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## To Buy or Not to Buy: The Ethics of College Clothing

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# To Buy or Not to Buy: The Ethics Behind College Clothing

ENVR 395, Spring 2023

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## INTRODUCTION:

College gear is incredibly popular among both enrolled university students and by prospective students, alumni, and fans of the institution. You can always turn to a college bookstore when in need of memorabilia. Filled with clothes of all styles and designs, college bookstores bring in consistent revenue for schools.

The Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (MIAC) college bookstores are no different. The MIAC is a college athletic conference which competes in NCAA Division III. The 13 private colleges and universities are located within Minnesota's borders.

## METHODS:

Original research through interviews of bookstore employees at CSB+SJU and Concordia College. The questions revolved around four themes:

- History of the CSB+SJU bookstore
- Apparel producers
- Book sales and
- Sustainability initiatives.

### Also utilized:

- A literature review and an analysis on the history of fashion and the fast fashion industry.
- CSB+SJU archives to learn about the history of the CSB+SJU bookstores.



Photo from CSB+SJU Archive, SJU 1979 Bookstore Advertisement

## CONCLUSION:

- The MIAC bookstores source their clothes from companies that have struggled with sweatshop controversy..
- The main providers of MIAC apparel are
  - **Hanes**
  - **Adidas**
  - **Nike and**
  - **Midwestern brands like Blue 84**
- Production facilities are in:
  - **Central America**
  - **East Asia**
  - **South Asia**
  - **Southeast Asia**
- Today, these brands strive to improve conditions in sweatshops (although some still face obstacles).

## SOLUTION

- Maintain independency as a bookstore
- Continue to source clothes from Midwestern brands
- Consider courses and lectures that educate students on sweatshop use and the importance behind ethically sourcing clothes.

## RESEARCH QUESTION:

Where is the MIAC college apparel sourced from? How ethically sourced are they and what are they doing to provide more sustainable clothing options?

## THESIS:

The MIAC bookstores try to source their clothes from companies with strong sustainability messages and a current good record on sweatshop use.

MIAC Brands & Sustainability		
Brands	Reported for Sweatshop Use	Sustainability Message on Website
<u>Hanes</u>	✓	✓
<u>Blue84</u>		✓
<u>Nike</u>	✓	✓
<u>Adidas</u>	✓	✓
<u>Cl Sport</u>		
<u>MB Sport</u>		