"The price of anything is the life you exchange for it"

A study on Voluntary Simplicity within the United States

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Abstract:

American consumption based lifestyles have a grave impact on the environment and personal wellbeing of Americans, creating unhealthy consumption patterns, unforeseen negative effects on individuals, and ultimately unsustainable lifestyles overall. Voluntary simplicity (VS), or individuals who resist consumerist tendencies seeking a higher quality of life through simplicity, is an answer to these concerns by promoting low consumption lifestyles, independence, and resilience among individuals and their lifestyles. This thesis considered VS within the specific cultural context of the United States, utilizing mixed methods in order to obtain an understanding of the cultural context of the United States, the VS movement, and both US and non US simplifiers. This research assessed how the VS movement interacts with modern America through the application of the lens of modernity to both America in general and then VS. This thesis then utilized surveys to obtain information on the ranked intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, as well as the extrinsic barriers that both compel and repel both potential American simplifiers and non-American simplifiers from making this type of lifestyle transition. These motivations are structured within self-determination theory and the spectrum of motivation that it offers. A comparison was then made between the motivation of US and non-US citizens in order to ascertain the unique characteristics of American simplifiers. The results of the research showed that American modernity is current characterized with emphasis on the individual over the collective, and wealth or success as being the defining metrics for success. The VS community departs from that project of modernity through emphasizing different metrics of success, seeking different concepts of individual identity instead of purchased identity, and restructuring consumerist behavior to prioritize utility consumption over status consumption. The surveys showed that autonomy and heath are prime motivators both intrinsically and extrinsically within both US and non US simplifiers. The comparison between US and non US simplifiers showed more of an emphasis on autonomy in the US citizens than the non US, and a lack of emphasis on the community building motivations within both groups. The thesis concluded with a discussion on the implications of these motivations, the lack of communal desire by simplifiers, assessing whether or not VS individuals are the agents of change needed within the US on sustainability, the sustainability implications of VS, and the methods in which VS lifestyles can be promoted, primarily through the promotion of extrinsic benefits and the removal of extrinsic barriers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take the opportunity to thank my adviser, Mine Islar, for all the help she has given me over the course of this project, with formal meetings, not being afraid to tell me when something needs to be completely scrapped, and with not rolling her eyes at me when I send her an email at 2 am just to "check in". She pushed me to be a better researcher and to think more critically about my own work. I would like to thank my classmates who were invaluable in this process, and guided me along with my thoughts on this topic. They have read through countless drafts of this research of very questionable quality, and I specifically want to thank Jonatan, Louis, Heidi, and Renée for their feedback and the mental effort they put into helping strengthen my thesis overall. I only hope that I was able to help you as much as you helped me during this process.

I would also like to take a moment to thank the LUMES program itself for giving me the tools needed to conduct research in this manner. The classes and skills that I have learned here have increased my confidence in my own abilities, taught me to temper my own biases and assumptions on how the world works, and to think proactively about the way in which we discuss environmental issues.

I would also be remiss if I did not acknowledge my parents and the role their support and encouragement has played in my higher education. They have pushed me to dream big, work hard, and be the best version of myself that I can be both in and out of the classroom, and the actions of their parenting can be seen throughout the pages of this thesis.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem formulation

It has become almost cliché to criticize the levels of consumption[1] within the typical American lifestyle, being taken as a fact of life that Americans just use and discard much more than the typical human being anywhere else in the world. An often-cited statistic says that if the entire human population consumed like an average American, thats we would require four additional Earths to support such lifestyles (Mcdonald, 2015). Even in a comparison between other developed places, such as European or Asian nations, the United States consistently consumes at a higher rate (National Geographic, 2014). Americans regularly rate last in terms of sustainable behavior and consumption among surveyed nations, with Americans consuming much more than its fair share of natural resources and energy (National Geographic, 2014). This issue of consumption, consumerism[2], and lifestyle within America is not simply wasteful, iti s environmentally destructive and unsustainable from myriad different angles, taking into account the manufacturing and disposal of the consumed goods (Koh & Lee, 2012).

This thesis will in part identify these negative aspects of American lifestyles, but will primarily investigate a lesser known, but rising concept within the United States and other consumerist nations, called Voluntary Simplicity. The conceptual core and practical expression of voluntary simplicity can help alleviate this issue of high consumption lifestyles that have become the norm within the United States (Powers, 2010). Voluntary simplifiers (henceforth referred to as simplifiers), are individuals who live very low consumption, low upkeep lifestyles with a strong tendency to value personal well being over other metrics of success, such as wealth (Rosen, 2010). These lifestyles are often disregarded in America as being on the fringe and irrelevant due to their lack of consumerist behavior (Rosen, 2010), but these simplifiers regularly have low carbon footprints, consume veryfew goods, and promote sustainability principles within their own lives (D'Alisa, Demaria, & Kallis, 2014). This emphasis on environmental awareness and low consumption makes simplifiers worth looking

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[1] Consumption is defined asvia the purchase or use of goods and services, resulting in the expenditure of the item or service (Woodward, 2013).

[2] Defined as "...a highly wasteful production of products...that structures socioeconomic relations...providing mass [goods] instead of luxury goods" (Migone, 2007 p.2).

into as potential agents of change within America to combat consumerism, and worthy of consideration within the sustainability science community. This research will attempt to understand through multiple methods how voluntary simplicity fits into American consumer culture, what American simplifiers are like, why these indivuduals elect to make these lifestyle choices, and what potential role they could play in the simplifying of typical American lifestyles.

1.2 Research questions

This thesis focuses on four primary research questions (RQ from henceforth) pertaining to voluntary simplicity:

1. How does voluntary simplicity interact with consumer culture within the United States?

    a. How is modernity characterised within America?

    b. How does voluntary simplicity interact with American modernity?

2. What are the intrinsic motivations associated with Voluntary Simplicity?

3. What are the extrinsic motivations associated with Voluntary Simplicity?

    a. What are the extrinsic rewards or consequences?

    b. What are the extrinsic barriers?

4. What are the unique characteristics of American simplifiers?

In order for the reader to understand the sub-questions I have chosen for RQ1, I first need to make a connection clear. In this thesis, I equate the concept of consumerism to being equal to the concept of modernity in America (Trentmann, 2004). This is a clear link given how interwoven the concepts of consumption, identity, and success are within the American context (Eastman, Fredenberger, Campbell, & Calvert, 1997; Trentmann, 2004). This link between modernity and consumer culture will be fleshed out in chapter 4, but this is a link that must be stated up front to avoid confusion. With this link in mind, I break the question of interaction between voluntary simplicity and consumer culture down into identifying exactly what modernity means in America at this moment and how voluntary simplicity interacts with that modernity.

The data to be included in this research will be literature regarding alternative simplistic lifestyles (including off the grid, low consumption, simplistic, or other similarly themed lifestyles), both peer reviewed and grey literature, as well as literature on the topics of modernity, lifestyles in general, social movements, motivation theory, and degrowth as an economic concept. Survey data will be included to help with the analysis, focusing on the respondent's answers to answer RQ2-4. Justifications for this literature, survey style, the participants in the surveys, and the methods of analysis are discussed in chapter 3.

1.3 Research scope

The scope of this research is looking exclusively at the United States as a consumer culture, but taking into account both US and non-US citizens. This choice to include non-US citizens in the research is chosen in order to obtain a comparison between US and non-US simplifiers, allowing for the unique tendencies of American simplifiers to be brought to light. The intended temporal scope of this research is to be focused on the last 20 years, with notable exceptions needing to be made in order to give a historical or theoretical basis for a current phenomenon, such as modernity or the historical roots of simplicity as a concept.

1.4 Relevance to Sustainability Sciences

Sustainability sciences is about understanding the relationship between nature and society, and this thesis does just that by considering a social phenomenon as it pertains to nature (Kates et al., 2001). As mentioned in the introduction, high consumption lifestyles are environmentally destructive from various angles (Koh & Lee, 2012). Consumerism is well known for being harmful due to the necessary extraction of materials, the shipping, energy costs, and eventual disposal of the items (Wiedmann, Lenzen, Turner, & Barrett, 2007). America has had a tremendous influence on what is acceptable in terms of consumption on the individual level, not just within its own borders, but globally (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). This influence that America has comes from an exportation of its values and lifestyles through media that is consumed around the world (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Tackling the issue of consumption specifically within the United States is one of those issues that must be solved since the US is such a shining example of consumerism around the world, which offers up images of exploding markets and unlimited wealth to other societies, but omits the destructive effects of this system.

Voluntary simplicity offers itself up as a response to these consumerist lifestyles by consuming substantially less, restructuring the culture around how Americans consume goods, and pushing against the identity crisis that many Americans have when it comes to the shortcomings of these consumption based lifestyles, points that will all be considered in chapter 5 (J. A. Sandlin, Walther, & Wuensch, 2016). This thesis aims to better understand the values and attitudes of the voluntary simplicity movement in the US, and more specifically, the motivations that compel this movement to act in the way that it does. Often times living sustainably is not considered to be sexy, with an undertone of living apologetically or with restraint connected to it, but the voluntary simplicity movement is an analysis of a group that is living in that way, and more importantly, doing it by *choice*. Understanding why these individuals choose to live in accordance with sustainability

principles is crucially important for this discipline, since it holds the key to encouraging others to also live this way as well and discouraging unsustainable behaviors. It has also become clear in the age of climate change that the environmental arguement is not a sufficient reason for people to alter their lifestyles, and so understanding the reasons beyond the environmental argument (such as personal motivations) are also an important piece towards promoting legitimate sustainable change with regards to lifestyles.

2. Theory

2.1 Theoretical framework

This section will introduce the theoretical concept of Voluntary simplicity, its real world expressions, and offer up an overview of this phenomenon.

2.1.1 Voluntary simplicity

Voluntary Simplicity (VS from henceforth) will be defined in this thesis as "…a diverse social movement made up of people who are resisting high consumption lifestyles and who are seeking…a lower consumption, but higher quality of life alternative" (Alexander & Ussher, 2012, p.1). The VS phenomenon can best be summarized as a shift away from traditional western values, such as materialism, and a shift more towards alternative values, such as personal wellbeing, health, relationships, or independence, to name a few (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002).

One of the most important aspects of VS exists in its name; it is a *voluntary* election toward a low-consumption lifestyle and geared toward personal fulfillment, while not acting as a mandate or a forced necessity of circumstances (D'Alisa et al., 2014). The modern methods in which an individual undertakes a simplistic lifestyle vary wildly in both action as well as the degree of the action, such as an individual electing not to buy products on certain days of the week, but can be as drastic as changing careers or fully taking a lifestyle "off the grid" to live a more complete, simplistic lifestyle in line with the environment and personal values (Alexander & Ussher, 2012; Ballantine & Creery, 2010).

 Voluntary simplifiers fall under the category of "ethical consumers" within the market (Shaw & Newholm, 2002). Ethical consumers are described as consumers who consider a wide range of moralistic and ethical ramifications of their purchases (Shaw & Newholm, 2002). There is no overarching formula for living a simplistic life, but there are common themes that exist within VS

lifestyles, such as frugality, austerity, prioritization of personal well-being, spiritual growth, and environmental integrity over economic growth (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002). These VS lifestyle choices can amount to drastic cuts in environmental impacts on the individual level, through permaculture and personal energy production (Alexander, 2012; Kropfeld, Nepomuceno, & Dantas, 2016), as well as important economic implications for modern markets since consumption is called into question for the individual (Powers, 2010). To summarize, it can be broadly stated that the choice to live a life simply stems from personal values, such as humanism, environmentalism, spirituality, and self-fulfillment (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002), that rejects the tenants of consumerism and the metrics of success normally found within consumerist socieites (Shaw & Newholm, 2002).

VS is very closely linked to the economic concept of *degrowth,* which is the intentional downscaling of production toward a more stable economic system, and as such needs to be acknowledged in this thesis (Schneider, Kallis, & Martinez-Alier, 2010). For the purposes of this thesis, the concept of degrowth will be briefly mentioned in the background (section 4.1), but the overarching concept and primary focus of this thesis will be on VS culture and its implications within America, and not degrowth.

2.2 Analytical framework

2.2.1 Modernity

Modernity is a sociological concept depicting the point in time that we are in and what it means to be "modern" in this present moment (Habermas, 1992). Modernity can be analyzed from infinite perspectives, ranging from cultural modernity and its development, to what it means to be modern in our governmental and political systems as opposed to societies in the past (Habermas, 1992). Modernity is a constantly redefining phenomenon that changes throughout the passing of time as innovative technology, cultural phenomenon, and perspectives change (Habermas, 1992). This process of a constantly shifting sense of what it means to be modern requires vigilant self-reflection and analysis of the attributes that currently create the modern existence.

The general conceptualization of current modernity has its roots within the French Enlightenment period where the core values of society and the methods in which society functioned changed (Habermas, 2014; Wagner, 2012). This came about due to scientific advancements, technological break throughs, an emphasis on individual identity over group identity, and a shift in the culture away from previous forms of knowledge in lieu of scientific reason and human rationality (Wagner,

2012). These changes occurred during a time when mankind was discovering more effective tools for altering the world and solving problems, giving way to the arguably the most prevalent attributes of this concept: the promise of modernity (Habermas, 2014). This promise of modernity is the general optimism that the future will be better, with better quality of life, greater human happiness, abundant resources, wealth, and that mankind has the capacity to solve its own problems through enough thought and willpower (Habermas, 2014). These changes all planted the seeds for the current form of modernity that many humans live inside of today, and the ripple effects of these past developments can still be felt.

This thesis requires considering the concept of modernity for three important reasons: first, it is necessary to understand modernity in the United States in order to understand the context of VS, specifically the context of the modern American lifestyle. Secondly, VS will also be observed through the lens of modernity to understand how the VS movement fits into the current American project of modernity. And third, postulating what the future implications are for VS based on how this movement fits into modern America.

2.2.3 Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory is an umbrella term for a collection of smaller sociological theories revolving around motivation and identity (E. L. Deci & Ryan, 2002), and postulates that there are differences in the types of motivations that humans have as well as a continuum for optimum motivation (E. L. Deci & Ryan, 2002). These theories move away from general motivation as a concept and towards the idea that *amotivation, intrinsic,* and *extrinsic* motivations make up the basis for human action (E. Deci & Ryan, 2000). For the purposes of this thesis, the continuum of optimum motivation was chosen to give structure to the investigation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as outlined in RQ 2-4., and can be seen in figure 1.

Ryan & Deci (2000) define extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as:

Extrinsic motivation: This type of motivation takes the form of performing an action in the desire to obtain an outcome, reward, or to avoid a consequence externally (E. L. Deci & Ryan, 2002). An example of this would be working a job that is not satisfying, but the salary is high. The salary in this case being the tangible reward that comes from performing the task that the individual may not feel intrinsically motivated to perform without the incentive. When considering extrinsic motivations, it is not simply rewards that drive us, but also the avoidance of consequences (E. L. Deci & Ryan, 2002). Extrinsic barriers, or extrinsic phenomenon that inhibit an individual's motivation towards

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performing an action, play a large role as well in shaping the likelihood of an action taking place (E. Deci & Ryan, 2000). An example of this would be feeling hungry for a large meal, but feeling discouraged at the prospect of having to make the meal yourself.

Self-determination theory has extrinsic motivations broken down into four distinct sub-sections (seen in figure 1 below), but for the purposes of this thesis and the investigatory approach toward understanding broadly the motivations of voluntary simplifiers, the four sub categories of extrinsic motivations will not be considered. Extrinsic motivations will be broken simply into extrinsic motivations (external rewards or consequences) and extrinsic barriers (the external barriers that disincentivize an individual). This was chosen to fit within the frame and themes of the research questions.

Intrinsic motivation: This is described as the ideal form of motivation (E. Deci & Ryan, 2000) where an individual is internally driven to perform a task due to its inherent pleasure or satisfaction (E. Deci & Ryan, 2000). This type of motivation is most common in children who undertake tasks for the intrinsic enjoyment of it, with a shift occurring towards adulthood where extrinsic factors play more of a role in the decision to undertake an activity (E. L. Deci & Ryan, 2002).

Self-determination theory includes a spectrum of motivation to help understand how motivation functions (shown below in figure 1) (E. L. Deci & Ryan, 2002). Amotivation, or the complete lack of motivation or attachment by the individual to a task (E. Deci & Ryan, 2000), being represented on the left, extrinsic motivation existing in the middle, and intrinsic existing on the right.
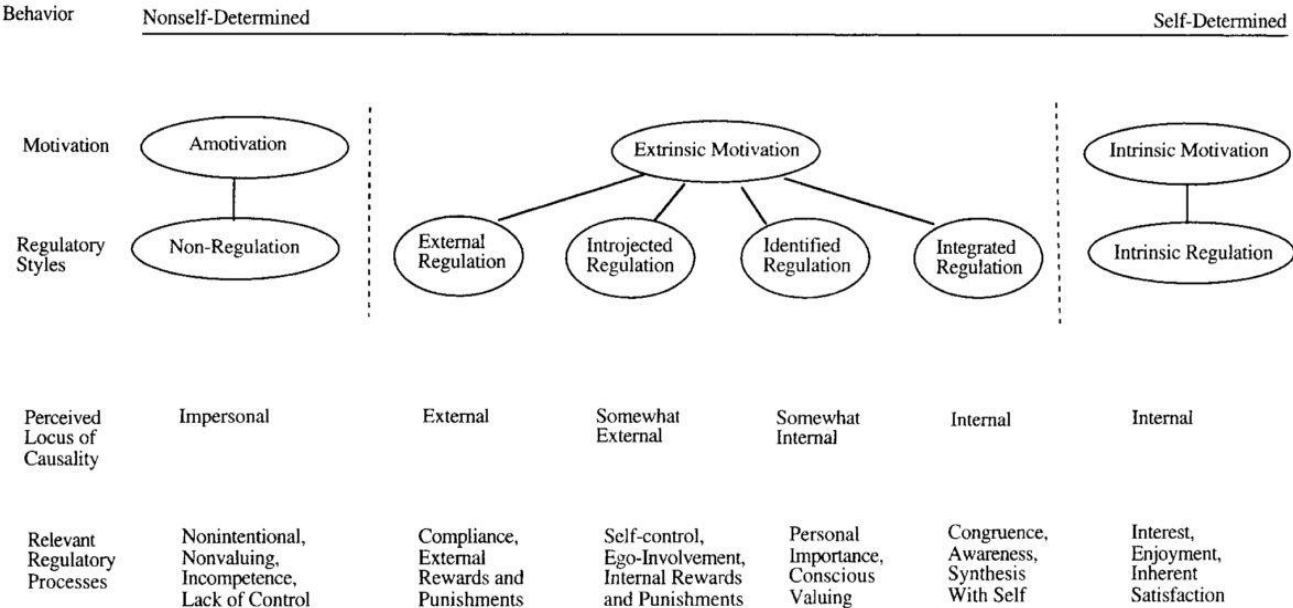

Figure 1: The continuum of motivation (E. L. Deci & Ryan, 2002)

This framework is used as a major tool within this thesis due to its ability to conceptualize the motivations of an individual regarding a specific action, in this case the choice to simplify their lifestyle. This thesis will utilize this continuum to help structure the conversation around what motivates voluntary simplifiers by breaking it into extrinsic and intrinsic motivations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology entry points

In this thesis, I take the ontological perspective of *critical realism,* which can be positioned between *positivist* and *constructivist* ontologies (Naster, 2014). Critical realism asserts that there is a reality that is outside of our own perceptions, and it is through science that we uncover the nature of that reality (Bhaskar, 2011). In the case of this thesis, the reality in question is the nature of the VS movement within the United States as well as the structures that affect this phenomenon, and through the methods outlined in this chapter I seek a better understanding of it as it pertains to sustainability. Epistemologically, critical realim assumes that there are not direct relationships between phenomenon and structures as with positivist epistemologies, but are the product of messy systems (Naster, 2016). In the case of this thesis there's an assumed link between high consumption lifestyles and VS, as well as a relationship between American culture and the tendencies of American simplifiers, but there is also the flexibility of allowing other factors to affect these connections.

3.2 Methodological approach

This thesis utilizes a mixed-methods, qualitative and quantitative approach towards understanding the nature of VS within the United States and the different motivations that compel an individual to undertake simplistic changes to their lifestyle. The specific case study of the United States is considered to understand the cultural characteristics of the nation, and how VS plays out in this specific context. While the focus is exclusively on the United States, data from non-US citizens has been collected through the survey methods of RQ 2-4 (outlined below) to better understand the tendencies of American simplifiers and allow for a comparison to be made between the two groups. Due to the specific nature of this research, the findings are not meant to be applicable to other situations without careful consideration; this thesis is an attempt to understand VS within this one specific cultural context and not to stand as a sweeping declaration to be used in all cultural contexts.

3.3 Methods of data collection and interpretation

The decision for mixed methods is based on the debate outlined in *Social Research Methods* (Bryman, 2012), taking the *technical* side of the argument which states that qualitative and quantitative data can be fused together instead of being seen as incommensurable (Kuhn, 1970). The primary tool that is utilized to answer these research question is a qualitative literature review. This tool considers the literature that's been written about on this subject in order to construct a coherent picture of VS within the United States as well as American culture. To give context to the literature review of RQ1, a background investigation into modernity as a concept, American consumption based lifestyles, and United States culture in general were required for positioning VS within the context of modern America. To supplement RQ2&3, data was obtained through the same literature review from RQ1 as well as an online survey that was utilized to rank the motivations of respondents. An overview figure of the questions and the methods utilized to answer those questions is displayed below in figure 2 below:
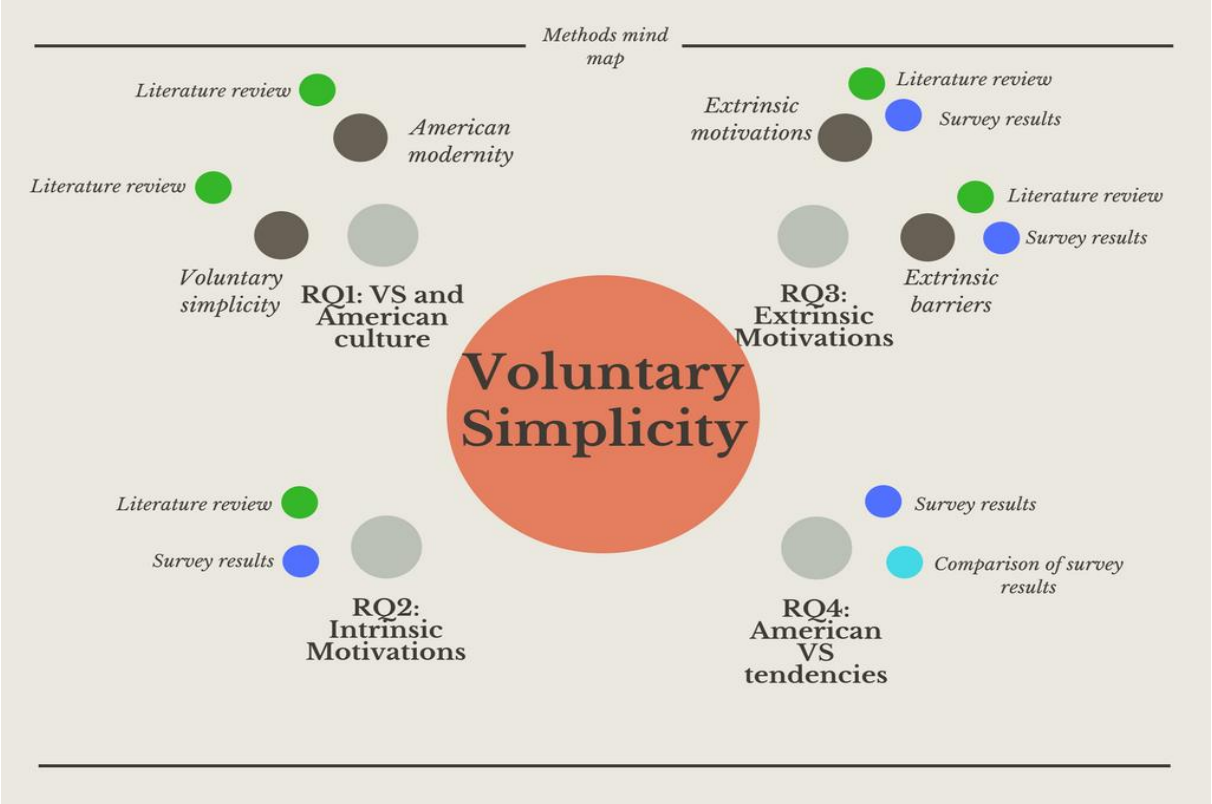

Figure 2: The methods displayed in a mind map. Main research questions are identified in light grey, their core concepts are shown in dark grey, and the resulting methods are displayed with assorted colors and labels.

3.3.1 Literature Review

The method of conceptualizing a literature review was based on the work of Bruce (1994), who classified the different methods of literature review; based on that list the style of literature review is a *search* style in which to identify relevant knowledge or information. The literature that was used for this thesis needed to involve voluntary simplicity or similarly themed lifestyles, such as off the grid or simplistic or low consumption lifestyles. The criteria below were used in order to narrow in on the applicable literary sources used in this research

1. Focus on alternative lifestyles, with explicit uses of the terms:

        a. Voluntary simplicity

        b. Off the grid

2. Investigatory litearture with a focus on the benefits and disadvantages to these alternative lifestyles

3. Content involving self-reflection of the alternative lifestyles

*Special emphasis was given to texts within the United States context

Searching for the texts was conducted using google scholar, Lund Universtiy's LUBsearch engine, as well as personal recommendations from academic professionals or previously known texts applicable to the topic of VS. Separate searches were conducted using the search terms "voluntary simplicity" and "off the grid" with each separate search resultng in around 17,000 total relevant texts. Of course it is not possible to comb through all of these texts, so the first ten results pages from each search engine was used to determine which were the most similar to my criteria. From this narrowing down, 17 were deemed useful in the literature review, the full list of these 17 texts can be seen in appendix 1. More than these 17 texts were potentially useful, but some were not readily available, were seen as redundant, out of date, in languages unknown to the researcher, or focused on topics not relevant within this thesis that have to do with VS. The resulting 17 texts were a mixture of peer reviewed literature as well as grey literature in the form of academic articles, ethnographies, or novels. Very few of the texts specifically consider the context of the United States, but are still found to be applicable to understanding the VS phenomenon in its entirety. These 17 texts were used as the basis of the literature review for RQ1-3, with the first research question utilizing the texts to understand how this phenomenon expresses itself in reality within modern America, and the second and third research questions focusing on instances where motivations or challenges are expressed.

With regards to RQ2&3 concerning motivations, the texts were analyzed as they were read and each instance of a discussion of a motivation for why individuals intrinsically chosen this lifestyle, the rewards or consequences they were seeking from this lifestyle, the consequences they are hoping to avoid, and the barriers or challenges the individual faced while performing this shift toward a more simplistic lifestyle, were all noted and coded individually. Instances of intrinsic motivations were coded with I_mot, instances of extrinsic motivations were coded with E_mot, and instances of barriers or challenges were coded with E_Bar. This allowed for the data to be organized and broken into more manageable chunks for the results section.

3.3.2 Surveys

To answer RQ2&3 more fully, and to give a basis for the comparison in RQ4, VS individuals were consulted using a self-selection survey type that utilized the internet as the main means of reaching respondents.

Sampling and access

The internet was selected to be the most viable means of reaching the most people who have an interest in VS or similarly low consumption lifestyles because of the low cost and the ability to connect researchers with large numbers of people. These particular individuals were surveyed due to the personal motivations they possess to live a simplified lifestyle, both presently and in the future. My intention with the survey is to extract these motivations from the respondents through carefully worded questions designed to give weight to motivations, and analyzing them for themes and trends.

The methods utilized for advertising the survey were posting the survey in various congregation points. This term is coined by the researcher for the purposes of this research and has no extrinsic source attached to it; it is simply a label for the places where like-minded individuals gather to discuss VS related topics. These congregation points came in the form of Facebook groups, forums, and Youtube channels. Three examples of the types of congregation points selected are located in appendix 2. Self-selection was the sampling method chosen for the survey out of necessity since user data or personal email addresses were not openly given by online congregation points; this made it impossible to set up a sampling frame as described by (Bethlehem & Biffignandi, 2011) and requires that the survey is simply posted in congregation points for people who have these interests and the data can be sorted afterwards. In terms of the distribution of nationalities with the responses, this

thesis aims to have at least half of the respondents be United States citizens in order to have a very clear understanding of the ranked motivations of the people inside my case study. But given the issues attributed to self-selection, there is no way to know whether or not this sample is sufficient or representative of the whole (Bethlehem & Biffignandi, 2011). In total, 100 completed surveys were collected from the postings of the research from various interest congregation points, with 57 respondents reportedly being US citizens and 43 respondents reportedly being non-US citizens.

Survey design

The surveys were designed with the intention of respondents ranking their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, as well as extrinsic barriers, to illuminate which motivations are the most important to them. A sample of the survey is shown in appendix 3. For survey questions 8, 9, and 10, the motivations presented for ranking by the respondents were based on common themes that arose from the literature review as well as the main findings of a multi-national survey on VS looking into motivations (Alexander & Ussher, 2012). This was a necessity since the survey software used does not allow for the option to both rank answers as well as allow for respondents to write in their own personal motivations, requiring that I offer up potential motivations to the respondents instead of leaving it open. The survey was designed keeping in mind the most common pitfalls of surveys/questionnaires outlined by William Foddy (1993), namely respondents not understanding questions, failures on the part of the designer to make their intentions clear, and a lack of effort on the part of the respondents. These three issues were addressed in the design of the survey to make sure that the survey was as clear and concise as possible, while also yielding the highest possible results. Questions were workshopped to overcome the first two issues outlined by (Bethlehem & Biffignandi, 2011) through trials to ensure that intention of the question was clear, and special attention was given to the terms used within the questions. Specifically, the term "simplistic" was omitted in many cases unless a clarifying statement could be attached to help hone in on the intended meaning by the researcher. The lack of effort issue was combatted by making the survey only 10 questions long, ensuring that the time commitment required by the respondents was very low, which helps boost the rate of responses and ensures attention is kept during the survey.

Analysis of data

The main findings of the surveys come from questions #8, 9, and 10. These questions require respondents to rank intrinsic and extrinsic motivations/barriers from most motivating to least motivating. The higher ranked motivations/barriers are given more statistical "weight", which allows them to be more clearly seen in the final graphs of the results. When combining all the answers into

a summary table for each question and obtaining the weighted average, the following equation is used (figure 3):

$$\frac{x_1 w_1 + x_2 w_2 + x_3 w_3 \ldots x_n w_n}{\text{Total}}$$

Figure 3: Equation used to analyze the average ranking for the ranked questions, where X= response count for the answer choice and W=weight of ranked position (Surveymonkey.com, 2017).

Once the average ranking for these three questions is established, the data is then split into two categories based on question #3 ("Are you a United States Citizen?") into US citizens and non-US citizens. For each set of responses from US and non-US citizens, the top three ranked intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, and extrinsic barriers are identified, as well as the top three lowest ranked intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, and extrinsic barriers. This allows for the highest and lowest motivations to be accounted for within both US citizen and non-US citizen respondents, as well as allows for a comparison between the two groups of simplifiers. This comparison is the basis for answering RQ4 regarding the unique characterisitics of American simplifiers.

3.4 Reflexivity, ethical considerations, reliability, and validity

As a researcher I acknowledge my identity as an educated, caucasian, American man and the influences this perception can have on the results. I acknowledge that having grown up in the US that I have a firm grasp of the culture, but that my views are limited given my upbrining, ethnicity, education level, and socio-economic status.

The surveys were posted in online congregation points with the expressed written knowledge that the responses would be going toward a Master's thesis and by taking the anonymous survey that they are consenting to allow my use of the resulting data in my research (Bryman, 2012). This is done to combat the issue of mistrust when it comes to online surveys, especially the use of spam bots and online scams that are pervasive within the internet (Bethlehem & Biffignandi, 2011).

There are some logistical concerns that can alter the quality of the results I receive from the respondents, namely the type of respondents that I am able to receive as well as this issue of mistrust within the internet. This general bias towards the type of people who are likely to interact with an internet based survey, namely people who are white, affluent, and educated, skews the population and gives a false representation of the whole, a point expanded upon by Couper (2000). Voluntary simplifiers are simplistic, with some taking it to the level where internet is not a part of their lives, thus eliminating them as potential respondents to my survey, resulting in a potentially false representation of the whole as well.

There is also the concern that the respondents will have romantic ideals about one day living a simplistic lifestyle without the reality of it affecting that notion; I allow for people who are currently living a simplistic lifestyle as well as those who are interested in one day living a simplistic lifestyle to take part in the survey, but the respondents who have not gone through the transition towards simplicity may have very different motivations and perceptions of the extrinsic barriers that come into play within that transition. These sampling issues could potentially offer false conclusions based on the survey results, but through a combination of the literature and the survey results the effects of this skewing have been minimized.

There is also a limitation within the survey program utilized for collecting survey data that does not allow an option for respondents to expand on their thoughts or offer up alternatives to the motivations given, limiting the motivations to those presented by the survey designer and possibly missing crucial motivations that are not considered in the final analysis.

4. Background

This chapter will give a functional background to the topics of simplicity and consumerism. These sections differ from chapters 1 and 2 in that they do not define a theoretical understanding of the concepts, but instead give a contextualized understanding of the history of these topics and how they came to exist in modern America.

4.1 Simplicity

Voluntary simplicity as a term was first mentioned by Richard Gregg (1936) in *The Value of Voluntary Simplicity* where he outlines the general understanding of the phenomenon. But, VS has been existing in some form within all cultures since the dawn of civilization, ranging from religious groups and texts, such as with the story of Siddhartha Gautama (Hesse, 2005), to the traditions of the

ancient Greek stoics (D'Alisa et al., 2014). Within the American context there are also famous historical accounts of VS and the argument against the rise of consumerism and the discussion of wealth. Henry David Thoreau is a popular example of such an argument with his famous ecological novel, *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (Thoreau, 1854) where he argues many of the same things that have been outlined before him, namely the emphasis away from material wealth and a shift towards personal wellbeing. This sentiment is fully encapsulated within his famous quote regarding his time writing his most famous novel, *Walden*:

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (Thoreau, 1854, p.101).

America has been grappling with the concept of identity, wealth, and consumption since its inception, but only recently has been giving voice to the concern of its impacts. US president Jimmy Carter referred to this as a "crisis of the spirit" during his presidency in the late 1970s, where Americans are misguided and seduced towards following the unproductive and unfulfilling worship of consumption (Carter, 1979). In many ways, the modern VS movement finds its roots within this same period of counterculture and social upheaval that characterizes the 1960s and 1970s. This was when the *back to the land* movement took hold promoting neo-rurality and a shift away from urbanization (Brinkerhoff & Jacob, 1987), permaculture became a more predominant topic, as well as eco-communities (D'Alisa et al., 2014). This period of social change helped raise questions that conflicted with what were considered to be "cultural facts" within America (D'Alisa et al., 2014); specifically the notions of wealth, consumption, and "the good life" (D'Alisa et al., 2014).

A current manifestation of VS has moved away from these previous iterations of the movement and comes at these issues from a different angle, namely economics. Economists are attempting to create more equity and design better economies that function for the people through *steady state economies* (Kallis, Kerschner, & Martinez-Alier, 2012). They also are attempting to circumvent the paradigm where there is a necessity for growth within economies, to promote sustainable markets through the concept of *degrowth* (Schneider et al., 2010). VS has its historical roots within all of these examples and takes on charactersistics from each historical root, ranging from ancient stoic philosophy combatting the ideological necessity for overindulgence to the economic concepts that attempt to solve the economic basis for this overconsumption and emphasis on wealth.

4.2 Consumerism in the US

American lifestyles have been marketed as the peak of material success: an overabundance of goods, consumption-based lifestyles that offer endless choice within the lives of consumers as well as a system that actively works to perpetuate itself (Mack, 1955). The type of economy that the US has cultivated has been theorized by WW Rostow (1990) to be the peak of economic development, with traditional societies being ranked as the least developed and mass consumption being placed at the zenith of development.

These lifestyles have been the envy of many other nations with the United States brand of systemic consumption being emulated in other countries throughout the world. The United States is unique in its cultural exportation power through entities such as Hollywood or other forms of media and so this image of the American lifestyle has permeated throughout the world as a byproduct of the dissemination of media throughout the world (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007).

The aspect that is most prominent within the modern American lifestyle is not simply consumption, but the rate of consumption as well as the type of consumption that's prevalent (Shaw & Newholm, 2002); buying things not out of necessity towards our basic needs, but to fill "...a void in our lives and make statements about ourselves" (Cole, 2010, p.1). Today this type of consumption is considered to be *status consumption,* where items are purchased to inspire envy or respect, with items representing the overarching goals of the society (Eastman et al., 1997). In general, the levels of consumption are growing with each decade, with average Americans consuming twice as many material goods as 50 years ago (Leonard, 2008) as well as Americans spending more on jewelry, shoes, and watches than on higher education (Stromberg, 2012) The current trends of consumption spending (figure 4) show that these values are still alive and well within America, with projections showing that this trend is not expected to decline barring any economic disturbances, such as the financial crisis of 2008.
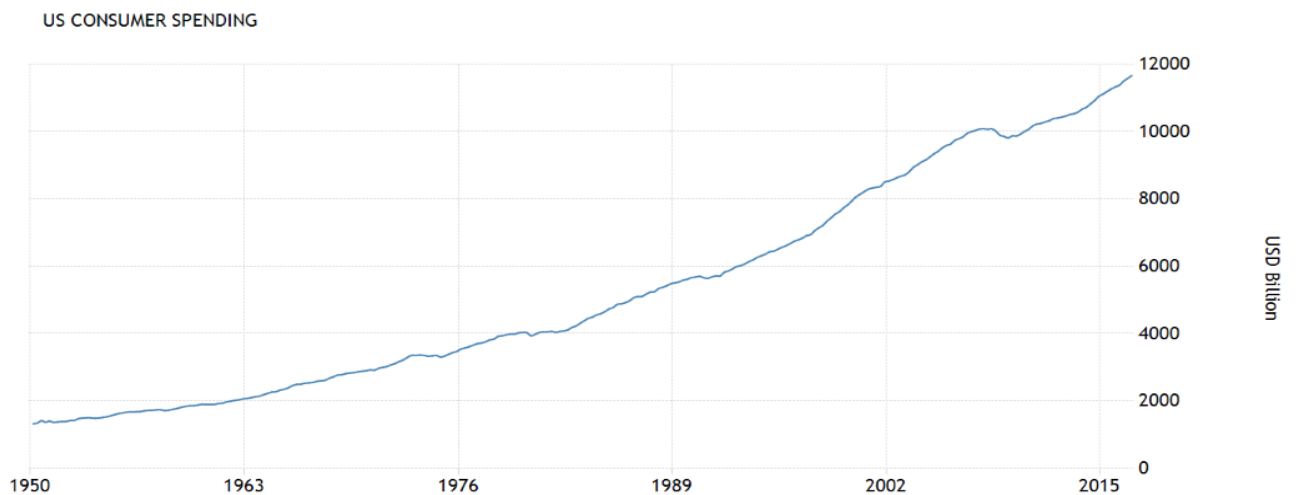
US CONSUMER SPENDING

Figure 4: US consumer spending from 1950-present (US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2017)

5. Results and analysis

5.1 RQ 1: Consumer culture and VS

As described in section 1.2, RQ1 has been broken down into the sub questions of how modernity is characterized within America and how VS interacts with American modernity. In this case, consumer culture is being made equal to modernity, and so the process for answering these questions will begin with defining modernity in America, then moving on to VS and its relationship with modernity.

5.1.1 Modernity in America

To understand how VS fits into modern America, it is important to first define and explore what modernity within America means, giving a context by which VS can be understood. Continuing from the theoretical outline of modernity put forward in section 2.2.1, I apply these same basic principles and attributes to American society to understand the underlying factors that create America as we know it today.

Modernity within America has the emphasis of the individual over the collective in nearly all aspects of life, examples being the emphasis on personal legal freedoms, the "American dream", and the expectations of success being firmly placed on the shoulders of the individual (Hewett, Money, & Sharma, 2006). The American dream is a fluid concept but can be defined as the notion that through hard work you can achieve anything (Rifkin, 2005).

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One of the core attributes of modernity as a concept is the "promise of modernity", which is the optimism in the future as well as mankind's ability to solve any problems that arise through hard work and thought (Habermas, 1992), which save for a few words can almost be directly translated into the American Dream. This concept was marketed to attract people to come to America during its inception and help cement it in place as the land of opportunity for those willing to work for it (Rifkin, 2005). The practical manifestations of this concept have changed over time to adjust to modernity, but the core underlying optimism and problem solving are always present in each iteration of the American dream concept. Within the American dream there is also an emphasis on the individual, the gifted, and the entrepreneur over the group, a sentiment captured in this quote by president Bill Clinton:

"The American dream that we were all raised on is a simple but powerful one - if you work hard and play by the rules you should be given a chance to go as far as your God-given ability will take you."

Bill Clinton (1993) speech to Democratic Leadership Council

The crucial parts of this quote are that "…if *you* work hard…*you* can go [far]", with the emphasis being on the individual as opposed to achieving as a collective or group. In America, the individual is the highest level of identity, with spirited debates over individual freedoms and the relationship between the government and the freedoms of the individual (Hewett et al., 2006). One of the more needlessly mentioned aspects of American modernity is the modern concept of "success", which is focused on the financial wealth of an individual, social prestige (fame), or personal image and appearance (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). This is in comparison to other metrics that can also be used to measure success, such as personal growth, relatedness, helpfulness, or health (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). America also fully upholds scientific advancement and rational thought over other forms of reasoning, with the fundamental separation of church being woven into the public mind placing reason over religious practices (Hamburger, 2004), as well as the emphasis on technological advancement and efficiency towards problem solving within the American economy (Kranzberg, 1986). This manifests itself often with an increased emphasis on efficiency, economic development through technology, and using science to improve the lives of Americans (Kranzberg, 1986). The American society has fully adopted the lessons of the Enlightenment within itself through the adoption of the individualistic and optimistic tendencies, and has taken it on as a personal sense of identity. These attributes all work together to create a unique society where the individual is the most important, the future is in his hands, and the future can be anything if he is willing to work hard enough.

5.1.2 Modernity and VS

For the next three sections, the VS phenomenon will be observed through the lens of modernity and placed in a comparison with the American modernity outlined in the section above. The discussion on VS within American modernity will be structured based on broadly identified themes in the literature, specifically considering the apparent project of modernity that VS represents, the role of VS and identity within consumer culture, and the restructuring of the modern consumer culture within America.

VS and the project of modernity

VS fits into the context of American modernity in a predictable, yet problematic way. It serves as a classic counterculture example and is both incredibly American in its values and expressions, yet is a firm departure from the existing notion of modernity within America. The literature shows that Americans are not abandoning their core values, such as independence, hard work, or the American Dream, but they are rather redirecting these values towards a different project of modernity that is more in line with their personal values (Håkansson & Sengers, 2013; Powers, 2010). While the metrics for success have been financial wealth and material wellbeing (Olmsted & Galbraith, 1958), these simplifiers are shifting the metrics described in the previous section more toward a sense of autonomy, personal wellbeing, and personal growth (Vannini & Taggart, 2015).

The literature (Powers, 2010; Rosen, 2010) shows that VS lifestyles are often portrayed as "un-American" due to the shift away from the current American goals of modernity, such as the ethos of hard work that Americans have and the priority of material wealth over personal wellbeing. But these lifestyles are in fact not simplistic and leisurely, with criticism often being thrown at the term "simplistic lifestyles", due to the required intense physical and mental work to be successful in this lifestyle (Håkansson & Sengers, 2013). They also happen to be in line with the American ideals of the American Dream and the sense of achievement and optimism that all Americans have (Powers, 2010).

In a sense, these simplifiers are trading their burdens of everyday life away from car payments and career oriented woes, toward growing food, making things last, and focusing on the ways in which they can make their own lives simpler and more efficient (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Håkansson & Sengers, 2013). It is Americans using their societally gifted tools, such as the culture of hard work and optimism, but directing it toward what they perceive are more worthwhile, such as valuing time over money (Ballantine & Creery, 2010; J. A. Sandlin et al., 2016). The problematic part of this

phenomenon is the conflictual nature of these different projects of modernity. These simplifiers are realizing a different goal of modernity that conflicts with the dominant peoject that exists within America, which in this case is the dominant materialistic and consumerist project (Rostow, 1960).

As discussed in section 4.2, the dominant ideology surrounding the economy within modern America is that mass consumption is the peak of economic development (Rostow, 1960) and anything to the contrary is unproductive or un-American by nature. Nick Rosen (2010), a UK author specializing in off the grid movements within the US and the UK, describes these alternative lifestyles as a "pre-post modernism" expression; his meaning by this is that these individuals are taking the knowledge, skills, technology, and ideas of the present, but filtering out the modern attributes that fail to align with personal values, and move backwards toward a less "modern" way of living through simplicity, emphasizing personal wellbeing (Rosen, 2010).

VS and off the grid lifestyles serve as a break in the project of modernity within America that has dominated for the past decades, a move towards a different concept of modernity within America that emphasizes different metrics for success aside from wealth and social standing. The conflicts that arise from the conflictual nature of these two opposing projects of modernity will be discussed in section 6.2.

VS and identity

Voluntary simplifiers and the motives behind why simplifiers undertake these lifestyle changes often lead down to the concept of individual identity. The concept of "purchased identity" associated with status consumption (Eastman et al., 1997; Grigsby, 2004) appeared in the preliminary background literature of this thesis and came into play within the VS literature review, where VS individuals identified a sense of purchased identity through material wealth and accomplishments instead of more genuinely human attributes, such as personal growth or human connections (Ballantine & Creery, 2010; J. a Sandlin & Walther, 2009). This purchased identity felt less genuine and rewarding according to the literature (J. a Sandlin & Walther, 2009).In the same way as mentioned in the section above, this new project of modernity aims to set different metrics for human success within America, and as a result this also influences the ways in which Americans obtain and grow their sense of self. The current trends outlined in section 5.1 describing modernity in America show that there is identity attached to wealth, consumption, and the literature review showed repeatedly that VS individuals do not want to "purchase" their identity, but rather develop it (J. A. Sandlin et al., 2016; J. a Sandlin & Walther, 2009).

A common theme in the literature was this sense that alienation and anomie had taken hold of the American lifestyle, where there was a lack of autonomy, competence, and value in their own perceptions of their lives (Powers, 2010). This was particularly apparent within the workplace where VS individuals expressed the desire to do work that matters (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002), feel that their work is not harmful through using resources efficiently (Klintman, Carlsson Kanyama, & Mont, 2013), and in general feel a sense of purpose connected to their work that goes beyond "careerism" (Håkansson & Sengers, 2013). In essence, the choice to lead this lifestyle eventually boiled down to the need to work on something that matters, to feel that they mattered as individuals, or the feeling that their work was not coming back to them in any real tangible ways, or it came back to them in ways that did not ultimately matter (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Klintman et al., 2013).

VS consumer culture shift

The VS movement can be understood from an economic rationality perspective as an intentional shift with how Americans interact with consumption due to the dissatisfaction that comes from consumerism (Ballantine & Creery, 2010; Håkansson & Sengers, 2013). VS is a step away from status consumption where the item serves some other purpose other than its function, such as sending an image, and more towards purchasing items based on their usefulness (Shaw & Newholm, 2002). For VS, this manifest itself in "simple" lifestyles where abundance is downplayed and utility is emphasized (Shaw & Newholm, 2002). In terms of consumption, this is hyper-utilitarian rationality at work that seeks to correct some of the woes that are connected toward this economic system, such as the sheer number of wasted products that America discards each year, and touches upon the VS value of the intelligent use of resources (Klintman et al., 2013; J. a Sandlin & Walther, 2009).

The topic of consumption nudging appeared in the literature as well, where there are systemic structures in place that "nudge" people to consume (Alexander, 2013); the VS literature imagined undercutting these systemic pressures and lock-in consumption, by creating their own methods of nudging toward non-consumption choices (Alexander, 2013).

Another find from the literature review was the concept of "satiation" or the ability to be satisfied when it comes to consumption (Grigsby, 2004; Håkansson & Sengers, 2013) and "material calm", which is the absence of stress involved with consumption, maintaining the appearance of wealth, and the individual's participation in the American consumption society (Klintman et al., 2013).

In essence, the literature review revealed the pushing necessity of striking a new balance when it comes to work and life, consumption and satisfaction (Klintman et al., 2013). In the current project of modernity within America, where more is better and consumption is idolized (Rostow, 1960), the VS

idea of knowing when to be satisfied with what you have comes in direct conflict with that project of modernity (Håkansson & Sengers, 2013). The literature review on VS and its relationship with consumerism revealed a deep confrontational edge that questions the underlying values within America, such as rabid consumerism, and imagines different paths that can be taken to circumvent unnecessary consumption (Alexander, 2013) and promote satisfaction with what people truly need (Håkansson & Sengers, 2013; Klintman et al., 2013). This restructuring of the consumption relationship is a key component that is clearly identified within the literature, where simplifiers feel that consumerism has gone too far or out of control, or they are experiencing a lack of enthusiasm for things that they purchase, or the general anomie that is associated with this type of producer-consumer relationship (J. a Sandlin & Walther, 2009).

5.2 RQ 2&3: Motivations and barriers

In this section of the results, RQ 2&3 will be answered using a literature review of the intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, and extrinsic barriers from the literature, as well as supplementing the literature review with the results of the designed survey regarding ranked intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, and extrinsic barriers. The survey responses in this section are only from the US citizens, of which there were 57 completed surveys.

5.2.1 Intrinsic motivations

Literature review

Both types of literature, peer reviewed and grey, yielded a wide range of intrinsic motivations associated with the desire to simplify. The most prevalent intrinsic motivation was the desire to live according to their own personal values instead of continuing to be a part of a system that did not share their values (Grigsby, 2004; Håkansson & Sengers, 2013). Sentiments surrounding this varied slightly from a desire to express their American ideals (Powers, 2010) to wishing to be a source of change in the world by living according to their personal values (Powers, 2010), or to simply just live according to their values (Rosen, 2010; Vannini & Taggart, 2015).

The next most prevalent intrinsic motivation from the literature was the emphasis on the idea of autonomy, or the desire to be more independent (Vannini & Taggart, 2015). This could again be a need to distance oneself from the system itself that they did not agree with and as a result be more autonomous (Powers, 2010) or the simple inward desire to live more autonomously and reap the personal benefits of that choice (Rosen, 2010). The third most prevalent intrinsic motivation was the desire for identity and the desire for a more robust sense of self (J. A. Sandlin et al., 2016; J. a Sandlin

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& Walther, 2009). This motivation was discussed in a few separate ways, as a direct opposition to the identity that modern American provided (Grigsby, 2004) and as a positive self-discovery perspective (J. a Sandlin & Walther, 2009). One individual in the literature remarked during an interview with the author that they felt a profound sense of alienation within America, especially within the workplace (Powers, 2010), and this motivated him to want to change how he interacted with the society to have a better understanding of his own identity (Powers, 2010). This sense of alienation was also coupled with the desire to want to do work that really matters, or to have a person's work have value (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Klintman et al., 2013). Another respondent gave the famous quote from the 1999 film *Fight Club* in which one of the characters says, "you are more than your job" (Powers, 2010), and this respondent used that quote to illustrate the need to be more than your function in society and to develop your own identity (Klintman et al., 2013; Powers, 2010).

Survey results

The survey yielded results as to which intrinsic motivations were more prevalent to the respondent, ranking them from 1 to 8, based on their weighted average. The top intrinsic motivation toward living a voluntarily simplistic lifestyle was to "live according to your values" with a weighted average of 6.04. The second ranked intrinsic motivation was the "desire to feel autonomous" with a weighted average of 5.53. The third highest ranked intrinsic motivation as the "desire to learn" with a weighted average of 4.84.

The three lowest ranked intrinsic motivations based on their weighted average were the "desire for community" with a weighted average of 3.19, "general interest in alternative lifestyles" with a weighted average of 3.76, and the "desire to feel competent" came in as the third lowest ranked intrinsic motivation with a weighted average of 3.98. The table below shows the data in a graphic representation.

What are the greatest internal motivations for wanting to live this alternative lifestyle? Rank them 1-8. 1 being the greatest internal motivation and 8 being the least greatest motivation.
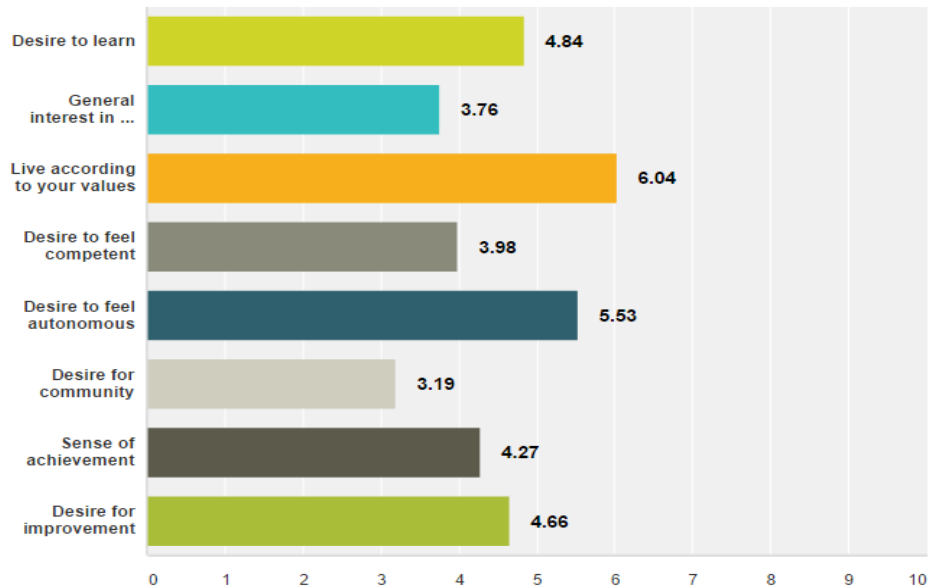
Answered: 50   Skipped: 6

Motivation	Value
Desire to learn	4.84
General interest in ...	3.76
Live according to your values	6.04
Desire to feel competent	3.98
Desire to feel autonomous	5.53
Desire for community	3.19
Sense of achievement	4.27
Desire for improvement	4.66

Figure 5: Weighted averages of intrinsic motivations within the US citizen respondents.

5.2.2 Extrinsic motivations

Literature review

The most prevalent extrinsic motivation that was found was a desire for control or increased autonomy (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Rosen, 2010; Vannini & Taggart, 2015). This theme was also touched upon by the American ideal of re-creating the American dream for oneself in a more fulfilling way (Powers, 2010). Another common theme was the desire to live better or to live "well" or to reinvent "the good life " (Alexander, 2013), removing excess, de-cluttering, or slowing down (Klintman et al., 2013), and one respondent in the book 12 x 12 (Powers, 2010) used the allegory of allowing your "soul to catch up" as a means of explaining the importance of slowing down. In this same vein as the motivation to "live well", many simplifiers expressed a desire to live better through enhanced physical or mental health (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Håkansson & Sengers, 2013) as well as the pursuit of enhanced happiness or contentment (J. A. Sandlin et al., 2016). The relationship between work and life, or the "work-life balance", was a common theme throughout the literature, with the expected reward of restructuring this balance as a motivator as well as the ability to spend more time with family as a result of the restructuring (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Klintman et al., 2013; J. A. Sandlin et al., 2016).

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Other extrinsic motivations were the desire for "material calm", or a release from the anxiety that is associated with certain types of consumption (Klintman et al., 2013) as well as the desire to avoid consumerism (Shaw & Newholm, 2002) and save money overall (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002). Less prevalent extrinsic motivations were the desire for more efficient uses of materials (Klintman et al., 2013), better child care (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002), and more social interaction (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002). Other less cited extrinsic motivations were the desire for doing less harm to the environment (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Grigsby, 2004), community building (Rosen, 2010), the desire to appear masculine in society (Rosen, 2010). And in the specific cases of religious communities there was also the desire to interweave spirituality and lifestyle (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Rosen, 2010; J. A. Sandlin et al., 2016).

The motivations listed above from the literature review had the tendency to be positive emotions, which contrast with some others that were found which revolved around the concept of fear and security, and the intense desire to avoid a consequence as opposed to the desire of a potential extrinsic reward (Bunker, 2011; Powers, 2010; Rosen, 2010). Individuals cited very strongly the desire for more security (Rosen, 2010) or the very tangible desire to avoid an impending calamity (Bunker, 2011; Rosen, 2010). This fear of the future as well as the necessity to prepare for an impending crisis was a general theme that came up repeatedly in some literature (Bunker, 2011; Rosen, 2010). These impending disasters took the form of governmental, ecological, and social disasters, but also were represented as unknown existential threats, with these threats found to be appealing extrinsic motivations for people to cultivate more independent, resilient, and simple lifestyles (Bunker, 2011; Powers, 2010; Rosen, 2010).

Survey results

The top three extrinsic motivations from the survey were: a tie for the highest rated motivation between "better physical/mental health" and "less dependency", both with a weighted average of 6.94, the desire for "less impacts on the environment" with a weighted average of 6.64, and the desire to "save money" with a weighted average of 6.60.

The three lowest ranked extrinsic motivations from the survey were the desire for "more time for community involvement" with a weighted average of 3.38, the desire for "more time to practice spirituality" with a weighted average of 3.82, and the "ability to structure own time" with a weighted average of 4.60. Below is a graphical representation showing all the responses.

What are your greatest external motivations towards living this simpler lifestyle? Rank them from from 1-10. 1 being your greatest external motivator and 10 being your least external motivating factor.
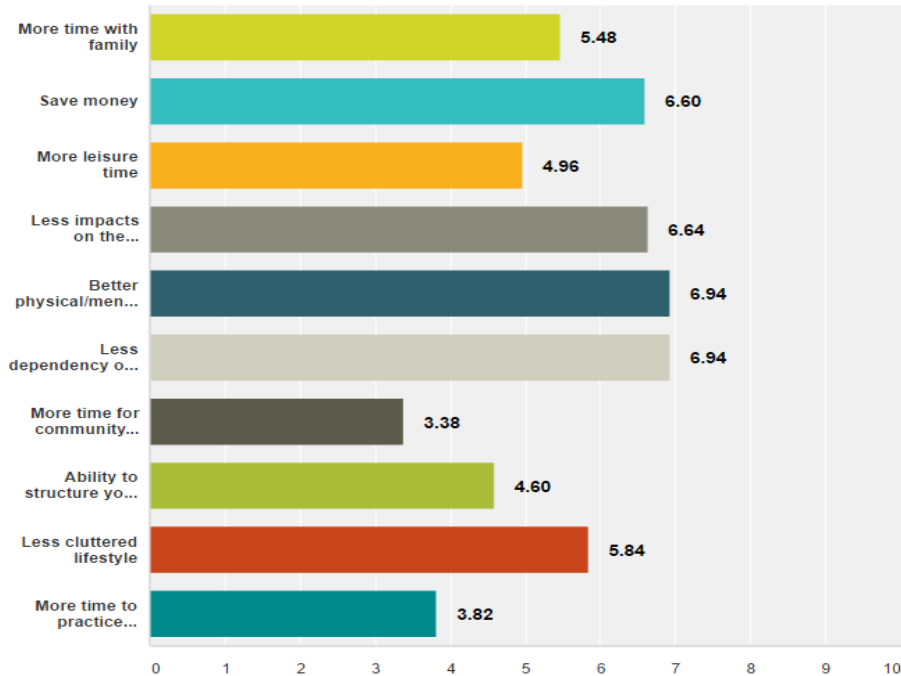
Answered: 56   Skipped: 0

Category	Value
More time with family	5.48
Save money	6.60
More leisure time	4.96
Less impacts on the...	6.64
Better physical/men...	6.94
Less dependency o...	6.94
More time for community...	3.38
Ability to structure yo...	4.60
Less cluttered lifestyle	5.84
More time to practice...	3.82

Figure 6: Weighted averages of ranked extrinsic motivations within the US citizen respondents.

5.2.3 Extrinsic barriers

Literature review

The literature provided some common themes when it came to identifying extrinsic barriers for voluntary simplifiers. The most prevalent extrinsic barriers came in the form of everyday logistics for making a simplistic lifestyle function properly. This translated into topics such as obtaining financing from banks for purchasing land, financing to purchase a home, as well as obtaining the necessary funds throughout the process in the event of an unintended expenditure, such as injury or home maintenance (Rosen, 2010). These logistical barriers also came into topics such as access to goods and services (Klintman et al., 2013), suitable transportation to and from their home, finding suitable employment to support this lifestyle, goods as well as finding employment that would also allow them the flexibility and schedule that these simplistic lifestyles require (Rosen, 2010).

In this same vein, there is a substantial barrier having to do with the amount of land available for purchase and the freedom to start a simplistic lifestyle on that land (Powers, 2010). Systemic

barriers, such as local building codes, zoning laws, and government ordinances all made for high challenges for those looking to start a simplistic lifestyle (Powers, 2010; Rosen, 2010).

More macro structural issues caused barriers to form as well, such as the centralization of populations in urban centers, which concentrate the employment opportunities instead of spreading them out (Powers, 2010; Rosen, 2010). The social pressure that comes from not wanting to be perceived as poor (Shaw & Newholm, 2002) and not actively participating in the predominant American culture (Håkansson & Sengers, 2013) surfaced as challenges in the literature as well. Another macro barrier that simplifiers felt was the lock-in consumption that they cannot change (Shaw & Newholm, 2002) or the idea that there are things that we are forced to consume due to the systemic choices in society, such as burning gasoline to go to your job because of long distances between work and home (Shaw & Newholm, 2002).

Other less prevalent extrinsic barriers were addiction to modern lifestyles and distractions (Håkansson & Sengers, 2013; Powers, 2010), lack of creativity in terms of substituting consumption habits as well as the effect that advertising can have on our judgements (Klintman et al., 2013), indecision and doubt as to whether a simple lifestyle is the best choice (Powers, 2010), and the logistics of raising children in this unique context (Rosen, 2010). Children as a topic were very prevalent in a few of the VS literature, but not all of them, citing that the challenges of raising kids, compromising with children on simplistic lifestyles, and finding suitable childcare were major barriers towards switching to this type of lifestyle (Craig-Lees & Hill, 2002; Håkansson & Sengers, 2013).

Survey results

The top three extrinsic barriers between individuals and shifting to a more simplistic lifestyle were "start up costs" with a weighted average of 7.46, this was followed by "suitable employment" with a weighted average of 7.2, and the final extrinsic barrier was "suitable housing" with a weighted average of 6.79.

The three lowest rated extrinsic barriers were "insufficient product information" with a weighted average of 4.43, a tie between "local laws" and "suitable transportation" with a weighted average of 4.57, and "social pressure" with a weighted average of 4.61. Below is a graphical representation of the survey.

What are the biggest challenges to initiating this lifestyle? Rank them from 1-10. 1 being the biggest challenge to overcome and 10 being the smallest challenge to overcome.
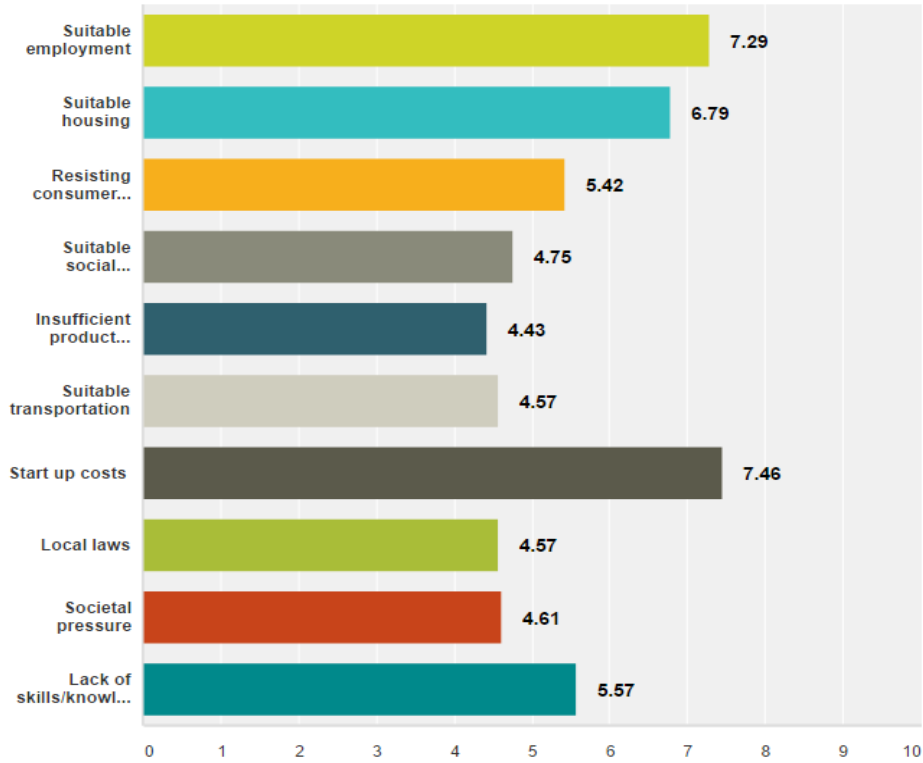
Answered: 56   Skipped: 0

Category	Value
Suitable employment	7.29
Suitable housing	6.79
Resisting consumer...	5.42
Suitable social...	4.75
Insufficient product...	4.43
Suitable transportation	4.57
Start up costs	7.46
Local laws	4.57
Societal pressure	4.61
Lack of skills/knowl...	5.57

Figure 7: Weighted averages of extrinsic barriers within the US citizen respondents.

5.2.4 Non-US citizen survey results

This section will briefly outline the survey responses from the non-US citizen respondents on the topics of intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, and extrinsic barriers. In total, there were 43 non-US completed surveys and their ranked motivations will be expanded upon below.

Intrinsic motivations

The top three intrinsic motivations from non-US citizens were: "live according to your values" with a weighted average of 7.05, "desire to learn" with a weighted average of 5.06, and "general interest in alternative lifestyles" with a weighted average of 4.28.

The thee lowest ranked intrinsic motivations were: "desire to feel competent" with a weighted average of 3.35, "sense of achievement" with a weighted average of 3.45, and the "desire for improvement" with a weighted average of 4.11. Below is a graphical representation of the data.

What are the greatest internal motivations for wanting to live this alternative lifestyle? Rank them 1-8. 1 being the greatest internal motivation and 8 being the least greatest motivation.
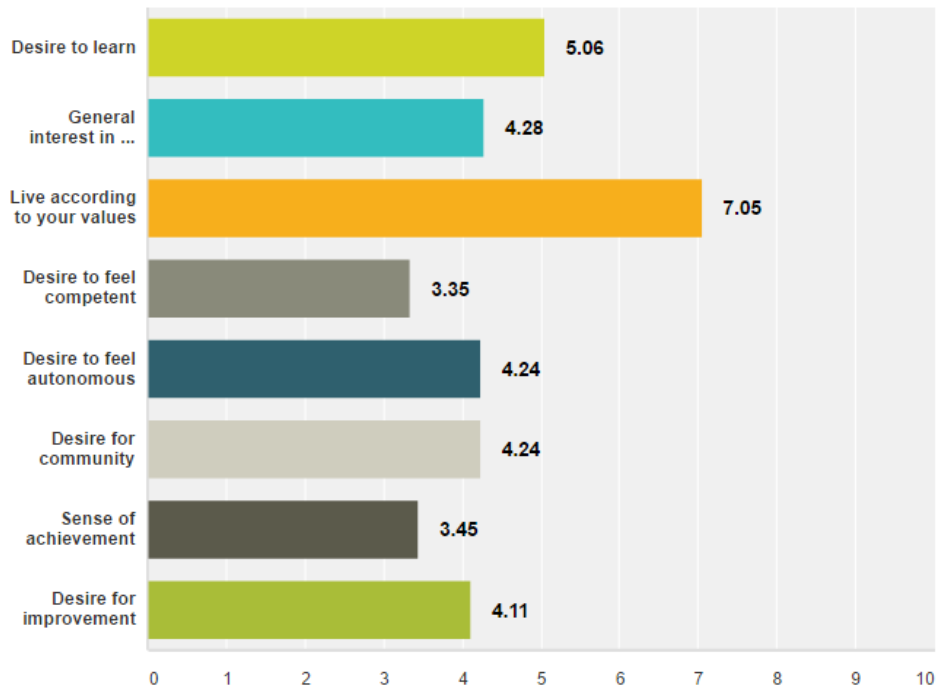
Answered: 38   Skipped: 5

Motivation	Weighted average
Desire to learn	5.06
General interest in ...	4.28
Live according to your values	7.05
Desire to feel competent	3.35
Desire to feel autonomous	4.24
Desire for community	4.24
Sense of achievement	3.45
Desire for improvement	4.11

Figure 8: Weighted averages of intrinsic motivations within the non-US citizen respondents.

Extrinsic motivations

The top three extrinsic motivations from the non-US citizen respondents were: "less impacts on the environment" with a weighted average of 7.72, "better physical and mental health" with a weighted average of 6.79, and "less dependency" with a weighted average of 6.14.

The lowest ranked extrinsic motivations among non-US citizen respondents were: "more time to practice spirituality" with a weighted average of 3.44, "less cluttered lifestyle" with a weighted average of 4.76, and "more time for community involvement" with a weighted average of 4.92. Below is a graphical representation of the data.

What are your greatest external motivations towards living this simpler lifestyle? Rank them from from 1-10. 1 being your greatest external motivator and 10 being your least external motivating factor.
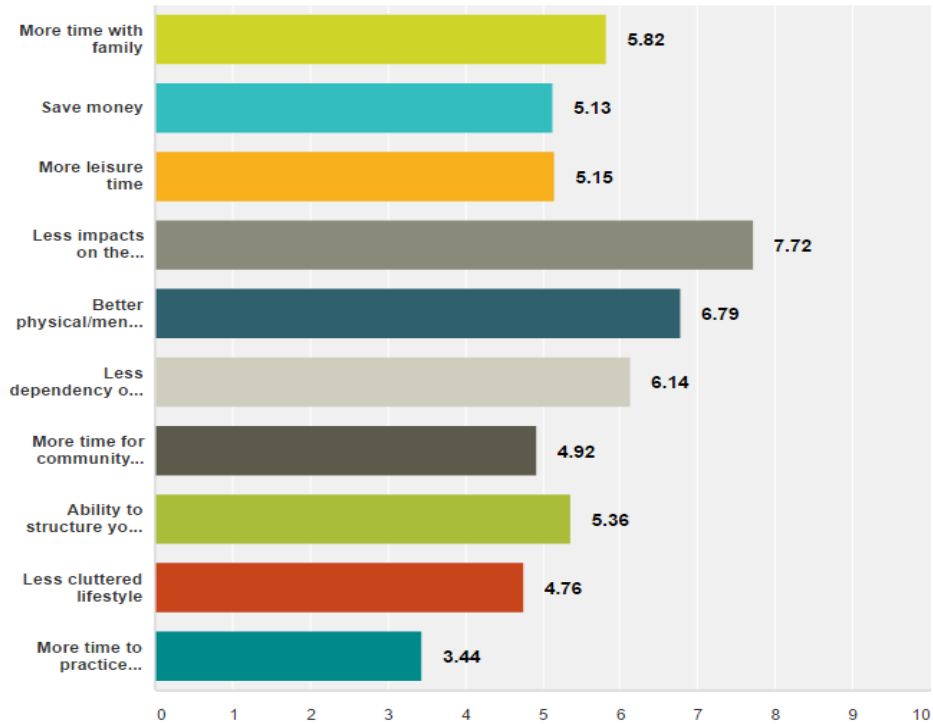
Answered: 42   Skipped: 1

Category	Value
More time with family	5.82
Save money	5.13
More leisure time	5.15
Less impacts on the...	7.72
Better physical/men...	6.79
Less dependency o...	6.14
More time for community...	4.92
Ability to structure yo...	5.36
Less cluttered lifestyle	4.76
More time to practice...	3.44

Figure 9: Weighted averages of extrinsic motivations within the non-US citizen respondents.

Extrinsic barriers

The top three extrinsic barriers from non-US citizen respondents were: "suitable employment" with a weighted average of 6.74, "suitable housing" with a weighted average of 6.62, and "start up costs" with a weighted average of 6.30.

The three least prominent extrinsic barriers from non-US citizen respondents were: "local laws" with a weighted average of 4.38, "suitable social activities" with a weighted average of 4.54, and "suitable transportation" with a weighted average of 4.55.
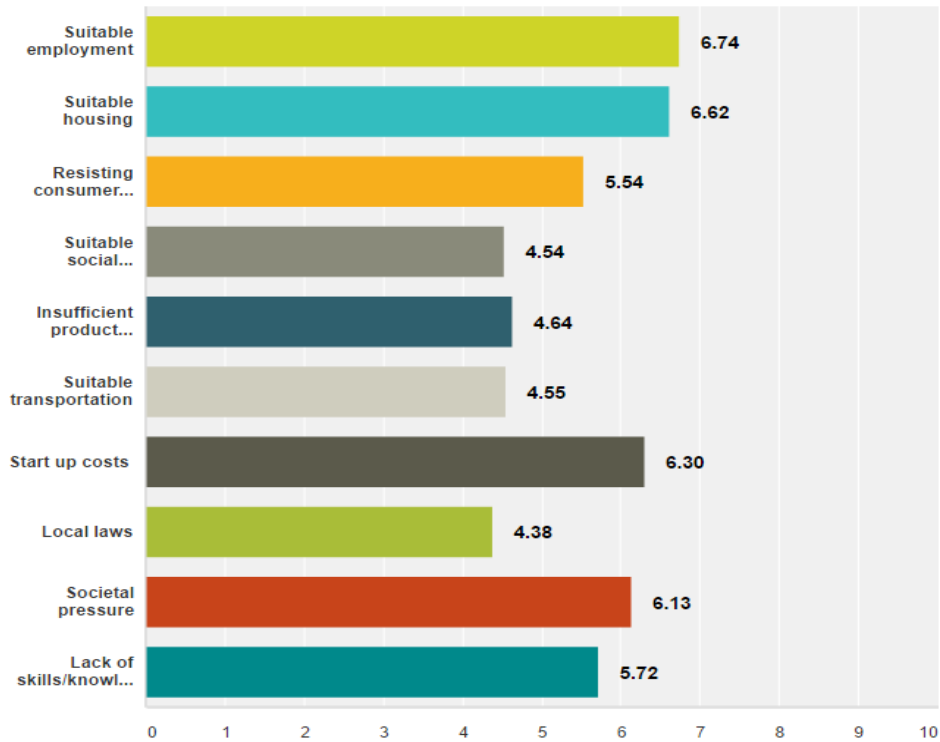
Figure 10: Weighted averages of extrinsic barriers within the non-US citizen respondents.

5.3 Comparison of US and non-US survey results

This section will answer RQ4, showing the comparison of the completelyed survey responses from both US citizens and non-US citizens, as well as summarize the findings as it pertains to identifying the unique characterisitics of American simplifiers.

5.3.1 Results from comparison

The results of the survey for both US citizens and non-US citizens show some definite trends in terms of similarities and differences with regards to motivations and priorities of each group. For the sake of convenience, a table (table 1, shown below) has been made to summarize the highest and lowest ranked motivations for each respondent group.

Table 1: Summary of the highest and lowest ranked intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, and extrinsic barriers for both US citizen and non-US citizen respondents. Weighted averages shown within brackets.

Motivation		US citizens	Non-US citizens
Intrinsic	Highest ranked	1. Live according to your values (6.04) 2. Desire to feel autonomous (5.53) 3. Desire to learn (4.84)	1. Live according to your values (7.05) 2. Desire to learn (5.06) 3. General interest in alternative lifestyles (4.28)
	Lowest ranked	1. Desire for community (3.19) 2. General interest in alternative lifestyles (3.76) 3. Desire to feel competent (3.98)	1. Desire to feel competent (3.35) 2. Sense of achievement (3.45) 3. Desire for improvement (4.11)
Extrinsic	Highest ranked	1. Better physical/mental health & Less dependency (6.94) 2. Less impacts on environment (6.64) 3. Save money (6.60)	1. Less impacts on the environment (7.72) 2. Better physical/mental health (6.79) 3. Less dependency (6.14)
	Lowest ranked	1. More time for community involvement (3.38) 2. More time to practice spirituality (3.82) 3. Ability to structure own time (4.60)	1. More time to practice spirituality (3.44) 2. Less cluttered lifestyle (4.76) 3. More time for community involvement (4.92)
Barriers	Highest ranked	1. Start up costs (7.46) 2. Suitable employment (7.2) 3. Suitable housing (6.79)	1. Suitable employment (6.74) 2. Suitable housing (6.62) 3. Start up costs (6.30)
	Lowest ranked	1. Insufficient product information (4.43) 2. Local laws & suitable transportation (4.57) 3. Social pressure (4.61)	1. Local laws (4.38) 2. Suitable social activities (4.54) 3. Suitable transportation (4.55)

A comparison of the highest and lowest ranking motivations and barriers from this table show that the fundamental motivations of both US citizens and non-US citizens are not substantially different from one another. The priorities vary slightly, but the general themes are the same with an emphasis being on living a lifestyle according to their own personal values, a desire for better physical/mental health, finding the everyday logistics of this lifestyle to be quite daunting, and a lack of emphasis on

personal achievement, spirituality, community engagement, and local laws and suitable transportation as barriers.

5.3.2 American tendencies

The surveys and literature review both confirm the strong individualistic bias of simplifiers in general, and specifically the increased emphasis of individualism within American simplifiers. An analysis of the literature review finding and survey results from section 5.2 allow for a clearer picture of American simplifiers to be established. Both US citizens and non-US citizens have roughly the same top extrinsic and intrinsic motivators to varying degrees with varying emphasis on these motivators (section 6.1.1), with US citizens reporting a greater need for autonomy and less dependence than their non-US citizen counterparts. Based on the survey data, US citizens also have much less drive for community engagement and community involvement, which is in line with the heavy autonomy/individualism that is prevalent within the modern US context (described in 5.1.1), which pushes for individual achievement in place of group achievement.

The barriers that are experienced within the American context as opposed to the non-US citizens are more in line with practical matters, such as personal wealth, as well as macro-economic and social phenomenon, such as employment, the availability of employment, flexible employment/employment culture, and the fluctuation of housing costs and opportunities for home ownership. These kinds of results help give context to how American simplifiers stack up against the world, and it shows that Americans are more motivated by autonomy and extrinsic rewards, such as saving money and more self-reliance, than by the same things their non-US citizen simplifying counterparts identify as real motivations. The implications of the lack of community emphasis within the VS community will be discussed in section 6.2 below.

6. Discussion

6.1 Community and VS

These results regarding community building and individualism are problematic from a social movement and sustainability standpoint. This section will look at VS from a social movement perspective to see the areas of strength as well as weakness within VS, with section 6.1.2 and 6.1.3 drawing sweeping conclusions around the topic of VS individuals as agents of change and the sustainability implications of VS.

6.1.1 Social movement implications

This section is going to be looking into the perspective of VS as a social movement, citing the social movement criteria put forth by Mario Diani (1992). These criteria will locate the strengths and weaknesses of VS as a movement, laying the groundwork for further critiques and recommendations on whether simplifiers are ideal agents of change for sustainability.

Mario Diani (1992) described four components that go into defining and creating an effective social movement:

1. A network of informal interaction between a plurality of individuals, groups, or organizations

2. Shared beliefs and solidarity

3. Collective action on conflictual issues

4. Actions that are performed largely out of the routine procedures of social life

Using these four criteria, I am able to look at the potential of VS as a social movement for potentially combatting consumption-based lifestyles. Based on the literature review and survey results, it is clear to see that there are some fundamental issues within the VS movement and it's potential for being an actor of change when seen through the lens of Diani's (1992) criteria.

The first criteria is achieved since there are forums, collectives, or other informal methods of communication happening revolving around the topics of simplified lifestyles. The second criteria is partially achieved since the motivations, values, and beliefs of each voluntary simplifier are very different, yet the manifestations of those differing values tend to be in line with each other. This generally is seen in a shift away from consumption based lifestyles, focusing more on making things last, restructuring how the individual fits within the dominant consumer culture, and being aware of their own consumption patterns and lifestyle (Håkansson & Sengers, 2013; Powers, 2010; Rosen, 2010).

The third criteria can be seen as the collective values turning into collective action, and this is where VS fails to meet the criteria of a social movement in an important way. Voluntary simplifiers are not actively marching on capitals and pushing towards change, the literature review has shown that voluntary simplifiers are generally wary of the government and getting involved with politics with

that realm of society being pushed aside in lieu of increased autonomy by the individual (Bunker, 2011; Powers, 2010).

The fourth criteria of Diani's (1992) theory of social movements can be seen as achieved since there are many individual actions that are taking place, all of which are taking place outside of the normal spheres of everyday American life. Examples of this being the setting up of homesteads, individual action to reduce consumption, or increased actions toward efficiency of the individual lifestyle (Powers, 2010; Vannini & Taggart, 2015). The inability for voluntary simplifiers to create a cohesive identity and community which takes collective action makes this a hard phenomenon to legitimately classify as a social movement instead of an unorganized collection of enthusiasts who are reinventing the American dream in line with their personal interests.

By looking through the social movement lens of Diani (1992), it is clear that there are some fundamental strengths associated with VS, as well as some critical weaknesses. These both play into the overall discussion over whether or not simplifiers are capable of being the agents of change needed within the American context, a topic that will be expanded on in the following section.

6.1.2 VS individuals as agents of change

Given the results discussed in the previous sections, namely the US simplifier's emphasis on individualism coupled with the lack of emphasis on community engagement, in addition to the weaknesses found in the social movement criteria, it is difficult to see how the actions of VS community in its current form will impact the trajectory of American consumption-based lifestyles. These individuals perform their acts of defiance within a vacuum, seeking to live their lives according to their own values out of the public eye, drawing little attention and causing few ripples in the waters of American lifestyles.

The VS individuals themselves are doing nothing to promote change in others, but their actions have had unforeseen implications throughout American culture. Books, movies, reality TV shows, and other cultural manifestations have sprouted up in the recent decades in line with the growing interest in VS culture, the individuals themselves, and the alternatives they promote to ordinary American life. Henry David Thoreau was one of the first American icons to champion simplicity through his writing, in particular with his book *Walden* (section 4.1). This work began the tradition of questioning lifestyles, what constitutes "success" for each person, and the importance of nature within a person's lifestyle, which are all themes that are present in modern day serious cultural adaptations of VS.

On the flip side there are also many pop culture representations of VS individuals in the past decade, with an emphasis on the shock factor, the extreme departure from the norm, and a sense of circus "side-show attraction" within their depictions. These cultural representations do little to promote the philosophical underpinnings of lifestyle that are present in famous works, such as *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854) or *Into the woods* (Krakauer, 1997), but still distribute the idea of an alternative lifestyle, some of the extrinsic rewards that come with that shift, and something to compare their current individual lifestyle against.

So perhaps the rebellious, anti-establishment, and inherently interesting nature of VS individuals is doing more to promote lifestyle change within the US culture than the individuals themselves. Given the relatively small number of US simplifiers, the lack of cohesive culture and goals between them, the differing manifestations of what "simplifying" means to each one of them, and the heavy individual tendencies of American simplifiers, these may not be the most effective agents of change at the present moment. There is potential for VS to be a cultural force in the future as awareness grows through these cultural representations, the numbers of US simplifiers increase, and the negative impacts of these lifestyles become more apparent to the general public.

6.1.3 Sustainability implications

In the same way that it is difficult to fully label the VS phenomenon as a social movement, it is difficult to truly assess the sustainability implications of the VS phenomenon. On the one hand, these are individuals who are voluntarily electing to undergo the necessary lifestyle changes that ensure tangible long term sustainability for their lives, including reduced emissions from transportation, reduced personal consumption, an emphasis on buying utility items over status items, reduced energy usage, increased resilience against social and environmental changes through intentional lifestyle choices, just to name a few (Kropfeld et al., 2016; Powers, 2010; Rosen, 2010). These are very real sustainability wins and in line with sustainability ideals, but they are on the small, individual scale instead of on the state or national level.

The fact that simplifiers are not interested in community building as well as a lack of interest in collective action shows that there is a fundamental barrier between these lifestyles and large scale change. This could be understood potentially from the American cultural context that heavily markets the importance of the individual over the collective through mechanisms such as the American dream. Alexander (2013) came to a similar conclusion regarding the future of VS and degrowth movements, and stated that:

"the Voluntary Simplicity movement or anything like it will almost certainly need to expand, organise, radicalise and politicise, if anything resembling a degrowth society is to emerge…." (Alexander, 2013, p.1)

Since degrowth literature often connects the dots between the benefits of degrowth and the goals of sustainability, this quote could also be understood to show that without collective action there is little hope of sustainability principles becoming a reality through the VS community. This emphasis on the individual action instead of the collective action smacks of the same critiques of the individualization of responsibility phenomenon (Maniates, 2001). In this critique, moving your home off the grid and living simply is the same as buying a bike or buying eco in the hopes of solving climate related issues; essentially small, low-impact actions that do little to solve the large, complex, and pressing problem of destructive lifestyles. This means that the burden of solving these problems potentially should not be placed upon the individual and instead be placed on the institutions that are driving these large, macro environmental issues. Without the voluntary simplification community coming together to perform collective action, there is almost zero political power that can be leveraged to change these institutions, the consumer culture within American, and the American mindset that incentivizes the exploitation of the environment.

But, just because the American VS community is wholeheatedly interested in the individual does not mean that this is a group not worth investing time and energy in from a sustainability point of view. This is a stubbornly individualistic, but valuable group of people who are conducting lifestyle experiments in line with sustainability ideals and should be encouraged in order to upscale these changes in the US. These people could be the first step towards a sustainability transition that is in line with maintaining the Earth's life support systems and improving human wellbeing (Parris & Kates, 2003) by providing tangible examples to others on a better alternative to the manic, success-obsessed culture that dominates within America. Focusing on building bridges between these tiny islands of simplified lifestyles should be a major priority for the sustainability community, and two strategies for doing so are outlind in the following sections.

6.2 Motivations

As stated in section 6.2.2, there is the potential for VS to be a force of cultural change with regards to lifestyles, given a larger population of simplifiers. This section will consider the two methods these simplified lifestyles can be encouraged to the general public, through a promotion of the extrinsic benefits and the removal of extrinsic barriers.

6.2.1 Promotion of extrinsic benefits

The surveys produced a ranked selection of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations that the respondents felt were in part responsible for their desire to simplify their lifestyles. Having collected these motivations and understanding the American preferences for lifestyle change, those who are encouraging these types of changes can use these motivators to better entice individuals to consider making a shift in their lifestyles.

The research conducted by (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009) provided a pathway forward when it comes to political divides within the US, specifically addressing the recent inability of the poles of the political spectrum to communicate on issues. The research showed that by reformulating the issues taking the opposing side's values into account, that there is a higher likelihood of persuading or improving communication between the two parties (Graham et al., 2009). This same principle can be considered when encouraging voluntarily simplistic lifestyles; simplifiers or the sustainably minded can better persuade Americans to alter their lifestyles by positioning these changes within the motivations that they already hold. In particular, within the American context, we can see that autonomy and personal expression of values within their lifestyle are high value motivations for Americans, as shown by the survey results in chapter 5. These motivations can be used to construct the conversation around shifting lifestyles and better bridge the gap between those who might not be considering the extrinsic or intrinsic rewards of making this shift. Understanding the motivations of these simplifiers can help guide sustianability professionals in how they create materials with the intent to persuade individuals, or the tone and content of videos discussing sustainability, to better appeal to people who may not be considering these types of changes.

6.2.2 Removal of extrinsic barriers

The survey results showed that the most prevalent obstacles toward initiating a more simplistic lifestyle were purely logistical topics, namely startup costs associated with initiating the shift, finding suitable employment, as well as finding suitable housing. An effective potential strategy for incentivizing individuals to consider simplifying their lifestyle could be to remove barriers, but this proves problematic when it comes to some of these obstacles.

 Some extrinsic impediments are tied to many systemic choices as well as modern phenomenon within the United States, and they're issues that cannot be easily solved to ease this transition (Powers, 2010; Rosen, 2010). For instance, finding suitable employment or suitable housing/land is tied to urbanization that takes place outside of rural areas, which is the primary site for these

simplified lifestyles. These barriers are the byproduct of market forces, such as the recent housing boom (and resulting crash) that has left the number of homeowners dwindling (Gopal, 2016) as well as the shift in populations toward city centers (Kalnay & Cai, 2003). These market forces and their effects run against the natural tendencies of VS, such as the necessity of home improvement/customization and conflict between home rental and ownership rates (Rosen, 2010).

In terms of potential solutions for removing barriers, politicians and individuals are very limited in combatting these large, macro, globalization forces, but there are some options that could be utilized to nudge lifestyles in this direction. Policies and incentives can be put in place to help incentivize the shift toward less consumption-based lifestyles, potentially as tax breaks for solar panels (Voncannon, 2006), reimbursement for growing your own food, or incentives to use your items for as long as possible or repairing them when they break (Orange, 2016). Municipalities can help foster some of the activities associated with living a more simplistic and resilient lifestyle through classes on permaculture, home maintenance, and ways in which to live a less impactful lifestyle. Restructuring the tax code could also help in terms of how small homes are taxed as opposed to large homes, potentially easing some of the anxiety associated with finding suitable employment to support the lifestyle.

The issue as it stands right now with these potential methods for removing the barriers between potential simplifiers and their desired lifestyle is the conflictual nature of these two different goals of modernity, as described in section 5.1. The American govenment is still promoting the ideas of post WWII consumerism with the emphasis on economic growth through concepts like "trickle-down economics" (Barry, 2017). This continuation of this project of modernity within America makes it doubtful that the VS community will receive any support from the government on combatting consumerist lifestyles; these are two competing ideologies that cannot coexist at the same time, and so while there are opportunities to relieve some of the obstacles between individuals and alternative lifestyles, the predominant culture is still holding much of the power that would be needed to enact these changes.

7. Conclusion

American lifestyles are repeatedly shown to be environmentally destructive due to their intense consumption patterns (Koh & Lee, 2012), and there is growing talk about the moral duty to change these lifestyles as well as the pressing inevitability of change with regards to these lifestyles (Alexander, 2012). VS is a potential solution to that problem and through understanding how the

movement fits into modern America as well as the motivations that these simplifiers have, we are better equipped to articulate this type of lifestyle change to Americans as a viable option. The results reinforced the autonomous tendencies of American simplifiers and showed that logistical, everyday concerns are the biggest barriers standing between simplifiers and their desired low consumption lifestyle. The survey results also showed how low community engagement is as an extrinsic motivator, proving problematic for future growth in the movement. Through an analysis of modernity and VS we are better able to understand the tendencies of American simplifiers and the heavy emphasis on autonomy that exists. The VS movement was also shown to be a loose connection of individuals with little to no political or collective will. This tendency away from collective action as well as the conflictual nature of voluntarily simplistic lifestyles within American, make the prospects of widespread adoption from a top-down approach rather unlikely. The only available methods in which VS can have a real impact would be from a bottom-up approach, promoting political action or social change, but as discussed in chapter 6, this is proving to be a difficult prospect given the overly individualistic nature of American simplifiers. Further research would need to go into the issue of connecting all these individuals together and overcoming the intense individualism culture that exists within America, with hopes of creating some cohesive community that can initiate the necessary change.

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Appendix 2: Congregation points for surveys

Facebook page example:

Forum example:

Youtube example:

Appendix 3: Survey example

Voluntary Simplicity Survey

1. Gender

○ Male

○ Female

○ Prefer not to say

2. Age

3. Are you a United States citizen?

○ Yes

○ No

4. Do you currently live a simpler lifestyle, such as an off the grid or low consumption lifestyle?

○ Yes, I currently live a simpler lifestyle similar to the examples given in the question.

○ No, I do not currently live a simpler lifestyle similar to the examples in the question.

Other (please specify)

5. If you do not currently live a simpler lifestyle as outlined in the question above, do you have interest in someday living a simpler lifestyle, such as an off the grid or low consumption lifestyle?
(skip this question if you answered yes in the question before)

○ Yes, I am interested in living a simpler lifestyle one day.

○ No, I am not interested in living a simpler lifestyle one day.

Other (please specify)

6. Is this lifestyle a long term or short term lifestyle choice? Long term meaning 5+ years. Short term meaning less than 5 years.

○ Yes, it's a long term lifestyle (5+ years)

○ No, it's a short term lifestyle (less than 5 years)

7. Is your decision to live this type of lifestyle voluntary?

○ Yes

○ No

Other (please specify)

[   ]

8. What are your greatest external motivations towards living this simpler lifestyle?

Rank them from from 1-10. 1 being your greatest external motivator and 10 being your least external motivating factor.

⠿	[⬍]	More time with family
⠿	[⬍]	Save money
⠿	[⬍]	More leisure time
⠿	[⬍]	Less impacts on the environment
⠿	[⬍]	Better physical/mental health
⠿	[⬍]	Less dependency on external things
⠿	[⬍]	More time for community involvement
⠿	[⬍]	Ability to structure your own time
⠿	[⬍]	Less cluttered lifestyle
⠿	[⬍]	More time to practice spirituality

9. What are the biggest challenges to initiating this lifestyle?

Rank them from 1-10. 1 being the biggest challenge to overcome and 10 being the smallest challenge to overcome.

⠿	▲▼	Suitable employment
⠿	▲▼	Suitable housing
⠿	▲▼	Resisting consumer temptations
⠿	▲▼	Suitable social activities
⠿	▲▼	Insufficient product information
⠿	▲▼	Suitable transportation
⠿	▲▼	Start up costs
⠿	▲▼	Local laws
⠿	▲▼	Societal pressure
⠿	▲▼	Lack of skills/knowledge

10. What are the greatest internal motivations for wanting to live this alternative lifestyle?

Rank them 1-8. 1 being the greatest internal motivation and 8 being the least greatest motivation.

⠿	▲▼	Desire to learn
⠿	▲▼	General interest in the topic of alternative lifestyles
⠿	▲▼	Live according to your values
⠿	▲▼	Desire to feel competent
⠿	▲▼	Desire to feel autonomous
⠿	▲▼	Desire for community
⠿	▲▼	Sense of achievement
⠿	▲▼	Desire for improvement

Done