

Lindsey A. Jochets
Masters Candidate in History of Decorative Arts and Design
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution
Parsons, The New School for Design
jochetsl@newschool.edu
www.Jochets.com
Spring 2011

Snuggie.Snuggle

Feeling chilled, but you don't want to raise your heating bill? Blankets can slip and slide, but the desire to be swaddled in warmth from head to toe, with no more cold feet, has given birth to the Snuggie. Physically the Snuggie is a blanket with arms composed from a large piece of fabric with oversized sleeves that physically and metaphorically hugs one's body. The design is similar to a blanket but includes armholes fitting around the front of one's body leaving an open back and bottom. It is convenient for achieving both warmth and emotional comfort. When applying and or dressing in a Snuggie, ones arms are outspread similar to giving a hug, thus offering similar satisfying sensations as human contact.

This vital survival need classified as human contact, can be founded in the term snuggle branching off from snug¹, to curl up comfortably or cozily, to draw close especially for comfort or in affection, nestle.² Snuggling is an intrinsic character of the Homo sapien as well other creatures such as birds and dogs. How convenient, since Snuggies' are now made for dogs, and lend themselves to animal patterning such Leopard spots, how confusing. Snuggling is often associated with the noun "blanket" deriving from archaic blank³ but relating to a large usually oblong piece of woven fabric used as a bed covering or to cover the body.⁴ It is through children's annunciation, nick-names, and sheer cuteness that the iconic term blankie was born. Like so many children, the *Peanuts* character Linus was mentally and physically attached to one specific object, which in his case was a blankie. It's plausible that a child's attachment to their



blankie as a transitional object is the same as a person's regard for their Snuggie, both becoming transformational object as a compensation for a lack of human contact.

Now many may argue it's possible to survive with limited human contact, however medical research concludes human contact is vital in a child's development, a patient's recovery, and a human's day to day progression.⁵ It's interesting to see how indispensable the human connection is, both historically developing from the nomadic tribes, where everyone relied upon one another, into today's suburban families separated by walls, schedule, and electronic devices. Technology has enabled communication while also limiting physical interaction, thus creating diversions of seeking and finding pleasure through objects rather than people. Throughout this transition, a desire developed to fulfill a person's void of warmth and companionship, with an artificial constituent such as a pet, toy, stuffed animal, or blanket. These artificial and automatic acceptors somehow satisfy mankind's emotional abyss with little or no actual human connection at all. Known as transitional objects these psychological artifices are analyzed in the writings of D.W. Winnicott and Ellaine Scarry.

Snuggie's success can be attributed to technology through their late night infomercials, online sales, and later product recognition in popular stores such as CVS and Target. Today's physically disconnected society can be accredited to the rise in the technology, and its ever growing presence in our lives. This affects the length of time we spend together, examples being seclusion through iPods, televisions, or even our corporeal separation by cars and or computer screens. With this lack of humanism, compounded by war, disease, and poverty, the Snuggie could not have picked a better time to come onto the market. With the aid of this technology Allstar Products Group has sold over 25 million Snuggies since it hit the market in 2008.⁶ Allstar's business savvy attitude along with Snuggies' accessibility, persistence, and affordability of \$14.99 for one, or two Snuggies with two compact book lights for \$19.95 cultivated popularity. Roughly eight percent of the United States owns a Snuggie, the same as supplying every citizen in both Haiti and Somalia⁷, furthermore if this plethora of

Snuggies were donated; we could supply one to nearly every child and adult living with AIDS/HIV.⁸ So it is thanks to spotlights on NBC's "Today" show, the Tonight show, Oprah, Saturday Night Lives' "Fuggly", as well as articles in the New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, USA Today, Time Magazine, and Bloomberg BussinessWeek the Snuggie managed to triumph the blanket.

Originally there were two colors to choose from, red and blue, but now the Snuggie is 100% customizable with prints ranging from camouflage, tie-dye, skulls, sports teams, to a waterproof outdoor model, and my favorite the Sherpa version. The Snuggie is manufactured in China from an ultra soft, thick, luxurious fleece, which is as light and as soft as a cloud. Irony in the Chinese manufacturing Sherpa Snuggies is found in the political, ethnical, kitschy, and referential term *Sherpa* meaning eastern Tibetan people who migrated to reside high in Himalayan Mountains of Nepal.⁹ It remains undocumented what the lives of these Chinese workers and the working condition of the factory are like. But the Snuggies' fleece also known as Velux is a napped synthetic fabric made from Polyethylene terephthalate is made to mimic wool. Polyethylene terephthalate is a thermoplastic polymer resin plastic. Urban legend warns against wearing a Snuggie too close to a heater or fire for fear of being engulfed in flames, which is a myth. However it is advised to use proper care when operating a Snuggie such as boozing and wearing, walking and wearing, and most importantly never leave a child unattended with a Snuggie. Aside from the obvious, the luxurious plastic fleece is zero percent recyclable, after washing it disintegrates into miniscule harmful plastic particles; furthermore it is probably linked to cancer. Aside from keeping you warm and fulfilling your lack of human connection, the constructs of the Snuggie play along with hospital gown design and the healthcare industries capitalistic attributes by possibly placing you in one, for a mere \$14.95 compulsive purchase.

All in all it helps to know that one can forget about the troubles of the world, whether revolution, nuclear fall-out, or natural disaster, warmth can always be found knowing you have a

hug is hanging in your closet. With the Snuggie you'll always have the comfort of a human companionship, artificially, so you'll have to take a risk social awkwardness again. You have the freedom to use your hands, work the remote, read a book in total warmth and comfort, use your laptop without being cold, and enjoy a snack while staying snuggly warm, thus rendering blankets, robes, comforters, electric blankets, sweaters, sweatshirts, husbands, wives, and pets useless.

¹ Webster contributors. "Snug." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/snug> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

³ Webster contributors. "Snuggle." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/snuggle> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

⁴ Webster contributors. "Blank." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blank> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

⁵ Webster contributors. "Blanket." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blanket> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

⁵ Lyons, Jessica. "Importance of Human Touch." <http://www.livestrong.com/article/186495-importance-of-human-touch/> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

⁶ Berr, Jonathan. "11 People to Watch in Business for 2011," *Daily Finance*. (2010): 1-8. Accessed, February 22, 2011. http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

⁷ Wikipedia contributors. "List of countries by population," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population (Accessed, February 22, 2011).

⁸ Wikipedia contributors. "AIDS," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV/AIDS> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

⁹ Wikipedia contributors. "Sherpa," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherpa> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

Bibliography:

Berr, Jonathan. "11 People to Watch in Business for 2011," *Daily Finance*. (2010): 1-8. Accessed, February 22, 2011. http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Lyons, Jessica. "Importance of Human Touch." Accessed, February 22, 2011. <http://www.livestrong.com/article/186495-importance-of-human-touch/>

Rudnytsky, Peter L. *Transitional Objects and Potential Spaces: Literary Uses of D. W. Winnicott*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body In Pain: The Making And Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Webster contributors. "Blank." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blank> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

Webster contributors. "Blanket." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blanket> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

Webster contributors. "Snug." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/snug> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

Webster contributors. "Snuggle." <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/snuggle> (accessed, February 22, 2011).

Wikipedia contributors. "AIDS," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. (accessed, February 22, 2011). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV/AIDS>

Wikipedia contributors. "List of countries by population," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. (Accessed, February 22, 2011) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population