

## Reconnection

What are the benefits and drawbacks of tradition? Does tradition create a sense of identity, or does it hinder society from moving forward? One specific benefit of tradition is sustainability, which is the idea I am exploring in this artwork. Because today's world is becoming increasingly more industrialized, the planet is becoming increasingly more polluted. Going back to the traditional methods of farming and textile-making can provide a potential solution for this problem.

For my art project, I wanted to make my own pieces of sustainable fashion in hopes to set an example for the rest of the world. The first piece of clothing I created is a scarf. It is made from wool sheared from sheep in a sustainable farm in Vaudeville, California. I dyed the wool using natural dyes. The red color comes from madder root which I dug up myself, and the blue comes from purple cabbage. I then wove the scarf using a rigid heddle loom. The small tree designs on either end are meant to represent trees, which to me are the symbol of Seattle, the "Evergreen City." The second piece of clothing is a dress. The fabric comes from a curtain that I bought at the local second-hand store, Community Projects. The flowers represent a connection to the earth, something that I believe should always be in fashion.

For me, the ideal society is comprised entirely of small businesses, and all products are made by practiced artisans and are completely sustainable. People play music and make art together. Food is also grown locally and sustainably. These are the traditions that I would want to exist in an ideal world. As a society, we need to act now if we want to turn that ideal world into a reality. As a person on this earth, you can help by supporting small, local farms that practice carbon farming, own sheep, or both. Buy clothes from local producers who use natural materials, thrift shops, or make your own. Vote for politicians who support local businesses; for example, the recent initiative to allow food stamps to be used in farmers' markets. Carpool, ride bikes, or walk for transportation. Advocate for renewable energy in your community--fossil fuel companies rely on consumer demand, and if they don't have it, they will go out of business. If the world works together as a community, we can preserve the most important traditions: the traditions that protect the land.

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# The Value of Tradition

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*This paper addresses the benefits and drawback of tradition. Does tradition create a sense of identity, or does it hinder society from moving forward? It also talks about one specific benefit of tradition: sustainability. Today's world is becoming increasingly more industrialized and the planet is becoming increasingly more polluted. Going back to the traditional methods of farming and textile-making can provide a potential solution for this problem.*

Every year, on Christmas Eve, my family and I go to see The Nutcracker ballet. I get dressed in my special outfit that I have worn to Christmas parties throughout the week, perhaps a red velvet skirt and shiny silver top. Once we arrive at the theater, we take pictures with the statues of the characters. My mom always makes funny poses; for example, when she poses next to the rat king, she puts her hands up to her face and wiggles her fingers, like she is a rat wiggling her whiskers. In the dance of the snowflakes scene, she raises her arms above her head and poses like an elegant ballerina. Once in the theater, we wait eagerly for the sparkling red curtain to rise up. When I was little, I took ballet classes, and so I always admired the dancers on the stage. They moved with such grace, and the story was so interesting and magical to me. My brother could care less; he only comes for the ice skating. After the ballet, we walk to the ice rink, don our ice skates, and hop into the crowded rink. My brother and I are reckless, and we speed through the crowds, knocking people over as we go. We make a competition of it and count how many times we fall over. Whoever falls over the least amount of times wins. What makes that day all the more special is that we know Christmas is the next day, and we happily daydream of the sweets and presents that are to come.

This tradition is certainly special to me and to my family, but it does not connect to the land that we live on. It only exists within my family, and it doesn't connect us to other members of the community. I think that the connecting element, the element that makes tales and traditions special in different cultures around the world, is the connection to the land. The land they live on is the one thing that every member in a community has in common. According to author D. Boyd, folktales are "living histories of the people of a particular time and place. They shed light on the values, aspirations, fears and dreams of a particular culture. They educate, inspire and entertain." Folktales are the perfect tradition because they connect people in a community through a connection to the land, which further inspires those people to protect the land they are living on. Almost everyone in the United States is an immigrant. We do not own this land; we stole it from the Native Americans hundreds of years ago. In addition, industrialization has created increased migration to cities, and many people in the United States live in concrete jungles, never having seen the land that they live on in their lifetime. Because of this alienation from the land, traditions are often brought on by big corporations hoping to make money, and have nothing to do with traditional ways of life in nature. For example, Christmas is a Christian holiday that the English imposed on America. It is meant to be a celebration of Jesus' birth, and the religious part of it brings people of the Christian religion together in churches all over the world. However, in addition to coming from a foreign land, meaning that the majority of the world doesn't feel a connection to the land they live on by celebrating it, it has recently turned into a money-making holiday, with the focus being on buying gifts. All of the gift-buying supports big corporations, who are the primary culprits of environmental destruction. Conversely, one Welsh legend has a strong emphasis on the land:

*As the local shepherds were one day long ago collecting their sheep on the ILiweð, one sheep fell down to a shelf in this precipice, and when the Cwm Dyli shepherd made his way to the spot he perceived that the ledge of rock on which he stood led to the hidden cave of ILanciau Eryri. There was light within; he looked in and beheld a host of warriors without number all asleep, resting on their arms and ready equipped for battle. Seeing that they were all asleep, he felt a strong desire to explore the whole place; but as he was squeezing in he struck his head against the*

*bell hanging in the entrance. It rang so that every corner of the immense cave rang again, and all the warriors woke uttering a terrible shout, which so frightened the shepherd that he never more enjoyed a day's health; nor has anybody since dared as much as to approach the mouth of the cave. (Rhys, 1901)*

This story connects to the land, and is an example of a great tradition. The people who live in Wales now are descended from the people who first told the legend and can visit the land where it supposedly happened. The detailed description of the immense, hidden cave creates a feeling of curiosity in the reader, and for those living on the land it creates a sense of nostalgia, leading them to feel a greater connection to the land and want to protect it. I live in Seattle, and I came across this description of the Olympic Peninsula: “Venturing inland, the dramatic coast gives way to lush forests and craggy peaks. The old-growth trees in the Hoh Rain Forest cradle a river valley so silent it has been identified as the quietest place in the country” (Williams, 2018). This makes me feel proud of the land I live on, and if this description was in a folktale or story that was told to me it would definitely make me want to preserve the land and protect it from deforestation or global warming.

What is the value of a tradition? How does the process of making textiles fit into that? The definition of tradition is “a way of thinking, behaving, or doing something that has been used by people in a particular group, family, society, etc., for a long time” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). But if we continue doing things the same way, how will we improve and grow as a society? What if the way we are doing things is wrong? On the other hand, why do we even need to grow as a society? If the way we are doing things is completely fine, why do we even need to change?

One value of tradition is that it helps us remember the past. This is important because, as the saying goes, “history doesn’t repeat, it rhymes.” The history of the world and of humanity goes so far back that anything that has happened in the past is guaranteed to happen again, just in a slightly different way. When the Holocaust is mentioned, many people think of Hitler and his mass genocide during World War II, but in fact there have been many more genocides throughout history. In 1838, Andrew Jackson ordered thousands of Native Americans displaced from their land, and many were killed during the forced march. In 1915, the Ottoman government killed 1.5 million Armenians in what was known as the Armenian Genocide. This is why it is important that we pay attention, so that we don’t repeat a tragic event in history. Also, tradition is what has gotten us to where we are today. Tradition is just a word for how things were done in the past. It is important to know how we got to where we are, so we can know where to go in the future.

Another thing to think about with tradition is that it creates a sense of identity. Author Katherine Rose from The Huffington Post writes: “Tradition, then, seems to be a subtle reminder of this [human nature], heightening our awareness of self *and others*, cultivating a sense of belonging and stability, and acting as a guiding force in our lives and society” (2017). Tradition can be a large and important part of the lives of many people. However, a strong sense of identity can lead to exclusion and xenophobia. Nazis had extreme traditions that everyone did together. Their sense of identity was so strong that they persecuted others who didn’t belong to that identity. In the scheme of the Holocaust, things progressed gradually. First, Jews were placed in ghettos. Next, they were rounded up and put on trains to concentration camps, and finally, they were starved and killed in gas chambers. Because of the gradual evolution of the situation, each

stage became the new normal, and the people didn't revolt. The same thing can be seen today with Donald Trump in office. At first he told a few lies, but his supporters blew them off, confident that he was a trustworthy businessman. Next, the Access Hollywood tape came out, and people were shocked, however many people continued to support him. After that, his dismissal of evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 election was in line with what was normal and wasn't very shocking. Now, although his "Lock her up" chants about Hillary Clinton and his continual denial of Climate Change can be compared to tyrannical behavior; they are surprising to few and manage to pass by without serious consequences. Religious and racial persecution by dictators is seen again and again throughout history. People who are different are seen as bad, and as such, are punished for it. Every community is a balance between a strong sense of identity and xenophobia on one hand, and acceptance and a weak community bond on the other. The former is commonly known as nationalism, and the latter internationalism. Nationalism is a feeling of pride towards one's nation, especially placing emphasis on its culture and interests. Alfred E. Zimmern, an author in Foreign Affairs magazine, describes the intensity in which nationalism can be felt: "The Englishman who feels a catch in his throat when he sees the white cliffs of Dover after an absence in distant lands (whether under the Union Jack or not) and the American who raises his hat to salute the Statue of Liberty as he steams into New York harbor, are both giving expression, not to their sense of patriotism or state obligation, but to their sense of nationality." Nationalism can be compared to a community-- they are both groups in which an individual feels a sense of belonging-- and a community can be as small as a family or as big as a continent. In an extension of this, we can think of all humans on earth as their own community in the vast universe. In this way, internationalism (a political principle which transcends nationalism and advocates a greater political or economic cooperation among nations and people) is nationalism, and it is essential that we think of it in this way so that we feel a sense of urgency to protect the entire planet from climate change. In today's increasingly global society, it is nearly impossible to avoid the gradual increase of immigration caused by climate change. Coastal flooding will soon create mass migration into inland areas, and natural disasters will create massive displacement. A solution to this cultural uprooting that these people will feel is to be welcoming, and extend your traditions to anyone who wishes to join your community. In this way, nations can keep their traditions while accepting new races, religious beliefs, and customs. However, immigrants bring with them traditions from their own nations, even though they now live on new land that the original traditions aren't connected to. Although this will happen, many immigrants celebrate traditions from their homeland while also adopting the new traditions from the land they now live on. This is the best compromise, as people can celebrate where they come from and where they are, feeling connections to two different lands on earth.

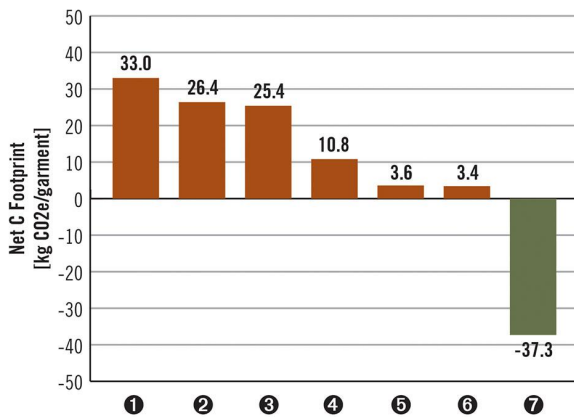
Some people might argue that if we always follow tradition, then we can never improve as a society. For example, if we always communicated through writing letters, then we never would've invented the skype call. However, change can be both bad and good. Cars and planes are polluting the environment, and there is a worldwide debate about the pros and cons of genetically modified foods. Fast fashion is a bad change that we have made away from tradition. Nowadays, there are big corporations that only care about profits, and will destroy the world trying to make them. In today's world, the consumer is continually buying and throwing out clothing, wearing each item only a few times before throwing it out and purchasing the latest fashion. Big brands such as Zara and Topshop are feeding this new habit by continually producing new products, and using fossil fuels to transport them worldwide. Runoff from factories pollutes waterways, and huge amounts of carbon dioxide is emitted into the air. This

promotes the greenhouse effect, in which carbon dioxide forms a layer in the earth's atmosphere, reflecting sunlight back onto the earth and raising global temperatures. Higher temperatures create larger wildfires and bigger natural disasters such as tsunamis, hurricanes, and floods. The fast fashion industry also mistreats workers and pays the minimum wage, especially in Bangladesh. Companies outsource their labor to cheaper countries, where the working conditions are inadequate and there are often factory fires and building collapses, as can be seen in the film "The True Cost." In the past, before the industrial revolution, the tradition was to make everything sustainably. Many cultures around the world would use every single part of an animal if they killed it. Wool was sheared from sheep, dyed naturally with vegetable or indigo dyes, spun into yarn, and woven or knitted into fabric. Tradition is important here because it will literally save the world! The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just published a statement that if we don't do anything to stop carbon emissions now, the global temperature will increase by 1.5 degrees celsius in 2030 (IPCC, 2018). An increase of 1.5 degrees in the global temperature greatly increases the risk of long-lasting and irreversible changes.

Although fast fashion pollutes the environment, it does have some benefits. It provides cheap, convenient clothes that most people can afford. Not everyone can realistically own a sheep or a loom. The Back to the Land movement, a movement where substantial numbers move from urban to rural environments, is overwhelmingly made up of the white upper class. Many people don't have the liberty to quit their job and try to farm for a living. On the other hand, if all clothing was made sustainably, the market would completely change. Clothing would be more expensive, but it would be higher quality and last for a lot longer than the cheap factory-made clothes do now. People wouldn't buy clothes with the intention of throwing them away weeks later, they would instead buy them with the intention of keeping them for as long as possible. In addition, if most people owned a small farm, they could make their own clothes, only being charged with the cost of time.

Clothing is one of the fundamental humans needs, appearing at the base of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Therefore, the creation of textiles was one of the earliest human inventions: "spinning is the oldest textile skill. Then comes knotting and netting – vital skills for our hunter-gatherer ancestors to make bags to carry food and nets to catch food. Weaving cloth in any amount came along in the Neolithic Period, when people were settled enough to set up their simple looms (made from sticks and pegs)" (Close-Hainsworth, 2017). This very old tradition is of much importance today, because depending on how it is carried out, the environment can be impacted in a good or bad way. If synthetic fertilizer is used to grow plants to feed the sheep, fossil fuels are used to power machines to weave wool into fabric, chemicals are used to dye the fabric, and machines used to sew it into garments, then more carbon is put into the atmosphere, worsening global warming. On the other hand, land managers that integrate carbon farming into their farm and ranch management can enhance the drawdown of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and into the soil, helping to solve the issue of global warming . Fibershed, a company based in Northern California, goes around to different local farms and teaches the farmers to how to implement "Climate Beneficial Wool," a program that puts sheep on grazing land that is managed with carbon-sequestering techniques such as composting and permaculture. Below is a chart published by Fibershed that compare their carbon footprint to that of a regular textile producer.

## Life Cycle Assessment of Fibershed & Conventional Fabric Production

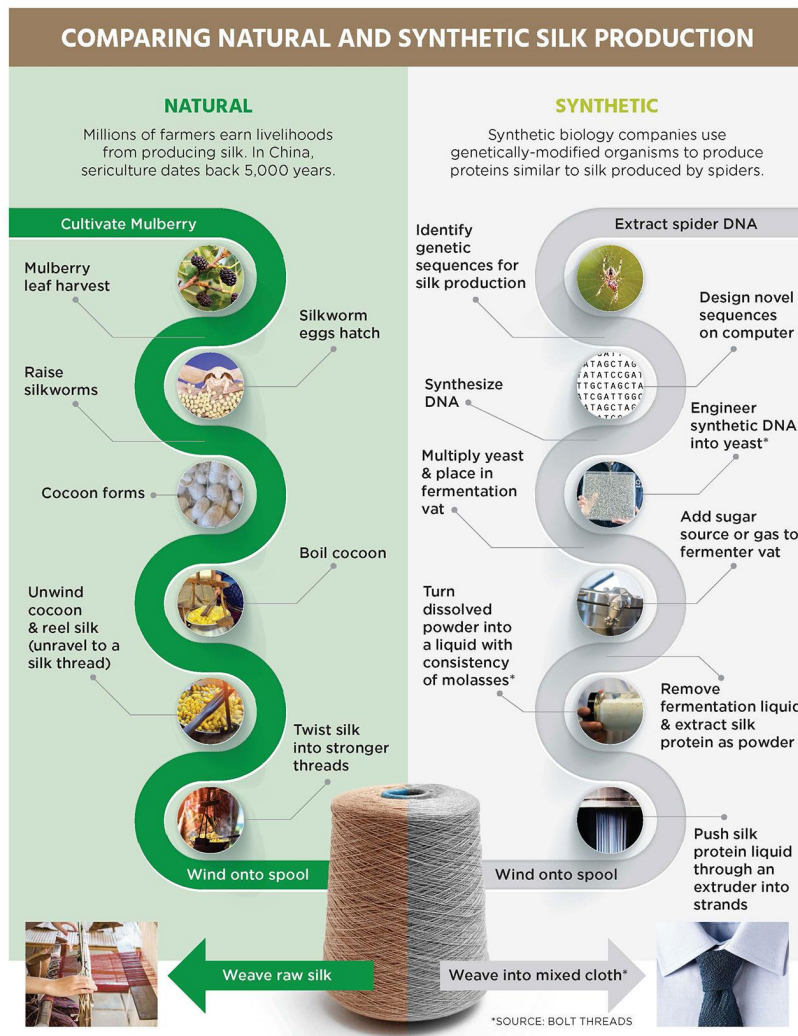


- 1 **Conventional Realistic:** CA grid-derived energy, slightly higher C footprint relative to other cases due to loss in soil C, synthetic fertilizer use, higher transportation costs
- 2 **Conventional Optimistic:** CA grid-derived energy, but no increase in soil C
- 3 **Fibershed Neutral Soil:** geothermal-derived energy, but no increase in soil C
- 4 **Fibershed Conservative:** geothermal-derived energy, good land management increases soil C at a more conservative rate than Case7
- 5 **Fibershed Realistic:** geothermal-derived energy, conservative compost credit, good land management increases soil C at a more conservative rate than Case7
- 6 **Fibershed Possible:** solar-derived energy, conservative compost credit, good land management increases soil C at a more conservative rate than Case7
- 7 **Fibershed Optimistic:** solar-derived energy, optimistic compost credit, good land management increases soil C at optimistic rate, minor reductions in C footprint relative to other cases at several steps (transportation distances, commuter mpg, animal emissions, air-dried clothes, etc.)

Recently, many biotech companies such as DuPont and Bolt Threads have engineered new “bio-synthetic” fibers such as “spider silk.” On the outside, these may seem like an environmentally-friendly alternative to the fabrics produced in the fast-fashion industry, but “the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people in the Global South depend on farming natural fibers for textiles—it’s such livelihoods that these Bay Area biotech bros are targeting when they boast they want to ‘disrupt’ apparel,” says Neth Daño, Philippines-based Co-Executive Director of ETC Group. Biosynthetic fibers made by companies such as the Emeryville-based Bolt Threads Inc. depend on industrial feedstocks like sugar, which is linked to deforestation and diminishing labor conditions. California farmers are also speaking out about how the popularity of biosynthetic textiles may be harming the emerging market for natural fibres—a truly labor-friendly and sustainable supply chain for fabrics (Sounding the Alarm). Biosynthetic textiles are more environmentally friendly than their petroleum counterparts, and are engineered to have greater surface durability. However, wool and other natural materials are engineered to keep mammals warm and dry, so they keep you cool in warm weather and warm in cool weather, and are even less harmful to the environment. Natural fibers allow air and vapor to pass directly through the individual strands so you get optimal breathability all the time. The disadvantage to natural fibers is that they are more expensive. On the other hand, they last a lot longer and are more environmentally friendly than biosynthetic textiles if they are produced locally and sustainably. “We can produce products in a way that not only sustain but also rehabilitate natural ecosystems,” said Ariel Greenwood, a rancher based in Sonoma County, California. “Synthetic biology takes market share away from products grown in a natural ecosystem, and that’s a missed opportunity to direct existing demand toward products that actually benefit both land and people.” Marie Hoff of Full Circle Wool in Mendocino, California also relates to this issue: “As a sheep rancher who stewards an oak woodland landscape, I can see how our food, fiber, fuel,



and medicine can be produced with a positive impact on the terrain. Agriculture is far from perfect, and we need a lot of investment to make regenerative agriculture the norm—that’s the key to humanity’s success, not new, unregulated synthetic materials” (Sounding the Alarm).



Bt cotton in particular is harmful to small farmers. Bt stands for *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a bacterium from which a microbial protein is continually produced by the cotton plant. The microbial protein that is produced is a toxin to insects, so when the insects take a bite of the cotton plant, they die (Bt cotton). Monsanto, a big biotech corporation, has a patent on the seeds farmers use and forces them to buy new seeds each year. If the seeds happen to blow from one farmer's property to the next, Monsanto can sue the second farmer for patent infringement, putting them out of business. This is ridiculous-- you can't control the movement of every single seed! In addition, Bt cotton produces its own pesticide continually. Although this allows the farmer to harvest more cotton, over time natural selection will create "superbugs" that are resistant to the Bt pesticide. In 20th century farming methods, farmers spray pesticide on a few of their fields every couple years, instead of having the crops continually produce the pesticide. This greatly reduces the chance of bugs evolving into "superbugs." Before that, in traditional farming, farmers prevented pests and disease by rotating their crops (not planting them in the same place more than once every three years), by cleaning up and composting dead plants, and by growing resistant varieties. Additionally, natural enemies can be introduced to control pests and parasites. For example, goats can be introduced and will eat weeds, and cats will kill rodents. It is important to spread the knowledge that biotech companies are harming the earth, not saving it, as the companies claim.

For me, the ideal society is comprised entirely of small businesses, and all products are made by practiced artisans, and are completely sustainable. It is a democracy, women and men are given equal rights, all races and sexual identities are equal, the health of the earth is valued, kids learn by doing, university is free, thinking is encouraged, and people read books and talk to each other instead of spending time on electronics. Immigrants are welcomed. People play music and make art together. Food is also grown locally and sustainably. Animals are allowed everywhere. These are the traditions that I would want to exist in an ideal world. As a society we need to act now if we want to turn that ideal world into a reality. As a person on this earth, you can help by supporting small, local farms that practice carbon farming, own sheep, or both. Buy clothes from local producers who use natural materials, thrift shops, or make your own clothes. Vote for politicians who support local businesses, for example the recent initiative to allow food stamps to be used in farmers' markets. Carpool, ride a bike, or walk for transportation. Advocate for renewable energy in your community-- fossil fuel companies rely on consumer demand, and if they don't have it, they will go out of business. If the world works together as a community, we can preserve the most important traditions: the traditions that protect the land.

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