

Ethical Consumption: A Manifestation of a Global Trend amongst Swedish Students

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List of appendixes

1 USB key containing a folder named 'Transcripts' in which six transcripts of the interviews conducted for this thesis.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Beardshaw's economics guide for students as cited in Harrison *et al.* (2005), consumers will usually choose the cheapest product, but only if they are confident that its 'utility' is as good as products that are slightly more expensive (Harrison *et al.* (2005), p. 1-2). This type of buying is referred to as 'traditional purchasing' or 'traditional purchase behavior' (Harrison *et al.* (2005), p.2). However, sometimes consumers choose to reject a certain brand or company to avoid adding undesired meaning to their lives (Rindell *et al.* (2013). They might also choose to purchase a Fairtrade-labelled coffee due to a concern for developing countries or to buy an eco-labelled cleaning detergent because they think environmental issues are important to consider. This type of buying has been described as 'ethical purchase behavior' or 'ethical consumption' (Harrison *et al.* (2005), p.2). Ethical consumption is therefore a broad expression embracing everything from ethical investment (the ethical purchasing of stocks and shares) to the buying of Fairtrade products and from consumer boycotts to corporate environmental purchasing policies (ibid (2005)).

For an increasing number of consumers living in affluent societies, the social features of products, e.g. decent living and working conditions for producers in developing countries, are important ethical criteria in their shopping strategies (Andorfer & Liebe(2011)). As an example, over the last decades, Fairtrade consumption has been expanding rapidly across Europe and in North America (Varul (2009). For instance, in 2010, shoppers spent €4.36 billion on Fairtrade products which is a 27 percent increase compared to 2009 (Fairtrade (n.d.)). Therefore, one could argue that ethical consumption has become somewhat a global trend amongst consumers in Western consumer societies: societies in which the buying and selling of goods and services seem to be the most important social and economic activity (oxforddictionaries (2016)). The question though remains how this global trend is manifested locally and not solely globally. In this thesis, I seek to explore how a global trend such as ethical consumption is manifested in Sweden, and I wish to examine the behavior of Swedish students in an attempt to explore how global understandings of ethical consumptions influence these consumers.

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I chose to explore Swedish consumers for the reason that Sweden seems to have become a front-runner with regards to global responsibility during the past decade. In 2003, the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament) decided that Sweden should strive to have a coherent Policy for Global Development (Statskontoret (2015)). The proposal lays a foundation for a coherent and consistent policy in order to contribute to equitable and sustainable development in the world (government.se (2003)). The policy proposes that the goal of Sweden's development cooperations will be to contribute to an environment supportive of poor people's own efforts to improve their quality of life (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003/2015)). Since the implementation of this policy, the Swedish government has continued to take on a global responsibility. In September, 2015, a UN summit revolving global sustainable development was held in New York in which representatives from the Swedish government attended (Government Offices of Sweden (2015)). During the meeting, Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden, stated that Sweden should take on a leading role in the completion of FN's new global goals for a sustainable development. Löfven argued that Sweden should lead the way with politics that pay regards to the perspectives of people living in developing economies, human rights and climate change (ibid (2015)).

As this indicates, Sweden signals that it takes on a global responsibility in the world. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore whether Swedish students share the same sense of global responsibility with regards to ethical consumption. Furthermore, Reese and Kohlmann (2015) argue that consumers' decision to consume ethical products often reflects a desire to show that they have power over what they consume or it may be a way to express oneself as a person of good morals. Therefore, I found it relevant to explore how global conceptions regarding ethical consumption influence identity.

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Problem formulation

How are global understandings of ethical consumption manifested amongst young Swedes, and in what ways do these influence their identities?

Research questions

1. Based on existing literature, what are global understandings of ethical consumption?
2. How can we understand the increasing interest in ethical consumption in light of theories of globalization?
3. How can social identities in a consumer society be understood?
4. How do young Swedish consumers relate to ethical consumption?

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Ethical consumption – a global trend

In this section of the chapter, an analysis of two previous studies on ethical consumption will be made. These are analyzed in order to answer the first research question that was presented in the beginning of this thesis. The research question is as follows: Based on existing literature, what are the global understandings of ethical consumption?

The section is structured in following way: It will begin with an analysis of two studies conducted by Strong (1996) and Varul (2009) respectively, and it will then proceed with a summary and discussion of what conceptions have been identified during this analysis. These two studies have been chosen, because they complement each other fairly well. Strong's (1996) is an example on how ethical consumption can be understood in a local context –the United Kingdom– and the study conducted by Varul (2009) is an example on how ethical consumption can be understood in a wider cultural context.

The first study to be analyzed is Strong's (1996) research on factors contributing to the growth of ethical consumerism in the United Kingdom. According to Strong (1996), an ethical consumer is not only concerned with the environmental impacts of their consumption choices, but is also concerned about the "people" aspect of manufacture, use and disposal (p.5). Therefore, ethical consumerism not only incorporates all the principles of environmental consumerism, but is also concerned with the 'people' aspect of ethical consumerism. Strong (1996) proceeds and defines fair trade products as "products purchased under equitable trading agreements, involving co-operative rather than competitive trading principles, ensuring a fair price and fair working conditions for the producers and suppliers" (p.5). It could therefore be argued that Strong (1996) implies that a global understanding of ethical consumption is that it acclaims product that have been produced by workers who are paid a fair wage and who work under good working conditions, and produced in an environmental-friendly manner. This is supported by her

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suggesting that the themes behind the rise of ethical consumerism include heightened awareness of issues related to the Third World amongst UK consumers which are often the result of media coverage (ibid (1996)). She suggests that the levels of available information have increased which have enabled ethical consumers to make informed decisions, and an increasing number of fair trade substitutes to traditional products have led to a shift in values towards concern for Third World sustainable development (ibid (1996)). Later on, she stresses this by stating that ethical issues have become regular feature of media reports and television documentaries. According to her, these ethical issues includes paying Third World producers a fair price, providing them minimum wages, the provision of minimum health, safety and environmental standards, social justice and the sustainment of natural resources (ibid (1996), p.9).

Strong (1996) furthermore hypothesizes that 'new consumers' are broadening their concern from green consumerism towards ethical consumption. She classifies these 'new consumers' as typically educated, often married with a double income, and generally he or she is in a financially better position to afford premium priced products (ibid (1996), p.6). She proceeds and suggests that as consumers increasingly are becoming more caring and socially aware, they are also moving towards a more responsible and responsive attitude towards issues that do not directly affect them (ibid (1996)). Due to this, she states that the consumer who used to be environmentally-aware has transformed into an ethical consumer: a consumer who not only demand fairly traded products, but is also challenging retailers and manufacturers to guarantee the ethical claims they make about their products (ibid (1996)). The global understanding of ethical consumption is therefore, following Strong (1996) that an ethical consumer is someone who feels a sense of global responsibility, both with regards to the global environment and fellow human beings. It could as well be argued that Strong (1996) implies that an ethical consumer rewards manufactures and retailers who produce their products ethically, and avoid those who do not. This may explain the increasing corporate responsibility that was revealed in her research. She states that corporate responsibility is evolving as an issue, and that organizations are increasingly involving issues of ethical consumerism in their

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purchasing and supply policies, for example, co-operative fair trade tea initiatives (ibid (1996)). Her research revealed that that five out of the eight responding organizations claimed to consider issues of ethical consumerism and fair trade when making purchasing decisions (ibid (1996), p.10). In continuation, she states that it has been a huge challenge for environmentalists to get ecological-friendly products into the supermarkets. However, her research showed that big retailers are now being persuaded to stock fair trade products, and consumer power has therefore, for a long time, “been a force for retailers to reckon with” (ibid (1996), p. 10).

Strong’s (1996) research revealed that consumers have become increasingly of issues involving fairer trade and what kind of influence Western consumers have on the expectations and aspirations of Third World producers. She furthermore characterized the manifestation of ethical consumption by following features (p.11):

- The evolving caring consumer;
- Pressure group support for fairer trading practices with the Third World;
- Increasing media interest in fair trade issues;
- Increasing corporate responsibility;
- Increasing supplier power in the marketplace

According to Strong (1996) these features have contributed to the wider availability of fair trade products, and have created a new type of consumer who is caring and more informed than previously. She argues there is “recognition among marketers that consumers are shopping for a better world” (ibid (1996), p.12). From Strong’s (1996) research, one could therefore derive that a global understanding of ethical consumption is that it involves consumers who are aware of several aspects of consumption. They tend to be informed about workers’ health, animal welfare and environmental issues.

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The next study to be analyzed has been conducted Varul (2009) in which he sought to map out the cultural contextualization of Fairtrade consumption on both a supranational and a national level. In his research, Varul (2009) argues that even though ethical consumption may often be an individualistic practice, the only way to fully understand it is by putting it into a cultural context. His study is therefore based on an Anglo-German comparative research with 57 in-depth semi-structured interviews. He conducted this research, because he wanted to explore why 'the practice of shopping for justice' plays out so differently in two European countries (p.184). He begins his research by stating that in the last couple of decades, the consumption of Fairtrade has been expanding across Europe and North America and has become a habit for significant minorities in most Western consumer societies (ibid (2009)). However, he continues this statement by arguing that there are striking quantitative and qualitative differences in Fairtrade consumption across national borders, and that his approach should therefore be understood in a contextualized approach (p.183).

According to Varul (2009), ethical consumers engage in the construction, affirmation and communication of ethical selves, and he therefore suggests that 'ethical selving' must be understood in cultural contexts. He introduces the notion of ethical selving in order to acknowledge that, often, the feeling of ethical obligation is integrated in ethical consumers' images of themselves. Therefore, they usually view morality and selfhood as an integrated part of themselves, and consequently, they are neither conflicting nor competing against one another. By this, Varul (2009) argues that ethical obligation and self-identities are not merely factors that influence ethical behaviors, but that they, simultaneously, are constructed and maintained by ethical practices. He furthermore emphasizes that when analyzing the motivational factors as to why consumers choose ethical products, it is crucial to consider both 'ethical obligation' (i.e. the fact that people usually want to do what is right) and 'self-identities' (i.e. the fact that people usually try to act in accordance with the image they have of themselves) (ibid (2009), p.183). It could therefore be argued that

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according to Varul (2009) a global understanding could be that people choose to consume ethically both because they feel a sense of ethical obligation and because of their self-identities.

Varul (2009) furthermore argues that in relation to contemporary capitalist culture, three aspects are of particular relevance. These are (p.184):

- The existence of a global market;
- Consumerism as a culture of choice and;
- An ideology of equal exchange and recognition

With regards to the existence of a global market, Varul (2009) argues that Fairtrade uses the social and electronic structures of global capitalism to enable critical, political or ethical consumers to 'act at a distance' (p.184). He states that the global market makes it possible to trace back the journey of products through the exchange processes of commodities and money. He refers to this process as the "monetarily induced 'prolongation of the teleological series'" in which a chain of causality between the living conditions of Southern producers and the decisions of Northern consumers is established (ibid (2009), p.184). He argues that it is only on the basis of such a causal link that a sense of global moral responsibility can emerge (ibid (2009)). From this argument, it could therefore be derived that a global understanding is that ethical consumption is about possessing a sense of global moral responsibility.

When Varul (2009) speaks of consumerism as a culture of choice, he refers to his argument that because it has been built around the most abstract of media exchange, money, consumer culture must therefore be a culture of choice (p.184). He further argues that in such a culture, the individual is burdened with having to construct a consistent character. By this, it is the thought that people are conceptualized as 'consumers' who are defined by their choices. The self is therefore not merely enabled to choose, but obliged to construct a life in terms of his or her choices, powers and values (ibid (2009), p.184). This argument is backed up by his respondents' own accounts. They explained that they were very much focused on how what they buy is an expression of their character disposition and their position in society. It was not only in

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order to display an 'ethical taste', but also often as a way to negotiate hedonistic desires and ethical aspiration (ibid (2009), p.184). It can therefore be suggested that a global understanding of ethical consumption is that it in some way can be viewed as a guideline for social representation and distinction. For instance, when entering a Fairtrade shop, one often subscribes to making a moral or political statement (ibid (2009), p.186).

With regards to equitable exchange and labor value, Varul (2009) argues that consumer capitalism not only sets the cultural frame in which ethical selving becomes a requirement, it also supplies possible elements for a moral discourse of justice in exchange (p.184). For instance, Fairtrade pays a 'just price' in terms of labor value –covering food, shelter, health– but nothing more. By this, producers are able to maintain their families, but not necessarily to get ahead. The thought is that by providing basic needs through *trade* instead of *aid*, it becomes easier to communicate recognition of productive and socially useful work (ibid (2009)). Varul (2009) argues that while aid is an "unbalanced gift exchange" that affirms an unequal relation, trade affirms equal mutual need (p.185). Bearing the slogan 'trade not aid' (ibid (2009), p.185) in mind, one could suggest that a global understanding of ethical consumption is that it is an attempt to ensure a sense of global justice.

Consumers today have become a metaphor for being an autonomous individual who is equipped with the inalienable 'right to shop' (ibid (2009), p.185). During his research, Varul (2009) identified a clear distinction between German consumers and British consumers with regards to their consumption of Fairtrade goods. German consumers were conceptualized as "informed and guided by authority and expertise [...] under an informal social duty to shop rationally (regarding both price and quality) (ibid (2009), p.186). British consumers, however, were found to pick and choose from various governmental discourses. They were also found to justify their choices in terms of their personal needs, aspirations etc. in terms of their personality and identity (ibid (2009)). Varul (2009) argues that when speaking of Fairtrade consumption in Britain,

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“there is a much stronger emphasis on imagination and hedonist sophistication”, hence “the ability to visualize and emphasize with producers’ lives and the aesthetic skill to appreciate the more subtle beauty/taste of their products” (p.186). German Fairtrade consumers, however, seem to view ethical consumption as a way “to inculcate an element of *substantive* rationality into the only *formally* (procedurally) rational capitalist market” (ibid (2009), p.186). Varul’s (2009) research therefore revealed that while the British liberal tradition views markets as ideal providers of freedom and justice, the German corporatist tradition views them as functional for social aims such as social peace.

Fairtrade consumption is, according to Varul (2009) embedded into a cultural context of global consumer capitalism. It informs the way people think about what constitutes a fair exchange, the extent of their global responsibility and how they construct themselves as ethical consumers/citizens (ibid (2009)).

The two studies analyzed above will not solely serve as a foundation for answering the first research question presented in continuation of the problem statement, these global understandings will also be applied as focus points in the analysis of the empirical data gathered for this thesis.

In the following a brief summary of these global understandings identified in the two studies by Strong (1996) and Varul (2009), respectively, will be made:

- A sense of global responsibility, e.g. fair working conditions, environment-friendly production etc.
- Reward to manufactures and retailers who produce their products in an ethical manner and avoidance of those who do not
- Awareness, e.g. working conditions, animal welfare and environmental issues
- Guideline for social representation and distinction
- Attempt to ensure a sense of global justice

The global understandings of ethical consumption which have been identified in this section of the analysis have been presented in order to create a better understanding of how ethical consumption may be viewed globally. As mentioned, these understandings have furthermore served as ‘themes’ for the analysis of the

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empirical data collected from my interviews. By this it means that while analyzing my interviews, I have kept an attentive eye on whether these themes could be derived from my own research. However while being aware of these themes, I have furthermore remained open to additional themes/conceptions that might emerge during the analysis.

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Chapter II: Methodology

The following chapter will address the identification of the structure of the methodological approach to this thesis which allows not only the reader, but the author of this thesis as well, to achieve an overview of the methodological design.

The chapter will begin with an outline of my general research paradigm and will be explained by the usage of philosophy of science and the key concepts of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Following the introduction to my scientific paradigm, the research design will be explained, including the approach to my research, my data collection and my choice of method for processing the data. The general guidelines for the completion of the interview guide and the profile of the interviewees will furthermore be included. The final part of this chapter will introduce the general limitations of this thesis.

Ontology, epistemology and methodology

Researchers have adopted a basic belief system that determines what inquiry is and how it is to be practiced depending on how we perceive reality (Guba (1990)). This is referred to as a paradigm. Guba (1990) regards paradigms as more than merely a scientific approach, but as a “basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry” (Guba (1990), p.17). Therefore, Guba (1990) does not only view a paradigm as a scientific approach but also as something that represents “a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world”, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts...” (Guba & Lincoln (1994), p.107). As I perceive paradigms to be active outside the research context, I regard paradigms to reflect a general worldview. I remain however aware that my constructivist paradigm is a suitable approach to this thesis, but it might not necessarily be the appropriate choice for other

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researchers. It should furthermore be noted that when working within the constructivist paradigm the produced knowledge is ultimately a human construction and is therefore subject to human error.

I have chosen to follow an ontological approach of relativism, an epistemological approach of subjectivism and a hermeneutics and dialectical methodological approach. My ontological, epistemological and methodological choices are not solely based on my understanding that paradigms reach beyond the research context, but also on my perception that they are human constructs and thus, are open to errors and adjustments (Guba (1990)). According to constructivism, “knowledge held by an individual is assumed “to have a complex set of referents and meanings” that must be taken into account” (Cobern (1993), p.2) when a researcher is trying to understand a phenomenon such as ethical consumption. Therefore, I have decided to unlock knowledge via social interaction with my interviewees and thereby learn more about their personal perspectives. This decision reflects the basis of the hermeneutic circle. It is an ongoing learning process in which I employ subanalyses to create and formulate my overall understanding of the research topic. The hermeneutic circle will accompany my thesis writing process from the beginning until the end. This means that during the writing process, my theoretical understanding as well as my constructivist understanding and methodological approach are open to alterations due to this learning process. The hermeneutic circle will be further elaborated and explained in later sections of this chapter.

It is possible to take any number of positions on ontology and epistemology when doing research (Guba (1990)). Within the understanding of these positions, it is possible to make certain theoretical and methodological choices which will highly influence the research. A specific position on ontology will automatically have consequences for the choice of epistemology. This justifies the tendency to claim adherence to a specific paradigm (ibid (1990)). The question of ontology plays a vital role and it is concerned with the nature of reality, i.e. what is reality and how is it perceived by the researcher? How a researcher positions him –or herself to this question is crucial as it will constrain what can be answered to

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the subsequent questions (ibid (1990); Guba & Lincoln (1994)). In this thesis, I view reality as a social and mental construction and therefore, I perceive reality to be constructed by individuals in their minds. As we all have different ways of grasping reality, multiple realities exist (Guba (1990)). I am aware that the constructs I identify during my research are merely reflecting a current state of mind and a current understanding on the topic which has been created throughout the interviews. According to Lincoln and Guba (1994), these constructs are all inventions of the human mind and hence subject to human error. Therefore, the relativist approach allows me to remain open-minded during the research process and continue to search for more sophisticated constructs which will help me to broaden my understanding (Guba (1990)). It should furthermore be noted that the data applied in this research has been gathered through interviews. Therefore, the reality examined here is a reality constructed by these individuals, but also partly by the constructions that I contribute through my personal interpretation of the collected data.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) epistemology questions “what [...] the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower [is] and what can be known” (p.108). This transaction is highly subjective and is mediated by the knower’s prior experience and knowledge, and by the knower’s interpretation –or construction– of the contextual surroundings. Knowledge is therefore not ‘discovered’ but rather created (Guba & Lincoln (2013)). Guba (1990) argues that subjectivity allows researchers to unlock constructions held by individuals (p.26). Therefore, by having direct interactions with my interviewees I will be able to “understand themes of the lived daily world from the subject’s own perspectives” (Kvale (2007), p.11). My epistemological approach is therefore subjectivism rather than objectivism. Within subjectivism, knowledge is perceived as subjective which stands in stark contrast to the dualist/objectivist understanding of epistemology that is held by positivists. Researchers with a dualist/objectivist understanding aim not to influence the research outcome and therefore adopt an external position to their research object (Pernecky & Jamal (2010); Guba (1990)). Therefore, as my

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research primarily depends on human thoughts and interaction, I do not believe that a positivistic approach will be able to provide my thesis with sufficient nuanced results.

Methodology questions how “the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known” (Guba & Lincoln (1994), p.108). The positivist approach to methodology is the experimental/manipulative methodology in which hypotheses are stated in advance to the research process and then subjected to empirical testing under specific conditions (Guba (1990)). Constructivists follow a hermeneutic and dialectic approach of methodology (Guba (1990)). The aim within this approach is to identify a variety of social constructs and generate one (or a few) constructions on which there is substantial consensus (Guba (1990); Pernecky & Jamal (2010)). According to Guba (1990), this process consists of two aspects: hermeneutics and dialectics. The purpose of the hermeneutic aspect is to identify individual constructions as accurate as possible and the dialectic aspect consists of comparing and contrasting these constructions (Guba (1990)). With regards to this thesis, this means that I aim to identify constructions created by my interviewees and to find similar patterns in their statements which can be applied in answering my problem formulation. As my problem formulation addresses global understandings of ethical consumption, I will keep attention if my interviewees offer similar information regarding this topic. Even if the information is not similar, my aim remains to identify the content of the constructs they individually create and use them as a way to deepen my understanding of the research topic. It should be noted that even though I attempt to establish the constructs based on the received data from the interviews, the identified constructs may be influenced by me as I interpret the data carrying my own culture, values and pre-knowledge.

The aim of the hermeneutic and dialectic approach of methodology is to identify constructs and patterns in the data collected from the interviews and to interpret the data in order to answer my problem formulation (Guba (1990); Pernecky & Jamal (2010)). This is not a straightforward process, but a continuous

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learning process. During this process, I aim to improve the pattern identification process in order to identify the most sophisticated constructs possible (Guba (1990)). For instance, I am aware that some of the information I might gather during the interviews is not only new to me, but also new for the informant I am interviewing. By confronting my interviewee with this information and by asking specific questions, we might end up with a more informed point of knowledge. It should however be noted that I do not understand this process to take place solely during the interviews and the data viewing, but to be present throughout the entire thesis as I am continuously going to reflect upon the obtained knowledge.

Thompson (1997) acknowledges the benefits of applying a hermeneutical framework when researching consumer behavior. He argues that it allows researchers to discuss, in the form of texts and narratives, the meanings that consumers ascribe to their consumer experiences. In consumer research, hermeneutics can be used as a way to derive marketing insights from texts of consumer stories, specifically because “marketers need models to analyze and interpret how consumers perceive products in relation to themselves” (Thompson (1997), p.439). Hermeneutics serves to ‘understand understanding itself’ in which the concept of understanding not only accounts for existing theory and research findings –it also accounts for the knowledge that emerges during the interaction between researchers and human objects of their inquiry (Arnold & Fischer (1994)).

Hermeneutic circle

Within the hermeneutic and dialectic approach of methodology, the hermeneutic circle is regarded as a way obtaining knowledge and can best be described as the process of understanding a text through interpretation (Debessay *et al.* (2008)). When referring to a circle, one refers to an understanding that neither the whole nor the individual parts of a research can be understood without reference to the other. Therefore, it forms a circle of interpretation (Debessay *et al.* (2008)). The hermeneutic circle suggests that the interpretation of textual data proceeds through a series of part-to-whole iterations (Thompson (1997)).

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This iterative procedure entails three distinct stages. The first stage is an intratext cycle in which a text (such as an interview transcript) is read in its entirety to gain a sense of the whole (ibid (1997)). The second stage is a process of interpretation of the parts of the texts and a comparison of the two interpretations looking for meanings of the whole to the parts and the parts to the whole (Ortiz (2009)). The second stage is also the process in which the researcher looks for patterns (and differences) across different interviews (Thompson (19997)). The third and final stage includes a process in which the researcher moves beyond what it interpreted in stage two with the revealing of what is unknown (Ortiz (2009)). This approach complements my research from the beginning until the end and allows me to gain a deeper understanding of ethical consumption and to interpret my interviews in this advanced context. However, if the topic was situated in another context and conducted by another researcher, it would most likely provide other findings and new results. Based on this, the findings in this thesis are not generalizable as such, but they do still provide valid and useful information which should be seen in the context in which it has been produced.

Research design strategy

In the previous section my choice of paradigm, constructivism, was clarified. This section moves on explaining the research design and then the research strategy in which I will explain which research method I have chosen.

Bryman (2012) defines a design as a framework for the collection and analysis of data of a given research (p.715). Denzin & Lincoln (2005) defines a research design as “a flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms first to strategies of inquiry and second to methods for collecting empirical materials” (p. 25). In order to be able to answer the problem formulation as clearly as possible, a research design is therefore essential to any research conducted. Following these definitions of a research design, the main steps in solving the posed problem will now be described and explained.

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Depending on what type of research one is conducting, multiple research designs are practicable, for instance experimental, cross-sectional, comparative, etc. (Bryman (2012)). As the aim for this thesis is to examine how Swedish students relate to ethical consumption and how global understandings of this issue influence their identities, I am interested in social constructs. I believe these can be unlocked via social interaction, and in this thesis the research design will therefore be qualitative interview design. According to Kvale (1996), qualitative interviews “attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples’ experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (p.1).

The research strategy selected for this thesis is therefore a qualitative approach which is explained as a strategy that “...usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman (2012), p.36). Qualitative data collection methods entails ethnography, focus groups and interviewing (ibid (2012)). As it is interpretive in nature, a qualitative approach is consistent with the constructivist paradigm (Guba (1990)).

Methods

As I have chosen to take on a qualitative approach, the data that form the basis of the analysis consist of both primary data (i.e. my interviews) and secondary data (i.e. the presentation of global understandings of ethical consumption), all conducted and collected for the specific purpose of this thesis. The way data and knowledge have been acquired in the thesis will be elaborated and justified in this section.

Qualitative interviews

Over the years, qualitative interviews have been categorized in a variety of ways. However, in contemporary literature they have mostly been separated between structured, semi-structured and

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unstructured interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006)). According to Zhang and Wildemuth (n.d.), structured interviews have a set of predefined questions in which the questions will be asked in the same order for all interviewees. They are quite similar to surveys; they are however administered orally rather than in writing (ibid (n.d.)). As I am not interested in this type of standardization, I have refrained from employing structured interviews as my main data collection method for this thesis. Unstructured interviews are conducted in conjunction with the collection of observational data, and semi-structured interviews are often the sole data source for qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006)). According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), unstructured interviews are applied to explore in depth a general area in which a researcher is interested in. There is no pre-determined list of questions to work through, and the interviewee is given the opportunity to talk freely about events, behavior and beliefs in relation to the topic area (ibid (2009)). Semi-structured interviews are generally organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and the interviewee/s (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006)). As a constructivist, I am interested in exploring the reality which is created through my social interactions with my interviewees. It furthermore encourages the interviewee to share rather rich descriptions of a phenomenon while leaving interpretation or analysis to the interviewer (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006)). Furthermore, not having a strict sequence of interview questions in the form of a structured interview, allowed me to be more open to changes that might occur, new interesting thoughts or simply just be able to ask follow up questions –all in order to gain a deeper understanding of the reality constructions of my interviewees.

Patton (2002), cited in Zhang & Wildemuth (n.d.), argues that because unstructured interviews so often occur as part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork, they can be described as a natural extension of participant observation. Zhang & Wildemuth (n.d.) furthermore argues that unstructured interviews are not useful when one already has a basic understanding of a phenomenon and wish to pursue particular aspects of it (p.9). Therefore, because I already have a basic understanding of ethical consumption and wish to

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examine ethical consumption amongst Swedish students and how their consumption of ethical products reflects a discourse of global responsibility, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews. In order to gain specific information and discover certain patterns in the interviews, I needed to be able to focus the theme of the interview. I therefore asked all of the questions from my interview guide, while trying to use a similar wording when asking for certain topics throughout the interviews (Bryman (2012), p.471). This has been done to ensure a certain degree of comparability of the diverse views expressed during my interviews in order to improve the likelihood to identify similar patterns.

Interview guide

According to Bryman (2012), the interview guide can be understood as “a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered” (p.471), and it is most often applied in semi-structured interviews. It can contain merely rough topics to be covered, or it can be a detailed sequence of carefully worded questions (Kvale (1996)). This type of guide is much less specific than the notion of a structured interview schedule (Bryman (2012)) and therefore, it allows me to be flexible and responsive towards my interviewees. The interview guide enables researchers such as myself to ask all interviewees the same questions in similar wording. This allows me to gain insight into my research topic without getting too carried away and to collect the data necessary to answer my research question.

According to Kvale (1996), “the research interview proceeds like a normal conversation, but has a specific purpose and structure” (p.131). Therefore, the first element for the preparation of an interview guide is to “create a certain amount of order on the topic areas” (Bryman (2012), p.473) with the intention of allowing a structured procedure of the interview, while remaining open for possible alterations. The questions in the interview guide arose from categories inspired from theory, the secondary data and my own knowledge about consumption in general and ethical consumption. This not only assures that the majority of my theoretical framework is covered in one way or another; it also brings structure into my interview guide.

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Accordingly, following the introductory part of the interview, I open with questions regarding their consumption habits in general in order to examine how they view themselves as consumers. This allows me to gain additional background information about my interviewees, as it allows me to gain insight into how they view consumption and how a big a role general consumption plays for them. Yet, as previously mentioned, I use my interview guide merely as a *guide*, and alter the order of the questions or add new ones depending on the answers provided by my interviewees.

According to Bryman (2012), the second element in preparing an interview guide is to “formulate interview questions [...] in a way that will help you to answer your research question” (p.473). As the theoretical framework basically serves as an instrument to unlock constructs from my interviewees, this element is fulfilled by constructing the interview guide primarily on my theory. Even though I am interested in a specific topic of research, I do not want to restrict my interviewees too much in their answers. Therefore, I try to keep the majority of the questions open-ended and let them talk relatively freely. It is solely when they finish answering a question or get too carried away that I introduce a new question.

The third element in constructing an interview guide, introduced by Bryman (2012), is to “try to use a language that is comprehensible and relevant to the people you are interviewing” (p.473). As I construct my interview guide on my theory, this element is important to me. I wish to refrain from applying theoretical terms and complex notions as I want to avoid confusion and keep the interviews flowing. Furthermore, as I am solely interviewing Swedish students, I have decided to use English as the interview language, because my Swedish vocabulary, unfortunately, is quite poor. Because the interviews are conducted in another language than my and my interviewees’ native language, we will experience a few language difficulties. However, we were able to move past them quite quickly and carry on with the interviews without further issues. Though, it should be noted that because English is my interviewees’ second language, there is a risk that some information has been lost during the translation from Swedish to English, and their answers to my questions may therefore have become influenced by this. Had I been able

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to conduct the interviews in Swedish, I might have received more detailed information about my research topic.

Interpreting the data collected through the interviews, I find it important to include “‘facesheet’ information of a general kind (name, age, gender, etc.), and a specific kind” (Bryman (2012), p.473). The specific facesheet questions contain information about actual occupations, social associations, hobbies and such. This information allowed me gain insight into the background of my interviewees in order to conceptualize the information I received. These questions were asked prior to the theory-based inquiries and were used as an introduction. I found this to be important as I believe that occupation or personal interests can have a great influence on how my interviewees view their role with regards to ethical consumption. Therefore, the background information I have gathered through these facesheet questions might offer further insight to how my interviewees view the world and their personal role in it.

Choice and profile of interviewees

The first interest in my target group, in combination with my theoretical framework, is sparked on a very personal level. Being a student in my mid twenties, living in the age of 2016, I have not only experienced my own personal interest grow in regards to ethical consumption, but also simultaneously observed a change in the world in which nations worldwide have begun to take on a larger global responsibility. Especially, the Swedish government has shown great interest in not only protecting the global environment and enhancing sustainability, but also taking on a global responsibility in regards to enhancing the living conditions of people living in third world countries (Government Offices of Sweden (2015)). Therefore, I find it relevant to interview Swedish students and explore how they relate to global understandings of ethical consumption, and how these understandings influence their identities. In this thesis, the term ‘ethical consumption’ does not refer to a clearly defined set of practices. Rather, it is to be understood as an

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umbrella term covering a wide range of ethical concerns. These varies from labor standards, human rights and animal welfare to questions of health and wellbeing and environmental and community sustainability (Lewis (2012)). Global responsibility is in this thesis defined as playing an active role in improving the world in which we live with regards to the above mentioned concerns.

I have decided to interview six students who are all currently enrolled at the social worker program at Lund University. My reasoning for choosing to interview students from this particular study program is that I have an assumption that students studying this specific field of study have a great interest in how the society in which they live works, and therefore I assume that these students might also have a global interest in the world. As the six interviewees are all enrolled at the social worker program and they all more or less know each other. The implication of this is that they are in the same social environment, and are to some extent therefore influenced by this. There is therefore a risk that their general attitudes towards ethical consumption may be similar to one another, and this will most likely come across during the interviews. Although they may share similar approaches to ethical consumption, I do not consider this to be a significant hindrance. As a constructivist, I believe that each interviewee has their own personal interpretation of the topic and their answers will therefore be based on how they have personally interpreted the topic 'ethical consumption'.

As the overall topic reveals personal opinions regarding the research topic, I have decided not to use my interviewees' real names. I have therefore applied the ethical principle of 'beneficence' which means that the risk of harm to a subject should be the least possible (Kvale (1996), p.116). In order to create an overview of the interviewees, I have included a table presenting the interviewees:

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Name	Age	Occupation
Sarah	24	Studies social work
Maria	23	Studies social work
Anna	26	Studies social work
Sofia	28	Studies social work
Silvia	25	Studies social work
Cecilia	32	Studies social work

Sampling method

The sampling procedure was a convenience sampling which is a way of sampling “that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility” (Bryman (2012) p.201). Because my interest in ethical consumption is sparked by my own experience and by my observations in for instance the students at my study program, I found it most logical to begin my research endeavors within this group and then move on to others who in one way or another were related to my target group. Thus, one might argue that besides from convenience sampling, I also employed the method of snowball sampling (Bryman (2012)). Following Bryman (2012), snowball sampling is type of convenience sampling in which “the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic, and then uses these to establish contacts with others” (p.202). Convenience sampling is categorized under the non-probability sampling group, and is therefore, as opposed to probability sampling, “a sampling that has not been selected using a random sampling method. Essentially, this implies that some units in the population are more likely to be selected than others” (p.713).

With no immediate contact who can act as a liaison between you and your informants, finding informants with a nationality you have no acquaintance with is a challenge. However, with help from my supervisor I was introduced to associate professor Torbjörn Lund who teaches at Socialhögskolan at Lund University. He introduced me to a student representative from the social work program. She forwarded my request for

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informants to students from the program, and two students agreed to participate in two individual interviews. Through these two students, I was introduced to three additional interviewees who then introduced me to one additional interviewee. A total of six in-depth interviews were conducted. I will argue that six interviews is the appropriate amount for this study, as I aim to gain a deeper understanding of each interviewee and reveal how Swedish students relate to ethical consumption. Kvale (1996) argues that many studies “would have profited from having fewer interviews” (p.103) and instead take more time to prepare and analyze the conducted interviews.

Initially, I wanted to conduct the interviews face to face, because it is often easier to create an informal and friendly atmosphere when the interviewer and the interviewee are able to face each other in person.

Due to logistic factors of conducting the interviews face to face within the frames of this thesis, the interviews were instead conducted over Skype. There are both pros and cons when conducting interviews over this software-based calling service. A main pro is that it is rather flexible to schedule interviews as you can conduct the interviews from home. Another advantage is concerned with the amount of resources which are normally necessary for an interview study. One of the cons with conducting interviews over Skype as opposed to face to face interviews is that appearing on a camera or on the ‘phone’ in Skype can make interviewees nervous. It can be especially anxiety-provoking to conduct interviews over Skype if you have not met each other prior to the interview which was the case with all of my interviews. This might lead them to not feel safe enough to open up and express their true feelings toward ethical consumption. In the end this might lead them to answer differently than they would have had we conducted the interviews in person. I furthermore noticed the importance of conducting the interviews with the webcam turned on versus conducting them over the ‘phone’. I noticed that my interviewees opened up more easily and seemed to feel safer when the webcam was on as oppose to when it was off.

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Before the actual interview began, I asked for permission to record the interview which was done using an online tool specified for Skype. I furthermore used the element of *structuring* in both the beginning and the end of the interview. Prior to the interview, it was applied in order to provide a brief introduction of myself and to explain the purpose of the interview. Following the 'official' interview section, I inquired if the interviewee had anything to add or if she had any constructive feedback.

Although, I aimed to be sensitive throughout the interview process, meaning I listened carefully and was empathic while speaking with my interviewees, I furthermore tried to be critical. Therefore, if the answers given were inconsistent or contradictory, I would inquire further. I also used the criteria of interpretation in order to clarify the meaning of my interviewees' statements.

Data processing

The part of the thesis dealing with data processing is divided into three individual sections. The first section deals with the interview material recording and the second section deals with the topic of transcribing. The third and final section attends to the data coding procedure applied in this thesis. I find the data processing to be important as it provides insight into the general data treatment. It furthermore serves as an indicator of my hermeneutic approach, in which I, from the beginning, am interpreting the information collected.

In contemporary qualitative research, one of the most common ways to document an interview is by recording it, either via a tape recorder or digital recording. As the interviewer must be highly alert to what is being said (i.e. following up interesting points made during the interview, probing where necessary etc.), it is best if the interviewer is not distracted by being forced to take in-depth notes during the interview (Bryman (2012), p.482). I did however decide to take a few notes as well combined with the recording as I wanted to have a 'backup' in case my recording program failed. Another advantage of recording interviews is that by recording them in a permanent form, they can be returned to again and again for relistening

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(Kvale (1996)). The recorded interviews provide valuable resources for later transcription and hereafter analyzing the content. Although, recording the interview is quite beneficial for the interviewer, one must take into account that certain challenges arise as a consequence. Knowing that their words become preserved, some interviewees may become self-conscious or alarmed at this prospect, and their answers may therefore suffer from it (ibid (2012)). Being aware of this, I wanted to create a friendly atmosphere for the interviewees in which they would feel comfortable with speaking with me. I furthermore asked for their permission to record the interview and all of my six interviewees agreed.

As I conducted all of my interviews over Skype, I chose to use a digital recording tool –named Amolto Call Recorder– that automatically recorded the interviews as soon as I called or received a call from my interviewees. When the interviews had ended, and Amolto had stopped recording, the program automatically saved the recording as an.MP4 file. This made it possible for me to transfer the file into another program named Audacity which is a cross-platform for editing sounds and I used this program as an audio player. I decided to use Audacity as an audio player, because it enabled me to change the speed or pitch of a recording. This is useful when recording interviews which have been conducted over Skype, as the sound can vary a great deal depending on the signal or internet connection. It is also very useful if an interviewee speaks rather fast and it is difficult to hear what is being said. To be able to change the speed or the pitch of a recording therefore minimizes the risk of losing valuable information.

The transcription of the interview took place once all interviews had been conducted. During the interviews, it was discovered that a number of the questions, although belonging to one category, provided useful answers in relation to another category. Therefore, as a way to identify and discover intriguing themes that emerged from the conducted interviews in the light of the already existing categories, I decided to employ a thematic analysis in this thesis. According to Bryman (2012), thematic analysis is used to examine data to extract core themes that can be distinguished both between and within transcripts (p.13). As I decided to conduct a thematic analysis, the transcription was constructed accordingly.

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Therefore, a word by word transcription was undertaken in which I chose to solely focus on the spoken words. I left other elements such as emotions, facial expressions and gestures untouched. Thus, my transcription reflects a written text rather than a linguistic interview which is in line with Ashmore and Reed's (2005), as cited in Mclellan *et al.* (2003), understanding that a strictly audio tape analysis represents a realist object, whereas the transcript is a constructivist one (p.66). This represents my understanding that the audio files containing my interviews are untouched and therefore represents the pure interview situation.

As I chose to transcribe my interviews word for word, I had to work through a large amount of transcription pages for my analysis. Therefore, I decided to apply a coding system immediately after the transcription took place. As my thematic analysis is based on my theoretical framework of globalization and identity construction, I decided to apply the coding system accordingly. I chose to apply various colors that each represents individual theoretical parts, and colors for topics that are relevant for my research question, but not necessarily relevant for my theoretical frame. By doing this, I remain open to new findings during my coding process. It is likely and aimed for that some colors are repeated through my transcripts as I am looking to identify similarities between the interviews. I have chosen to color code my transcripts in order to make them more manageable. The color codes are as follows:

- Themes related to the global understandings which were presented prior to the methodology chapter are marked with ...
- Themes related to globalization and glocalization are marked with ...
- Themes related to Jenkins' theory on identity construction are marked with ...
- Themes related to Schouten's theory on identity construction are marked with ...
- Themes related to other global understandings and emergent themes are marked with ...

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My data processing technique is therefore as follows: First, I read through the transcripts one by one in order to create a better overview of the data. Then, I repeat this procedure while color coding them in accordance with my color coding scheme. Next, I read through them again in order to ensure that I have not missed any important points or views during the last two reviews. Finally, I begin sorting them in themes in order to process the sheer amount of data (Ryan & Bernard (2003)).

Limitations of the thesis

In this section of the thesis, I will briefly discuss possible limitations of my research.

I have chosen to focus my research on Swedish students and my interviewees are all enrolled in the same study program –the social worker program– at Lund University, Sweden. As previously mentioned all six interviewees more or less know each and to some extent socialize in the same social circle. An implication of this is that they may have similar replies to the questions asked in the interviews, because they have been influenced by the same social environment. However, as it has been argued before, I do not consider this to be an important hindrance as I as a constructivist believe that individuals may be influenced by their social environment, but they each have their own personal interpretation of reality and, hence, the world.

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Chapter III: Theoretical framework

The following section is divided into two parts. The first part will entail a presentation of theories related to globalization as will serve as theoretical framework for answering the second research question which is:

How can we understand the increasing interest in ethical consumption in light theories of globalization?

The second part of this section will include a presentation of Jenkins (2004;2008) and Schouten's (1991) theories on identity. Their theories will be applied in order to answer the third research question which is as following: How can social identities in a consumer society be understood?

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Globalization

The aim of this section is to gain a deeper understanding of the increasing interest in ethical consumption in light of theories on globalization. It will begin with a brief review on postmodernity and its relation to globalization as we know it today. The section will then proceed with a brief presentation of how globalization is understood today. It will end with a presentation of two theories on globalization framed by Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman, respectively.

A brief postmodern review

According to Featherstone (2007), researchers have claimed that there are several meanings to the word 'postmodernism'. Cova (1997) argues that it can be viewed as a definition that describes the features of the socio-economical conditions that during the second half of the twentieth century. He states that this particular definition is quite accurate as "it draws attention to continuity and discontinuity as two faces of the intricate relationship between the present socio-economic condition and the formation that it preceded and gestated" (Cova (1997), p.298). By this, Cova (1997) indicates that postmodernity can be viewed as a term that ties the present condition (modernity) together with the postmodern condition. Brown (2006) views postmodernism is another way than Cova (1997), and argues that postmodernism should rather be regarded as an "attitude, a feeling, a mode, a sensibility, an orientation, a way of looking at the world –a way of looking askance at the world" (p.214). He elaborates further, and cites Apple (1984) who states that the characteristic attitude of a postmodern consumer is a "mixture of world-weariness and cleverness, an attempt to make you think that I'm half-kidding, though you're not quite sure about what" (p.214).

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From an economical aspect, postmodernity is by Brown (2006) interpreted as a new qualitatively different, historically epoch. It has brought multinational and globalized capitalism which has changed the “traditional ways of working, producing, consumption and exchange (p.213). From a consumption perspective, this ‘world’, as Brown (2006) describes it, can be viewed as unpredictable, uncontrollable and upheaval (p.213). As it has formed a nonexistent courtyard with no boundaries in which there are no rules, only choices, the scope of consumption has changed during postmodernism (ibid (2006)). According to Brown (2006), postmodernity is a place in which one for instance “wears Paris perfume in Tokyo” (p.215). In relation to this thesis, in accordance with the thoughts of Brown (2006), a consumer living in Sweden can wear clothes made in Cambodia and eat tropical fruits imported from Latin America.

Globalization

The concept of globalization has become a keyword that goes beyond academic and policy discussions, and can now be found everywhere in daily life (Jones (2006)). When speaking of ethical consumption, globalization plays an important role. Through global trade and changes in the supply chains, globalization processes contribute to the consumer society. By providing diverse and endless choices of available products and services, globalization affects individual’s consumption patterns (Giddens (1991)). The rise of social interconnectedness and advances in technology enforces the process of reflexivity in which individuals become aware of their actions and begin to evaluate the consequences of their consumption practices (Giddens (1991); Beck *et al.* (1994)).

In the following, a presentation of different views on globalization as seen from some of the most prominent sociologists will be made. The sociologists who will be presented in this section are Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman. The section presented below, named ‘Runway world’ will first concern Giddens’ views on globalization. The section hereafter will be a presentation of Davis’ (2016) interpretation of Zygmunt Bauman’s view on globalization and his thoughts on the term ‘glocalization’.

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Runaway world

In 2000, Anthony Giddens published his book 'Runaway World' in which he describes how globalization is reshaping our lives. Here he argues that the world in which we find ourselves today is no longer under our control and can therefore be described as a 'runaway world' (Giddens (2000), p. 20). The pace of social change is not only much faster than in any prior system, so is its scope and the profoundness with which it affects pre-existing social practices and modes of behavior (Giddens (1991)). Globalization is restructuring the ways in which we live, and it influences everyday life as much as it does events happening on a world scale, such as the global climate change (Giddens (2000)). As globalization, modernity radically alters the nature of day-to-day social life, and affects the most personal aspects of our experience (Giddens (1991)). One of the distinctive features of modernity is an increasing interconnection between the two 'extremes' of extensionality and intentionality: globalizing influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other (ibid (1991)). We live in a world of transformation, and the 'we' here refers not only to the West, but to the world as a whole (Giddens (2000, 1994)). Giddens (2000) argues that "there are good, objective reasons to believe that we are living through a major period of historical transition. Moreover, the changes affecting us aren't confined to any one area of the globe, but stretch almost everywhere" (p. 19). Hereby, Giddens suggests that globalization can be viewed as the main reason for the ongoing transitions in the society.

A view on globalization: Glocalization

As the headline implies, this section of the chapter will present Bauman's view on globalization through an interpretation made by Davis (2016).

Davis (2016) argues that one of the most significant contributions toward a sociological understanding of globalization was provided by Roland Robertson. Robertson understands globalization as a concept that

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refers both to the “compression of the world” and “the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” (Robertson (1992), p.8). In his work “Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture”, Robertson identifies social processes which have led to a sense of global interdependence, because it has become an “increasingly tight-knit world” (Robertson (1992), p.9). Davis (2016) states this greater concentration of global interdependence has meant that local issues effecting individuals and small groups are viewed as the result of global processes. Therefore, locality and globality become mutually constitutive, and the relationship between the local and the global is by Robertson termed as ‘glocalization’ (Davis (2016)). Bauman, however, understand the term ‘glocalization’ different than Robertson. According to Davis (2016), Bauman claims that due to the freedom of movement, glocalization results in a world-wide restratification of society. Davis (2016) argues that the consequence of this development is that the world becomes increasingly polarized, and while the ‘globalized’ individuals are free to move around the globe, the ‘localized’ individuals are instead tied to a place and have fewer opportunities. Later in this section, I will explore Bauman’s view on glocalization as it has been interpreted by Davis (2016). However, prior to this, I will present the aspect of ‘time-space distanciation’.

Having presented the term ‘glocalization’ Davis (2016) proceed and presents another key aspect towards understanding globalization from a sociological aspect. He refers to this aspect as ‘time-space distanciation’ or also referred to as the ‘compression of time and space’, and it refers to the idea that globalization has altered the relationship between time and space (ibid (2016)). Davis (2016) argues that by for instance communicating by text message or email, the aspect of ‘time’ has been shortened to the level of instantaneity, and that the fact that people from different parts of the world are able to share common experiences of global events have led to the shrinking of ‘space’ (p.139). He provides as example of this latter point that it can be viewed in global culture in which the diversity of world cultures are absorbed and realized at local level, or in terms of global media (ibid (2016)). An example of the shrinking of ‘space’ with regards to global media could be the devastation in Nepal wrought by a severe earthquake in 2015.

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Because of the heavy global media coverage, people around the globe experienced this catastrophe almost simultaneously. Davis (2016) states that it is important to note that globalization does not imply that the physical reality of space has been 'compressed'. Rather, it involves the "phenomenology of contradiction', i.e. time and space *appear* to have been compressed" (p.139). Davis (2016) continues and argues that because of this, globalization is more than merely a synonym for modernization, more, he thinks of it as a globalized phase of modernity. He states that because of the 'phenomenology of contradiction', the world seems to have reached an un-controllable state. Social life seem to take place in a series of episodes that may or may not be linked together, and the dominating feeling is therefore, according to Davis (2016) that the living world appears now to have no one in control. He further argues that the reason why a large amount of sociologists have chosen to characterize this global phase of modernity in various ways is because they all have a desire to understand the effect of this 'uncomfortable perception' of time and space (Davis (2016), p.140).

According to Davis (2016), Bauman regards globalization as one of two 'meta courses' behind contemporary social change, the other being individualization (p.140). Davis (2016) argues that these two principles can be regarded as related due to the notion that a global figuration has emerged. Here, all human activity is bonded together by a free-market economic framework which is beyond any localized control. This global figuration has created a 'new global disorder' that fills individuals' 'liquid life' with fear and uncertainty, because individuals are now solely responsible for managing their everyday lives (ibid (2016, p.140). Davis (2016) further argues, as it is no longer able to control the flow of capital between the free markets of the world economy, the nature of political power is undergoing a significant change. According to Davis (2016), the 'localized' as Bauman has termed them –the geographically-fixed–political are therefore dependent on the all-powerful 'globalized' market, and consequently, politicians are now operating at the behest of uncontrollable and ever-changing economic conditions. For instance, Davis (2016) defines globalization as "the progressive separation of power from politics" (p.142). What is meant

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by this is that when power flows globally, modern political institutions are unable to respond other than locally.

Davis (2016) states that through his work on sociology, Bauman interprets social life in terms of two sharply distinct social conditions: the haves and the haves-not. This division emerges in various guises, including the 'seduced' and the 'repressed' or the 'free consumers' and the 'flawed consumers' (ibid (2016), p.142). This 'will-to-dualism' as Davis (2016) puts it, also informs about Bauman's thoughts on globalization, specifically in terms of his distinction between the global and the local; what might be global for some, means local for others (p.142). According to Davis (2016), Bauman argues that nowadays "we are all on the move" which can either be physically by travelling around the globe or it can be virtually through cyberspace (p.143). Thereby, the most desired value is that of mobility, i.e. the freedom to move, to be global, and mobility therefore becomes the central stratifying factor of 'liquid modern' times (ibid (2016)). The least coveted value must therefore be immobility –the inability to move, to be local. Davis (2016) argues that "in the course of this re-stratifying process, a new world-wide socio-cultural self reproducing hierarchy is established between the global and the local" (p.143).

Davis (2016) sums up two critical reflections regarding Bauman's view on globalization. The first of these concerns Bauman's rather harsh understanding of human social life in the era of 'liquid modernity'. Davis (2016) argues that according to Bauman, globalization –in its current 'liquid manifestation' –is an entirely negative phenomenon that shows contempt for the modern economic, political and cultural order. The free-market economy has been separated from political control which have caused a global pandemic of fear insecurity in all levels of society (ibid (2016)). Davis (2016) however, argues that the increased communication and information flows that globalization has brought along, has helped to unite the various cultures around the globe. Thereby, globalization has allowed people from all corners of the world to share experiences and events with each other (ibid (2016)).

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The second of Davis (2016) critical reflections concern the way Bauman view the human condition in terms of dualities. According to Davis (2016), Bauman believes that globalization forms two dominant cultural types that he refers to as the 'tourist' and the 'vagabond'. While the tourists are free to abandon their current location when new, more exciting opportunities arise, vagabonds are views as the 'alter-ego' of the tourists. The tourists can be viewed as the privileged 'free consumers' and the vagabonds are the underprivileged 'flawed consumers'; although both groups share similar images of the 'good life', the vagabonds are not able to afford the same sophisticated choices made by the tourists, because they have limited resources. They are therefore 'flawed' consumers who are unable to consume in a society of consumers which makes their position in society quite precarious (ibid (2016), p.144). According to Davis (2016) there are potential problems with viewing the human condition in terms of dualities. One of Davis' (2016) most prominent points of critiques is that it will be difficult to identify particular empirical social groups that fit perfectly to the descriptions of 'tourists' and 'vagabonds. He states that even though there are social groups which may be invested in a wealth of available resources, they may still refuse the "hedonistic consumer pursuits of the 'tourist'" (ibid (20216), p.151). As Davis (2016) points out, how can this group of consumers then be described from Bauman's viewpoint? Will they be considered to be 'free' or 'flawed' consumers, or 'tourists' or 'vagabonds'? This therefore becomes a matter of subjective interpretation (ibid (2016)).

Davis (2016) ends his thoughts on Bauman's reflection on globalization by stating that even though Bauman presents a rather negative view on the 'liquid world', he still identifies positive steps which can be taken in order to begin to balance a globalized world.

Based on the review on postmodernity and the theories on globalization and glocalization respectively, presented by Giddens (1991;2000) and Davis' (2016) interpretation of Bauman, following themes have been identified:

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- Increased awareness of actions and evaluation of consequences of consumption practices
- 'New global disorder' → ethical consumption –a question of control?
- Greater concentration of global interdependence
- Time-space distancing
- Increased global connectedness

The themes presented above will serve as focus points in the analysis of the empirical data gathered through my interviews.

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Identity construction: Jenkins and Schouten

In the following, a presentation of the social anthropologist Richard Jenkins and professor in marketing and consumer culture John W. Schouten's thoughts on identity construction. Their theories will serve as the theoretical framework for research question number two: How can social identities in a consumer culture be understood? The section will end with a brief summary and discussion of each theory and present themes identified on the basis of these theories. These themes will then be applied as focus points during my analysis of the empirical data gathered for this research.

A question of social identity

"Without identity there could be no human world"

- Jenkins (2004, p.7)

In his work 'Social Identity' (2004), Richard Jenkins treats the creation of an identity as a space which is negotiated between 'I', 'we' and 'the others'. Jenkins suggests that the center of the social concept of identification is concerned with how individuals and groups perceive how others react towards them, and how individuals and groups need social relations in order to be able to evolve.

The following section will examine Richard Jenkins' (2004;2008) perspective on individual and collective identity construction, and it will relate to the dissimilarity between groups and categories. The distinction between nominal and virtual identity will likewise be stressed. This section will furthermore treat how individuals, who use their actions as a expression for an identity, are either confirmed or denied which determines what the individual chooses to accept into his or her identity.

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Jenkins' understanding of identity

In order to understand how Jenkins views identity one must relate oneself to the society in which the individual and the collective meet. Jenkins (2004) describes this society as 'the human world' (p.16). It is important to view the individual and the collective as a whole as identity is not only internally created, but externally created as well. For instance, he highlights an assumption made by Goffman (1959) which is that "individuals consciously seek to 'be' –and to be 'seen to be'– 'something' or 'somebody', to successfully assume particular identities (ibid (2004) p.20). It is characteristic for Jenkins to view identity as a social process, and he understands the emergence of selfhood as an ongoing and, in practice, simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others (ibid (2004), p.18). According to Jenkins (2004), this is a process whereby all identities –individual and collective– are created, and he offers a template for a model of this process which he calls the *internal-external dialectic of identification* (p.18). He stresses that identity is never unilateral, and that individuals and collectives identify themselves with others, and in their search for discovering who they are, they are simultaneously deciding who the others are (p.20). He therefore proposes a definition of the self "as an individual's reflexive sense of her or his own particular identity, constituted *vis-à-vis* in others in terms of similarity and difference, without which she or he wouldn't know who they are and hence would not be able to act" (Jenkins (2004), p.27). He moves further and states that the "self is the individual's private experience of herself or himself; the person is what appears publicly in and to outside the world" (ibid (2004), p.28).

The division of the 'human world'

Leaning on Goffman and, to some extent Giddens, Jenkins (2008) suggests that the world is constructed and experienced by humans, and he divides the world into three distinct 'orders' which are co-existing and all involved in the creation of identities (p.39):

- *The individual order* in which the human world is made up of embodied individuals, and what-goes-on-in-their-heads;

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- *The interaction order* wherein the human world is constituted in relationships between individuals, in what-goes-on-between-people; and
- *The institutional order* in which the human world consists of patterns and organizations, of established-ways-of-doing-things.

Jenkins (2008) applies the concept *individual order* as a way to describe the separation that exists between individuals, for instance in terms of their separated bodies (p. 41). With this order, Jenkins (2008) suggests that because individuals have separate bodies, they view the collective on the basis of their own bodies. Its selfhood is, however, still dependent on social relations which Jenkins believes to be requisite in the creation of identity. Thus, Jenkins (2008) stresses that the individual must relate to how others view it and identify with others in order to evolve (p.41).

In the *interaction order*, Jenkins emphasizes the importance of how others react towards us, as it influence the validation of an individual's identity. Although people have (some) control over the signals about themselves which they send to others, they cannot ensure the 'correct' reception or interpretation of these signals (ibid (2004), p.20). Selfhood must, according to Jenkins (2004; 2008), be confirmed by others as credible before it can enter one's identity.

Whereas the previous two orders have primarily dealt with the individual, the *institutional order* deals with more collective identities. Here, Jenkins (2008) makes a distinction between a collectivity which identifies and defines itself (a group *for* itself) and a collectivity which is identified and defined by others (a category *in* itself) (p.43). The *institutional order* is therefore concerned with the established context for the creation of identities that influences these identities.

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The difference between groups and categories

Jenkins' distinction between groups and categories demonstrates how others' external definition influences an individual's internal perception. According to Jenkins, this clarifies how the external and the internal becomes parallel phenomenon in the creation of identities.

Jenkins' definition of a collective entails that individuals in some way or another have something in common. In order to avoid reifying the 'reality' of collectivities, Jenkins has defined two types of collectives: groups and categories. He demonstrates the distinction by stating: "groups are defined by and meaningful to their members, while categories are externally defined without any necessary recognition by their members (Jenkins (2004), p.88). Group membership is therefore a relationship between members, and even if they do not know each other personally, they can recognize each other as members (ibid (2004), p.84). A category, on the other hand, is less straightforward. Its members do not need to be aware of their collective identification, and membership of a category is not a relationship between members (ibid (2004), p.83-84). Members of category are therefore identified and defined by people *outside* the category, and are only recognized as a whole because others *outside* the category have noticed common characteristics between the members. Therefore, members of a category do not recognize each other collectively, and if they do, it will be as individuals and not because of group bound common features. In fact, "once relationships between members of a category involve mutual recognition of their categorization, the first steps towards group identification have been taken" (ibid (2004), p.85).

Nominal and virtual identity

This brief section will explain to how a category is related to nominal identity, and how a group is related to virtual identity.

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Nominal identity can be described as a label that is given externally to an individual or a group. Virtual identity describes how an individual or a group integrate, relates to and experience this label (Jenkins (2008), p. 44). It should, however, be mentioned that while Jenkins applies nominal and virtual identity in various contexts, the two terms are bound to neither individuals nor collectives. Nominal identity is the label with which an individual is identified, and virtual identification is, as Jenkins (2008) puts it, “what a nominal identification means experientially and practically over time, to its bearer” (p.99). Thus, must the individual or collective undergo a labeling process in which being labeled in a certain category will become important. The way the individual and others react to the label will become the effect, and can subsequently be ‘absorbed’ as part of an identity. All identification combines the nominal and virtual, and they are both aspects of the same process (Jenkins (2008), p.100-101).

Summary of Jenkins’ theory on identity construction

The above-mentioned chapter explains how identity, according to Jenkins (2004;2008), is constructed through three orders, and he distinguishes between groups and categories and between nominal and virtual identity.

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An act of symbolic self-completion: selves in transition

In 1991, John W. Schouten published his study 'Selves in Transition: Symbolic Consumption in Personal Rites of Passage and Identity Reconstruction'. Here he attempts to gain insight into the role of symbolic consumer behaviors in the maintenance or reconstruction of self-concept (Schouten (1991)). The study was therefore undertaken with two primary research objectives:

- To examine the a priori themes in the context of plastic surgery consumption
- To identify and analyze emergent themes with the hope of expanding current understanding of the self-concept in consumer behavior

Although a somewhat dramatic form of symbolic consumption, aesthetic plastic surgery, was chosen as the domain, his thoughts on symbolic consumption may still be applicable in relation to ethical consumption. In the following, a presentation of his study and how it can be related to ethical consumption will be made.

Even though it is expensive, irreversible, painful and potentially dangerous, for an increasing number of people from the American middle class, Schouten (1991) argue that plastic surgery has become more widely available and acceptable as a potential means of self-improvement. He moves further and states that an attractive body is a rather valuable personal attribute, and is found to facilitate success in social, romantic, and economic endeavors. It may be argued that ethical consumption can facilitate success in the same areas as what Schouten (1991) addresses as 'an attractive body' assumable is capable of (p.412). It can be suggested that the rise of ethical consumption during the past decade may therefore have been strengthened by consumers viewing it as a potential means of self-improvement, as it makes consumers capable of either maintaining or reconstructing their self-concepts.

Schouten (1991) seeks answers to one of the main-questions revolving plastic surgery: What motivates those who choose plastic surgery? He offers self-concept theory as a way to gain insight into this question.

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When he applies the term 'self-concept', it is understood as "the cognitive and affective understanding of who and what we are" (p.413). It encompasses the role identities, personal attributes, relationships, possessions and other symbols that individuals use as a way to understand and create selves (ibid (1991)). Acting as symbols of identity with which individuals create their self-understanding and communicate self-relevant information to others, social roles also constitute basic components of self-concept. In this regard, the consumption of ethically produced goods may be self-relevant as a symbol of specific role identities. For instance, while Schouten (1991) suggests that "people may elect plastic surgery in order to improve their performance in key social roles" (p.413), one could argue that some consumers may select ethically produced goods for similar reasons. Ethical consumption as a symbol may deliberately be manipulated by consumers for the purpose of managing impressions of their selves. When consuming ethically, individuals often receive social benefits, in which 'social' in this case not necessarily refers to that of social welfare, but rather social interactions and a person's social image. Individuals may consume ethically produced goods, because it enables them to convey to others that they have 'good values' (Starr (2009)). In continuation of this, Schouten (1991) mentions the term 'marketing character'. This term is used to describe individuals who manage their lives as commodities and present themselves in such a way as an attempt as to increase their own socioeconomic exchange value (ibid (1991)). This term may as well be applied to describe a certain group of ethical consumers who consume this particular type of products, namely the group who was just mentioned above. In relation to the study of Schouten (1991), his empirical data, collected using ethnographic interviews, showed that the principle of impression management often played a part in informants' decisions to have surgery and so did consciousness of their self-presentation to particular audiences.

Relating to this, Schouten (1991) presents a theme that he describes as follows: "Individuals may seek aesthetic plastic surgery as a means of approaching positive or avoiding negative possible selves" (p.413). In relation to self-concept, he refers to the cognitive construct formed of systems of symbols as self-schemas. Possible selves, or hypothetical self-schemas as Schouten (1991) himself describes them, can

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either be positive or negative. By this, it is meant that they act as objects of aspiration, hope or fear and they motivate approach or avoidance behaviors. In relation to ethical consumption, one might argue hypothetical self-schemas may be used as a way to approach positive possible selves.

An issue of taking control

The issue of control emerged as well in Schouten's (1991) findings, and he drew two subthemes from his results (p.418):

- Plastic surgery as a perceived means of exercising control over one's body and one's destiny
- Personal efficacy as the ability to exercise such control

As an example, one of his informants learned in a young age that she could take control of aspects of her own life that she had never thought to change before, and especially with regards to her appearance. As she got older, she found that it was no longer enough for her to dye her hair in various colors or experiment with makeup. Plastic surgery allowed her to reassert control symbolically over yet another aspect of her body, and Schouten (1991) indicates that it symbolized ownership and control of her own body (p.419).

Even though, he suggests that plastic surgery may be used as a means to take control of one's own body, one could suggest that the same may be applied to ethical consumption. A suggestion could be that consumers choose to buy for example organic products as a way of taking control over their own bodies. That they choose to buy this type of product, because they wish to minimize their intake of for instance pesticides and thereby take control of what comes into their bodies.

Role transitions

Through his findings, Schouten (1991) furthermore discovered that significant changes in informants' roles or statuses often initiated feelings of unconvincing role performances and, thence, to behaviors interpretable in terms of symbolic self-completion theory (p.415). Symbolic-self completion theory

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indicates that the less complete individuals feel in roles to which they are committed, the more probable they are to use stereotypical symbols of role competency to reinforce perceptions of adequate performance (ibid (1991)). Six of the informants Schouten (1991) interviewed, underwent plastic surgery at times in which their lives were in transition. For instance, following or anticipating major life events that included childbirth, career changes, divorce, relocation, and deaths in their families. With regard to the use of plastic surgery, Schouten (1991) found that two subthemes emerged within the context of role transitions (p.417):

- Plastic surgery as a means of reintegrating the self-concept
- Plastic surgery as a catalyst for further self-change

Certain informants found that plastic surgery supplied them with physical attributes which helped them to feel more comfortable and complete in social roles they had recently adopted. In this regard, plastic surgery was therefore used as a means of reintegrating his or her self-concept. For one informant, plastic surgery was used as a catalyst for further self-change. She chose to have plastic surgery during a period in which she faced several changes, and found that the surgery was part of a general growth. It contributed to enhanced self-esteem and self-confidence which catalyzed a more encompassing life transition. Within a year of her surgery, she had begun to build a new life structure that included single parenthood and her own career (ibid (1991)). Schouten's (1991) findings therefore suggest that role transitions may lead to a major restructuring of life-styles and values and during such times of identity reconstruction, people may become receptive to goods, services, or ideas that they formerly would have considered unnecessary or undesirable (p.417). I suggest that this can be linked to ethical consumption. A consumer, who is in a period of transition, may be more inclined to buy ethical products as he or she is in the midst of restructuring his or her lifestyle and values. A consumer who perhaps found it somewhat unnecessary to buy ethical products before his or her role transition, may be more inclined to buy such products as his or her values have changed during this period. However, as mentioned, this is merely an assumption and it will be further examined during the analysis chapter of this thesis.

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In his study, Schouten (1991) furthermore found that a process of identity construction emerged from his data which led him to begin a discussion regarding this subject. He refers to Van Gennep (1960) who observed that important life passages generally consists of three phases that each has their own rituals. The first phase consists of separation, in which a person disengages from a social role or status. The second phase consists of a transition, in which the person adapts and changes to fit new roles. The third and final stage consists of incorporation, in which the person adapts and changes to fit new roles (ibid (1991), p.421). The transitional or liminal state has according to Schouten (1991) been described as a limbo between a past state and a coming one, and is therefore a period of ambiguity, of nonstatus, and of unanchored identity. He argues that while this stage in previous times seemed to be a collective experience, it has now transformed into an isolated type of liminality. This has led people to create personal rites of passage which are used to shape new identities with symbols and activities that have been made available by our consumer culture (ibid (1991)). As it has been mentioned, the decision to have cosmetic surgery is often made during a transition stage. Therefore, Schouten (1991) argues that plastic surgery be viewed as a self-imposed, personal rite of passage, allowing a person to separate from one physical attribute (an act of disposition) and incorporate another (an act of acquisition and consumption) (p.421). He found that for the majority of his informants, plastic surgery helped to restore a sense of self-congruity that had been lost during their liminoid state, thus hastening the passage to more stable, postliminal states. Schouten (1991) furthermore found that people who are in their liminoid state appear to be more likely than others to engage in "identity play", meaning, to formulate, elaborate, and evaluate possible selves (p.421).

Identity construction

During non-liminal states (i.e. states in which a person's social role has been established) the self may hide a dormant predisposition toward change (e.g. a negative body image). Because of the relative stability of the nonliminal state, the person is able to ignore or endure the predisposing condition until a transition is induced by some triggering event (ibid (1991)). Schouten (1991) suggests that a transition of identity begins

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with separation from some role or other key component of the extended self. This separation may be triggered by some external force or event, or it may be experienced subjectively. By this means that it may be triggered by an internal force such as a psychological need for control. Basically, when someone loses or rejects an important aspect of self, this is where separation occurs and liminality sets in. Schouten (1991) argues that if liminal people have experienced separation from key roles, they have to create new roles or at least emphasize existing roles to fill the gaps. From here, they begin to formulate possible selves that are affected by several individual and socio-cultural factors. These possible self-schemas appear to be composed from aspects of past selves and role models, and they are assembled according to personal values, goals and perceptions of social expectations. While they may be loosely articulated, possible selves' further elaboration seems to be integral to the process of identity reconstruction (ibid (1991)). According to Schouten (1991), if the possible self is more appealing to the individual than the actual self, the formulation of possible self acts as the internal triggering force and therefore precedes separation. People evaluate possible selves on the basis of their desirability and attainability, and the perceived attainability of a possible self affects its motivating power. However, attainability may change during role transitions as social and financial conditions also change (ibid (1991)).

Schouten (1991) argues that a person can respond to their possible selves in one of three ways (p.422):

- With inaction
- With active rejection
- With actualization and the incorporation of the possible self into a revised self-concept

The short-term consequence of inaction is continued liminality and occurs when possible selves are not sufficiently desirable to motivate approach, but at the same time, are not sufficiently undesirable to motivate avoidance. As inaction, active rejection leads to continued liminality as well and the formulation of yet another possible self. Rejection is what happens when a possible self is deemed unattainable, undesirable, or incongruent with other aspects of the self-concept. In the end, the more well-elaborated,

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desirable, and plausible a possible self seems to the individual, the more motivating power it wields and the more likely it is to be actualized (ibid (1991)).

According to Schouten (1991), his study illustrates the importance of consumption activities in restoring harmony to an incongruous or unsatisfying self-concept. It explains a process in which individual growth can occur in the course of major role transitions. He argues that symbolic and experiential consumer behaviors aid the exploration, establishment and ongoing support of new roles and identities, and they are therefore important in successful transitions. Schouten (1991) furthermore states that role transitions are crucial times that determine the direction and quality of consumers' lives, yet, there is limited research on the consumption behavior of liminal people.

Summary and discussion of Jenkins and Schouten

Jenkins and Schouten's theories were chosen as the basis for the theoretical framework for this thesis, because it has been found that they complement each other with regard to social identity in a consumer culture. Jenkins suggests that an identity is created on the basis on how others react towards the identification, and that in order to be able to evolve, individuals and groups need social relations. While Jenkins suggests that the creation of an identity is both an internal and external process, one might argue that it seems as if he views the identity construction primarily as a social and external process rather than an internal process. In the theory of Jenkins (2004;2008), the individual seems to be dependent on how his or her identity is perceived by others and how they react towards this identity.

Like Jenkins, Schouten suggests that an individual's identity is created both internally and externally. However, while Jenkins views identity construction primarily as a social process, Schouten seems to view it more as an internal process. He focuses on transformation of identities, and that this transition begins with

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separation from some role of the extended self. The transition is referred to as 'role transition' and it may be experienced subjectively as it can be triggered by an internal force such as a psychological need for control. In order to fill the gap from this separation, individuals must create new roles or at least emphasize exiting roles. From this view, Schouten suggests that identity construction begins as an internal process, and from then, individuals begin to formulate possible selves which are affected by several individual and socio-cultural factors.

Thus, Jenkins and Schouten's theories have been chosen as the theoretical framework for this thesis as they provide two different perspectives on identity construction and complement each other quite well. While Jenkins focuses on social processes, Schouten focuses on internal processes, and their theories will therefore enable me to have different perspectives on social identity when analyzing the data gathered for this thesis. The theories will furthermore assist me in identifying themes in my analysis which I might not had been able to identify, had these theories not provided me with a more nuanced view on social identity. As I wish to remain open towards the emergence of themes during my analysis, I have decided to apply all aspects of the two theories.

On the basis of Jenkins (2004;2008) and Schouten (1991), I have condensed following themes which will be applied in the analysis of the empirical data that have been gathered for this research. The themes are:

- Identity as a social process (The internal-external dialectic of identification)
- Selfhood must be confirmed by others as credible
- Ethical consumption; a question of group membership

On the basis of Schouten's (1991) research, following themes have been condensed:

- Ethical consumption as a potential means of self-improvement
- Ethically produced goods used to improve consumers performance in key social roles

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- Ethical consumption as a potential means of seizing control
- Ethical consumption as a means to restore a sense of self-congruity
- Global moral responsibility, e.g. a moral compass for what is ethically right and wrong

The following chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of my empirical data.

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Chapter III: Analysis

Social and environmental concerns surrounding consumption have led to an increased interest in ethical consumption and it has evolved into a somewhat global trend. The aim of the previous chapters of this thesis has been to 1) outline global understandings of ethical consumption, 2) seek an understanding of the increasing interest in this particular type of consumption in light of globalization theories, and lastly 3) seek an understanding of social identities in a consumer society. The aim of this chapter is to examine how young Swedish consumers relate to ethical consumption and in what ways global understandings of this type of consumption influence their identities. The chapter has been divided into five parts in which each headline for each part represents an overall theme. The themes have been identified through an analysis of the primary and secondary data used for this thesis, and the five themes are:

- Ethicality: the moral compass
- Awareness: The key to be ethical
- An issue of control
- Identity as a social process
- Ethical consumption as a potential means of self-improvement

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Ethicality: the moral compass

As it has been stated previously, an ethical consumer, according to Strong (1996) is both concerned with the environmental impacts of their consumption choices and with the 'people' aspect of manufacture, use and disposal (p.5). She furthermore suggests that the consumer who used to be environmentally-aware has transformed into an ethical consumer. She defines this type of consumer as someone who not only demand fairly-traded products, but simultaneously are challenging retailers and manufactures to guarantee the ethical claims they make about their products (ibid (1996)). They are simply put "shopping for a better world" (ibid (1996), p.12). This section aims to shed light on how the interviewees relate to the global understanding of an ethical consumer which has been described above in accordance with Strong (1996).

In previous chapters of this thesis, it has been suggested that there are several global understandings of ethical consumption and one of these is that an ethical consumer is someone who has a sense of global responsibility. Global responsibility in this respect refers to being aware of fair working conditions, environment-friendly production, animal welfare etc. As ethicality can be interpreted in a number of ways depending on the person who is making the interpretation, I therefore found it relevant to ask my interviewees following questions: How they would describe ethicality and what ethicality means for them personally. The findings suggest that although the actual definition of the term differentiated quite a bit, all six interviewees seemed to be in agreement of the basic meaning of ethicality.

When asked how she would describe ethicality, Silvia replies that she considers it to be a type of moral compass in which a person has a responsibility for other people and beings than yourself (Silvia (p.12)). She continues and argues that "if we see it [ethicality] as our moral compass and as a way of power, I think we could actually get a better world" (Silvia (p.12)). With its northward facing needle, a compass is a relatively simple instrument and is a consistent indicator of physical direction. By applying Silvia's definition of

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ethicality, and placing “moral” in front of ‘compass’ it is possible to evoke a rather clear image of a compass that points a person in a particular direction in life. Instead of the northward facing needle, the middle of the compass consists of mental processes that serve as indicators on which way to ‘go’ in life according to one’s personal beliefs. As it was mentioned in a previous chapter, Varul (2009) refers to the notion of ‘ethical selving’ in his research on Fairtrade consumption. The notion was introduced, because Varul (2009) wanted to acknowledge that the feeling of ethical obligation is integrated in ethical consumers’ images of themselves. Because of this, they view morality and selfhood as an integrated part of themselves. For instance, when asked if she feels she has become more ethical now than she was a few years back, Anna says yes. She feels she has become more aware of ethical issues, and she feels that as “a citizen of the world” (Anna (p.8)), it is her responsibility to be ethical. She will, however, only define herself as a “semi-ethical” consumer (Anna (p.5)) and says that she perhaps is not doing everything she could with regards to ethicality. Still, she says that she does small things and in this way, she is still able to contribute to a more ethical world (Anna (p.8)).

In relation to Silvia’s definition on ethicality, other interviewees provide similar definitions of the term. According to Anna, ethicality is when you think your choices through and that the things you choose to do or buy are chosen with a conscious. She believe that an ethical consumer is someone who looks at things from different angles and then makes up their mind based on the knowledge they have obtained from this (Anna (p.4)). This view is shared by Sofia who defines ethicality as being conscious about the pros and cons of things, and that an ethical consumer is a consumer who chooses the product that benefits most people. According to Sofia, viewing the ethical prospects of everything shows how compassionate a person is (Sofia (p.5)). When asked about angles from which a consumer can look at products and labels, Anna replies that this could be information regarding the manufacturer, working conditions, where the money goes to etc. If one chooses to follow Anna and Sofia understandings of an ethical consumer, it is possible to identify such consumers amongst the interviewees. Cecilia is a rather ethical consumer in the sense that she primarily

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buys organic and Fairtrade labeled food products. She exhibits a great sense of global responsibility, expressed through her consumption practices. In her interview, she says that when she buys a product, she tries to form a general view of the different options she has in order for her to be able to make a 'good' choice in the end. She provides a rather good example of her considerations: "...for example, when I am buying bananas and there are only a brand that I heard of was a bad choice, then I will not buy bananas. At all" (Cecilia (p.3)). By this, she means that if she needs bananas and she goes to the store only to find that the only bananas that are left are the ones produced by a manufacturer she knows does not live up her ethical demands, she will rather go without the bananas than to 'settle', so to speak. Furthermore, when asked to describe ethicality, she agrees with Anna and Sofia and says that it involves consumers who will consider how products are produced and in what country they have been produced. She continues and says that for her, ethicality is about the choices she makes, and how or whether she chooses to act according to her ethical beliefs (Cecilia (p.4)). She provides an example; if she is in a store, looking at a sweater she likes, and she sees on the label that the sweater has been produced in a country that is known for having bad working conditions for employees, she will most likely not buy the sweater. And if she does end up buying it, she will feel bad about it (Cecilia (p.4)). This implies that even though she has her ethical beliefs, she does not always act accordingly to these beliefs. She states that this is mostly because of her financial status. Sometimes she cannot afford to be ethical in her consumption choices, and she therefore has to buy a more 'unethical' option (Cecilia (p.4)). However, although she cannot always afford to be ethical when she shops, she tries to be ethical in other aspects of her life. One might even say that she follows Silvia's definition of ethicality, namely that it should be viewed as a moral compass. When asked what ethicality means to her personally, Cecilia replies that it means "making good choices in all areas in my life" (Cecilia (p.5)). This naturally includes her consumption choices, but it also regards her general appearance, work life and her political beliefs. Generally, in all aspects of her life, she tries to be as caring and nice to people as she can, and in her work life she tries to the best she can for her clients (Essie (p.5)). Simultaneously with being a fulltime student, Essie works fifty percent of her time as a social worker

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investigating youths who have problems with their families (Cecilia (p.1)). In her spare time, she is a member of a feminist group who are active in participating in actions and demonstrations for women's rights (Cecilia (p.11)). She is also a member of the Left Party in Sweden, and has ambitions of becoming active in politics when she finishes school this summer (Cecilia (p.12)). In elaborating her comment about ethicality meaning making good choices in all areas of her life, she also says that she believe in voting for the party she believes will gain most people and the environment (Cecilia (p.5)).

Another interviewee who falls under Anna's definition of an ethical consumer is Silvia, as her own definition of ethicality may also suggest. In replying what ethicality means to her personally, she first refers to her definition of it being her moral compass. She then continues and refers to the expression "what footprint do I put on the earth?" (Silvia (p.13)). She says that this expression is something she in general keeps in mind in her everyday life. Her replies also suggest that she has a 'quid pro quo'-mentality, and she implies that living an ethical lifestyle may be viewed as a question of priority. She says "okay, now I have not been buying ecological food for this and this long, and okay, so I do take the train instead of taking my car to school" (Silvia (p.13)). She continues and says that she tries balancing being ethical in all aspects of her life. Not solely with regards to her consumption choices, but also with regards to transportation –as the quote before suggests– how long she showers, that she remembers to turn off the lights when she exits a room and etc.. She therefore exhibits a great sense of global responsibility with regards to the environment. However, she also says that she sometimes finds it difficult to know which options are the most ethical ones. She says that she often feels as though it is a question of whom or what she wants to support. She provides an example in which she expresses a sense of uncertainty when she is shopping. She says: "Is it better to buy a doll second-hand in the second-hand shop next door or should I buy this more expensive thing from a country in Africa or Asia?" (Silvia (p.13)). Silvia says that she lacks knowledge of which one of these two options has been produced under best conditions regarding impact on the environment and other human beings. With regards to lack of knowledge, a number of the other interviewees also express that they feel as they do not have sufficient knowledge to be completely ethical in all areas of their life. For

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instance, when asked if she finds it easy to buy ethical products in Sweden, Cecilia replies “Not in all areas” (Cecilia (p.8)). She finds it relatively easy to buy ethical food products, but it is more difficult to know with clothes or furniture. This view is shared by Silvia. She stresses the importance of consumers being aware of how their clothes have been produced, but at the same time, she also says that it is very difficult as a consumer to know which brands are ‘good’ and which ones are ‘bad’ (Silvia (p.7)). She continues and says that she was very interested in this question, and she tried to do some research on the subject. However, she found it to be very difficult to find information on which clothing companies were ethical in the production of their clothing. Because she could not find any clear results regarding this issue, she decided to shop her clothes second-hand. She states that she views second-hand shopping as a way to overcome such problems (Silvia (p.8)).

Global identification

During the analysis of the interviews, a subtheme has emerged, namely ‘global identification’. A number of the interviewees show concern regarding global justice. Their replies imply a general belief that global inequalities between richer and poorer countries should be considered unjust. A few of the interviewees also show concern for global human rights in their replies. When asked about her opinion towards global ethical products such as Fairtrade, Cecilia replies that she believes that more organizations and brands should dedicate themselves to ethical issues. She finds it terrible that many of the cheap products sold in Western societies have been produced by workers who have terrible working conditions and that they often are treated as slaves for the manufacturer (Cecelia (p.9-10)). She argues that Western consumers have heard about these conditions for years, but that it seems as though it has not been a top priority for the world which she finds highly problematic. Her reply show that she is willing to gain further knowledge about humanitarian issues, and seem to belief that this should be a priority for all consumers in Western societies. As it has been mentioned previously, Cecilia aims to become active in politics which also indicates awareness and concern for her fellow beings and for the society in which she lives. Another interviewee,

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Sarah, also shows a high level of global identification. When asked to describe her lifestyle, she replies that due to economic reasons she unfortunately has to buy clothes that have most likely not been ethically produced, because they are often cheaper than clothes produced under more ethical circumstances (Sarah (p.2)). However, she stresses that as soon as her economy becomes more stabilized, she will buy clothes that she knows have been produced under better circumstances than then the clothes she buys now. She wants to be assured that the clothes have not been produced by workers who are exploited or who are getting chemicals into their bodies during the production process (Sarah (p.2)). She also says that even though she feels she cannot afford to buy ethically produced clothes, she tries to avoid buying clothes produced in countries that are known for having bad working conditions and unfair treatment towards the workers (Sarah (p.5)). She also had a period of time in which she boycotted H&M, because she had found that the workers producing the clothes worked under bad working conditions (Sarah (p.6)). However, she also confesses that she sometimes forget to think about these things when she is shopping, mostly due to economic reasons. Despite of this, her replies suggests a consumer who is not only concerned for the well-being of her fellow beings, but also seems to, to some degree, identify herself with the workers producing the clothes she buys. Another interviewee who seems to share Sarah's view on H&M is Anna. She has also chosen to boycott H&M, because she discovered that some of their clothes had been produced by child workers (Anna (p.4)).

The excerpts of the replies provided by the interviewees that have been presented here, all suggests that a number of the interviewees not only exhibit a level of global responsibility and global identification, but also a level of global moral responsibility. For example, by choosing to boycott H&M based on questionable working conditions, Sarah and Anna implies that it goes against their moral believes to support a company that demonstrates unethical behavior.

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Skepticism

During the interviews, a subtheme relating to an understanding of global ethical brands such as Fairtrade emerged: Skepticism. It was discovered that a number of the interviewees express a level of skepticism towards brands and organizations that define themselves as ethical. When asked about her attitude towards global ethical brands such as Fairtrade, Sarah express a level of skepticism. Her general attitude towards such brands is good, and she thinks it shows that there are people who want to make the world a better place and who want to protect the environment. However, she continues and says that she finds it difficult to believe that in an organization or a company –no matter how fair trade they are supposed to be– there are no “mistakes” as she refers them as (Sarah (p.14)). By mistakes, Sarah refers to the possibility that there perhaps are people within the organization who try to bend the rules a little. In reality, this makes the company or organization less ethical in than what they portray themselves to be (Sarah (p.14)). Because of this, she finds it difficult to completely trust organizations such as Fairtrade, even though in theory, she thinks they are making a good initiative to bring awareness to people about ethical issues. Other interviewees share Sarah’s view, and justify their view by saying that they do not feel they have sufficient knowledge regarding such organizations, and it is therefore difficult to trust them. Sarah’s view is for example shared by Maria. She refers to a well-reputed Swedish company named Oatly. According to Maria, many vegans love the brand as they produce oats-based foods such as ice-cream, milk etc., and in their branding of their products they had the slogan “Wow No Cow” (Maria (p.10)). However, according to her, they have been exposed in fertilizing their oats-fields with waste products and grinded animal bones. Her point with referring to this company is that, as she says, this is a company that has branded itself to be very ethical. Yet, not even they can live up to their own ‘ethical’ reputation (Maria, (p.10)). When exposures on companies such as Oatly come to the surface, consumers become increasingly skeptic towards companies and organizations who brand themselves as ethical. Therefore, even though a number of the interviewees’ general feeling towards global ethical brands are very positive, they find it difficult to trust them to be as ethical as they pose themselves to be.

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In this part of the analysis, the interviews were analyzed in terms of the overall theme 'ethicality: the moral compass'. The findings suggest that the interviewees demonstrate levels of global responsibility, global identification and global moral responsibility. The data however, also suggests that even though the interviewees' general attitudes to global ethical brands are positive, there is still a level of skepticism. They agree that it is important to bring ethical issues into focus, but the interviewees seem to fear that ethical organizations and companies may not be as ethical as they pose to be.

Awareness: The key to be ethical

As it has been addressed earlier, Strong's (1996) research revealed a new type of consumer who is caring and more informed than previously. Having analyzed her research, it was therefore derived that a global understanding is that ethical consumption involves consumers who are aware of several aspects of consumption. The aim of this part of the analysis is to shed light on how the interviewees relate to this specific global understanding of an ethical consumer.

Strong's (1996) definition of this new type of consumer is supported by all six interviewees who all seem to agree that awareness may be viewed as the key to act ethically.

When asked to describe an ethical consumer, Cecilia replies that in order to be "a real ethical consumer, you should both be conscious about it, but also act on it" (Cecilia (p.8)). With this, Cecilia means that an ethical consumer must be conscious about which labels or products are the most ethical ones. Hence, which products that have been produced in the best possible way for instance with regards to working conditions and the environment. However, according to Cecilia, it is not sufficient to merely have the knowledge of such things; a 'true' ethical consumer must also be able to act in accordance with this knowledge. This view is supported by a number of the other interviewees. For instance, when asked to describe an ethical consumer, Maria replies that this type of consumer is someone who is aware, as she

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believes that awareness is the biggest step to do anything (Maria (p.15)). She stresses that she is under the impression that many consumers today are comfortable doing what they have always done and are creatures of habits. She continues and stresses that these consumers often have a need to somehow justify to both themselves and others that they can continue on with their habits as they are. Even though their consumption habits may not be as ethical as they otherwise could have been (Maria (p.15-16)). However, according to Maria, if these consumers are provided with knowledge and facts regarding working conditions or environmental issues related to their consumption choices, they would perhaps be more inclined to make more ethical consumer choices. Even though ethicality may not end up being at the top of consumers' lists, Maria argues that just by having the knowledge and being aware of this knowledge, consumers will most likely make consumption decisions that are "a bit more better if you have the knowledge to do them" (Maria (p.16)). She continues and says that information is the first step to make consumers change their ways and how they consume.

The adventurous consumer

In many ways globalization has resulted in an increased awareness regarding consumption issues, and it seems as though a high number of consumers have become rather adventurous. These consumers tend to ask more questions regarding origins of the food and the products they consume. The majority of the interviewees for this thesis can be considered to be part of this group of adventurous consumers. For instance, when asked about what criteria she has when selecting products, Cecilia replies that she primarily searches for products that are organic or Fairtrade-labeled. She has furthermore been a vegetarian for the past seventeen years, primarily due to "animal, ethical [...] reasons" (Cecilia (p.3)) as she herself puts it. Another example of an adventurous consumer is Silvia who is very ethical in the majority of her consumption choices; she is a vegetarian, primarily eats organic and locally produced food products and buys second-hand items. During the interview, she also stresses that she prioritizes to spend her money on traveling rather to spend them on material items such as clothes, furniture etc. As it is the case with Cecilia,

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this suggests that Silvia is a more adventurous consumer who tends to ask more questions about the source of her food. Her replies throughout the interview also imply that through her travels, she has become increasingly aware of how products are produced in foreign countries. She also stresses the issue that many consumers do not know where their products come from or how they have been produced. She says: "People do not know what it looks like, like... What does a banana look like? They are not always bent, you know? And people do not know [...] how it looks and that there can be small bananas too" (Silvia (p.15)). With this comment, Silvia suggests that many consumers may not give much thought about where their products come from or how they have been produced. Silvia implies that many consumers may not think about the fact that for instance the fruit and vegetables they see on the shelves in the supermarkets do not necessarily look like that from the hand of nature. For instance, before fruit can be transported to the store and be bought by consumers, it has to undergo a number of steps in the process. First, it has to be harvested. Next, in order for the consumers to get the best quality, the harvested fruit must then be sorted. After the sorting process, the fruit has to be packed for transportation and finally, it is one way or another transported to the store. Her comment suggests that if consumers were made aware of this, they would perhaps be more inclined to think about what processes the product has undergone in order to be purchased by consumers. This way of thinking may then perhaps lead them to think about the working conditions of the workers who have been in charge of handling the products. This would then perhaps lead to a more ethical thought process when deciding to purchase a certain product –such as for instance fruit or vegetables.

As it was mentioned in the chapter regarding globalization, the rise of social interconnectedness and advances in technology have led to individuals becoming increasingly aware of their actions and as a result have begun to evaluate the consequences of their consumption practices (Giddens (1991); Beck (1994)).

However, as it has been stressed a number of times throughout this section, awareness is the key to act ethically. Silvia, an interviewee who considers knowledge to be a privilege points out that in order to obtain

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such knowledge, a consumer must to be able to somehow come in contact with this knowledge (Silvia (p.12)). It could for instance be suggested that advances in technology have resulted in increased access to information regarding ethical consumption. This increased access to ethical consumption issues can be argued to have led to increased awareness regarding such issues. This suggestion is supported by one of the interviewees who provide a good example on how this can be understood in relation to generational change. Maria argues that her generation has become more ethical than her grandparents' generation (Maria (p.17)). She stresses that when they were her age, they did not have access to computers and because of this, her generation now has access to a whole new world of knowledge that her grandparents' generation never had the chance to know even existed. Because her generation has the opportunity to go online and search for information regarding consumption issues, they have been exposed to knowledge relating to ethical issues. Maria implies that access to this knowledge has led to more ethical consumers who are more aware of the consequences their consumption choices may have on the environment and other human beings around the world. This suggests that consumers who have access to advanced technologies such as computers may be more ethical in their consumption practices than those who do not have access to this type of technology. The justification for this suggestion is that the consumer living in a society with advanced technology has a higher chance of being exposed to articles or videos related to such issues. These articles or videos may feature interviews with former workers who are opening up about the sicknesses or disabilities they sustained while producing a product under questionable working conditions. Being exposed to such accounts may to some extent influence consumers to act more ethical in their consumer choices. This view is somewhat supported by Cecilia who in relation to a question regarding the Swedish government's environmental politics, says that she feels she as a consumer is affected by the media (Cecelia (p.7)). Up to two or three times a month, the media in some way or another, reminds her that she lives in a country that has certain politics regarding the environment and global responsibility in general. She states that this has led her to become more conscious about environmental and fair trade issues (Cecelia (p.7)).

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Even though living in a technological advanced society may lead to a more informed consumer, a number of the interviewees argue that it can be quite time-consuming to become aware of all ethical aspects of consumption, including worker's health, animal welfare and environmental issues. According to Silvia, it is therefore often easier to become aware of such ethical issues if your social circle shares the same interest in obtaining such knowledge (Silvia (p.12)). For instance, Maria says that if she wish to obtain more knowledge on the subject of ethical issues, she only needs to log into her Facebook account and search through her newsfeed. Because a high number of her Facebook-friends are interested in issues related to ethical issues, she finds herself constantly reminded of such issues, because her friends link to several articles related to ethical consumption (Maria (p.17)). It is therefore fairly easy to find information regarding ethical consumption issues –if one has access to the internet that is.

It should however be noted that there can be several reasons as to why consumers are unable to act on their ethical knowledge regarding circumstances under which a product has been produced or where in the world it has been produced. As a number of the interviewees point out, it is not only quite time-consuming to acquaint oneself with knowledge regarding ethical consumption, it can also be quite costly to be a 'complete' ethical consumer. As students, the majority of the interviewees find it rather difficult to consider themselves to be 'complete' ethical consumers as they neither have the time it takes to become fully acquainted with these issues nor the economy to consume one-hundred percent ethically-produced products. For instance, Silvia points out that it is difficult to have the energy to be fully aware of all aspects related to the production of goods, if one is constantly worrying about one's personal finance (Silvia (p.12)). A number of the interviewees furthermore express a sense of struggle between wanting to be more ethical in their consumption practices and their economy. For instance, when asked about her lifestyle, Sarah replies that her clothes she wears is "unfortunately very much from H&M" (Sarah (p.2)). The word 'unfortunately' express that she feels somewhat guilty about the fact that she has bought the majority of her wardrobe in H&M –a company she finds to be rather unethical due to the working conditions in their

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factories. Shortly after expressing this, she says that it is very much a question about economy for her part. She continues and says that she has already decided that as soon as she has a better economy, she will buy more expensive clothes that she knows have been produced under ethical circumstances. When asked if she consider herself to be an ethical consumer, another interviewee named Anna says that she would describe herself as semi-ethical. The reason why she would not consider herself to be a 'complete' ethical consumer is because even though she is aware about ethical consumption issues, she does not always act in accordance with this awareness (Anna (p.5)). She implies that even though the decision to become an ethical consumer may be easy, it is something else to be one in practice, because it can be a rather expensive lifestyle. However, as Sarah, Anna believes that when she gets a fulltime job and a stronger economy, she will become more ethical in her consumer choices.

As it was suggested earlier in the thesis, a global understanding of ethical consumption is that it involves consumers who are aware of several aspects of consumption. In this part of the analysis, an elaboration of how the young Swedes who have been interviewed for this thesis relate to this understanding. The findings suggest that the interviewees agree with this suggestion. All six interviewees agree that an ethical consumer is someone who is aware and who acts according to this awareness. However, the majority of the interviewees also agreed that it can be quite time-consuming to acquaint oneself with knowledge regarding ethical labels and products. They also agreed that money was an important factor in being able to act ethically in one's consumer choices. A number of interviewees also experienced a sense of struggle between the desire to act ethically and their tight economy as students.

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An issue of taking control

In the section about Schouten (1991), it was stated that he had found a subtheme in his findings that is as follows: Plastic surgery as a perceived means of exercising control over one's body and one's destiny (p.418). It was suggested that consumers may use ethically produced products as a means to take control over their own bodies. The aim of this part of the analysis is to shed light on how this suggestion may be related to young Swedish consumers, such as the interviewees interviewed for this thesis and their ethical consumption practices.

The suggestion presented above has been verified by several of the interviewees. To a question in which the interviewees were asked to describe their lifestyles, Sarah answered that she and her boyfriend tries to buy as much organic as possible. When she was questioned why, she answered that "It feels safer for us, better for the environment" (Sarah (p.2)). Seen in the light of Schouten (1991), her comment about buying organic products, because it makes her feel safer may be viewed as an attempt to take control. Her comment about organic products feeling safer for them to consume than regular products agrees with the suggestion that consumers may choose to buy ethical products as a means to take control over their bodies. Therefore when Sarah says that consuming organic products makes her feel safer than regular products, it could be argued that she uses them as a means of exercising control over her and her boyfriend's bodies. She consumes these types of products, primarily because she and her boyfriend wish to minimize their intake of for instance chemicals which are often found in regular products. She continues and says her father-in-law is a food inspector and that he guides her and her boyfriend to which brands they should avoid because they "are not good" (Sarah (p.3)). As with the vast majority of the interviewees, Sarah seems to be quite aware of her consumption choices. For instance, not only does she primarily eat organic products, she also tries to limit her meat and dairy consumption and buys alternatives instead (p.9). This view is shared by almost all of the interviewees as the majority is either vegetarian or rarely eats meat.

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However, Sarah also tries to control other aspects of her life than merely what she consumes food-wise. She furthermore states that if she finds a hole in a pair of pants, she is more inclined to sew them herself rather than to go out and buy a new pair of pants (Sarah (p.3)). She furthermore states that the majority of her and boyfriends' furniture is made of materials that are reused (Sarah (p.12)). This implies that she wish to control how her furniture is made and what materials have been used for the production of them. This reuse-mentality is shared by a number of the interviewees. A few of them shops in second-hand stores and justifies this choice by stating that it is often cheaper and because it is better for the environment than to buy new clothes or furniture. One interviewee agrees with this viewpoint, but adds that by buying second-hand, she gets the opportunity to support organizations that, as she puts it, use the money to do something good (Silvia (p.8)). This view implies that she wants to be somewhat in control over where her money goes and by buying second-hand items from these organizations, she furthermore tries to make sure that she support people in need while she shops. Furthermore, when asked about her relationship with consumption, Silvia replies that she consider herself a shopper in periods of time. She continues and says that she has realized that the more time she spends on the internet, the more she wants to shop. However, since she and her boyfriend do not have "endless amount of money" (Silvia (p.6)), she tries to be as considerate with her money as she can. She stresses that it feels better to be considerate with her money rather spending her money on things that she does not really need. She continues and says that she has begun to pay more attention to how it feels in the long term rather than the brief feeling of satisfaction she gets when she has bought something she did not really needed to buy (Silvia (p.6)). Although she has had this realization, she still enjoys shopping once in a while. Her choosing to buy second-hand items may therefore suggest an attempt to control her unwanted consumption impulses. She knows that she cannot really afford to shop things she does not need and she does not always enjoy the feeling she gets when buying such things. However when shopping in second-hand stores she feels like she is supporting a good deed, because the money she spends there are used to support something good. Silvia's statements suggest that she may voluntarily ration her purchase quantities of certain goods and use second-hand

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shopping as a means to avoid feelings of guilt related to her shopping. It could therefore be suggested that she in several ways tries to control her consumption by doing most of her shopping in second-hand stores. When arguing that Silvia may be feeling a sense of guilt when she shops it is primarily based on her saying that it feels better not to shop, but also on her stressing that it is also a question of capitalism. Her ambivalence towards capitalism is stressed by her argument that people tend to buy things they do not need. With regards to Silvia's ambivalence towards capitalism, Anna expresses similar feelings. When answering a question regarding her lifestyle Anna mentions that because she used to work in a big Swedish store, she has found herself dislike the capitalistic aspect of consumption. She dislikes the idea of being expected to buy things you do not really need or want, and then end up having to throw it out, because you have too many material things (Anna (p.2)). This view is supported by Maria who expresses concerns of a 'throw-away' mentality in which it has become more common to buy new clothes rather than reusing old clothes as one was more inclined to do in previous times (Maria (p.21)). Anna defines herself as a "lazy" shopper (Anna (p.2)) in the sense that she wishes she could be more aware of how the products she buys have been produced and by whom. She considers herself to be a semi-ethical consumer, because she is not "totally unaware" (Anna (p.6)). However, even though she does not consider herself to be wholehearted ethical, her resistance towards the mass consumption in societies today displays a great sense of ethical thinking. In continuation of this, when asked if she ever shop in specialized stores, she answers that she buys tea in a local tea store. When asked why, she replies that she likes the fact that it is a small store that is not a part of chain and that she likes the thought of her supporting them (Anna (p.3)). This way of thinking may be considered to be quite ethical, and it could therefore be suggested that even though she may not be as 'ethical' as some of the other interviewees, her way of consuming ethically still reflect a need for control. It responds to her need to be in control over her lifestyle and it helps her to resist societal pressures to consume.

While the views expressed in the examples provided above may reflect a need for control over their bodies, appearances and lifestyles, their ethical consumption may also reflect an attempt to control their future.

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Their consumption of ethically produced goods can be seen in light of globalization. For instance, in the section about Giddens (2000), it was stated that he views globalization as something that is restructuring the ways in which we live, and is influencing our everyday life. Consumers in a globalized world are therefore constantly forced to deal with changes and uncertainties regarding the world they live in. It could therefore be argued that the world is out of our control due to the ever changing ways of doing things. Because of this, one could be inclined to argue that consumers living in a globalized world are constantly trying to control the uncontrollable; the world. Giddens (2000) uses the global climate change as an example of something that seems to be uncontrollable. Consumers may therefore use ethical consumption as an attempt to take some sort of control over the world and the environment within it. For instance, when asked how she would describe herself as consumer, Maria replies that she would not consider herself to be a big consumer (Maria (p.5)). When elaborating this, she very much stresses the environmental aspect of her lifestyle; she does not own a car and she leads a mostly vegetarian lifestyle. When asked about her criteria when selecting products, Silvia replies that she tries as much as she can to buy organic and locally produced products (Silvia (p.7)). As mentioned previously, Sarah said that she buys organic products because it makes her feel safer and because it is better for the environment (Sarah (p.2)). Even though the six interviewees express different levels of environmental concerns during the interviews –with regards to their consumption choices– they seem to agree that protection of the global environment is important. It should however be noted that due to various reasons, not all of the interviewees buy ethically produced goods every day. Still, those of the interviewees who aim to buy primarily organically produced products in their every day consumption seem to be trying to control the uncontrollable; their future. Of course, ‘future’ should be understood in the broadest sense of the word, as what is meant by this is that they try to control the environment by consuming these types of products instead of regular products.

The interviewees’ way of somewhat simplifying their consumption using ethical choices reflects a need to be in control of their choices, their appearances, their bodies and above all, their lives. The relationship

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they have constructed between consumption and ethics furthermore reflects the need to be in control over their consumption and their lifestyles. In this regard, ethical consumption behavior somewhat serves as a means to achieving control over their lives. A suggestion could therefore be that those of the interviewees who engage in ethical consumption practices may do so because they believe that their actions can have an impact, and their ethical consumption choices may reflect a need for personal control. This suggestion is supported by a previous study on ethical consumption conducted amongst Canadian consumers. The study revealed that a greater sense of personal control was associated with personal control (Turcotte (2010)). It revealed that consumers with the greatest feeling of personal control were also those who were more likely to participate in ethical consumption (ibid (2010)). Thus, the study revealed that consumers who possess a greater sense of personal control generally believe they can influence not only what happens to them, but they also believe that they have the necessary resources to meet various problems. They furthermore believed that their future is highly affected by their actions (ibid (2010)). Based on the findings, it would seem as though the majority of the interviewees share this attitude. By consuming ethically, they subconsciously try to control their future –both with regards to their own personal lives, such as appearances, bodies etc., but also with regards to the world in general. For instance, by consuming goods that have been produced ethically or shop-second hand items, they feel as if they are putting less stress on the environment. In that sense, it can be viewed as though they are trying to control their own and the future of their planet by actively avoiding consuming in a way that puts added pressure on the global climate.

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Identity as social process

The overall theme for this part of the analysis will revolve primarily around Jenkins' view on identity as a social process. Based on the interviews conducted for this thesis, an analysis of how the interviewees' identities are created both internally and externally and how this is reflected in the interviews will be made.

When selecting interviewees for this thesis, students from the social workers' program at Lund University were chosen as informants. Prior to the interviews, it was expected that students who choose to study this particular program are most likely quite interested in the society in which they live as well as the surrounding world. This expectation was more or less confirmed during the interviews. For example, when asked if there are any ethical consumers in her social circle, Maria replies that she would definitely say so and refers to her classmates (Maria (p.24)). She substantiates this by saying that social workers in general are very aware. According to Maria, they want to see themselves as good people and with comes being aware about the environment and other issues related to ethicality. This mentality can be linked to Jenkins' term 'group membership' which was presented in chapter II of the thesis. In order to be able to understand 'group membership', one must understand Jenkins' definition of a collective. His definition entails that individuals in some way or another have something in common. He defines group membership as a relationship between members, and even if they do not know each other personally, they can recognize each other as members (Jenkins (2004), p.84). The reply provided by Maria suggests that social workers may view themselves as members of a certain group of people who cares about ethicality and issues related to this topic. According to Jenkins, the individual and the collective should be viewed as a whole as identity and it not solely internally created, but externally created as well. Based on Maria replies, it could therefore be argued that social workers have somewhat subconsciously defined the group themselves and view the membership as an important part of their consumer identity. For instance, Maria continues and provides an example which can be applied in the justification of this argument. While some people may

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view second-hand items as questionable because it has been used by someone else, social workers will most likely acknowledge the purchase, because “it tells you are cool, relaxed person, and you are [...] ethical” (Maria, p.24). It is however important to note that this statement should be viewed as a generalization of social workers, and it can therefore not be applied to all social workers. In relation to this statement, Maria was asked if she feels she has been influenced to become more ethical after she began her studies to become a social worker. She replies that she to some degree feels she has become influenced. As she says if people around you talk about it and makes ethical choices themselves, it becomes more relatable for oneself to act the same way (Maria (p.24)). This view can furthermore be set in relation to Jenkins’ model that he refers to as the *internal-external dialectic of identification*. As the model has already been explained on page 44 in Chapter III, it will not be explained in depths. However, in short, Jenkins provides this model as an explanation of the process in which identities are created –internally and externally. He argues that identity is never unilateral, and that individuals and collectives identify themselves with others. Based on this, it can therefore be argued that students enrolled at the social worker program identify themselves with each other and create their consumer identity based on their fellow students. They reflect themselves in other students and their consumption habits, and discover similarities and differences with which they create their identity. According to Jenkins (2008), individuals must relate to how others view them and identify with others in order to be able to evolve. As ethical consumption seems to be of great importance for this particular group of students, it is therefore important for the individual to be able to identify itself ethically with the group. If the individual does not feel as if it is able to take part in this ‘ethical identification’, its selfhood will not be able to enter the identity of the individual. This argument is based on Jenkins’ *interaction order* in which he argues that before selfhood can enter one’s identity, it must be confirmed by others as credible. This suggests that the reason why these students seem to be quite ethical in their consumption practices is because their identity to some degree has been externally created by their fellow students. It may also be suggested that the reason why the vast majority of the interviewees seem to be quite ethical in their consumption practices is

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because they want to avoid separating themselves from the group too much. Humans are fundamentally built to be part of a group and the creation of our identity is therefore highly influenced by this. Biologically speaking, it is not in our nature to stand out from the crowd too much as it once was viewed as dangerous in relation to potential safety risks. Of course, humans have undergone great transformations from back then, and today it seems as though it has somewhat become a trend to stand out from the crowd. However, as much as individuals try to stand out, it remains in their nature to be gregarious and because of this; the creation of their internal identity is still very much dependent on how it is externally viewed by others.

Ethical consumption: a question of group membership?

The interviews revealed that a number of the interviewees to some degree feel that the fact they are living in Sweden has influenced them as consumers. For example, during the interview, Maria says that many Swedes seem to be quite aware about their consumption habits as they feel as if they have a certain reputation to live up to (Maria (p.12)). According to Maria, Swedes in general have an image of themselves that they are quite open-minded and ethically aware as consumers (Maria (p.15)). According to Cecilia, this ethical awareness may to some degree have been influenced by the Swedish government (Cecilia (p.5)). She states that they have not only implemented restrictions on certain chemicals that are bad for the environment, they have also put high taxes on gas (Cecilia (p.5)). Cecilia furthermore agrees with Maria, and says that she believes that Swedes in general are rather conscious about environmental protection and fair trade with developing countries (Cecilia (p.7)). The arguments provided by Maria and Cecilia can be set in relation to Jenkins' thoughts on group membership. Even though it is of course impossible for all Swedes to know each other on a personal level, they can recognize each other as members of a country that in several ways can be characterized as globally responsible. As consumers, they reflect themselves in the country in which they are born. It could therefore be suggested that as a result of this, Swedes may be

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more ethical in their consumption practices than residents living in countries which may not be as globally responsible as Sweden seems to be.

Even though a number of the interviewees seem to believe that living in Sweden has influenced them to be more ethical in their consumption practices in general, Silvia provides an interesting viewpoint. When asked what ethicality means to her personally, she refers to a type of 'ethical karma' (Silvia (p.13)). For instance, she and her boyfriend recently bought a car, and if she feels has used the car too much and thereby has not been acting as environmentally friendly as she feels she should, she tries to make up for it in other areas of her life (Silvia (p.13)). Yet, although she usually aims to be as ethical as her economy allows her to be, she also says that she finds it rather difficult to find the right balance. She argues that while consumers can try to live as ethical and environmentally friendly as they possibly can, they still have to balance their ethical lifestyle in a way that fits into the society in which they live (Silvia (p.13)). In several ways, the interviewees suggest that the Swedish society aims to make Swedish consumers as ethical as possible. As an example, Sarah states that the Swedish government wants Swedish consumers to reduce their meat consumption due to the high levels of pollution the actual production of the meat emits (Sarah (p.9)). However, Silvia argues that despite of this, it is somehow frowned upon by the society, if someone chooses to move into a primitive cottage in the forest and live without electricity. She continues and says that in many ways, the society forces people to lead a certain lifestyle, and if someone chooses to exclude him- or herself from this lifestyle, it may be a rather difficult process for that person (Silvia (p.14)). This difficult process may be explained from Jenkins' perspective on identity. As mentioned, Jenkins argues that in order for an identity to be created, it must both be internally and externally created and is therefore viewed as a social process. However, if an individual chooses live a rather isolated life, he or she may not be able to create a sustainable identity as there is no one to confirm it as credible. Jenkins would therefore most likely argue that because his or her social identity has neither been denied nor confirmed by others, it is not able to evolve.

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When asked if she ever shops in specialized stores, Sofia replies that she only shops in these kinds of stores if she needs a very special vegetarian product that she cannot find in any regular shops (Sofia (p.3)). Based on this reply, she was asked if she is a vegetarian. She says that she would not refer herself as a vegetarian, but that she hardly ever eats meat because she prefers not to (Sofia (p.4)). When asked to elaborate, she says that the primary reason is that she has been influenced by friends. She used to live with a vegetarian, and while she was living with her, it gradually began to feel more natural for her to eat more vegetarian (Sofia (p.4)). She says that even though eating meat feels wrong for several reasons such as with regards to animal welfare and the environment, these reasons were not the primary reason why she primarily began to eat vegetarian. The primary reason was that she felt influenced by her friends. This comment can be connected to what has previously been addressed regarding the issue of group membership and social identity between students enrolled at the social worker program. It was here suggested that students studying this particular program may be more inclined to ethical consumption as their consumer identities are influenced by their membership of a seemingly ethically aware group of students. According to Jenkins, identity is concerned with how individuals perceive how others react towards them. It could therefore be suggested that when Sofia began to spend more time with individuals whose general attitude to consumption practices were more ethical than her own, her identity gradually began to evolve in a more ethical direction. She perceived how her social circle reacted to her less ethical consumption practices, and it could be suggested that because she to some degree felt outside the group of ethical consumers, she subconsciously began to adapt more ethical consumption practices as a way of becoming an integrated part of the group. Her consumer identity is therefore highly influenced by her social relations. This view may also be connected to the suggestion regarding the general sense of group membership in Sweden which was earlier presented in this part of this analysis. Maria and Cecilia suggests that Swedes in general have a strong sense of ethical awareness, and it could be argued that this can be set in relation to what happened to Sofia's consumer identity when she became part of a more ethically aware social circle. A suggestion could be that Swedish consumers in general may be inclined to buy ethically produced products,

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because they feel they are part of a group when doing so. In her interview, Maria also argues that it seems to have become a lifestyle to be an ethical consumer and that this might explain why many Swedish consumers chose to engage in ethical consumption (Maria (p.16)). When asked if she find it easy to make ethical purchases in Sweden, Sofia answers yes. She further states that regular stores such as the Swedish supermarket ICA has increasingly begun to brand themselves as eco-friendly stores. According to Sofia, the reason for this is that seems as though when a product is labeled 'organic', it "appeals to the masses" (Sofia (p.7)). This supports Maria's statement that ethical consumption has become a lifestyle for many consumers.

It has previously been mentioned that a global understanding of ethical consumption is that it involves a sense of global responsibility. A number of the interviewees furthermore view ethicality as their moral compass which they use to guide them in the direction that seems to be the most ethical with regards to their own moral beliefs. A sense of morality is often incorporated in ones identity, and in many ways it evolves with time. The older we get the higher sense of morality we tend to get, and in many cases it also depends on a person's external environment. This suggests that if an individual primarily surrounds itself with people with strong ethical and moral believes, the individual has a higher chance of a having strengthened set of ethical and moral believes. It could therefore be argued that because the young Swedes interviewed for this thesis seem to almost constantly be surrounded by people with strong sets of ethical and moral believes, their identities have all been highly influenced by this. Viewed from Jenkins' perspective, their identity as consumers should therefore have become increasingly ethical after they have enrolled in the social worker program.

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Ethical consumption as a potential means of self-improvement

In this part of the analysis, the interviews conducted will be analyzed in accordance with the overall theme:

Ethical consumption as a potential means of self-improvement.

When the interviewees were asked if they believed they had become more ethical in their consumption practices than they were a few years ago, several said yes. Based on what was revealed in the previous part of the analysis, this suggests that a number of the interviewees have become more ethical after their enrolment at the social worker program. It was furthermore revealed that those of the interviewees, who answered yes to this question, also seem to be those who are the most ethically aware consumers of all of the interviewees. Schouten (1991) states that “people may elect plastic surgery in order to improve their performances in key social roles” (p.413). In the previous chapter of this thesis, it was therefore suggested that consumers may use ethical consumption as a symbol they can manipulate for the purpose of managing impressions of their selves. It was furthermore suggested that consumers who consume ethically, often receive social benefits in terms of social interactions and a specific social image. The fact that several of the interviewees seem to imply that they have become more ethical aware after they have begun their studies, may suggest that they began to consume more ethically, because wished to convey to their fellow students that they had good values. In the previous chapter, the term ‘marketing character’ was presented. It has been used to describe individuals who manage their lives as commodities and as a result of this, become capable of presenting themselves in ways that may increase their socioeconomic exchange value (for more information, please refer to page 49 in Chapter III. As it has been suggested in the previous part of the analysis, students at the social worker program seem to belong to a group of consumers who in general seem to be more ethical aware than other consumers. It was suggested that there appears to be a common social identity in which it is perceived “cool to be ethical” (Maria, p. 24). In order to be able to share this specific type of social identity, the student must therefore to some degree convey to the other students

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that he or she share the same values as them. Although one interviewee has been ethically aware for a number of years, and therefore perhaps did not feel a need to manage her identity much when she began her studies, the vast majority of the interviewees appear to, to some degree, have managed their lives as a type of commodities. In order to enhance their key social roles at the program, they more or less had to engage in a type of ethical consumption practice, for instance in terms of their food consumption or by shopping in second-hand stores.

Ethical consumption and the state of transition

In chapter II of this thesis, it was suggested that a consumer who is in a period of transition may be more inclined to engage in ethical consumption. The justification for this suggestion is that individuals in periods of transition are often restructuring their lifestyles and values during this period of their lives. This view is supported by Silvia. When asked how she would describe herself as a consumer, she replies that the older she has become the more considerate she feels she has become with regards to her consumption (Silvia (p.5)). She has begun to be more aware about how she spends her money and on what kind of products. In many ways, she prefers quality over quantity. She is prepared to spend more money on organic and locally produced products, because she feels she takes better care of the food this way (Silvia (p.9)). For example, she says: "...when you buy a bit more expensive food, you take a bit more care of it. Like I do not have three slices of cheese on every sandwich I do, since I know that my cheese is pretty expensive. I am fine with one" (Silvia (p.11)). She therefore argues that she has become more considerate with her money, especially since she is almost finished with her studies and she feels like she is entering a new phase of her life (Silvia (p.5)). Schouten (1991) would most likely argue that Silvia is currently in a transitional or liminal state of her life. As previously explained, Schouten (1991) suggests that important life passages generally consists of three phases (for more information, please refer to page 52 in Chapter III). The transitional or liminal state is to be understood as the second phase in which an individual is caught in a limbo between a

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past state and a coming one. According to Schouten (1991), the individual is therefore in a period of his or her life in which he or she has an unanchored identity. It has previously been suggested that individuals who are in a liminoid state of their lives appear to be more inclined than others to engage in 'identity play', hence, to formulate, elaborate and evaluate possible selves (Schouten (1991), p.421). This suggestion seems to be supported by Silvia whose statement presented before implies that she has noticed a change in her consumption practices now that she is about to begin a new phase of her life and thereby experiences separation from a key role: student. It appears as if she, subconsciously, has begun to gradually formulate and elaborate a possible self who is more ethical aware than before. Schouten (1991) argues that if liminal people experience separation from key roles, they feel necessitated to either create new roles or at the least emphasize existing roles to fill the gap brought by the separation. As Silvia is already quite ethical in her consumption practices, it does not seem as though she is trying to create a new role as a consumer. Rather, she appears to be emphasizing her existing role as an ethical consumer by combining her ethical consumption practices with an increased awareness of the value of her money. However, it seems as though Silvia is not the only one of the interviewees who is in a liminoid state of their lives. As Silvia, another interviewee, Anna, is almost finished with her studies as well. As it has been mentioned in a previous part of this analysis, Anna describes herself as a semi-ethical consumer who is aware about ethical issues related to consumption, but does not always have the economy to act according to this awareness (Anna (p.5)). When asked if she thinks she will become more ethical in her consumption practices when she has finished her studies and finds a job that will provide her with a better economy, she, with no hesitation, replies: "yes. I do" (Anna (p.6)). In his research, Schouten (1991) refers to possible selves as objects of aspiration, hope or fear and they motivate approach or avoidance behavior (for more information, please refer to page 53 in Chapter III). It could be suggested that because she is almost finished with her studies, Anna is in a liminoid state of an important life passage in which she has constructed a possible self that she aspires to incorporate in her identity once she gets a job after her graduation.

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An issue of self-improvement

When asked to describe what kind of consumer she views herself to be, Sarah refers to herself as a responsible consumer (Sarah (p.3)). This can be set in relation to Schouten's (1991) argument that plastic surgery is acceptable as a potential means of self-improvement. In chapter II, in the section dedicated to Schouten, it was assumed that certain consumers may view ethical products in the same light as some people view plastic surgery, and that these products make these consumers capable of either maintaining or reconstructing their self-concept. Based on her reply, it could therefore be suggested that Sarah might use ethical products as a way to construct her self-concept. Schouten (1991) defines self-concept as the "cognitive and affective understanding of who and what we are" (p.413). In several respects, Sarah views herself as a responsible consumer –thereby implying she is an ethical consumer– and she may use her consumption of ethical products as a symbol of a specific role identity. However, Sarah is not the only interviewee who may use ethical consumption as a symbol of a role identity. In previous parts of this analysis, it was mentioned that the vast majority of the interviewees are vegetarians. The few interviewees who do eat meat, says that they hardly ever consume any meat products. It should however be noted that the interviewees who said they were vegetarian brought the subject up themselves, and were never asked about it before they mentioned it in relation to other questions. This implies that living a vegetarian lifestyle appears to be an important factor in the construction of their identity –both as consumers and as individuals in general. Maria who describes herself as a flexitarian (Maria (p.8)) as she only eat meat very rarely, says that generally when people state they are living a vegan lifestyle, it is a rather big statement for them and a 'label' they take pride in (Maria (p.11)). Although Maria refers to vegan consumers in this example, it could be suggested that vegetarians may also take pride in living this particular lifestyle. Generally, in magazines, news papers and TV-programs, vegetarianism is often viewed to be a rather healthy lifestyle. Vegetarianism is therefore often viewed as more than merely a choice of not to consume meat, it is perceived as a lifestyle. It conveys to other consumers that consumes who choose to dedicate themselves to this type of lifestyle, in general are quite ethical in their consumption practices. The

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justification for this argument is that when consumers choose to become vegetarians, it is often because they do not feel they can justify eating meat. Therefore, living a vegetarian lifestyle conveys to other consumers that one cares about ethical issues such as animal welfare. It could therefore be suggested that the majority of interviewees interviewed for this thesis may use ethical consumption, e.g. vegetarianism, as a means of self-improvement and as a symbol of a specific role identity. To some extent, vegetarianism makes the interviewees capable of restructuring their self-concepts, and managing impressions of their selves to others.

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Chapter IIII: Conclusion

The final chapter of this thesis is the conclusion in which the content will be reviewed along with some concluding thoughts regarding what has been researched.

Over the last decades, Fairtrade consumption has been expanding rapidly across Europe and in North America (Varul (2009). For instance, in 2010, shoppers spent €4.36 billion on Fairtrade products which is a 27 percent increase compared to 2009 (Fairtrade (n.d.)). Therefore, one could argue that ethical consumption has become somewhat a global trend amongst consumers in Western consumer societies. Along with theories, a literature review and six in-depth interviews with Swedish students the aim of this thesis has been to explore and analyze how a global trend such as ethical consumption is manifested in a local context.

The analysis revealed that the interviewees in several ways have taken elements from global understandings of ethical consumption and blended it with their own consumption practices in terms of their general behavior and consumption patterns. A number of the interviewees view ethicality as their moral compass which they use to guide them in the direction that seems to be the most ethical with regards to their own moral beliefs. The findings therefore suggest that the majority of the interviewees have expanded the thought of ethical consumption, and are now trying to be ethical in all aspects of their lives. All six interviewees also agree that the key to be ethical is awareness and to act in accordance with this awareness. However, a few of the informants stated that even though they have an ethical awareness and have some kind of knowledge with regards to which products are ethical and those that may not be as ethical, they do not always act according to their awareness. Because of their economy, they often feel they cannot afford to be ethical in their consumption practices, because these types of products in general tend to be more expensive than regular products. The interviewees stated that once they finish their

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studies and are able to find a job which will provide them with a more stable economy, they are certain that they will begin to act more according to their ethical awareness. It was also found that in general the interviewees demonstrate high levels of global responsibility, global identification and global moral responsibility, both in terms of their consumption practices but also in terms of their lifestyles. The majority of the interviewees are vegetarians or vegans and have chosen this lifestyle because of ethical reasons in terms of environmental issues or animal welfare or other issues related to ethical considerations. The analysis furthermore revealed that a high number of the interviewees prefer eating organic and locally produced products because it makes them feel safer. The findings therefore suggests that the interviewees' way of somewhat simplifying their consumption using ethical choices reflects a need to be in control of their choices, their appearances, their bodies and above all, their lives.

The analysis showed that global understandings of ethical consumption influence not only the internal, but also the external identity of the interviewees. The findings suggest that a number of the interviewees use ethical consumption as a means of self-improvement and as a symbol of a specific role identity. To some extent, it makes the interviewees capable of restructuring their self-concepts, and managing impressions of their selves to others. The analysis also revealed the importance of group membership in relation to a common ethical identity –both as a Swedish citizen, but also with regards to their role as a student at the social worker program at Lund University.

The findings indicate that the five main themes by which the analysis was divided are contributing factors in constructing the interviewees' identity. These five main themes are as follows:

- Ethicality: the moral compass
- Awareness: The key to be ethical
- An issue of control
- Identity as a social process

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- Ethical consumption as a potential means of self-improvement

Therefore, according to the findings presented in the analysis, the Swedish model on ethical consumption is that Swedish students view ethical consumption to be more than consumption; rather, it is a lifestyle.

Based on my findings, Swedish students are very aware when it comes to ethical issues, and the findings indicate that it is when they choose to act on this awareness that ethicality becomes an integrated part of their identity –both internally and externally.

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