Another Hanger Added to the Rack: The Effects of Middle-Class Thrift Shoppers on Low-Income Individuals

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ABSTRACT

This paper researched the effects of increased middle-class thrifting on low-income individuals in a suburbanized setting. The inquiry is built on the works of Ma and Riggio who explored the effects of resellers on low-income individuals using a similar Likert-style survey method that gathered results on the thrifting habits. As a result of this research, there were findings of a lack of negative impacts from middle-class thrift shoppers because of the considerably low rate of thrift shoppers. This low thrifting rate could be due to a lack of motivation from sustainability movements and social media which were commonly attributed sources for the thrifting increase within the fashion field. Additionally, results also show that high rates of donation supplying thrift stores with clothing to then be sold to low-income individuals. However, there was an extent found in the noticeable price increases, and lack of consideration of others while thrift shopping. This can be seen in the middle class which had a significant difference from the low-income group in terms of shopping in plentiful sizes.

Introduction

As a whole, the fashion industry not only emitted around 598 million metric tons of Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) in 2020 (10% of all global warming emissions) but also contributed to other forms of environmental damage ("*Climate change indicators…*"; "*UN Alliance aims…*", 2018). For instance, synthetic materials require around 342 million barrels of oil per year to produce, and clothing dye processes require 43 million tons of chemicals per year (Stallard, 2022). Subsequently, numerous sustainable fashion alternatives have been proposed. The most notable of these is thrifting. For this research inquiry, thrifting can be defined as the process in which second-hand clothing is bought from a thrift store or any second-hand store online or in person.

In recent years, the middle class has increasingly shifted towards thrifting as a source of clothing despite middle-class shoppers being large consumers of fast fashion (cheap clothing made using inexpensive outsourced labor to keep up with trends). When translating the nearly $1,700 of American spending per year on fast fashion to thrift stores it is found that thrift stores cannot handle the same level of consumerism as fast fashion companies ("The Hidden Costs…", 2023). This is due to the low supply of clothing that thrift stores have in comparison to the high demand. Kelsea Schumacher and Amanda L. Forster, authors of a study released by the US Department of Commerce in 2022, state that around 15% of clothing is donated to thrift stores while the other 85% is thrown away (Schumacher and Foster, 2022). As a result, thrift stores have a limited supply and as thrifting increases the demand will out way the supply causing a shortage in clothing at thrift stores. Low-income individuals would then not have a proper supply of clothing. Additionally, other social factors including selfish motivations could upend this solution. For instance, selfish motivations are present as individuals, who have the financial ability to purchase clothing elsewhere while maintaining sustainable practices, thrift large amounts of clothing to create haul videos, or participate in the thrifting resale culture, where people will buy clothes from thrift stores and resell them at a high price, to create a large profit.

This resell culture has been proven to negatively impact low-income individuals who use thrift stores as their sole source of clothes (Ma and Riggio, 2021). Therefore, low-income individuals who have used thrift stores to meet their basic need for clothing would not have a proper selection of clothing in their size or preferred style as middle-class thrifters buy in large quantities. It is the goal of this research to determine whether low-income individuals are impacted by the combination of a lack of clothing selection and an increase in middle-class shoppers.

Review of Literature

Changing Perspectives on Thrifting

Historically, thrifting has been found to have different connotations or feelings that surround the action of thrifting than it does today. Nancy Fischer, who performed a qualitative analysis of American newspapers from 1950 to 1990 to find the historical context of thrifting, explains that in the 1950s, "When factory-made clothing became widely available, wearing used clothing became associated with poverty," (Fischer, 2015). As a result of this ideology, many people did not want to be seen wearing second-hand clothing, creating negative perspectives surrounding buying clothing from thrift stores. From 1950 to 2012, thrifting continued to have a negative light surrounding it as individuals increased their expenditure by participating in fashion trends as time passed. In 2012, there was a change in connotation from a negative perspective to a positive one. Ronobir and other directors at the FINX Research & Journalism Institute attributed this change in view to Malcamore's 2012 Grammy-winning song "Thrift Shop." This is because the song lyrics promote shopping with little money by purchasing clothing from thrift stores stating that the whole process is "awesome." This changed the connotation of thrifting among younger individuals to see thrift shopping as a way to save money and get a good bargain on clothing (Ronobir et al., 2020). A 2021 survey produced by Chester and Hall for the University of Tenessee Technical School would agree with Ronobir as they found that 61% of respondents have never looked at thrifting negatively (Hall and Chester, 2021). This shows how much change the thrifting space has seen in comparison to the 1950s and even in the childhood of some millennial-aged (individuals born from 1981 to 1996) individuals.

Kayleen Kelly, a millennial and professional home organizer on TikTok opens up about her experiences with this change stating that she would hide using Goodwill as a source for clothing from her peers as a child because it was seen as embarrassing. She goes on to explain that in recent years, thrifting has grown as a result of social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram (Kelly, 2022). TikTok in particular has over 12.4 billion views and 1.3 million posts under the #Thrifted tag not including the billions of views other similar tags have such as #thriftedfashion. Just looking at the number of views this tag has, it is clear that this is very popular among TikTok users, which mostly consists of individuals a part of Generation Z, or individuals born from 1997 to 2010. Furthermore, ThredUp, an online consignment company, released a 2023 resale report that predicts the future of second-hand clothing. They say that in 2027 Generation Z will make up 60% of all shoppers and the thrifting market will include 60% of new shoppers while around 40% will be made up of existing shoppers (ThredUp, 2023). This statistic goes to show that thrifting is becoming increasingly positive with the younger generations as more and more people use thrift stores as their main source of clothing, and share their experiences online. Overall, this change in perspective shows why low-income individuals could be at risk with the fluctuation of thrift shoppers at such a drastic level.

Environmental Advantage

Environmentally, thrifting is seen as a solution for the immense pollution caused by the fashion industry, and therefore, it is important to understand that this solution was necessary as a result of the growth of the fast fashion industry (Perri, 2023). This is because the garment production processes create around 71% of total CO_2 emissions created by the fashion industry (Basalamah et al., 2023). Meaning, that the creation process is the most harmful to the

environment. As the fast fashion industry has grown, the production process has increased leading to more environmental damage. Specifically, water waste is one of the largest polluters in this industry. This is because chemicals and dyes will reside in water used by garment factories; however, these factories will not filter the chemicals out of the water before sending them back out to a larger body of water (Basalamah et al., 2023). Noting that most garment factories are located in outsourced nations that do not have proper sanitation or water systems shows that this water harms the surrounding communities as these people are exposed to drinking water that contains chemicals. Dr. Prit Paul Singh, a hospital director in India, shed light on this in the documentary *The True Cost,* which discusses the environmental and social effects of the fashion industry. He said, "You will see that hundreds of patients are suffering with cancers. Seventy to 80 kids, in every village, you will find facing severe mental disabilities and physical handicaps'," (Andrew, 2015). This shows that the production process's environmental and social effects result in a need for change whether that change, such as thrifting, could hurt other social circumstances as well.

Subsequently, many consider thrifting as a viable solution because it follows a consumption cycle where there are more wears per creation of the article of clothing. For example, fast fashion is not clothing that is made to last and is often thrown out after one life span, or the number of owners, meaning that the articles of clothing that do not last long enough to be donated are used by a secondary owner and would have less wear than a well-made article. To meet the demand for fast fashion clothing the production process must increase as wear decreases. This is due to the increased demand resulting in more items of clothing being produced; however, the wear of an article of clothing is a lot less as the clothing is thrown away after only a few wears due to poor quality of clothing. Specifically, the Division of Fashion at the College of Marketing and Retail and Glasglow Caledonian University found that fast fashion tends to last for around 10 wears (Morgan & Birtwistle, 2009). As more individuals shop from thrift stores the opposite is true. There are more wears per article as each piece sees a longer life span. Additionally, since there is a longer life span in the article of clothing new clothing is not produced as often. This decrease in production is part of the thrifting process that decreases the environmental impacts of fast fashion. However, this only works when large numbers of people switch from fast fashion to thrifting. Only one person doing so would not work. In addition, there must be enough clothing supplied that is fashionable and wearable for it to sell. As a 2017 study stated only 8% of clothing waste is reused, meaning that for thrifting to work properly more people need to donate clothing to thrift stores that are in demand by a large population (Common Objective, 2018). Montgomery and Mitchell found most donors are women donating their children's clothes or elderly women donating their clothing, meaning the style of clothing that is most often donated is not the most usable for the low-income population which is mostly men (Montgomery and Mitchell, 2014).

In addition to production waste, thrifting is a solution to landfill waste. Most clothing that ends up in landfills will sit in landfills for anywhere from 20 to 200 years, as polyester (a commonly used material in clothing) is not biodegradable (Stanes & Gibson, 2017). Additionally, as the clothes do eventually start to decompose they release chemicals into the ground and waterways and release CO2. As over 5% of landfills are made up of clothing, the pollution is intense. Maya Cummings the creator of Upcycle Style a consignment company that wants to create a more attractive thrifting experience states that thrifting will produce a longer life span of clothing (Cummings, 2021).

Effects of Thrifting

Thrifting growth has resulted in numerous changes in the fashion industry. For instance the "curated consumer," or an individual who is a part of Generation Z who uses thrift stores for the uniqueness that their clothing offers and the sustainability aspects, as Maya Kotsovolos calls it, was created. These individuals have created a space where shopping from thrift stores is possibly not a trend but rather a lasting way of life (Kotsovolos, 2021). This is beneficial environmentally; however, not all effects of this increase are. For instance, Ronobir and other researchers explain that thrift stores such as Goodwill and The Salvation Army are being gentrified. This means that these stores have an increased demand from the curated consumer and a wealthier consumer base. Therefore, they have raised the prices of their products since these individuals will purchase more products from thrift store stores at higher prices than their

previous customer base would. They specifically state, "[The gentrification of thrift stores] is starting to show an issue of how second-hand shopping and being sustainable in fashion is a privilege for the affluent class given how it is getting harder for an average working class citizen to thrive," (Ronobir et al., 2020). This is a problem as Florida has seen a 2.8% increase in homelessness, meaning more and more individuals need clothing that is cheap and accessible, especially business clothing that could help them get a job ("*TOGETHER WE CAN …"*, 2023). However, with this gentrification, it is becoming increasingly difficult as prices are too high and trends result in individuals shopping in sizes and styles that are often necessary for low-income individuals. Another issue that is present, is that of resellers. As there has been an increase in demand for vintage clothes individuals will buy in large quantities from thrift stores and then resell them for high prices to make money. Ma and Riggio study the resell process and its effects on low-income communities. They found that the decreased stock of clothing as a result of resellers has led to negative effects on low-income communities (Ma and Reggio, 2021).

From this study, it is illustrated that while the negative effects of resellers on low-income individuals have been tested, the effects specifically on middle-class consumers have not. From this gap, the following inquiry was formed: To what extent does the growing thrifting trends among the middle class in Pasco County affect low-income individuals' ability to obtain affordable clothing? This question will be answered using a Likert-style survey which will ask respondents questions relating to their experiences while thrifting along with some demographic questions. Prior to conducting research, it was hypothesized there would be negative effects on low-income individuals because less clothing available in certain sizes and styles would harm those who can not afford to shop elsewhere; assuming the growing population of thrifters is consuming in large quantities, low-income individuals who may not have the ability to shop elsewhere for clothing.

Methodology

Overview

Once approved by the institutional review board, a Likert-style survey was used to determine the effects of middle-class thrifting trends on low-income individuals' ability to obtain affordable clothing in Pasco County, Florida. This location was chosen due to its highly suburban population containing mostly caucasian middle-class families which differs from previous works such as Ma and Riggio who studied a highly populated urban city with a larger population of Hispanic individuals (United States Census Bureau, n.d.; United States Census Bureau, 2022). Additionally, Florida has the third most homeless individuals out of all US states with 25,211 homeless individuals which makes Florida a prime target of this study when looking at low-income individuals (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2022). While there are locational differences, this method followed a similar process to Ma and Riggio, who studied the effects of clothing resale on low-income individuals' ability to obtain affordable clothes, as it begins with existing demographic research and ends with new research revolving around thrifting habits (Ma and Riggio, 2021). The implementation of a survey was the best way to determine the extent low-income individuals who obtain affordable clothing are affected by the middle class as it allowed for a more efficient process to have a larger sample answer a set of standard questions than a classic interview process would. Additionally, a survey allows respondents to stay anonymous, and therefore, be more likely to be truthful in their responses. In terms of survey style, the Likert-style survey is the best option as it allows for results to be produced quantitatively and gives respondents the ability to provide more advanced responses. Therefore, possessing a limited personal bias in respondents while also gathering the best understanding of the sample's thrifting lifestyle.

Demographics

The first section begins with a consent question which ensures ethical measures within the survey. The question ensured that the respondent understood that their response was anonymous and that they were able to exit the survey at any time. The section of the survey then asks demographic questions to understand the survey respondents. For instance, it was imperative to understand what income range the respondents fell into and what that income range would be defined as. To do this, an income calculator created by researchers associated with Pew Research was used. The calculator found that within Pasco County, Florida the middle class can be defined as individuals who make $28,000 to $83,000 per year, and low-income can be defined as anyone who makes under $28,000 per year (Bennett et al., 2020). The section then asks questions relating to age, gender, education level, and employment. Then the survey was circulated among residents of Pasco County, Florida from November 2023 to February 2024. To do this social media was used to share the survey on different group pages within the county. This ensured more individuals would see the survey and be more likely to take it; additionally, it ensured that people from different parts of the county could take the survey rather than just one area within the county.

Thrifting Habits

After completing the demographics section of the survey, respondents were led to the section discussing thrifting habits. This section is structured using a Likert scale from one to five. In this survey, one represents "Completely Untrue" while five represent "Completely True." This section of the survey asks questions relating to thrift shoppers' shopping habits and purchasing decisions (*See full survey apparatus in Appendix A*).

With the use of the quantitative results of the survey, frequency distribution, and t-test equations were used to determine the results. The use of frequency distribution shows how individuals feel and allows for averages to quantify the results which then can be put into a t-test that will determine the significance of the middle class specifically compared to the other income groups. Some comparable statistics that were used to answer the research inquiry include the significance of differences seen in the consistency of thrifting, level of agreement to shopping in plentiful sizes and styles, and the level of consideration of others while thrifting between the low-income group and the middle class. The use of a t-test will allow for the determination of the significance of specifically middle-class thrifting habits.

Results

Demographics

In order to determine whether an increase in thrift shopping among the middle class in Pasco County, Florida affected low-income individuals, a survey was administered. This survey resulted in 122 total survey responses *(See complete survey results in Appendix B)*. However, 106 responses were used, as responses from 16 individuals who selected that they do not live in Pasco County, Florida were discarded. This was done to ensure the research gap from a suburbanized geographical area was addressed without bias from more urbanized settings.

From these responses, there is a fairly even distribution of results corresponding to individual income. The income group that most respondents identified with was the middle-class group, who make $28,000 to $83,000 per year, with 37 respondents (35.8%). Then the low-income group, those who make less than $28,000 per year, and the high-income group, those who make more than $83,000 per year, each had 34 respondents (32.1% each). Additionally, it was important for this inquiry to understand who made up these income groups and how age has played a role in increased thrifting so, age was reported in the questionnaire. This resulted in a majority of individuals in the Generation

X age group (33%). While individuals a part of the Millenial and Generation Z age groups made up the next portion of respondents (27.4% each), and finally, only a few respondents identify as Baby Boomers (12.3%).

Age Break Up of Income Groups

Table 1. This chart shows the correlation between individual income and age.

Age Range	People with income less than $28,000	People with income $28,000-$83,000	People with income more than $83,000
Generation Z (1997-2010)	22	3	4
Millennial (1981-1996)	6	13	9
Generation X (1965-1980)	5	17	13
Baby Boomer (1946-1964)	1	4	8

As can be seen by *Table 1,* as the individuals who responded age they are more likely to make a higher income. This can be seen as individuals who are a part of Generation Z (Gen Z) mostly make less than $28,000; however, individuals who are a part of the Millennial group make upwards of $28,000. This shows that despite previous research produced by ThredUp, a consignment company, previously discussed Gen Z having a major influence on the thrifting community, most individuals a part of Gen Z are a part of the low-income group. Therefore, they are the group primarily in need of inexpensive clothing, rather than a group of individuals who are taking clothing away from others (ThredUp, 2023). However, it is also important to point out that some individuals from Gen Z are still in high school and college; therefore, some are unemployed or can only work part-time. With this in mind, it is important to recognize that those individuals of Gen Z who are classified as a dependent are also dependent on their parents' income which was not addressed in this study.

Finally, another demographic result found in this survey includes that 94 survey respondents (88.78%) identify as female. This not only shows that women are substantially more likely to take an educational research survey but also shows that women are more interested in thrift shopping than men. This shows that the survey results are limited in that they hold survey bias. This is a result of the use of voluntary sampling, where respondents got to choose to take the survey, rather than probability sampling, respondents are randomly chosen from the population which was done to preserve the ethicality of the research. Meaning, that individuals voluntarily choose to take the survey; therefore, if an individual is completely uninterested in the topic or dislikes the topic they will be more likely to not take or not finish the survey allowing survey bias to play a factor in this research.

Thrifting Habit Scores

When looking at the results of the Thrifting Habit section of the survey it can be seen that 75.5% of respondents have been shopping for four or more years. Since these individuals began thrifting it can be seen that on average they purchase 2.44 items of clothing per trip to thrift stores. From this data, it can be determined that individuals who thrift shop in Pasco County have been thrifting at a lower rate than hypothesized. This could suggest that suburbanized

settings are not dependent on thrift stores and that this middle-class sample does not shop at high enough rates to affect low-income individuals.
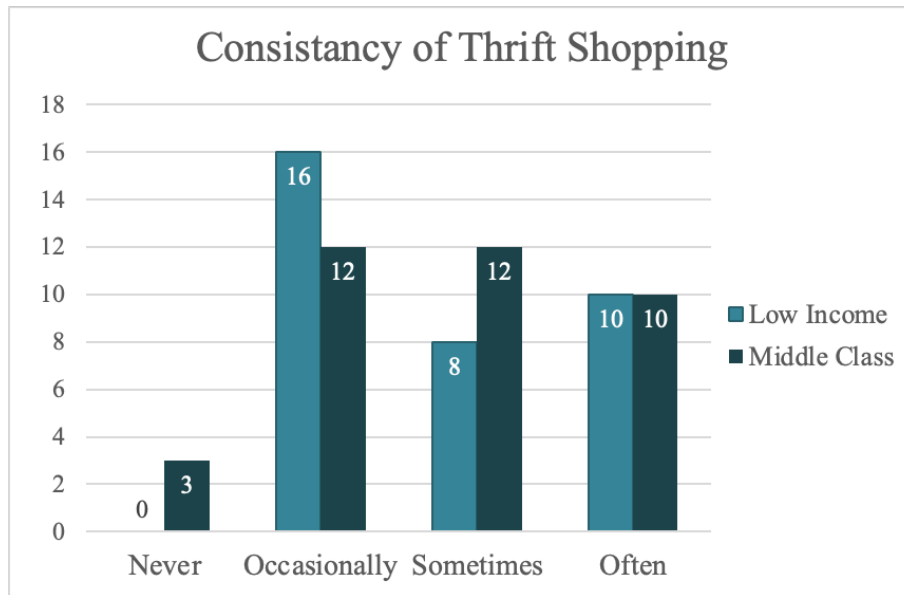
Figure 1. This bar graph compares the distribution of low-income and middle-class individuals' consistency in thrift shopping.

Additionally, When discussing specifically the middle-class group it can be seen (*Figure 2*) that the middle class on average shops at an inconsistent rate leading towards the survey options "Occasionally" and "Sometimes". Additionally, it can be seen that low-income individuals also shop from thrift stores at an inconsistent rate. When looking for averages each survey response was given a number "Never" being one and "Often" being four. Low-income individuals averaged about 2.82 while middle-class individuals shop at a slightly lower rate at 2.78. When determining if this 0.04 difference is statistically different a t-test was performed resulting in a p-value of 0.8548 which is greater than the alpha value of 0.05. This means that the null hypothesis was confirmed and this difference in consistencies is not statistically significant and suggests that thrift shopping in Pasco County is not at a high enough rate to affect anyone who is dependent on thrift stores for clothing.
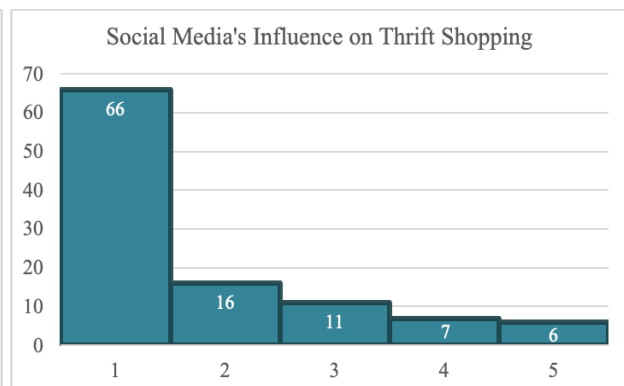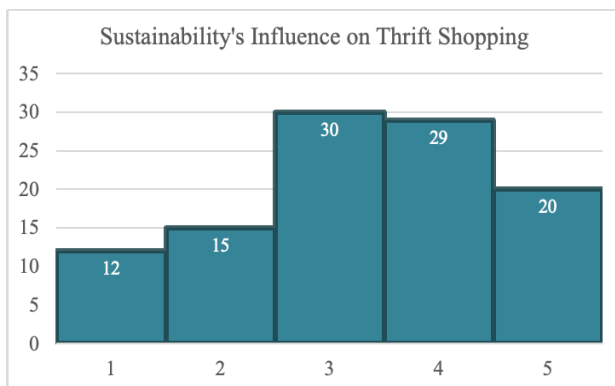
Figure 2. This frequency distribution table shows the distribution of sustainability's impact on thrifting with an average of 3.28.

Figure 3. This frequency distribution table shows the distribution of social media's influence on thrifting with an average of 1.78.

When discussing why the sample was motivated to begin thrifting *Figure 2* shows that respondents felt neither strong nor weak environmental motivations as the responses averaged at 3.28. This data differs from what Basalamah and other researchers published in the Journal of Sustainable Business Practices had stated pertaining to the large number of Sampoerna University students who use thrift stores due to their environmental benefits (Basalamah et al., 2023). As for the influence of social media, even fewer respondents felt that they were influenced by social media as their responses averaged to 1.78 (*Figure 3*). However, 21 of the 29 Gen Z respondents reported a response higher than 1; therefore, showing greater signs of influence compared to the other age groups. This indicates that trends reach farther on social media within this age group and that Gen Z is the most influenced by social media in terms of fashion. While this group specifically shows influences, overall there is an overwhelming response stating that there was no influence. This contradicts not only the hypothesis that had originally stated that there would be a high volume of individuals who would use thrift stores for clothing due to the nature of up-and-coming trends but also Ronobir and other directors of the FINX Research & Journalism Institute findings. They had originally stated that social media has taken over thrift stores and gentrified the thrifting experience; however, the data provided in *Figure 3* suggest that this is not the doing of social media (Ronobir et al., 2020). This lack of motivation by both environmental sustainability and social media could be why the sample sees such a low rate of thrifting and exemplifies differences in research in the field.
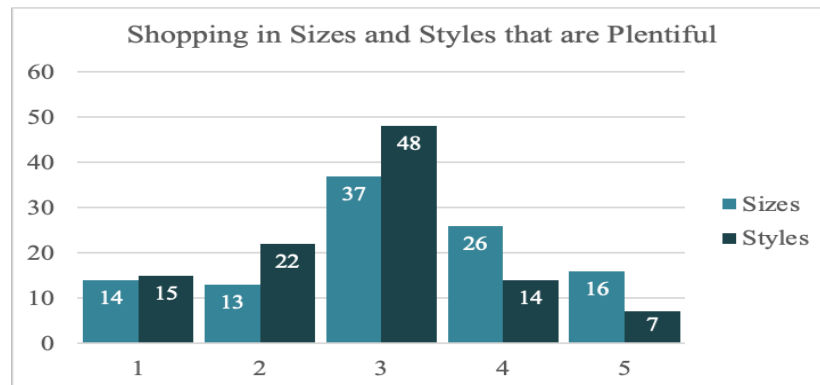
Figure 4. This comparative frequency distribution graph shows the frequency with which respondents feel they shopped in sizes and styles that are plentiful at thrift stores. Sizes average 3.16 and styles average 2.77.

Looking at *Figure 4* it illustrates that the sample responded mostly neutral when asked if they purchase clothing in sizes and styles that are plentiful in the store. For the question pertaining to size (*Figure 4*) the sample's responses were averaged to 3.16. When looking at style (*Figure 4*) an average of 2.77 was found. This illustrates that the sample often shops with a lack of consideration for others. By not shopping in sizes and styles that are plentiful, those in need might not have the ability to find clothes that fit them or are in a style that allows for the betterment of their quality of life. For instance, clothing that falls under the professional style would be important for low-income individuals who are looking for a job or are trying to maintain a job.

When looking at income-specific data the middle-class averages at 2.86 for size and 2.68 for style while the low-income group averaged at 3.62 for size and 3.06 for style. When conducting a T-test in order to determine if this difference is statistically significant the following results can be seen for both size and style.

T-Test Results for Determining Difference Significance Between Income Groups

Table 2. This table shows the statistical data determining whether the differences in averages between the low-income group and middle-class are significant when looking at shopping in sizes and styles that are plentiful.

Values	Shopping in Plentiful Sizes	Shopping in Plentiful Styles
Low-income group average	3.62	3.06
Middle-class average	2.86	2.68
Alpha	0.05	0.05
p	0.0036	0.1037
Null Hypothesis Confirmed?	Rejected (p < Alpha)	Confirmed (p > Alpha)

As can be seen by *Table 2* the differences between the low-income group and the middle-class when looking at shopping in plentiful sizes are significantly significant as the null hypothesis is rejected. This goes to show that the middle class in particular is less considerate than the low-income group when shopping in plentiful sizes. However, when it comes to shopping in plentiful styles the null hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, there is no statistical significance in the difference between the low-income group and the middle-class. Generally, this data shows that the middle class is possibly making it difficult for low-income individuals to find the clothing that they need.
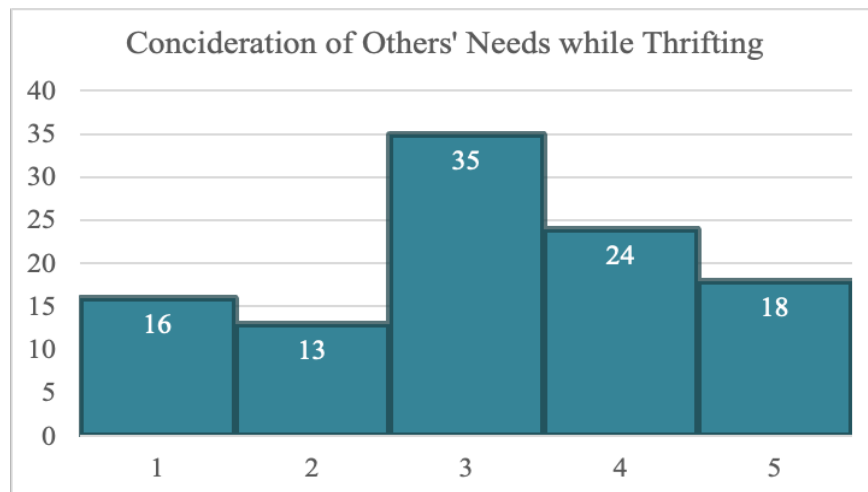
Figure 5. This frequency distribution graph shows how considerate the entire sample is of others' needs while thrifting. The data averages to 3.14.

Additionally, data found in *Figure 5* supports the data found in *Figure 4* as respondents averaged a 3.14 when asked if they are considerate of other's needs while thrifting. This determines that most individuals choose a neutral response. Both sets of data show that despite around 80% of the sample noticing price increases at thrift stores, which would negatively affect low-income individuals, the sample is not highly considerate of others. This means that low-income individuals could be unable to find the necessary clothes. However, this could be a result of thrift stores having

available clothing as 92.5% of the entire sample agreed that they donate clothing to thrift stores often. Individuals show that they are highly likely to donate clothing despite Schumacher, Forster, and The US Department of Commerce's previous findings stating only 15% of clothing is donated to thrift stores (Schumacher and Foster, 2022). This means that the issue of lack of clothing options may not be apparent at thrift stores due to the abnormally large amount of individuals who donate clothing. Subsequently, low-income individuals would have options of clothing available to them which could be why individuals were not considerate of others while thrifting in both *Figure 4* and *Figure 5*.

Additionally, it is imperative to consider that the responses associated with the questions resulting in both Figure 4 and Figure 5 are self-reported. Therefore, the respondents might have been untruthful in order to make themselves look better, or they may not be aware that they are inconsiderate.

Discussion

To answer the question, to what extent does increased middle-class thrifting affect low-income individuals in Pasco County, Florida? It was found that there was a low rate of thrift shopping among the sample as 2.41 items were bought on only occasional trips to the thrift store. This could be due to the low averages in motivation for both environmental reasons (3.28) and social media (1.78). Additionally, there was no significant difference between the low-income group and middle-class. Meaning, that the shopping levels of the middle-class likely do not affect the ability of low-income individuals to find necessary clothing. On top of this, 92.5% of respondents donate their clothes to thrift stores leading to an abundance of clothing available for thrift stores to sell despite previous research.

On the other hand, there is a lack of consideration of others while thrifting, especially that of the middle-class individuals shopping in certain sizes. Secondly, 80% of respondents agreed to notice price increases. This is similar to other works such as Ronobir and other researchers and Ma and Reggio who both found price increases as more individuals who would pay the higher price started thrift shopping. For Robinir and other researchers at the FINX Research and Journalism Institute, this was individuals looking for more sustainable fashion. They found that these individuals would pay more and therefore the stores would charge more (Ronobir et al., 2020). For Ma and Riggio, a very similar instance occurred as resellers would not mind paying the extra money because they would then also sell their product for more. This then allowed thrift stores to increase their prices to make a profit (Ma and Riggio, 2021). All in all, middle-class thrifting in Pasco County, Florida does not negatively impact low-income individuals with the extent of indirect price increases and inconsiderate shoppers. This disproves the original hypothesis which expected the middle-class to shop drastically more and have a larger negative impact on low-income individuals.

With this new understanding, it can be generalized that the middle-class has few direct impacts on low-income individuals. This means that thrifting should be promoted further to decrease the environmental effects of the fast fashion industry as mentioned by Maya Cummings who created Upcycle style to enhance thrifting for the purpose of sustainability (Cummings, 2021). Additionally, the increase in an item of clothing's life cycle will allow for less carbon and water pollution during the production process. This then allows environmental improvements and a decrease in CO_2 emissions. Other improvements in options for low-income individuals could now also be further investigated since further knowledge of price increases has been found and could affect low-income individuals.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Despite challenges with implementing the survey questionnaire, it was determined that increased middle-class thrifting in suburbanized settings does not affect low-income individuals' ability to obtain affordable clothing necessary to improve their lifestyle. With the extent being increased prices at thrift stores and inconsideration of thrift shoppers. This differs from previous evidence showing extensive negative impacts on resellers and environmentalists. It is from this new understanding of the field that this research was able to help the field further enhance sustainable fashion

practices with the knowledge that low-income individuals are not negatively impacted, and the implication of finding new solutions to help low-income individuals who cannot afford clothing due to price increases.

For future research, research should be done studying the effects of increased thrifting to improve sustainability on outsourced laborers. Outsourced laborers are dependent on sweatshops for job opportunities and it is imperative to these nations' economies that these companies and jobs are present. So, while environmental impacts would increase in what ways does this impact those workers? Additionally, research should be done to consider new methods to meet the needs of low-income individuals who are not facing increasing prices like thrift shops are. Overall, individuals can support environmental sustainability through their fashion choices with peace of mind knowing that low-income individuals are not at risk in Pasco County, Florida.

Acknowledgments

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