing sold at malls. Some women explained that they began shopping for second-hand clothing (both consignment and thrift stores) precisely because as young women they had difficulty finding clothing that fit their body. Therefore, for some, consignment offered clothing that more easily fit their bodies, compared to clothing found in malls or department stores. However, most women interviewed still had to depend on mall clothing to purchase wardrobe staples, such as pants. It is also important to acknowledge that those consignment shops interviewed only sold clothing up to a certain size, and many did not carry what is often categorized as ‘plus’ sizes. Therefore, although some participants found clothing that could fit their body types more easily at consignment stores, this may not be true for those women who fall outside of the ‘average’ size spectrum. Size availability is another example of how consignment can be accessible for some, but not for all. In relation to women’s bodies and fit within clothing, body types and size vary and feeling comfortable in the fit of a garment is a very intimate, subjective experience. These experiences women shared surrounding fit and size illustrate the blurring between both the mainstream and the community economy, as participants relied on both to assemble a complete wardrobe. In addition, this analysis of accessibility suggests being weary of romanticizing community economies in relation to the mainstream, because in many circumstances, larger retailers are more accessible than consignment. In other words, consignment shopping is a good choice for many, but it is likely that many others do not shop there because of issues of circumstance, rather than choice.

5.2.3 Consumer Politics and Emotions

The community economies literature reveals that economies are often socially embedded and culturally distinct. However, the dichotomous framework avoids expanding on how these qualities play out empirically. The empirical focus of this study,
and the feminist interview methods used found that participants’ emotions and political preferences were central to how they experienced consignment. Thus, it is crucial to discuss consumers as emotional, rather than passive and exclusively rational individuals. Moreover, the tensions and complexities that inform the tenets of the compound economy (i.e. local/global), manifested in emotional ways for participants, both through feeling good (i.e. comfortable) and feeling bad (i.e. guilty). In other words, emotional experiences serve as a useful tool to understand and formulate the consignment compound economy. In addition, privileging emotional experience is important for feminist research, as personal stories and emotions are often discounted in positivist research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007). The following section highlights the political and embodied emotional experiences of participants, which often blur and interrelate, and are crucial to the function of the compound economy.

Gregson and Crewe’s (2003) study on used car boot sales (a type of garage or second-hand good sale), led them to the conclusion that participants did not shop for used goods, including used clothing, for political reasons. Gregson and Crewe (2003) argued this to be the case because most people they interviewed who deliberately consumed second-hand goods, did not connect their consumption to the practices of production, nor discuss the political circumstances of the product (Gregson and Crewe, 2003). However, for this study, the opposite was consistently found. Many participants argued that they purchased consignment clothing deliberately to avoid practices of new clothing production because they did not agree with clothing manufacturer practices. Specifically, they felt uncomfortable about low paying garment factory jobs, in unsafe conditions. Many women also explicitly connected their garments to the labour and inputs that went into making them. Participants discussed fabric quality, and concerns that labourers need a living wage for everyone to obtain good quality products. Consignment therefore, is symbolically ethical and political for participants. Specifically, the majority of participants had thoroughly reflected on their beliefs around these topics. This interest in conscious and thoughtful consumption that many participants practiced, illustrates the underlying theory of community economies, as they are intended to be a political way to push back against capitalism.
The political and ethical motivations and beliefs participants expressed were tightly connected to their emotions surrounding consignment. Nearly all participants described feeling some level of guilt from clothing shopping in general, but especially consuming new clothing, including fast fashion and high-end clothing. Shopping consignment was stated to alleviate feelings of guilt, and was a motivating factor for some to consistently purchase consignment clothing over new clothing. As noted in Chapter 4, participants were heavily influenced by their ideas of how clothing is manufactured, specifically the harmful environmental and social practices. Participants awareness, even marginally about poor working conditions and environmentally harmful practices ruminated as feeling guilty for consuming clothing entirely. This connects to discussions within the geographical literature on ethics of care and caring at a distance (Silk 2008; Smith, 2000). Participants consistently expressed concern for purchasing clothes, even out of necessity. This ethical caring at a distance was central to their choosing to shop consignment, but also sell, and own a business that could be categorized as ‘green’. Many also noted that clothing shops donated high quality clothing to local shelters, and participants greatly cared about local women in need as well. In addition, women in this study often defined what they considered to be ethical consumption and resistance to the mainstream based on their feelings of guilt. Beyond feeling guilty however, participants noted feeling pleasure in relation to shopping and selling consignment as well. This occurred through experiences such as finding a ‘gem’ or bargain, the comfort of browsing through these shops in the presence of friendly owners and a relaxed atmosphere, and the relief of finding clothing that fit their bodies. These emotions surrounding engagement with consignment clothing, illustrate the importance of emotions when discussing consumption and community economies, and the interrelation between both the political and emotional context of consignment.

There is a breadth of writing on ethical consumption as a theory and practice, which is largely beyond the scope of this study. However, it is important to briefly reflect on the relationship between consumption, emotion, and ethics as these concepts were consistent motivators for the ways women in this study consumed. Miller (2001) critiqued how consumption is largely only written and discussed within academia as
materialistic, capitalistic, and incompatible with environmentalism. Miller (2001) argues that the anxieties and feelings of guilt consumers have directly relate to a desire for ending poverty. This is because poverty is largely denoted by the absence of goods. Caring for distant (and local) others has been heavily debated in the literature, but some academics argue it may have the ability to de-fetishize the commodity (Popke, 2006). As mentioned above, many women connected the clothing they purchase with the labour involved in producing the clothing, inputs and overall production that went into the final product. Several participants also argued for a need to pay workers a liveable wage to receive high quality goods, and that this is not done with clothing that is coming from the Global South.

Arguably, consignment shopping does reflect a possibility to de-fetishize the commodity in this way, as consumers, sellers, and owners are wilfully connecting their garments to the manufacturing practices of new clothing. Some argue that reworking the fetishizing of commodities in this way (and practices like fair trade) may create a global domain of responsibility (Popke, 2006). This practice also reflects a connection between both the political interests of the consumer and their emotions informing their consumption choices, as both interconnect. Although the community economies framework rests on the concept of building strong communities through well-being and equality, the original framework by Gibson-Graham (2006) does not elaborate on how consumers are emotional beings, rendering it incomplete. It is evident through this discussion that emotions are saturated with an individual’s choice to consume in some ways and not others, and both feeling good and bad inform and result from their consumption choices. The compound economy is able to illustrate that emotions are central to economic activity, and therefore, provides a more comprehensive reflection of the materiality of the economy.

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11 Commodity fetishism is Marx’s theory of how capitalist production of commodities makes the environmental, economic and social relations behind them invisible (Marx, 1867; Hawkins, 2011). A significant portion of participants explicitly connected their clothing purchases to the social and environmental conditions of garment manufacturing, validating the potential for second-hand to de-fetishize commodities.
5.3 Summary of Consignment as a Compound Economy

Participants’ responses about their experiences, opinions, and beliefs surrounding consignment clothing in Guelph clearly aligned with the literatures categorization of community economies. Participants’ descriptions of shopping for new clothing at the mall, including discussions on fast fashion, largely aligned with the literature’s categorization of the mainstream economy. However, there were complexities that arose during conversations that reflected the inability to position consignment as completely oppositional to fast fashion/mall shopping. Consequently, this also suggests that the relationship between community economies and the mainstream economy is more blurry than dichotomous in practice. Therefore, the compound economy model was used in this study to discuss the complexity that the original dichotomous framework was not able to capture. Figure 5 below illustrates the compound economy model in relation to this study’s focus on consignment clothing in Guelph. In the original compound economy model by Heley et al. (2012) the compound economy was pictured as a box between the mainstream and community economies in their diagram, but no text was included within that box to further explain it. Here, the consignment compound economy does include specific tenets that primarily came from tensions and complexities that arose in interviews with participants, and are illustrated in the middle box. These complexities reflected specific moments when it was difficult to clearly separate the community economy from the mainstream, reflecting how often these two assumed separate entities actually blur and interrelate.

The first two tenets of the compound economy included local/global tensions and the subjective notion of value. These concepts reflected the complexities that arose when participants attempted to define consignment as local, high quality, and oppositional to mainstream clothing. After discussing these tensions through the compound economy model, it was possible to see that consignment both depends on the mainstream, while subverting it by limiting waste going into landfills through reusing clothing and also encouraging less consumerism, and promoting community focused mindsets. The third tenet, accessibility and privilege, was not spoken about by participants but was crucial to reflect on and when discussed illustrated the blurring
between the mainstream and community economy in relation to time spent and costs of new and used clothing shopping. Moreover, the absence of any discussion around accessibility points to the crucial importance of refraining from romanticizing community economies in relation to the mainstream, as both can have benefits and downfalls and should be analyzed from a critical place. Lastly, the final tenet, the political and emotional experiences and beliefs of participants illustrated the tensions within the compound economy and the benefits of community economies more generally. Moreover, these emotions assist to shed light on the interconnections between the mainstream economy and the consignment economy and how larger global processes of capitalism, globalization and poverty manifest within consumers. Listing these tenets within the framework is important as a beginning step to challenging the dichotomous model, and promote a more comprehensive depiction of the economy as a whole. Figure 5 below illustrates the consignment compound economy containing the consignment compound economy tenets in the middle.

Figure 7: The Consignment Compound Economy Model adapted from Heley et al. (2012)
Chapter 6. Conclusions: Contributions, Limitations and Future Research

This section outlines this thesis’ contributions both to the community economies scholarship and practice, as well as literature on second-hand clothing and consumption. Following this, is a discussion of limitations and future paths of research.

6.1 Contributions

6.1.1 Community Economies Scholarship and Practice

This research contributes to the scholarship on community economies by providing an empirical example of the ways consignment clothing in Guelph reflects the major tenets of community economies. After interviews and analysis, it can be concluded that according to participants’ opinions, beliefs and experiences, consignment in Guelph largely reflects a community economy spatially, economically, socially and ethically. Although participants did not use the same language as that in the community economies literature, their discussion of how consignment is local, affordable, good quality and environmentally friendly reflects the same values and meanings. Therefore, this study contributes to the already existing literature on community economies by connecting the theoretical underpinnings of community economies to a material case study.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the practical application of community economies. Cities that share similar spatial and economic characteristics of Guelph can generate a consignment industry, which in turn promotes positive environmental mindsets and mindful consumption practices. It shows how consignment both materially and symbolically reflects many of the tenets of community economies in practice, including a focus on environmental health and community well-being. Moreover, this thesis illustrates how consignment may be accessible for many women who otherwise could not afford certain clothing, or have difficulty finding clothing that fits their bodies in new fashion shops. In addition, consignment clothing is considered to be very community involved (both materially and symbolically) which may assist with other similar sized and structured cities to attempt to increase their circulation of used goods and support of local independent business. The community economies scholarship,
although very theoretical in the academic literature, also attempts to be accessible for all types of communities and individuals around the world. All articles are available to access on the web, and books are written in accessible language to transform these theories about diverse economies into actual practice. Therefore, this research attempted continues this link between research, theory and practice and begin to show how clothing can be part of this in some cities.

6.1.2 The Compound Economy Model

There have been many critiques of Gibson-Graham’s (2006) community economies framework, citing it as overly simplistic and dichotomous. Despite some suggestions for new frameworks and models, there is a lack of empirical studies employing one. Therefore, a major contribution of this study is the utilization of the compound economy model to illustrate important complexities and tensions that arose during interviews in relation to consignment clothing. These tenets of the compound economy reflect how the relationship between the mainstream and community economy blurs quite often and thus is not dualistic. These are illustrated in the middle of the compound economy figure, in between tenets of the mainstream economy and community economies.

Local/global tensions and the subjective notion of value revealed that the consignment process is built upon the mainstream economy, but also subverts it through environmentally sustainable practices and the promotion of community mindsets. In other words, consignment depends on the mainstream fashion industry but also limits clothing waste through re-use clothing, and provide a space for women in Guelph to donate much of their clothing to locals and feel as if they are part of a larger movement, and a community. An important topic that was not discussed by participants, accessibility, is part of the compound economy because it further shows how the reliance on and engagement with consignment could be related to one’s privilege and income level, and indirectly supports inclusions and exclusions within fashion consumption. Analysis of this revealed the importance of paying closer to attention to accessibility to ensure community economies are able to be used by the
entirely of a community, not only certain individuals. Lastly, the importance of including consumer’s political interests, emotions, and how participants make decisions was explored. Participants’ largely considered the dimensions of consumption and production when cloth shopping, reflecting how second-hand clothing is consciously political for many people. Moreover, these women’s emotions both good (feeling comfortable in the clothing and shops) and bad (feeling guilty) are tightly wound in clothing consumption, and were consistently referenced and discussed in interviews. These insights into the motivations for why participants consume in certain ways, reveal the importance of seeing consumers as emotional rather than exclusively rational. The compound economy model makes space for discussing the emotions and political preferences of individuals rather than assuming them to be rational, which occurs in the dichotomous diagram.

6.1.3 Consignment and Second-hand Clothing

Beyond the contributions to community economy scholarship, this study fills a gap in the literature surrounding consumption and second-hand clothing. Specifically, it explores how women’s second-hand clothing consumption in a city in the Global North can be considered political and ethical consumption. There are several studies on economic globalization that focus on women and production, but focus less on how women are connected across commodity chains, and specifically how consumption relates to the recently changing landscape of clothing production. Moreover, how second-hand clothing connects to mainstream clothing production has not been discussed very much within academic literature. Although these topics were not the focus within this research, they were still connected and therefore, this thesis begins to fill a gap in the literature and suggest new paths of research broaching several of these topics.

6.2 Limitations

There are some limitations of this research study which will be outlined in in this section. Firstly, time constraints have dictated that this project remain small and therefore, the number of participants interviewed are not representative of the Guelph
population. Consequently, the results from the interviews cannot be argued to reflect mindsets of the general population within the city. Had more time been available it may have been interesting to get a more representative sample from Guelph in order to learn more about those women who do not shop or sell consignment. Additionally, because the study was small-scale, the results may be less relatable to other Southwestern Ontario cities, or those cities outside of Ontario, Canada.

Beyond the size of the study, the particularities of Guelph make it difficult to relate the findings from this study for other cities. Guelph is an attractive place to move for people that highly value environmentalism and therefore, many of the shops and community events reflect these values. It follows then, that the majority of the consignment shops within Guelph are appealing to Guelph citizens precisely from an environmental perspective. This also may explain their success within the downtown Guelph area. It’s possible that the ‘community’ in Guelph is very different than that of many others and therefore, the results may not be transferable when discussing community economies in similar-sized cities. Essentially, Guelph has a unique community and spatiality downtown that facilitates environmental mindsets.

Similarly, the findings from this study were generated from the perspectives of participants, as they were collected solely from in-depth interviews. Although there was diversity among participants in terms of their experiences and roles within the larger clothing industry, the findings also contain their biases and positionalities. Consequently, the findings are reflective of only this small group of participants and are limited in speaking to the consignment and larger second-hand economy in Guelph. In other words, the scope of this study, and specifically its focus on experiences rather than utilizing more ‘objective’ data such as participant observation, or recording second-hand consumption practices from a larger sample size, reflect a limitation in speaking to the larger dynamics at play within consignment clothing in Guelph, and elsewhere. Also importantly, this study is limited as it does not include the voices of many marginalized groups that were absent within the sample. Lacking are the clothing experiences of queer bodies, indigenous women, and disabled women, among many others.
6.3 Future Research Paths

There are several recommendations for future research paths. Firstly, this study has only begun to research the ways second-hand clothing can reflect the characteristics of a community economy. Consumers are becoming increasingly interested and involved in alternative clothing consumption, relying heavily on trading and purchasing second-hand. Therefore, more research is needed on how these practices work and how they can be supported in cities and rural areas. There is much room to explore the various practices already occurring and how they could be further realized, made stronger and transferred to other areas.

The compound economy illustrated a more comprehensive reading of community economies than the initial framework, revealing how economies largely do not fit neatly into just community or mainstream categories. The compound economy model also assisted to illustrate that consumers are emotional rather than just rational, which is a major motivation for certain consumption choices. More research is needed to understand emotions and consumption through the community economies framework. Future research in this area could also be useful to understand how community economies can be further realized by individuals already interacting within their communities, or how to get more individuals involved in community practices. Similarly, more research into the ways accessibility fits within community economies is needed within the literature. Community economies scholarship is built upon a critical feminist political economy theory and therefore, understanding exclusions and inclusions among current community economies is crucial to their effectiveness. Further research can investigate the ways some individuals may be excluded, and be used to re-integrate them to ensure there are as few barriers as possible for community economies to thrive.

Lastly, the field of community economies can greatly benefit from more empirical case studies. One option may be to further explore what is commonly known as sharing economies that have been increasing in many cities throughout North America (including tool libraries, and BUNZ trading groups in Toronto and nearby cities). Researching these can help to increase the visibility of diverse economies and
contribute to changing mindsets and material practices at a greater scale, which was an initial goal of Gibson-Graham's writings.
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Appendix 1: Recruitment Poster

Consignment Clothing Study

Women aged 18+ who have either sold or purchased from a consignment shop in Guelph, Ontario, in the last 6 months are needed for a study on consignment clothing and community economies.

Your participation will require a 1 hour interview and you will be entered into a draw to win 1 of 3 $50.00 gift certificates from a consignment shop in Guelph.

Please email Liz Homer at ehom@uoguelph.ca for more information.
Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Owners

**General**
Can you tell me some of your main duties and responsibilities as the shop owner (or store manager)?
Can you tell me how consignment works here (the logistics)?
What are the top 3-5 reasons you like owning or managing a consignment job
  a. Can you expand more on these reasons (i.e. environmental reasons, economically beneficial)?
  b. Do you also shop consignment?
  c. What opportunities drove you to open or manage a consignment shop?

**Spatial**
Why did you open a shop in Guelph?
  a. How does your shop compliment or fit within other shops in the downtown Guelph area? Why does it fit well or why not? Is it similar or complementary to other businesses in the downtown area? Why do Guelph residents like to shop consignment?
  b. Is there something significant in Guelph, or is consignment clothing sales successful in other cities just as well?
  c. Is consignment good for Guelph’s community?
Do you shop, attend any events or participate in any other ways in Downtown Guelph? (you personally and the business)
  a. What might these be and why?

**Economic**
Are there certain brands of clothing that are sold here more often than others?
  a. Are these fast fashion or high-end?
How long do you keep items in store before giving them back to the seller?
How do you decide what clothing will be kept to try to sell and what will not be?
  a. Is it only based on clothing quality or do size, style or any other factors matter?
How do you decide how to price items?
  a. Are items sold here more, less or near the original price of the garments?
Can women from a wide variety of incomes shop here? (Is it affordable)?
Is this business good for the Downtown Guelph business association/ Guelph’s economy?
How does consignment differ from fast fashion?

**Bodies/size/fit**
What are the demographics of the women who shop at your stores?
  a. Do you market to this particular age group/style?
  b. Do you carry only certain sizes? Is carrying a wider range of styles and sizes something you are interested in?

**Political Capacity**
What would you say your knowledge/awareness level is of the fashion/global clothing industry?
What are your opinions on this industry?
What are your thoughts on our culture and overconsumption of clothing?
Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Consumers

General
What are the top 3-5 reasons you like to shop consignment?
   a. Can you expand more on the reasons? (i.e. environmental, economical)
How often do you shop consignment compared to other types of clothing (or do you only shop consignment?)
   b. What about other forms of used clothing (thrift, garage sales)?
   c. Where are your favourite places to get clothing and why?
      i. Is it based on style? cost? fit?
How do you feel when you shop consignment vs. the mall?
What are the main determining factors when you purchase clothing, in order (if you can guess): cost, size, style, brand? / What do you look at first when your shopping?

Spatial
Do you consume clothing in other places in downtown Guelph?
Which places do you like best? Why?
What about at the mall or at larger big box retailers?

Economic
How important is cost to you when shopping consignment?
How important is cost to you when consuming clothing in general?
Do you find prices in consignment are more or less expensive than other places you shop? (and is this a main draw?)
What do you define as a fair price or good value for clothing?

Spatial/Economic
What does shopping locally mean for you/how do you determine the parameters of the term?
When shops encourage individuals to shop locally (can be through advertisements on the door or outside), does this influence you? Are you more or less interested in ‘shopping locally’ vs. not?
How do you know if you are shopping locally?
Does it matter to you if clothes are made locally or abroad?
How much of your clothing currently is made locally vs. abroad?
What are the barriers to consuming locally?
How might these be eradicated in a ‘perfect world’? How could these be overcome?

Social and Ethical
Are you involved in any community groups/events/organizations within downtown Guelph?
If yes, what kinds of things do you do and why do you enjoy this?
Does Guelph have a different sense of community than other cities? How does Guelph’s sense of community differ from other places?
Do you take part in any activities like clothing swaps or trade clothing with friends?
Have you ever used community gardens (farmer market shopping, foodshare)?
How often do you take part in these? Why do you do these things? How do you feel about sharing clothes with friends vs. buying new clothes? Do you think consignment reflects ethical consumption (given that ethical consumption usually reflects characteristics such as organic cotton, fair trade).

**Global Apparel Industry**
What would you say your awareness is around the fashion/global clothing industry? How familiar are you with the social and environmental consequences of the global apparel industry? (i.e. things like factory conditions for workers, or cotton crops, over consumption of clothing in the landfill)
Do you find that these issues influence how you shop at all? Has this ever influenced you to buy fair trade, organic or locally made clothing? Do you think consignment might be a way to help eradicate some of these issues? Do you think consumers should be mindful of social and environmental consequences when making purchases?

**Bodies**
Do you have difficulties finding clothes that fit your body type? Do you shop at particular places that fit to your body type? you find you avoid certain stores because of clothing fit? Can you explain/elaborate on some of your experiences? Do you avoid certain styles of clothing because of your body shape or size? Do you ever reflect negative on your body while shopping or after going home?
Appendix 4: Interview Guide for Sellers

General
Where do you sell your clothing to (which shops)?
  a. Do the processes differ, or are they all generally the same?
What are the main 3-5 reasons you choose to sell consignment?
  b. How long have you done this for?
  c. When you bring your clothes to the consignment shop and some do not get taken, what do you do with the leftovers (i.e. donate them/take them back)?

Spatial/Economic
How often would you say you shop downtown vs. elsewhere (the mall, big box retailers)?
Is shopping locally something that influences you?
Why or Why not? Can you explain how you incorporate it?

Economic
Do you prefer cash or store credit for your clothing sales?
What types of clothes do you purchase? (i.e. fast fashion, high-end)
  a. Do you also buy consignment and/or thrift clothing?
  b. Can you expand more on why you like to do this?
     i. Is it just based on style? Do you like to reuse clothing? Is it a personal, political or morally informed decision?
Would you say you shop for clothing frequently?
Would you say you have more clothes than you need, or you often overshop?

Ethical and Social
Based on your experiences, why do you like selling clothing consignment?