Anti-consumption and identity
- How the rejection of consumption can be identity-constructing

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Abstract

The choice of anti-consumerism can be driven by both material and idealistic interests and just as for consumption, anti-consumption can be used in the construction of the individual’s identity. Only a few previous studies have looked at the connection between different identities in relation to anti-consumption (such as Cherrier, 2009) and even fewer looked at both the individuals’ perception of the process of becoming an anti-consumer as well as how anti-consumption can be used to build one’s identity. The study at hand aims to build on this by investigating the individual’s approach and perception to anti-consumerism, the process of becoming an anti-consumerist and how identity can be constructed through anti-consumerism. This is done through interviews with ten informants who have rejected consumption in various major aspects and the resulting empirical material is analyzed in the light of theoretical contributions as well as relevant previous research in areas of anti-consumption, identity, identity-construction and neoliberalism. Through this, the study contributes to an enhanced understanding of the different paths towards anti-consumerism, as well as how anti-consumerism can be used to build one’s identity. The results show that the process of becoming an anti-consumer may be due to numerous reasons, including social and moral valuation of the environment, external or cultural pressure and their will to change themselves or for saving money. The study further finds that the informants perceived difficulties when becoming an anti-consumer, such as managing their environmental reactions and dilemma to deliberately abandon normative forms in society. In addition, it is found that the informants perceive a connection of anti-consumption with their personality as well as a sense of identity. How this is expressed by the informants are presented as their aspiration to change the surroundings, how they wanted to express anti-consumption to others, their desire for increased control and how they experienced inner change in relation to anti-consumption.

Key words: Anti-consumption, consumption, neoliberalism, identity, identity-construction
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1. Introduction

In the introductory section, a background is introduced to the overall subject of the study. The background is followed by a declaration of the research object and the related purpose of thesis with the questions the study aims to answer. The introduction also presents definitions of central concepts to the thesis and finally the disposition of the dissertation is presented.

1.1 Background

It is not only material interests but also idealistic interests that drive the individual and makes the consumer consume different items. Consumption is more than a semiotic game of meanings. It is sturdily anchored in a system of social relations, which does not only involve the buyer and the seller but also the buyer’s family, kin, peers, colleagues at work as well as class relations (Swedberg, 2008, p. 250-251). Everyday life in the twenty-first century offers many examples of consumption that can be studied, and the point of a sociological study is neither to praise nor to condemn consumers, but to understand how and why people consume (Zukin & Smith Maguire, 2004, p. 193). This argumentation by Swedberg and Zukin & Smith Maguire is interesting throughout a perspective of exploring consumerism, but also anti-consumerism. The present study partly aims to investigate how individual’s approach and perceive the process of becoming an anti-consumer, by an active choice in their everyday lives. Identity is created through interaction in a context (Berger & Luckmann, 1998) and identity and self-image are strongly influenced through socializations processes and interaction with other individuals’ (Jenkins, 2014). This is relevant for the present study as anti-consumption is of interest, and if and how individuals are able to construct identities through anti-consumption. There are some studies which have highlighted the concept of identity in relation to anti-consumption and only a few studies have investigated different identities in relation to anti-consumption (e.g. Cherrier, 2009), and this study intends to investigate the process of becoming an anti-consumerist and the identity construction that can be associated with anti-consumption.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The purpose of the study is to increase knowledge and understanding of how individuals perceive the process of becoming anti-consumer and how identity can be constructed through anti-consumption. Identity refers in this study to the self-image of the individual created in social interaction. The study aims to investigate the individual’s approach and perception to anti-consumerism and the process of becoming an anti-consumerist, and how identity can be constructed through anti-consumerism from a sociological perspective, and this will be
discussed in relation to consumption and neoliberalism. Therefore, any psychological concepts or aspects such as e.g. motivational factors are not taken into account in the study. Furthermore, the study does not have the purpose to generalize on a larger population and the answers are only valid for the interviewees who participated in the study. Based on background and the aim of the thesis, following research questions been formulated: How do individuals perceive the process of becoming anti-consumer? How can identity be constructed through anti-consumption?

1.3 Disposition of the thesis

Following the introduction, description of the study’s theoretical framework is presented on identity, identity construction, consumption and identity construction and identity with cultural considerations. In the next chapter, previous research is presented relevant to the study in areas as anti-consumption, anti-consumption and identity formation and consumption with consideration of neoliberalism. Thereafter follows the methodological considerations of the study detailing approaches associated with collection and processing of the study’s empirical material. Furthermore, the result of the study follows, presented with selected quotes from interviews. Lastly, a discussion about the results is presented in relation to the study’s theoretical framework, the study’s purpose and research questions with previous research. Finally, a conclusion is presented of the results of the study and suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

This section presents the theoretical reasoning and the associated concepts that will be used for the analysis of the empirical material in the study. Initially, theorization on identity is presented. Thereafter, the theorization of consumption and identity-formation is presented, where different orientations of theory of identity-formation are presented. Then a short discussion is presented with attention on theory that focuses on identity with cultural considerations. Finally, a summary of the theory section is presented in relation to the purpose and the questions of the study.

2.1 The creation of an identity

To analytically approach the issue of identity, I will firstly look to Bauman’s (2002) theorization of identity. As relevant for the purpose of this thesis, Bauman (2002, p. 176) theorizes how the individualization of society affects the formation of people’s identity. With individualization the human identity has been transformed from the attributed, inherited and
innate determination of her social character, from something given to a task. The actor is responsible for performing the task but also for its consequences and side effects. The formation of one’s identity and identity problems have changed direction. Before the breakthrough of individualization, man was born into an identity and constantly struggled to maintain his assigned identity and follow the pathway. Today, the individual is facing other problems, as, which identity to choose, and the person has the task of creating his own path. The biggest concern is for the individual today is to find an identity that is attractive in the market and try to maintain its attractiveness. Society is today characterized by an individualization thought (p. 180).

Aurell (2001) shows, in accordance with many contemporary researchers (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Berger & Luckman, 1998; Jenkins, 2014; Goffman, 2004) that identity is socially designed and constantly changing. Aurell (2001) exemplifies this by the research of professional roles, by presenting how cultural values creates conditions for the individual to identify with the social context. How the individual is treated influences how his or her identification is made.

Jenkins (2014), in similarity to Berger and Luckmann (1998), discusses identity as an interrelated process between the individual and the collective. The individual’s self-image and view of the world are strongly influenced by collective through socializations processes and interaction between and with other individuals. Jenkins theory (2014) distinguishes differences and similarities, that the identification is derived from differences and similarities; how the individual takes a stand from individuals that are different from themselves and how the individual identifies collectively by similarities with others, which leads to group building and collectivism. This becomes relevant to this study as it can illustrate how individuals’ build identity in relation to themselves and to other anti-consumers.

2.2 Consumption and identity formation

In 1979, Bourdieu theorized differentiations of consumer goods and how consumption can reflect and reproduce cultural and class differences and hierarchies. This research laid much ground for how consumption and identity-formation would be approached in the literature, although his work in regard of consumption and cultural aspects are more recognised literature. If the above section is considered, Bourdieu's discussion in regard of identity is more strongly constructed at a societal level, and in relation to the perspectives in the above section there is greater hint that the individual choice in the matter is weaker. In the approach by Bourdieu (1979) the line between identity-formation and cultural aspects to consumption is
thin, thus he states that the science of taste and cultural consumption begins with a transgression that is in no way aesthetic. It has to eliminate the sacred frontier which makes legitimate culture a separate universe, in order to discover the clear relations of what separates and unite apparent “choices”, such as preferences to other economic aspects. It is argued that consumer preferences are embedded in social arrangements and are not only rational individual choices, and to gain understanding in theories of “tastes” one must incorporate social aspects to the discussion. This principle is linked to what Bourdieu (1979) describes as “situational objects”, that is connected to social factors. Sennett (1977) uses similar concept of objects to argue that if one wants to entry the “trendy” reference group depends upon one’s access and one’s knowledge of what is considered to the “popular goods”, their social and cultural values and how one uses them. Consumers seek their identity through consumption, appearance and social performance.

Campbell (2005) differentiates the image of the consumer from economic theory as viewing the consumer as a rational actor, with the image of the consumer as a passive, manipulated and exploited subject of market forces (p. 23-24). A modernistic view of consumption is used, by observing the consumer as a human that consume out of desire to engage in creative acts or self-expression. The view differentiates from traditional view of identity-formation, because humans do not try to create or maintain a sense of identity according to Campbell (2005). Rather, the consumer already has a clear and stable sense of identity and it is what gives rise to their distinctive consumption (p. 24). In continuance of identity-formation and consumption, Warde (1994) addresses some general issues concerning consumption that have arisen from the work of Bauman (1988), Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) which all argue that consumption is critical to identity-formation and reformation. All three, but especially Bauman (1988), argue that this is a source of anxiety. The freedom implied by the consumer choice entails a commensurate degree of personal responsibility. Additionally, Bauman (1988) states that a function of advertising is to assuage the self-doubt that is accompanied with choices. Nevertheless, Warde (1994, p. 878) argues that these accounts of the impact of reflexive modernisation on self-identity and consumption is misjudged. In the argumentation against Bauman (1988), it is stated that consumption would be a much less pleasurable practise if it was both subject to ever-expanding free choice and if the decisions made were fundamental components of a reflexive process of identity-formation. He draws the conclusion that these consequences would be high and visible levels of distress among those individuals most deeply involved. But, this is not apparent and therefore it is suggested that
the relationship between identity-formation and consumption is tendentious. Further is it argued by Warde (1994, p. 878) that “…many sociologists tend to assert the predominance of a particular social psychology of the self, a self that is defined by the labour and creating a sustaining a ‘self-identity’”. Therefore, in this process becomes consumption designed central, for commodities are principal channels for the communication of self-identity.

2.2.1 Identity and culture as two sides of the same coin

As mentioned, Bourdieu (1979) argues that consumption can reflect and reproduce cultural and class differences and hierarchies. Much of contemporary studies within sociology of consumption takes cultural aspects into account in research on consumption, “… how the concept of culture can illuminate phenomena such as buying, selling and consuming can be properly understood if their meaning is taken into consideration. The cultural approach also moves away from economic theory by emphasizing social aspects, symbolic value in commodities and cultural positions” (Swedberg, 2007, p. 250). Katz-Gerro (2004) emphasizes that if consumption is to be studied, cultural aspects must be taken into account, as it shapes the contours of social locations and social relations. Cultural aspects in regard of consumption argued to be interesting for the two main reasons of as, firstly, culture should be taken into consideration when discussing preferences as cultural preferences serve as a means for distinguishing social groups. Cultural consumption is a standard and a basis for social and cultural positions, preferences and behaviours. Secondly, consumption is central to the process by which social groups reproduce themselves, it may be how individuals or groups get or can place themselves in a social group they want or feel they belong to.

2.3 Summary of theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical frameworks that will be used to analyse the empirical material in the study have been presented. Initially, was theorization in regard of the creation of identity presented, with presentation of Bauman's (2002) theorization of how the individualization of society affects the formation of people’s identity. Then a prominent part of the theory of identity was presented, that focuses on how identity is socially designed and constantly changing and how cultural values creates conditions for the individual to identify with the social context and furthermore how the individual is treated influences how his or her identification is made. Furthermore, theorizing about identity was presented as an interrelated process between the individual and the collective. Jenkins (2014), in similarity to Berger and Luckmann (1998), discusses identity as if the individual’s self-image and view of the world are strongly influenced by collective through socializations processes and interaction between
and with other individuals. Thereafter, theorization was presented in regard of identity and consumption, and Bauman’s theory was first presented, which contains a greater focus on identity as something strongly structured at the level of society and that the individual choice in question is weaker. Then, was theorizing and discussion in regard of a modernistic view of consumption presented, that observes the consumer as a human that consume out of desire to engage in creative acts or self-expression. Thereafter, is a discussion about how consumption is critical to identity-formation and reformation, or if the impact of reflexive modernisation on self-identity and consumption is misjudged.

3. Previous research

In the following chapter, an in-depth study takes place in relevant areas for the thesis. The previous research will be used in connection with the final chapter for discussion in regard of the results of the study. The previous research has been divided into four sections, whereas the first section illustrates the application of anti-consumption. The next section focuses on consumer resistance, anti-consumption and identity-formation. The third section presents research in the area of consumption and neoliberalism and research in continuance of neoliberalism and the term downshifter.

3.1 Anti-consumption

A thesis that aims to examine anti-consumption issues inevitably needs to address how the rejection of consumption are to be essentially understood and how consumer resistance has been discussed. Individuals concerned with the unstainable and exploitative conditions of mass production in several industries inspire people to reflect upon and image alternatives to consumption. Many of these critical individuals oscillate between resistance to market influence and the exercise of power on one hand, and anti-consumption on the other hand, in that they reject, restrict and reclaim the use of certain goods (Biehl-Missal, 2013, p. 245; Lee, Roux, Cherrier & Cova, 2011, p. 2). There is a diversity in how anti-consumption are researched in relation to consumer rebellion (Dobscha, 1998, p. 91). Different conceptualizations toward anti-consumption has been; consumer resistance (Fischer, 2001, p. 123; Fournier, 1998, p. 88; Penaloza & Price, 2003, p. 123; Zavestoski, 2002, p. 121), boycotting (Herrman, 1993; Kozinets & Handelman, 1998, p. 475; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004, p. 691), counter-cultural movements (Victoria, 2002, p. 129), ethical consumption (Shaw & Newholm, 2002, p. 167), non-consumption (Stammerjohan & Webster, 2002, p. 126) or emancipated consumption (Holt, 2002, p. 70). Common to each of these
conceptualizations of anti-consumption manifestations are the expression of an aim to “withstand the force or effect” of consumer culture (Penaloza & Price, 2003, p. 123) at the level of the marketplace as a whole, certain marketing activities and/or brands or products (Fournier, 1998, p. 89).

Zavestoski (2002, p. 121) labels anti-consumption with a “resistance to, distaste of or even resentment of consumption” in general, but Penaloza and Price (2003, p. 123) refer to a “resistance against a culture of consumption and the marketing of mass-produced meanings”. So, these descriptions imply that anti-consumption is a resistance that is both an activity and an attitude. It is an activity of refusal that can range from the polite “I would prefer not to buy” to the explicit total refusal of consuming e.g. a product (Cherrier, 2009, p. 181). It is also an attitude that declines to give resignation to the ideology of progress and material growth (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004, p. 691). Stillerman (2015, p. 174) conceptualize anticonsumerism around the segment of consumers that has begun to call into question the personal and social consequences of their own behaviour and seek more ethical and green forms of consumption. According to Stillerman (2015) can three discourses or categorizations be made in regard of anti-consumers; the ethical consumer, the anti-consumer and the global consumer activist. Ethical consumers refer to as making effort to purchase in a matter that reduces harm to other human beings or the environment. Anti-consomers have a more radical effort to reduce one’s impact on the environment by minimizing market transactions and energy use through such strategies as “going off the grid”, e.g. growing one’s own food or stop travel by airplane. The third categorization, referred to as global consumer activism uses some of the same techniques of boycotts but uses boycotts that were developed by consumer movements operating inside national borders, but focuses on global problems and increasingly, targets global corporations. According to Portwood-Stacer (2012, p. 88) can anti-consumption be better understood as a lifestyle orientation than as a straightforward description of actual abstinence from consumption. Hence, anti-consumption encompasses both abstinence from consumption and forms of consumption that are meant to signify oppositions to consumption.

Lee et al. (2011) defines consumer resistance and anti-consumerism and delineate the concepts from each other. According to them is consumer resistance a rich and well-defined area, drawing on Penaloza’s and Price’s (1993) work, the field of research has explored in various contexts as reactions displayed by consumer towards companies and their influences and practices. Lee et al. (2011, p. 2) define consumer resistance as a concept that must
include; a consumer: a person, or persons, definable as a consumer, or consumers, acting within but sometimes attempting to escape the marketing system. The second is resistance; forms of variable oppositional responses to practice of dominance within the market place, such as commercial pressure. According to Lee et al. (2011, p. 2) is emphasis revolving the topic of power or, rather, power asymmetry, in regard of the conceptualization of consumer resistance. In contrast to consumer resistance, anti-consumerism means literally against consumption, with focus related to consumption, or more accurately, phenomena which are against the process of consumption. The definition of consumption is specific to business discourse, as opposed to the psychological definition of consumption whereas all living people acquire, use and dispose of commodified goods (including ideas, services, products, brands and experiences. It is of importance, according to Lee et al. (2011, p. 3) that no definition of consumption assumes that the process involves acquisition, use, and dispossession of all goods. Instead, it is implicitly accepted, and perhaps by common use, that business scholars are interested in the acquisition, use and dispossession of some commodified goods. Hence, anti-consumption research focuses on phenomena that are against the acquisition, use and dispossession of these goods.

3.2 Consumer resistance, anti-consumption and identity formation

Cherrier (2009) refer to the subject as “resistance of consumption” with description to the private consumer, and how it may not be easy to adopt and refuse the routines and habits of purchasing certain items both due to financial and emotional costs. The topic is addressed by raising the important question: why do some individuals resist the culture that seem to be so dominant, that is sustaining to a capitalistic economy based on consumerism and materialism? Cherrier (2009) presents two theoretical cultural discourses with accentuation on consumption, the decline of consumption and cultural aspects invoked in the reasoning, to furthermore present a consumer resistant identity to each discourse based on empirical material. The first cultural discourse is referred to as exploitative consumption and is critique toward consumption against businesses and producers rather than private consumers. Large business and manufacturers are often viewed as pervading production optimizers and costs minimalists with big too big negative effects on the world, hence the limitations of environmental resources and social inequalities are emphasized. Hence, natural resources and social resources used without concern for the environment or with social consciousness, and exhaustion of environmental resources are in focus. The response of this discourse is the political consumer which choose a lifestyle against exploitative consumption. The political
consumer addresses social inequalities, exploitation of the environment and oppression produced by the modern consumer society and issues connected to risks with a globalized society. Unlimited progress and growth that comes with technological optimism are criticized with emphasis on the importance of higher consciousness at all involved parties. The aim is external change with goals to break the illusion of how individual’s action has no or small impacts on the environment, and emphasis is put on the idea that every person’s actions is influential of the world's environment. The consumer resistant identity that is referred to this discourse is the hero identity (Cherrier, 2009). The political actions of this consumer are made with an awareness of dissemination and need not necessarily aim to influence governments, but primarily to influence consumer understanding and affect the collective understanding of people's influence on the environment. The political consumer is described as having a hero identity in the sense of how they aim to reshape and re-structure the everyday, through active choices with an ideology of resist the unlimited mass-production and mass-consumption. In their actions, the importance of consumption with greater awareness of equality, justice and participation is included, and they want to influence consumers' consumption choices and their lifestyle. An emphasized concept in the construction of hero identity is the individual's perception of the risks in society and how political dynamics can be affected. What a political consumer represents is a heroic essence that can both rationally and consciously distinguish between making "wrong" and "right" in society. The second cultural discourse is referred to as positional consumption that refers to the view that the consumer seeks identity through consumption, social performance and appearance, and accept social expectations and conform to cultural categories which is created by e.g. advertising, media or fashion. It is often a struggle to acquire positional goods in relation to other consumers, and status visibility drives consumers to competition, as consumers enjoy narcissistic behaviour for upward mobility and adulation. The practices are described as mainly structural as a result from a system of codes that systematically dictates the consumers. It relates to an ideology of how consumption and the exposure of products and objects provide a sense of identification or self, that can be recognized by themselves and others. This type of consumption and copying others consumption products and lifestyles will not provide a lasting sense of identification or self, and it will only offer an illusion of the "real" self or the anonymity that can be felt in life but will not give a lasting sense of self. The response of this discourse is the creative consumer that are a reaction against the unreachable social goals or accomplishments. The creative consumer does not consume, acquire or dispose products or objects for the response or expectations of other people, but for their own concerns and values (Cherrier, 2009). This
kind of consumer’s goal or attention is to strive for individuality, and practises are against mass-culture and mass-consumption and the focus is not to generally negate consumer cultures. The goal is neither to try to influence other people and do not seek to transfer their lifestyle to others in comparison to the political consumer, and the process of the individual consumption is to pursue the self and their own individuality. Hence, main emphasis is inner change by the individual consumer. The personalization of their lifestyle and the construction of their identity is the primary importance, therefore, is there no point in seeking to influence or try to copy the consumer lifestyles displayed in the media.

The consumer resistant identity that is referred to this discourse is the project identity (Cherrier, 2009). Consumption practices created by creative consumers are to personalize their concerns and values and can be seen as a search for the meaning of life that takes place in building their identity. The view of how contemporary lives meaningless have been replaced with the triumph of consumerism of individualism, and the anti-consumption practises take place along with the construction and building of the consumer identity. The project identity is described as negligent or protesting the dominant power of mass-cultural society, and anti-consumption is based on empowerment, the social status of the individual and the individual's view of society.

3.3 Consumption and neoliberalism

Furthermore, I engage in a discussion about neoliberalism in order to discuss anti-consumption in relation to today's modern society. In Verdouw’s (2017) proposition for an empirical qualitative study from a sociological stance about subjectivities in neoliberal contexts, she explains how the economics and politics of most western societies are based on neoliberal tenets, such as the free and possessive individual, whose freedom is partly envisaged as an individual’s capacity and qualification to grow and spend capital. Key tenets include the depiction of free markets, entrepreneurialism and trade as normative, and the extension of private market logic into multiple environs through competition and privatization. In relevance to this study and the mentioned study by Verdouw (2017), Slater (1997) emphasizes that through the neoliberal Renaissance since the 1980s, consumption has been seen in relation to the freedoms on the market and thus as a guarantor of both economic development and individual freedom and should be taken into consideration when discussing modern consumption (p. 10-11).

The result of the mentioned study by Verdouw (2017) shows that some participants’ subjectivities strongly reference lay (everyday) forms of neoliberalism, although other
participants proactively undermine them and that diverse ways of engaging with neoliberal money meanings bring significant and diverse consequences for social connectedness and self-identity. In the analysis made by Verdouw (2017) do the participants share key values largely encapsulated in the desire for economic freedom. The participants showed e.g. tendencies of seeking to be self-sufficient and financially independent, with motivational aspects to be satisfied and happy by just earning enough money to “do the things they wanted”. According to Verdouw (2017), neoliberal subjectivity in this matter emphasizes self-responsibility, activity and initiative, strategizing among various options and taking own responsibility for outcomes. The participants also show a key theme that is related to the values and goals of all participants in regard of attitudes and behaviour interact with money activities, e.g. by creating an opinion on what is legitimate ways to spend money, and what not to spend money on. The last key theme presented by Verdouw (2017) express how participants view their future as a path that is visible, autonomous with careful money management. Verdouw (2017) relates this to the neoliberal self that is “a project that must be consciously steered”, managed and invested in, as the neoliberal citizen is self-confident in identifying the future because they do not acknowledge any other alternative.

Perhaps the most relevant to this study is Verdouw’s (2017) presentation of the downshifter. The term refers to a desire to live simply and a choice to initiate long term change, especially by reducing income levels. Downshifting is defined by a participant’s decision to reduce the income considerably, as a choice in regard of quality-of-life. Motives for downshifting varied, including re-engaging in a “meaningful” employment, escaping work pressures, improving family health, gaining more family or leisure hours or for ideological reasons. By choosing lower income, financial self-reliance has or may cease as a motivational life-goal. They choose thoughtfully and conscientiously and aims not to think economically but to think morally, with awareness of their departure from normative forms of daily life that offer very small friction to neoliberal ideas. The goals of the downshifters are then less material and frequently include satisfying or meaningful work that in many cases has social contribution.

3.4 Summary of previous research
In this chapter, previous research has been reported relevant to the study. Initially, was explained how the application of anti-consumption have been presented. Subsequently, previous research was presented regarding consumer resistance, anti-consumption and identity formation, and concepts and perspectives that will be used to discuss the results of the study. The next section presented previous research in the areas of consumption and
neoliberalism that is relevant for this study, such as research about the term *downshifter* in the area of neoliberalism.

4. Methodology

The following chapter presents planning and approaches in regard of retrieval and processing of the empirical material. Initially, the methodology of the study is presented which is followed by an account of the study's considerations regarding the method material. Then follows an exposition for analysis of materials and coding, before a discussion of the validity and reliability of the study is presented as well as the ethical considerations that has been taken into account in the study.

4.1 Methodological approach

Based on the purpose of the study and in order to answer the questions that is formulated in the study a phenomenological methodical approach has been chosen. A phenomenological approach aims to understand social subjective phenomena from the perspective of individuals and their standpoint, and from their own constructions of the world (Padgett, 2008, p. 35; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 124). The approach is therefore mainly suitable for studies of experiences about a phenomenon among different individuals (Rosengren & Arvidson, 2002, p. 233). With this in mind was a phenomenological-inspired approach chosen to in the best possible way explore the phenomenon of identity. The phenomenological approach was therefore chosen of the basis of the possibility to bring an understanding perspective that is characterized by an overall picture, as the method is suitable for studies of complex phenomena or when the purpose is to achieve understanding to a subject.

Since the purpose of the study is not to examine the extent of the phenomenon or results that can be considered representative of the entire population of anti-consumers have possible quantitative methods not been selected. The study was conducted with both inductive and deductive approaches, in which theory to a certain extent was developed before collection of data but also further developed during the meantime of the progress of the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 38-39; Tracy, 2013, p. 21). An iterative process between empirical work and theory was applied as aspects emerged during the data collection that contributed to the development of the theory.

Interviews have been chosen as method of data collection, as it allows interaction and the possibility to speak with relevant actors and thus create an understanding of what they feel, know, perceive and do (Aspers, 2011, p. 33; Creswell, 2007, p. 38). Hence, the choice of
interviews is considered suitable for the collection of relevant material according to the purpose of the study, to examine the process of becoming an anti-consumer and how identity can be constructed through anti-consumption. The choice of collection method is furthermore justified as through interviews it is possible to reach complex and answers of e.g. perceptions, opinions and experiences of the informants that could not be possible to collect through other qualitative methods, e.g. observations of the informants (Aspers, 2011, p. 37).

The study intends to be a descriptive study, referring to the nature of the questions, while analysing the empirical material based on chosen theoretical framework. Another important element in the work derived from the chosen framework and method for data collection is the fact of reflectivity, that as researchers are part of the social that are studied (Rosengren & Arvidson, 2002, p. 386; Creswell, 2007, p. 38). As researcher of this study is this considered with humbleness to the personal role and understanding in the handling of informants and treatment of empirical material in the following work of the analysis.

4.2 Material

The following section presents procedures for preparation and collection of the study’s empirical material. Initially, the selection and delimitations that are applied in the study is presented, before preparations and approach to collection of empirical material is presented and discussed.

4.2.1 Selections and delimitations

In the study, considerations specific to selection and limits have been made. Prior to the completion of the study, it was found that there was considerable variation in the approach between anti-consumers. The variation in approaches and what the informant chose not to consume meant so that the selection required careful delimitations to improve the possibility to produce relevant material and answer the questions of the study. In conjunction with the selection process, I took inspiration from Rosengren and Arvidson (2002) in regard of creating a variation in regard of examine a process, and selected informants based on them being a part of an anti-consumer group on social media platform Facebook and focused on having declined consumption in excess of consumables over a year. The Facebook network builds on personally created user profiles or accounts that enable interaction through the network. Through created groups on the network, individuals can communicate and disclose personal interests, an interaction in personal issues that would otherwise be harder to find. Therefore, this network has been chosen as part of the selection method as individuals have
active participation in the group and a greater opportunity for interaction with others in the field of anti-consumption.

The category of individuals that was intended to study had to meet specific criteria that was set up, such as an actively statement against consumption and had made an actively action to lower their regular consumption. The consumption that the informants had limited was impulse shopping, eye-catching purchases, new goods such as clothing, shoes and similar products, and had focused on consuming only second-hand products and consumables.

Many informants had chosen to be committed to a “buy-free” year, for this year and many done it for two or three years.

In order to reach a relevant selection of informants from the mentioned population, strategic selection was applied in the study. In order for the sample to be qualitative representative, the method was chosen in order to be able to handpick informants based on the specific criteria. The selection method is based on selecting appropriate interviewees that are reachable and seems to fit the study (Padgett, 2008, p. 54-55; Trost, 2010, p. 140). For the present study it meant that potential informants had to be available to meet in the regions of Uppland and Södermanland in Sweden and met the above-mentioned criteria. The individuals have been contacted via messaging on Facebook or e-mail. In the chosen population with anti-consumers in the member group on Facebook, the total number of members is 414 individuals, of which about 17% are male members and remaining female members. In the sample of the study is 2 out of 10 informants male and remaining female, and even though the purpose and questions of the study do not matter gender affiliation, the distribution of the genders are similar to the distribution of the genders of the members of the anti-consumption group.

4.2.2 Preparations for collection of material

Semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to capture the informants’ subjective experiences, opinions (Aspers, 2011, p. 143; Tracy, 2013, p. 140) and to be able to examine the process of becoming an anti-consumer. Prior to the collection of material, preparatory action was taken for the purpose to develop structure to the study and design. The interview guide associated with the study focuses on the areas: practical questions about consumption, how are they affected by not consuming, external factors and own experiences. These areas derive from the purpose of the study and the theoretical framework with aim to give guidance to keep the conversation to the relevant areas throughout the interviews.

The order of the questions remained undecided to transfer focus on creating interviews where the questions arise or come in order as a result of the informants’ answer, as Ekholm and Fransson (1992, p. 76) and Trost (2010, p. 72) explains is appropriate. A less structured
interview was guide was constructed, with inspiration from Tracy (2013, p. 139) that emphasizes that a less structured interview guide is meant to stimulate discussion rather than dictate it. Such an approach encourages creativeness during the interview, adaption to ever-changing circumstances and to maintain control of the discussion of the interview. Within the study and the process as whole, I chose to use a high degree of structure as the study handles with processes and identity and not any unprecedented phenomenon (Trost, 2010, p. 40-41). This was chosen for the reason to assure that the research corresponds to a coherent and unified study. The usage of a thematic open interview with low degree of structure and without a prepared interview-guide could cause risk of depart from the subject during the conversations in the interviews (ibid.). Hence, these aspects are argumentation for the choice of semi-structured interviews and the design interview-guide, which allows the researcher to place the informants’ experiences and understandings in focus without too much interjects of pre-understanding or to great of theoretical viewpoint. Similarly, a structure is maintained that ensures subject boundaries and anti-consumption and identities permeates the study and the interviews in general.

4.2.3 Collection of materials
A letter of formal notice was constructed during the preparation phase of the material gathering, which described the purpose of the study and clarification of the rights that the informants possessed regarding voluntary participation in accordance to the publication Good Research Practice by Swedish Council of Science (2011). In the letter of formal notice, Trost’s (2010, p. 65) description of how to create a safe foundation for the informants was adopted, as how the informants are offered to propose a time and place for the interview. Furthermore, the letter of formal notice contained information regarding that the research was conducted in relation to studies at Uppsala University and contact information to the thesis supervisor. Selected parts from the information in the letter of formal notice were repeated in the beginning of the interviews, when the informant was asked for consent and permission to record the interview. At all interviews, the informants agreed to this. To enable transcripts and to be able to carefully recall quotations from the interviews, were all interviews recorded. A recording device is preferred that does not disturb the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewer, for example by blink or take up much of the field of vision (Trost, 2010, p. 75). The interview guide was of great use during the interviews and served as a support for the focus on the overall purpose of the study. Several questions were asked directly from the interview guide while some questions were not prepared in advance, was made as a result of the informant's reply via follow-up questions. Follow-up questions
were used as a tool to capture as well as reflect what the informant answered. By mirroring back interesting information in the informant's response, the material could be kept relevant to the exposed focus, to gather the informants' perceptions and experiences about anti-consumption. The location and time of the interviews were based on the wishes of the informants. The places varied between the informants' workplaces and public cafes in accordance with Tracy (2013, p. 139), advocating that semi-structured interviews take place during a slow time at the workplace or over a lunch which allows for more emic, emergent understandings to blossom and for the interviewees' complex viewpoints to be heard without constraints from scripted questions or strict constrains from the location. The ten interviews ranged from 45 minutes to two hours.

4.3 Analysis and coding

In the process of converting empirical material into codes e.g. processes and patterns, experiences in time and social aspects and identities, and the process of making the material analysable, a transcription of the primary material was performed, which in the case of interviews relates to the verbal recordings (Padget, 2008, p. 134; Hjelm & Lindgren, 2010, p. 84). When audio recording was used in conjunction with the interviews, similar to Trost's (2010, p. 74) arguments, exact wording could be captured to enable as soon as possible conversation of the conversation. As transcripts should be implemented with advantage immediately after interviewing, to take on impressions and shades that could otherwise easily be lost after a long time after recording (Aspers, 2011, p. 73), full transcripts were made for interviews for a maximum of 48 hours after implementation. However, shorter transcripts were made in connection with implementation on the last three interviews, in order not to lose important impressions and shades, which were completed within a week with full and word-based transcription. Encoding is part of the analysis work because the material is broken down into smaller parts, encodes and activates analysis (Aspers, 2011, p. 165). In this study, a combined coding effort has been used by inductive and deductive work. This choice was based on humility for knowledge and understanding of the field and therefore chose to be open to interpretations of the empirical material. With this insight into consideration, the coding work was initiated according to an inductive process, which meant that paragraph by piece was separately processed through the material and identified/created empirical codes (Tracy, 2013, p. 184-187, 190-194; Aspers, 2011, p 170-172). After conducting such an inductive coding of five of the interviews, these initial codes were chosen to be taken into consideration to continue the work according to a more deductible approach. This in fact
meant that, based on the inductive codes, partly deductive codes were created with a clearer connection to the theoretical framework. In accordance with Aspers (2011, p. 169), the combined inductive and deductive work generated a coding scheme to encode all transcripts of the empirical material. In conjunction with the coding process, Tracy’s (2013, p. 186) and Aspers (2011, p. 185) description was used as the empirical material was encoded by the margin method, based on themes with associated colour. This was chosen to be done in digital printing by encoding the themed colours directly in a word processor, resulting in a simplicity of correcting errors, following change history and the ability to process the material at different physical sites.

4.4 Validity and reliability
To ensure the credibility of the study in general, it is important to consider factors that may affect the validity and reliability in the ongoing research processes. It should be added that the validity and reliability that permeates the study not only in this paragraph but is based on the ongoing choices and balances that have been made and reported throughout the work of the study. Validity is considered to be the most important measure of the credibility of a study (Rosengren & Arvidson, 2002, p. 195). A high degree of validity assures that the study is valid in the sense that it measures what it intends to measure. The validity further aims to assess the study's operationalization, how well the empirical and theoretical concepts are consistent with each other (Rosengren & Arvidson, 2002, p. 195; Tracy, 2013, p. 230). The study measures what it intends to measure in a qualitatively oriented interview study, which means that great importance must be attached to the questions and their design in relation to the subject area of the study. Therefore, as previously described, an interview guide has been designed with related questions with the aim of raising relevant areas for the topic of anti-consumption and identity creation. In addition, reinforced validity can be emphasized regarding the measures taken around the study's selection. As the informants have been personally reached in social media and the selection process has been done according to the methodology by Rosengren and Arvidson (2002), and the subject has not been processed through a client or profession, which could have influenced the statements. This helped the informants to provide subjective and personal responses without the involvement of a client or employer, which contributed to a fairer and more valid outcome.

A reliable study has a low level, or non-existence, of random results, according to Trost (2010, p. 131). In connection with qualitative studies, the reliability process is complicated since high reliability conceptually assumes a high degree of standardization, something that
qualitative interviews, as for this study, often lacks when they are highly distinguished structuring and low standardization (Trost, 2010, p. 41; Tracy, 2013, p. 237). In accordance with Rosengren and Arvidson (2002, p. 201), during the collection of the material, it was attempted to avoid random errors arising by asking questions similarly to the informants, with the aim of strengthening reliability. As mentioned earlier, recording of the interviews has been conducted, which has subsequently been followed by justified transcripts. This has been done to further strengthen the reliability of the study (Ejvegård, 1996, p. 42; Tracy, 2013, p. 237-238) using Dictaphone as well as implementing verbal transcripts. In addition, in accordance with the peer review/debriefing strategy, debriefing sessions have been held during the study, to further enhance the validity of the research by allowing third parties to review the research process (Creswell, 2007, p. 251). The study has thus received the opposition of an external actor in the form of a master student in the field of sociology, in addition to the study supervisor, who has studied the theoretical basis and the research process. This strategy can be motivated by facilitating the researcher's ability to maintain honest and close material in the field of research (Creswell, 2007, p. 250). It has also been important to consider validation as an ongoing process and not a verification at the end of the work, as Creswell (2007, p. 250) emphasizes.

4.5 Ethical considerations

In connection with this study, particular attention has been paid to the Swedish Research Council (2017) publication for Good research practice. Special attention has been paid to areas related to the disclosure of information, gathering of consent, confidentiality and use of information as these aspects were particularly relevant to the design of the study. The provision of information on the purpose of the study, has been described in detail for the informants (Swedish Research Council, 2017, p. 40). The dissemination of information has been done both in writing through a letter of formal notice when the initial contact is made and verbally in connection with the interviews. In connection with interviews, verbal consent has also been obtained regarding current participation and recording of interview (Swedish Research Council, 2017, p. 26). In addition, in relation to the confidentiality aspect, I have handled information on informants with great care and taken measures to protect the privacy of the information and the right to privacy protection (Swedish Research Council, 2011, p. 40-41). This has been done by processing uncollected material without any third parties in the vicinity, stored material in password-protected computers, as well as encrypted names that have been made to make connections to individual sources difficult. Confidentiality was also
ensured by removing all audio recordings shortly after transcription was completed. Another aspect that has been taken into consideration is the use of data and means that the collected material is used for research purposes. As stated by the Swedish Research Council (2017, p. 40-41), researchers cannot promise that anyone other than the research group will be able to access the material as transparency of the research material may be justified or necessary. However, it has been clearly communicated to informants that the data will not be disclosed for commercial use or to external actors but will only be used for research purposes.

5. Results and analysis

In the following chapter, the result of the study’s empirical material and presented in relation the theoretical framework of the study presented in the theoretical section. The result and analysis are divided into three parts: processes and patterns, experiences in time and social aspects and identities. The first sections of processes and patterns are seen in the study as complementary results to results and discussion about identity and provide an overall background for the next sections of identity. The three areas complement each other thus the first sections aim to present the informants’ perception of processes and patterns, patterns of exceptions and the process of having or not having children. The second section aims to address and illustrate reflections in regard of time aspects and society, and the last section highlights identities and identity construction. Initially are the ten informants briefly presented, whose participation constitutes the empirical material of the study.

5.1 Presentation of the informants

The selection for this study consists of ten individuals which have actively chosen to be anti-consumers to varying degrees have declined consumption. At the time of the survey, the informants were aged 30-52, with a gender distribution of eight women and two males. Below is a brief presentation of informants.
5.2 Processes and patterns

In the next section an account of the informants’ perception of becoming an anti-consumer, patterns of when informants made considered and not considered exceptions and how the process of having children have affected their approach to anti-consumption.

5.2.1 The process of becoming an anti-consumer

The transcribed material shows how the informants have experienced the process of reducing their consumption or e.g. becoming completely "buy-free" and what motivated them to take the step, which exceptions are common to the informants and how it affected them when they got children or reflections about not having children. The results indicate that the informants have different motivational aspects to change their consumption. These can be divided into four major categories where the first concerns how the individual reason and minds social and moral valuation of the environment. In the quotations below, this environmental concern is exemplified by two informant’s descriptions of reasoning of high valuation of the environment and taking social aspects into consideration:

Today, I'm thinking more about the environment and how we really affect everything on our planet, who am I in this society. I have to create the world I want, I cannot walk around and complain about how it is and then do the
opposite. If I do not like the fact that animals are being kept in cages and then ordering cheap meat, then you have to actually do something about it and become the vegan, for example. – GN

It was quite important to me at the outset to feel that I contributed to the world of sustainability. One wants to contribute to a more sustainable supply and resist the consumption society we live in, or at least I feel so - SH

As the quotations above show, the result entails a perception that they can contribute as individuals and a willingness for being more sustainable was a prominent driving force in the act of living with very little consumption. The result further show that it foremost was an emerging process, from starting to think about how they affect the environment to start to act of more sustainable actions as consume less.

The second category that is linked to the motivation of the individuals to change and lower their consumption concerns how the individual experiences external or cultural pressure. The analysis shows that some informants experienced external pressures that were a contributing factor in their decision to reduce their consumption. Above all, this came from social media, where the individuals experienced a stress or shame for high consumption. In the quotations below, this external pressure is exemplified by two informant’s descriptions of reasoning in regard of high consumption of goods:

It was especially before Christmas that I felt it began to escalate, both that I saw how people consumed in all the social media for Christmas gifts to the children, but also how the counterfeit was labelled on social media and it gave me a push because I got kind of panic when I saw that a mom had bought 300 Christmas presents before Christmas. That meant I just wanted to do the contrary, that my children could only have a Christmas gift each. - LA

That's why I started thinking about it, it felt like I'd been in a dark hole and that's when I started to see how others lived their lives in a different way. I felt almost a kind of shame in living as I did, because I was not really that person. Then I began to listen to other people's stories and read about how to live in other ways. - GN

The two quotations illustrate both the perception of the external pressure of the growing insight that high consumption is nothing to strive for and consequences that come with high consumption and how it has affected their position. But also, that they have been inspired from social media as a driving force to change their consumption behaviour.

The third category is concerned with the individuals own will to change, to experience inner change in him- or herself, often linked to low self-esteem or poor self-esteem. This is clearly
illustrated in the quote by SH explaining how consumption could be performed for better well-being or for raising self-esteem with things in its vicinity:

For my part, it was very linked to my low self-esteem, that I had a need to show my consumption and, for example, what I had on me. It could be that I wanted to feel better in some clothes, with some gadgets, like status markers and things like that. I began to get more and more aware that I did, that I acted for my low self-esteem and it did not feel healthy. When I tried to consume less and put a buying-stop for myself, and only bought consumables, I felt quite fast that I really did not miss anything. I noticed that I had what I needed. It made me think I could change myself and my lifestyle. – SH

Some of the informants felt a feeling of poor self-esteem and that they did not good about themselves or their consumption, in a similar manner as the quote above suggests, and told of a change that had brought about the change in their consumption behaviour and choices in the life of consuming less. As the informants tell, many felt a better feeling both about their consumption and themselves, and that they feel more liberated after the changes. This also connects the informants to a sense of lesser demands. This is accentuated in the continuing quotation of SH and SN, which describe an improved sense of self:

I feel that I made a statement both for myself and for others and I feel more liberated and healthier. – SH

The more things you have the more difficult it is to keep track of everything and you act because you do not know that you already own it or where it is. It's quite crazy to live so really. Nowadays I think of everything I buy, which is a huge difference from before, and I feel kind of easier as a person. - SN

This is also conveyed in the quotation below, where a sense of strengthened personality and that shopping and consumption do not have to be a supporting foundation for your personality. EA who has been living almost free from consumption for several years of e.g. clothes and products, and is very active in social media, blogger and writer about reducing consumption describes the strengthening feeling of self as:

I think I mean that my well-being is not dependent on shopping. That I and my person can carry oneself, that I do not need any external supplements or get kicks from shopping to feel good in myself. That I seek meaningfulness elsewhere. – EA

The fourth category that is linked to the motivation for the informants to change and lower their consumption concerns economic aspects and how saving money was an incentive to start
consuming less or almost not at all. A pattern that was prominent among the informants who had the motivation at the start to save money was that they often started only with this motivation, but over time other incitements were created such as the desire to consume less for the sake of the environment or because they conceived a better self-esteem due to their decisions and their new choice of life. Some of these informants had set a future goal for their savings money and what they would "get out of" after a "buy-free" year, others did not have clear goals and described that it was enough to see the savings money grow on the bank-account. One of the informants who had set a clear goal with the "buy-free" year was LA who described the objective through the following quote:

I have always wanted to own a plot in Åre, and if I manage to save up to a certain amount of 100000 kronor this year I will buy it. It is also consumption, but it feels like something that is approved to buy, because it's not a thing, but more for another way of life. – LA

Some of the informants convey how a sense of competition with themselves came about. GN who also has strong values in regard of the environment and the society describes that he started comparing almost everything with a daily salary, such as dining at restaurants which was one of the first things he explains that he stopped consuming because he did not feel it was worth spending the money. GN who today lives in a mobile home in form of a RV, has resigned from his permanent work and works on a small scale as freelance journalist describes through the following quote how one of the main goals in recent years has been to reduce consumption and reduce spending:

Today, I consume very little, my expenses are approximately 6000 kronor today. It is on insurance, the dog, food, but it's just for strictly survival. I do not go to the movies, do not drink coffee outside. I buy almost nothing, and it has been the same for two and a half years. – GN

5.2.1.1 Management of the surroundings’ reactions

The analysis entails descriptions from the majority of the informants in regard of expectations of reactions about their choices and changes in consumption and the process of becoming a different kind of consumer. These reactions are predominantly expected from friends for activities associated with consumption due to changes in their behaviour, such as not accompanying shopping, going to the movies or other activities that are otherwise linked to their old consumption patterns. However, many of the informants describe that a common response to their consumption choices is of a negative nature from surroundings, family and
work colleagues. As the quote below, this is exemplified by LA, which tells about her colleagues' reactions to her choice of being free of consumption besides consumables for one year.

But my male colleagues here at work, they do not think I can manage to be "buy-free" for a year. Then I get a little more motivated. I love to grow things for example, and when we were at a big garden fair, they barely believed me when I did not buy anything. They do not really believe that I'll be able to cope for a year and ask, "How are you doing this for a whole year?" I feel that I'm being motivated by it and think "just you wait and see". – LA

Overall, the result shows that the informants experience a more positive response from closely related family members, that they get more support from their family and that they experience a sense of being able to inspire their family and children to engage in their choices. However, as the quotation by LA exemplifies, the analysis entails of a more negative attitude in the workplace of their colleagues, and that they feel that they cannot inspire with the same simplicity as they can with their family members.

5.2.2 Patterns of exceptions
As mentioned, all the informants had committed to significantly reducing their consumption¹. However, the informants described that it was not always easy to adhere to their specific rules and that there were sometimes both planned and spontaneous exceptions. Several informants tell us that the deviation from the rules could be felt as a failure and could accompany regret or shame. However, the deviation did not accompany any of the informants that they abolished their rules or gave up the "buy-free" year. As the quotation from JA exemplifies, the result shows that many of the informants had difficulty in resisting spontaneous shopping:

It has happened, on impulse, that I "accidently" bought something, which I have regretted and returned to the store. It may be a decorative thing for the home or clothes. I always try to not consume but sometimes you give in for the temptation. In some cases, I have returned the items and in some cases I have kept them and thought "stupid mistakes, but I keep on fighting". - JA

The exceptions were discussed in terms of e.g. "you are only human" – AI, and "everyone makes mistakes" – LA, but that it became easier and easier over time and during the process of not consuming. IA describes how the process has not been smooth and always with joy.

¹ See section 4.2.1 Selections and delimitations
2016 was the first year when she tried to have a buy-free year but felt that she did not do it well and was not as well thought-out in her choices as she is today. But today it is significantly easier to refrain from shopping and consumption. This is described inter alia through the quote:

I feel, even though I've been doing this for several years that I'm still learning, but I still have stores I do not allow myself to enter, so I cannot be attracted. I feel a bit like an alcoholic on weaning, so I have some stores I do not go in order not to be attracted. - IA

The empirical material shows a relatively unified view that experiences were beyond the rules for consumption and if they had “buy-free” year. As shown in the following citations, the consumption of experiences, and some consumption that was connected to experiences, were described as a conscious choice and conscious exceptions, but with various justifications for these exceptions. Experiences were described more as something that is needed and uplifting in life, as the two quotes below convey:

Experiences I do not have in my “buy-free” year, as I do a lot of trips and experiences with my family. We go on excursions, walks, so that we are together and spend time as a family, and it leads me to buy food such as food for that trip, but I think it's a difference. – LA

One of the conscious choices I've made around this is not to stop consuming experiences, so I'm still following many things my friends do. If I did not have this exception, it would probably be more noticeable that I have this buy-stop, if I removed experiences too. I think it would be very boring otherwise, I probably would not be able to do this then. – IA

The results that the informants conveyed about the consumption of experiences, they were considered more acceptable as they created new memories, were developing and they made time to spend time with family and friends.

5.2.2.1 The process of having or not having children
The empirical evidence shows that the informants are experiencing a change in their thinking about sustainability, responsibility for the earth, and in some cases a developing concern about the future after having children. The result shows a desire for their values to be brought down on one's children, and it is emphasized that future generations will have good conditions for living in, as well as a desire to have more awareness about the products consumed for their children. Several of the informants describe it as process, like LA explains how the desire to
become more aware was a process that came under the acquisition of three children. It evolved from wanting to trade non-toxic and sustainable products to the children to not want to consume and the will to consume only clothes that have been inherited from friends and acquaintances. The analysis of the stories of the informants can be divided into two groups *experience of inner change* and *fear of the future*. To link to the first grouping, this is exemplified by the following citations describing the perception of responsibility and transfer of values:

I feel that I have a responsibility for the future, that I have a responsibility for my children in this area. I feel I have a responsibility to make them understand how we consume things, and how we use resources and get them more aware, for a sustainable future, but especially when they grow older. It is necessary that we all think of the future.

- SH

One of the informants who has lived "buy-free" for several years and is active on e.g. social media, to inspire others, explains how she wants to convey her values to her child:

I think I will keep this lifestyle throughout my life and I will try to get him to understand how I'm thinking about shopping. He is so small now still, but I'll probably bring him to second hand stores when he wants to start choosing clothes himself.

- EA

As stated in the citations, there is a willingness to involve their children in their consumption activities and several informants describe how their chance of influencing their children is that they are small because they can have a review and more easily affect their children's values. As JA describes, she finds that she is sometimes too strict with her children, as she also determines what they are getting and cannot buy for their own weekly money. But she describes that everything else would go against her values and that they will get to determine themselves when they grow up and she hopes that they have accepted her values then. To link to the second grouping, shows the analysis that there is a fear of the future and worries what the informants leave behind. In the two quotations below, this fear of society’s imprint of the earth is clearly illustrated along with the desire to improve the situation by consuming less:

When I got children, it became a completely different dimension, of course, to start thinking about "what should I leave behind me” and time feels more finite here on earth. I want to try to leave for the next generation an environment that they can live in, they have, as well, not been with and dirty the environment that our last century has done.

- IA
Then it is a conscientious question that I do not think I can leave behind a world for my son, based on how we consume now. How we consume today require such resources from the earth, so there is a conscientious question in this absolute. - EA

Separating from the overall picture provided by the informants, one of the informants’ choice of life is to be voluntarily child-free. GN describes that his volunteer childlessness is often questioned when he is single and over 30, but he believes that it is his choice of life and that he has found himself through that choice. The following quotation describes that the choice of life is closely linked to unsustainable living and the willingness not to contribute to more people consuming the ecological assets of the earth and consuming in an unsustainable manner:

A further conviction in my voluntary childhood is that we do not need more people to the world, because today I see it as a human being making so great ecological and ecological impressions in our modern model, it's sick.

There are already a lot of animals and people in the world who need help. - GN

This view is closely linked to an active criticism of society at large and how a normal consumer overcomes what is sustainable for our nature. GN also describes how he previously perceived that he could not change anything in the world alone, but today he realizes that this is not the case and that all people can influence a high degree by changing their way of living and their consumption. Additionally, there is a description that, even though he has very low consumption in addition to consumables, companies are chosen where he consumes extremely carefully according to their ethics, and that he feels that he is not so unusual at that point or around the growing desire to become self-sufficient.

5.3 Experiences about time and societal aspects
The next section gives an account of the informants’ perceptions of changes in time aspects when they consume differently than before, and positions in society that may have influenced why they consume differently and less today, such as thoughts about capitalism and neoliberalism.

5.3.1 Perceptions and behaviours in regard of time aspects
The transcribed material shows how the informants have experienced a differentiation of time during the process of reducing consumption, such as experiencing that they have more time at their disposal and more free time to do what they want. The section will firstly present
In contrast, as opposed to this, some of the informants describe, as they perceive how the descent of consumption may be time consuming, for example, when they must find a specific product second hand, which can cause time-consuming difficulties. Secondly is the analysis of the informant’s perception of how time they compared time to consumption and to go down to working hours presented. As IA describes, she experiences a big difference about not having to deal with all the possessions she had before, explaining that the more things she had, the more time she took care of these things, in terms of repairs, maintenance and laundry. She explains that the car is a good example, and she finds that she saves time cycling instead, even though it takes longer time to get to some locations. Time she'd rather spend the family or be out in nature. The informants, for example, explain how they changed activities that circulated around consumption that they have today switched to activities that are more about socialization, being out in nature and experiences. This can be illustrated by the following extracts:

I used to spend Saturdays shopping with my friends, for example, and it’s several hours we talk about. Now I’m doing something else instead and I’m much calmer and relaxed on the weekends. I could spend so many hours chasing things I thought I needed, either physically or online. E.g. check, compare prices and so on, and that takes a lot of your time. – IA

As presented in the above statement, informants describe the movement of activities focused on consumption. Several informants demonstrate similar perceptions about the rejection of social media, which has both been time-consuming and made them more inclined to consume. With the help of LA’s reasoning, this view is exemplified of having more time at its disposal along with the de-escalation of social media in relation to their new consumption patterns and goals with less consumption:

I experience a huge difference in what time I have for the children, more than I thought. I do not spend as much time on Facebook, Instagram and other social media. I have become aware and present, that sounds like a cliché but it actually feels so. - LA

In view of LA’s statement, it can be understood that there is an opinion that time is saved and that they have more time for the family that have come with their new lifestyle to consume less. But this view is not shared with all informants, as some informants describe some
difficulties with not be able to buy some things easy and how this lifestyle can be time consuming, e.g. when they are in need of a specific product for them or their children and the difficulties of finding this product on the second-hand market, which can be time consuming. PA describes:

But on the other hand, it can be difficult to live like this when the son has grown out of clothes and he must have a pair of training pants directly. Then it would be really easier to go to town and just buy it, because it's there, than to start looking at the second-hand market. Then you have to have some more advancement and in this case with my son's pants, I felt it might take a week to look up the second hand and it may be so this time. But sometimes it may be that you do not actually have that week, then it becomes problematic. – PA

The analysis describes a dilemma for the informants as they find that in situations where a purchase becomes more urgent, the problems increase when they must make a position if they are to follow their "rules" about not buying or making an exception in the absence of time.

5.3.1.1 Reduce working time

As the analysis shows that different time aspects were very important for both consumption and rejection of consumption, it also entails how the informants choose to measure some consumption against time and how there is a consciousness of reducing working time related to a reduction of consumption. JA explains how her choices about reducing consumption have influenced how she looks financially on several aspects in life and describes it as only positive. She describes that she started to reduce 25% in working hours and that she quickly felt that it was the right choice to choose time in advance of money, as the quote below clarifies:

I work less now, and it really depends on consuming less. Should I consume more, I would not be able to work so little. Today I only work 50% and it is completely self-chosen. I quickly felt that choosing the right time for money was the right choice, and I work for freedom, so I have not built up expensive habits that cost a lot of money. I want to live easily, so I do not feel I have to earn a lot of money because I have expensive habits. Being free and not having things that “own” you are really great. – JA

Aligned with the quotation above, GN describes how he basically measures time as a currency in relation to consumption. The following quote describes how many choices are judged based on time and what consumption and working time it would cost him:

All the choices I make are more or less about time, I work as little as I can because I consume as little as I can. It's not about just saving time, for example, I went for 8 km here today instead of taking the subway, and it's
based on the fact that the subway here requires me to work and consume. I really have the money, but I measure everything on time. It's not about being stingy and wanting to save money, I just want to work so little so I can do what I want with my time, and not consume things I do not need. - GN

As shown by the statement, the analysis indicates the assessment is not only based on saving time, but also choices that are time consuming but are to reduce consumption. The conscious choices that are being made aims to serve them to feel that the work time they work are their own choice and should come with a feeling of freedom and are well invested. In these cases, the consideration is from themselves and not by external pressure, and the choices are often made on the basis of their own coherence and willingness to not consume what they perceive as "unnecessary things". Which means that the goal is not always to save time or think economically without deliberately reducing work time in a satisfactory manner and becoming less materialistic.

5.3.2 Positions about capitalism and neoliberalism

When the informants’ reason about the Western society and how we consume it is foremost about critiquing the consumer behaviour they have been raised with and how everyone is thought to live and consume in this matter. The critique is not against e.g. their parents but against the society's emergence of unsustainable consumption and how many people live according to these ways without reflecting. The analysis shows how the informants experience a sense of how society has shaped how the majority look at consumption and their consumption patterns. This is described in the two citations below which exemplifies how the informants describe the feeling that this society has shaped the people during their growth:

I was born and raised here in Sweden, and I think that how we consume here in Sweden have we learned through the mother's milk. I mean that we have really learned this and living with high consumption is the only way we have learned. Our consumption behaviors are something we have to look through, we are getting fed with things all the time, both directly and indirectly, and we are fed with a culture that says: "buy this, you need this". – IA

I grew up with the ambition to be like everyone else, as the average person lives today. I used to do what everyone else did, I built a life. It is so badly important to have a car that you own yourself, work all the time and own your own apartment. It is, of course, the society we have grown up in. But it is not pronounced, of course, it was not that I said "now I'll do like everyone else" but I imitated a system that already existed, a model that already existed and behaviors like already existed. – GN

In further development of this topic, the analysis shows, which is also exemplified in these
two above quotes, that this learned approach to consumption and our consumption behaviour are somewhat influential. In addition to this, individuals need a wake up from the learned approach and need to review how to live with less consumption.

**The analysis further indicates that** the informants describing this criticism of this social structure and way of consumption also describe how this way of life affects our mental peace and how it neglects our relationships with ourselves and our environment. GN describes it in the form of "that our way of consuming is at too high cost and that this way of life bargains all we really need, as finding yourself, real love and the feeling of being needed". PA, who is a lawyer, works with and has a great interest in environmental issues, believes that our consumption society needs to be changed to a large extent, that the entire system and society need to be changed in order to reduce consumption visibly. This is exemplified in the quotes below:

Mainstream must be sustainable. Thus, one can question the entire capitalist system, so that there is more sustainability, how we look at growth beliefs and how we consume. Thus, growth must be subordinate to us, not the contrary, as it is now that we are subordinate to consumption in a capitalist society. – PA

I began to see and realize that my whole life is based on the fact that I follow this sick thought of growth. Everything is supposed to grow all the time, everything is supposed to be better. This is how our society are "supposed to look like" according to the model. But it does not have to be the right way. – GN

What is also demonstrated in the quotes is the informants’ belief that there is an alternative way of living, or a model for the society that are not according to how the normal people live in our society today and that there is a belief of a "better way" of how the modern society can be modelled, with another approach to growth and consumption.

### 5.4 Identities

The following sections present the results and analysis of the empirical material regarding identity and identity construction in connection with anti-consumption. The chapter presents and discusses mainly four sections which is discussed in relation to identity features. All presented and discussed sections will be linked to the presented previous research in this study in a forthcoming section, however in this section are two more closely linked to the previous research and two are more based on protruding results from the analysis of informants' results in the study. To begin the section of identity and how anti-consumption can be identity-creating, I begin to convey how some of the informants described and
discussed about themselves in relation to having significantly decreased or stopped consuming. This can be exemplified by the quote of EA, who for many years has used very little consumption and is now working partly to convey the message of "buy-free year" as a freelance consultant and through social media:

   This is a bit like a lifestyle, it almost becomes part of one's personality. So, really, it's not only that I get bad conscience if I consume, but it's more that you make a statement if I buy something today. It's about using its existence by saying "I do not shop" and that means something for one's personality. It charges my personality with a lot of things, which is the right "me" and now I have found many who think the same as me. – EA

As described in the above quotation, the result shows that many of the informants communicate both explicitly and implicitly, a connection to their personality, sense of identity and a sense of fellowship with others by living consumption-free or, for example, with a purchase-free year.

5.4.1 Aspiration to change the surroundings
The transcribed material shows how some informants expressed a desire to change the society or the world in line with their thoughts of consumption and how they find identity within themselves and with other people by consuming less and getting their surroundings to do the same. The first grouping in this study that is presented here, is closely linked to the next categorization presented in the study which express their opinions more strongly, as they have similarities that will be presented below, but also have differences such as the will to change the world at a larger level and how these informants associate their identity with the will to change on a larger scale than the other grouping presented.

The result shows how the activities and ways of life about being an anti-consumer are linked with the feeling that humanity utilizes the earth, animals and humans. As stated earlier the informants perceive that they can make a difference as individuals and that a major motivator for living with a little consumption is to "want to do the right thing". This coincides with this grouping and is exemplified, inter alia, by IA, which describes:

   The worst feeling about our consumption society is how we use animals and people to such an extent, I know my actions or what I do may not make that big difference, but how should one influence the big world? You are just human, but you have to try. – IA

\[2\] See section 5.2.1 The process of becoming an anti-consumer
The informants convey the vision of getting the outside world to understand that through reduced consumption there is a better well-being and make others understand "why we pursue happiness through consumption" and that they experience a feeling of community in this endeavor. There is also a view of how our consumption, lifestyle and pursuit of happiness in society, that goes along with criticisms of the capitalist sides and neoliberalism\(^3\) of society, and that there is a desire to make others understand that a change in consumption is of value for both themselves and the surroundings. The quote below mediates this willingness to inspire others at a greater level, and criticisms of consumption and how society's pursuit of happiness through consumption can be linked to criticism of society:

\[
\text{I find a lot of inspiration by wondering "why" we actually do this on our quest for happiness. We have such an unhealthy quest for happiness through consumption today. I started with myself, examined myself and how I chased kicking through shopping. But now I take the step that I really want to change everyone else. I want others to see what a hunt it is, a search for happiness and kicks. So, I try to talk very positively about it, and I think it feels very nice, and that this is me really. I do not try to give pointers for anyone else, and I want more people to try this. – AI}
\]

As mentioned in the quote above, informants describe an initial willingness to change on a smaller scale but aim to change consumption on a larger scale and make people understand the value of anti-consumption and hope to reach many people and the public in society. In line with the above quotes, SH describes how she feels different by living consumption-free and her willingness to make many people do the same:

\[
\text{I actually believe that I can get very many to try a shorter period, starting with a shopping-free month to later increase and strive for a consumption-free life, to change things in the long run. Believe that I could make many people think of the courses "How would it be if I only bought food, medicine and consumables for a month?" Because then many would understand or realize that it's not that hard. If you have too many things, you are governed by those things. I feel like another person than I used to be, in a positive way. I want to change how others live their lives like I did before. – SH}
\]

One thing that separates this group of informants with the next group that is more expressive in their opinions, is the approach that they are not striving to gain attention and do not seek

\(^3\) See section 5.3.2 Positions about capitalism and neoliberalism, where informants critique of modern society is presented.
social media, among others, to inspire others and to achieve this desired change in society. However, this applies to the following grouping, which uses, inter alia, social media to convey its interest and builds a sense of identity creation by being consulted on social media.

5.4.2 Expressing anti-consumerism to others

The following section presents and reports the analysis of the informants who, unlike the above presentation of informants, gladly tell and share their way of living on e.g. social media and create identification by being seen and heard and sharing their living choices. The informants’ experiences and descriptions about living consumption-free or, for example, with a free purchase year, is in line with the desire to expose their consumption habits and inspire others through digital networks and social media. There is thus a desire to express their lifestyle and their thoughts, and motivation are found in being seen in relation to be an anti-consumer. Regular means that informants indicate to inspire others is through blogs, social media, conferences and debate articles. PA describes that, among other things, she engages in various actions and conferences for the purpose of inspiring others, and that she believes that one must take a stand, and express it, to make sure that one is able to make a difference, which she describes that she appreciates. In continuance, EA describes through the quotation below how she experiences that this has become part of her and that she appreciates the attention attached to her lifestyle:

> It has become a thing for me, a part of my personality. I speak so often and in various forums about freedom of purchase, so I have become “Emilia who does not shop” and I feel that people are a bit impressed by it. It is very nice to get attention that way, so I think that living with shopping has just been positive for me, that it charges my personality. – EA

Like the quotation above, the result shows that the informants appreciate the attention of talking and appearing in e.g. social media in connection with living consumption-free and the felling that it becomes part of their identity or "what they become known for". As the analysis indicates that the informants critique consumption, and choose a lifestyle against consumption, it corresponds with Cherrier (2009), when presenting the consumer resistant identity hero identity. The description of the informants and the above quote by EA follows the description made by Cherrier (2009), which includes a hero identity in the sense that they aim to reshape and re-structure consumption through active choices of resistance and their deeds include being loud about the subject, as they want to influence consumers' consumption choices and their lifestyle. This is in line with the Cherriers (2009) description of a hero
**identity** as they emphasize the importance of greater awareness of consumption, inequality, injustice and participation to resist consumption. As mentioned earlier, this is a significant difference between the preamble category of informants who has aspiration to change the surroundings, which although they intend to change the large and social level, does not seek to be seen or heard, for example, in social media to gain influence and create inspiration to consume less.

### 5.4.3 The desire for increased control

The transcribed material shows how some informants desire increased control of their consumer behaviour and their own identity. The informants tell about a desired self-perceived control of their own identities and a desire to be the one who controls his identity in the form of several different ways. Recurring, they describe how they perceive that they feel better and more thoughtful in their choices after starting to live with less consumption. Several informants tell how they feel less stress and feel more comfortable in themselves, as the focus has shifted from many different types of consumption to a greater focus on themselves and their well-being, which have come with their new lifestyle. This is repeatedly exemplified in terms of consumption of clothes and their consumption around clothes. SH describes how the disposition of consumption has changed her focus and that she knows herself better by not consuming to show status markers, like clothes, for others:

> Before, I could think of several weeks before what I would wear or buy for a New Year's party, and everything was so connected to new purchases and what others would like and think. Now I feel more that I have another focus, focusing on myself and the experience, being more present and being myself more. – SH

The result also shows the experience that there are many things that influence individuals what to consume and to constantly consume more. This is described both from pressure from social culture and social media and influences unconscious choices to a large extent. As seen in the two coming statements is there a presence of desire to be in control and discussion about the unconscious choices of individuals and how to become more aware of consumption as an individual:

> All we do is unaware choices, and I did not want to feel that anymore. I felt I began to think of all this with some kind of contempt, about the whole way we consume, and I began to question everything. – GN

> I do not want to be a slave under anything, and above all not products or influences of social media. Therefore,
I've removed shopping-related and consumption-related issues on social media. I noticed that I was a slave under my phone for example, and it was definitely an area I wanted more control in. I was completely upset when I realized how such things governed me. – AM

In the quotation above, we can see the mentioned will not to be influenced by shopping-related and consumption-related pressures, including from social media. This echoes back to section 5.2.1 and the way in which informants experienced stress or shame in regard of consumption, and an external pressure from social media. Hence, the results show that for several informants became their decision not to follow social media to the same extent and actively avoid social media in relation to consumption. An analysis of these results suggests the tendency to experience relief and a reduced perceived need for consumption after having decreased social media or after actively remove consumption posts and advertising on social media.

5.4.4 Anti-consumption and experienced inner change

The preceding section presented that some informants desired and perceived control of themselves and their actions with decreased consumption and after changing their lifestyle to not consume as much as earlier. This section focuses on how the analysis of the informants' description about reducing their consumption to achieve better well-being within themselves, gaining self-esteem and changing behaviours for their own sake. Most of the informants that described that they reduced their consumption and their consumption patterns to change something in their self for themselves, describe for example that they felt poor self-confidence, that they did not feel that their deeds represented them or that they felt either lost or like they "followed the mainstream" of what everyone else did. When analyzing the transcribed material, it is recurring that the informants perceived that they consumed inter alia to impress others, focusing on what others thought and that consumption was a way of getting confirmation from others. This also describes a process to focus more on oneself and an experience of being able to build their own identity by shifting focus from consumption to the focus of themselves and their well-being. Most of the informants describe it as a process, by not consuming for example clothes, they were forced to investigate other values of themselves and there was a change about, inter alia, the confirmation they sought previously from others through consumption. This is exemplified by the following quote describing how focus has been shifted from what others think about them and consumption, for example, to confirm that the focus is on themselves:
Today, I think it's not as important what people think and like about me. I began to investigate myself and why I thought it was so important and I noticed how coupled it was for consumption. I do not want to prove anything to anyone else now, and I noticed that there was a deeper need for confirmation from others and I did not want to know it. Think it's often about insecurity about yourself and you have not found yourself. Today I do more what I really want, and what feels like me, and then if I buy something it's almost always a more successful purchase.

– SH

What the above quotes convey is how many informants describe how their consumption was connected to others, and that their previous consumption patterns are described as part of their identity as others assessed in various ways. The quote also exemplifies the feelings about reducing their consumption and how it has contributed to a sense of "finding themselves" without consuming and, for example, the clothes, things or activities that they consume today feel more like "themselves". The analysis of the results shows how their self-esteem was more or less linked to their consumption and by changing their consumption patterns and by focusing on anti-consumption have contributed to the fact that they now feel that they are consuming for themselves, and not for others, but also things who feel more "like them" and consumption that are more closely linked to their "real" identity.

In the quotation below, this clearly illustrates the experience of personal development and describes the perception of having to examine their needs and other values in life:

All this is bigger than just not buying things, this is a personal development and you must constantly investigate your needs and what is really important for oneself. What is important to have and not to have in life, and then it turns out that it reflects your personality, what you think is important and worthwhile. – JA

6. Discussion

The following chapter initially presents a discussion of the main results in relation to the purpose and the research question of the study. Further, the results are discussed in relation to previous research and the theoretical framework, before I present some conclusive comments and suggestions for future research.

6.1 Summary of results in relation to purpose and research question

The aim of this thesis has been to contribute to an enhanced knowledge and understanding of how individuals perceive the process of becoming anti-consumer and how identity can be constructed through anti-consumption. For this purpose, I have drawn on theoretical contributions about identity, identity formation and consumption, and previous research about anti-consumption, identity-formation in regard consumer resistance and neoliberalism in
regard of consumption to study how ten anti-consumers have experienced the process and how identity can be constructed through anti-consumption. For this end, I have worked with the earlier proposed research question: How do individuals perceive the process of becoming anti-consumer? How can identity be constructed through anti-consumption?

The analysis of this study shows that the process of becoming anti-consumer in the various forms described in this study is based on perceptions from both external and internal considerations, why the informants chose to reduce their consumption in these ways. The results indicate that the informants have different motivational aspects to change their consumption. These have been divided into four headlines in the result of the study, which includes and takes into consideration the social and moral valuation of the environment, external or cultural pressures, to experience inner change in him- or herself and saving money was an incentive to start consuming less or almost not at all. The analysis means that the informants perceive that they must manage their surroundings reactions. These reactions were predominantly expected from friends for activities associated with consumption due to changes in their behaviour, however, the results show that common responses to their consumption choices were of a negative nature from surroundings, family and work colleagues. As all the informants had committed to significantly reducing their consumption, the study shows of dimensions of how the informants perceive difficulties with being an anti-consumer and how it was not always easy to adhere to their specific rules and that there were sometimes both planned and spontaneous exceptions. The empirical material showed that difficulty in resisting spontaneous shopping, and that experiences were beyond the rules for consumption, which were then more thoughtful decisions.

An important factor that was closely linked to many of the informants around the process of becoming an anti-consumer was when they had their own children. The analysis entails how this process sometimes started or was grounded as the informants shifted ways of thinking and experienced new concerns as they had children. This was foremost linked to their thought and feeling regarding sustainability, responsibility for the earth, and in some cases a developing concern about the future for their children.

The transcribed material showed how the informants experienced a differentiation of time during the process of reducing consumption and how different time aspects were very important for both consumption and rejection of consumption, as for the feeling of lack of time and the feeling of gaining more time after reducing their consumption. Furthermore, the decision to reducing the working time was prominent for the informants. The question of
society and beliefs about societal structure was prominent when analysing the empirical material. This concerned e.g. positions in society that may have influenced why they consume differently and less today, such as thoughts about capitalism and neoliberalism. In regard of this subject, the informants critique was foremost about consumer behaviour, and the behaviours they had been raised with, but also how this way of life affects our mental peace and how it neglects our relationships with ourselves and our environment.

The analysis further entails that the informants perceive a connection with anti-consumption to their personality, both explicitly and implicitly, with a sense of identity and a sense of fellowship with others by living consumption-free or, for example, with a purchase-free year. The first part of the result regarding identity is based on how the informants show a willingness to change society or the world, in line with their thoughts of consumption and how they find identity within themselves and with other people by consuming less and getting their surroundings to do the same. This is presented in this study as having aspiration to change to surroundings and are closely linked to the next presentation around identity referred to as expressing anti-consumerism to others, and how they aim to change consumption on a larger scale and make people understand the value of anti-consumption and hope to reach many people and the public in society. However, the second presented section separates from the first section as they are striving to gain attention and do seek social media, among others, to inspire others and to achieve this desired change in society which is not the case for the informants who aspire to change the surroundings. The informants who are more expressive in the second section uses, inter alia, social media to convey its interest and builds a sense of identity creation by being consulted on social media. The next presented section in this study in regard of identity is referred to as the desire for increased control, as the transcribed material shows how some informants desire increased control of their consumer behaviour and their own identity. The informants tell about a desired self-perceived control of their own identities and how they feel better and more thoughtful in their choices after starting to live with less consumption. The informants tell about a feeling of being more comfortable in themselves as the focus has shifted from many different types of consumption to a greater focus on themselves and their well-being, which have come with their new lifestyle. The last section presented in the study related to identity is how the informants experienced inner change in relation to anti-consumption, and how they related the feeling of internal change with reducing their consumption to achieve better well-being within themselves, gaining self-esteem and changing behaviours for their own sake. The analysis of the results shows how
their self-esteem was more or less linked to their consumption and by changing their consumption patterns and by focusing on anti-consumption have contributed to the perception that they are consuming for themselves, and not for others, but also things who feel more "like them" and consumption that are more closely linked to their "real" identity.

6.2 Discussion of results in relation to previous research and theory

As identity and identity construction in relation to anti-consumption are in focus, this section will begin to discuss the theorization of identity in relation to the study results. The empirical evidence from this study indicates, in line with Jenkins (2014) theorization of how identification is derived from differences and similarities, how a sense of identity and a sense of fellowship comes with their reduction of consumption. Jenkins (2014) further explain how the individual takes a stand from individuals that are different from themselves and how the individual identifies collectively by similarities with others. The result shows the how the informants connects anti-consumption to their personality, both explicitly and implicitly, with a sense of identity and a sense of fellowship with others by living consumption-free or, for example, with a purchase-free year which is relevant as it illustrates how individuals build identity in relation to themselves and to other anti-consumers. Similarly, the complementary model to Jenkins (2014) from Berger and Luckmann (1998) that discusses an interrelated process between the individual and the collective has appeared fruitful to properly account for how anti-consumption can be identity-creating, in relation to how the informants described and discussed about themselves in relation to having significantly decreased or stopped consuming. Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann (1998) describe how the individual’s self-image and view of the world are strongly influenced by collective through socializations processes and interaction between and with other individuals’. This is in line with the result of the study in regard of how they discuss their new lifestyle, their feeling of community in relation to anti-consumption and their new contacts through this usage of anti-consumption.

The results of cultural aspects in the study, in the light of Katz-Gerro (2004) is interestingly as it is stated that if consumption is to be studied, cultural and external aspects must be taken into account, as it shapes the contours of social locations and social relations. This is relevant as the results of this study shows that some informants experienced external pressures that were a contributing factor in their decision to reduce their consumption. This external pressure is exemplified by e.g. the experience of stress or shame for high consumption and the perception of the external pressure of the growing insight that high consumption is nothing to strive for and consequences that come with high consumption and how it has affected them.
In order to link to the consumer resistant identities presented by Cherrier (2009), the first section in regard of identity presented in this study, is in compliance with Cherrier’s (2009) description of the hero identity, described as focusing on natural resources and social resources used without concern for the environment or with social consciousness, and exhaustion of environmental resources. The next section presented in the study which speaks about the aspiration to change the surroundings demonstrates the same attention to how humanity utilizes the earth, the animals and the people, and emphasizes this as important reasons for living as an anti-consumer. Both the informants who had the aspiration to change their surroundings and the informants who were more expressive about their lifestyle, responded with a lifestyle against exploitative consumption and addresses social inequalities. But also, with the mentioned reasons of exploitation of the environment and oppression produced by the modern consumer society and issues connected to risks with a globalized society. However, the informants who aspired to change their surroundings in this study, differs from with Cherrier’s (2009) description of the hero identity, that would like to influence other people and do seek to transfer their lifestyle to others. This description of wanting to transfer his or her lifestyle to others and influencing others is more derived from the second section as the informants were more expressive, as the informants appreciated the attention of talking and had a willingness to appearing in e.g. social media in connection with living consumption-free and had a feeling that it had become a part of their identity or "what they become known for".

The third headline in this study in regard of identity, referred to as the desire for increased control, has similarities with Cherrier’s (2009) second identity, the project identity, both focusing on inner change by the individual consumer and the personalization of their lifestyle and the construction of their identity is the primary importance. Therefore, is there no point in seeking to influence or try to copy the consumer lifestyles displayed in the media. However, the last section in this study in regard of identity, referred to as anti-consumption and experienced inner change, who described the informants as wanting internal change has even more in common with Cherrier's (2009) description of the project identity. As these informants described how they reduced their consumption to achieve better well-being within themselves, to gain self-esteem and to change behaviors for their own sake. This is described e.g. as they felt poor self-confidence, that they did not feel that their deeds represented them or that they felt either lost or like they "followed the mainstream" of what everyone else did. This follows Cherrier’s (2009) description of the project identity, as they do not consume for the sake of other, but for themselves. These consumer does not consume, acquire or dispose
products or objects for the response or expectations of other people, but for their own concerns and values. The informants in this study connected to this section describe it as a process, to focus more on oneself and an experience of being able to build their own identity by shifting focus from consumption to the focus of themselves and their well-being. By not consuming for example clothes, they were forced to investigate other values of themselves and described it as a change about, inter alia, the confirmation they sought previously from others through consumption. Furthermore, describes Cherrier (2009) how main emphasis is inner change by the individual consumer. The personalization of their lifestyle and the construction of their identity is the primary importance, which follows the mentioned description of the informants in this study that experienced inner change through reduced consumption. Therefore, common features as described above, follow for both Cherrier's (2009) description of the project identity and the mentioned section in this study in regard of the desire for internal change and their practises that comes along with it.

The empirical material further entails that anti-consumption is closely interrelated with opinions about neoliberalism and opinions that have led to actions such as reducing their consumption. As Verdouw (2017) describes, the critical views on neoliberalism, included the willingness to pursue economic freedom, which include financial self-reliance, security, independence (that include avoiding of dept) and the own choice. This goes in line with the informants’ description in this study regarding having a own choice in our society, the feeling of "breaking free" of cultural rules in our society especially in regard of consumption and the decisions to go down or change their workhours to be able be more independent both economically and timewise. Verdouw (2019) further entails that the participants in her study showed tendencies of seeking to be self-sufficient and financially independent, with motivational aspects to be satisfied and happy by just earning enough money to “do the things they wanted” but also a drive to be successful and earn “as much as they can now” by increasing the income where possible. A good example of this willingness to live self-sufficient and only to do things that the informants themselves want to do, and to earn only the ones they choose, is the informant GN in this study. He has adapted this way of consumption and way of living, and only works for as many hours as he believes he needs to handle financially with the small expenses he has chosen to have today. GN who lives today in a RV, has resigned from his permanent work and works on a small scale as freelance journalist and work only on his conditions, both timewise and economically.

Verdouw (2017) describes how the values and goals are important for all participants in her study, in regard of attitudes and behaviour interact with money activities, e.g. by creating an
opinion on what is legitimate ways to spend money, and what not to spend money on. This is particularly relevant to this study, since all informants have opinions about how the money should be spent, what consumption should look like and what is not legitimate to spend money on, even though their subjective opinions differ in the matter, an emphasis should be placed on that every informant has explicit views, just as Verdouw (2017) describes.

In addition, there are similarities, but also differences with Verdouw's (2017) description of the downshifter, which has a desire to live simply and a choice to initiate long term change, especially by reducing income levels. This is certainly relevant for this study as many of the informants choose a similar lifestyle, even if the motives were slightly shifting but all going in the same direction of wanting to reduce their consumption. Verdouw (2017) also explains that the motives for downshifting varies, including re-engaging in a “meaningful” employment, escaping work pressures, improving family health, gaining more family or leisure hours or for ideological reasons. By choosing lower income, financial self-reliance has or may cease as a motivational life-goal.

Further, Verdouw (2017) describes how the downshifter chooses thoughtfully and conscientiously and aims not to think economically but to think morally, with awareness of their departure from normative forms of daily life that offer very small friction to neoliberal ideas. The goals of the downshifters are then less material and frequently include satisfying or meaningful work that in many cases has social contribution. The participants’ goals are not guided by individualistic economic concerns but guided by moral (spiritual) and social action. This is very relevant to this study as the informants describe their conscience about consumption and their actions about consumption, and that they deliberately deviate from normative forms in society, and that many of the informants' goals are governed by moral and social concerns and measures.

6.3 Conclusion and suggestions for further research

The results of the study invite for some conclusive reflections of the informants’ experiences about reducing their consumption as significantly as the informants in this study and about anti-consumption more overall, and parts of the result in the study is extended work of Cherrier (2009).

The results show that the process of becoming an anti-consumer may be due to numerous reasons, such as social and moral valuation of the environment, external or cultural pressure, their will to change themselves or for saving money. Another important insight is the result of the study about the informants' experiences about the process of becoming an anti-consumer
and the difficulties that may arise, such as managing their environmental reactions, the dilemma about setting rules to follow and dilemma to deliberately abandon normative forms in society.

Finally, an important insight that is an extension and consistent with Cherrier's (2009) exposition, is that anti-consumption can be identity-constructing, as well as how different forms of identity-creation can arise with the rejection of consumption. The results in this study entails that the informants perceive a connection with anti-consumption to their personality, both explicitly and implicitly, with a sense of identity and a sense of fellowship with others by reducing their consumption. The results presented in this study in accordance to identity is divided into four main sections, referred to the informants’ aspiration to change the surroundings, how they wanted to express anti-consumption to others, the informants desire for increased control and how the informants experienced inner change in relation to anti-consumption.

The purpose of this study has been to examine the individual’s approach and perception to anti-consumerism and the process of becoming an anti-consumerist, and how identity can be constructed through anti-consumerism. By analyzing an empirical material consisting of ten interviews with informants who have rejected consumption in various major aspects, in the light of theoretical contributions and as well as relevant previous research, I have hopefully contributed to a deeper understanding of the subject of anti-consumerism. The results from this study also raise several interesting questions for future research to investigate, three of which will be suggested here. Firstly, it would be interesting to supplement a qualitative interview study of anti-consumption in other aspects than this study has investigated, such as focusing on different social groups, or gender differences, which unfortunately could not be explored more in-depth in this study. Secondly, a quantitative study would be suggested in order to examine the extent of anti-consumerism in our society. Thirdly, it would be interesting to do a comparative study between different societies or countries to investigate the differences between diverse cultures in regard of anti-consumption.
7. References


