Social Problem Analysis: *The True Cost*

Individuals and families alike pack their vehicles with warm sweaters, food, sleeping bags, lawn chairs, among other essentials. Anticipation and smiles cover their faces as they embark on their journey. As they arrive at their destination, they are confronted with long lines of many people, there for the same objective, to get the best “Black Friday” deals they can. The busiest shopping day of the year not only comes with great discounts, but an array of injuries, incidents and even death. Many individuals convince themselves that cutting their Thanksgiving dinner short, spending hours or even days waiting in line, and dealing with the frenzy and madness that ensues is worth saving a few bucks. Most of this bargain shopping is done without the slightest reflection on where these items come from, who’s making them and at what cost. The film *The True Cost* explores the profound impact of the fast fashion industry on our social and ecological world. It investigates our insatiable materialistic desire for affordable goods that is often at the cost of the blood and sweat of exploited garment workers and the wrecked earth that many call home. It’s about the suffering that workers all around the world are forced to endure just to keep the price of the clothing on our backs low, while keeping the pockets of a small amount of individuals and corporations fat with money.

Instructions: In 3 pages minimum (please do not exceed 5 pages), answer the following questions in an essay format using APA format. Your **paper must include a title page, body (with in-text citations) and reference/works cited page.** **You must include at least 3 outside resources, other than your book (scholarly article, book, newspaper, etc.) and some specific examples/moments from the film to highlight your answers and support your arguments.** I **DO NOT** want you to summarize the film! The main purpose of this assignment is for you to apply sociological concepts/ideologies/theory in critically analyzing the film’s content using your sociological imagination and personal insight. Your paper will be graded on the following:

* Proper formatting and grammar/sentence structure (12 point font, Times New Roman, and 1 inch margins, double spacing should all be used).
* The proper application of sociological concepts, ideas and theory along with specific examples/moments from the film to highlight arguments.
* Answering all the questions in an insightful/analytical manner properly applying the sociological imagination.

**Questions:**

Please make sure to include theories and sociological concepts that we have discussed in class (and those covered in your book) to analyze the reality of this film and the idea of fashion. Include at least 2 theorists’/theories.

1. What struck you the most about this film? What impact did it have on your understanding of importance of material culture is in our world?
2. How important is fashion to you and why?
   1. What role do you play in the perpetuation (continuation) of this materialistic culture? That is, how do you contribute to this social phenomenon? Use your sociological imagination and theories to analyze your experience.
3. Some critics have argued that this film provides accurate reflection of the materialistic cultural value systems present in U.S. (Western) societies. Do you agree or disagree with this assertion?
   1. What role do the media have on supporting materialism and its proliferation?
4. “There are a lot worse things they could be doing”, an all-too-familiar justification for the horrific conditions garment workers must endure to merely scrape by and maintain life is echoed throughout the film.
   1. Do you agree or disagree with this sentiment? Why or why not?
   2. As a society, how can we address this issue?
5. The staggering environmental consequences of the fashion industry are highlighted throughout the film.
   1. What approaches do you feel may lessen the burden on our depleting natural resources, landfills and agro-chemical dependency? Or are we too far gone?
   2. As an individual, what role can you play in changing this part of our culture?