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Who am I?

A phemonenological study on becoming aware of yourself and the transitions it can lead to

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I dedicate this thesis to the women who shared
their stories making this paper possible.

Thank you!

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting
their bad advice –
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug
at your ankles.
“Mend my life!”
each voice cried.
But you didn’t stop.
You knew what you had to do,
though the wind pried
with its stiff fingers
at the very foundations,
though their melancholy
was terrible.
It was already late
enough, and a wild night,
and the road full of fallen branches and stones.
But little by little,
as you left their voices behind,
the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do –
determined to save the only life you could save.

Mary Oliver, “The Journey” (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, p.413)

Preface

Some words before starting

Many years ago I came across a poem about how humans tend to wear different masks in different settings. In time there might be so many masks that we forget who we are without them. I have always found it intriguing how we humans function, how we hide behind materialistic things, our past, or our presumed inherited genes or environmental influences. We might even hide from our selves. The easiest label to describe this thesis would be to call it “A study on self-development”, but it is so much more. It is all about the search for the person behind all the masks, by learning and accepting all the masks as they are identified. The informants’ stories are at the heart of the thesis, but along the way there has been a drive towards a much more global understanding of it as well. The more appropriate label for the thesis is therefore “A study on becoming aware of oneself”. To gain awareness about the different levels and aspects of whom we are. Reunite with the true friend who is always within us, but sometimes is suppressed on different levels by different forms of masks.

This thesis is about the process of becoming aware of who you are and the impact your actions and thoughts have on you. In many ways to write a master thesis is the same as going through such a transformation of self-development. It can be painful at times, take you unexpected places, be overwhelming and you often feel you are standing in one spot without moving anywhere. Bit by bit you come to notice that you are reaching the goals you set out to do. By being persistent, having techniques and structure, but to also have a support team can give you the results you want. There are many people who have helped me on my way, though I cannot mention all, a few stand out; Kjersti for spending so much time visiting me at the university during my master program and helping with many proof-reading sessions along side with Kristine, Kathrine, Helga & Øyvind, my mother for always being there with comforting words and comments during the process, Håvard for being my ever dependable rock, and last but not least my supervisor Richard Alapack who has helped me through the entire process, from teaching me to go my own way when doing the bachelor-course, continuing to support my way through the master-course, helping me to finalize my master thesis by proofreading and correcting my English. To all that have helped me, thank you. I could never have done this without you!

A special gratitude goes to my informants, for sharing your stories so openly with me, so I could pursue the topic of going through a transformation. I admire the path you have walked, and hope more people take the chance to find their inner peace and happiness like you have done.

Enjoy the read, and be inspired ☺

August, 2010

Ingeborg Skaret Kjos-Hanssen

And remember: Awareness cures!

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1 Introduction

Who am I? The question is simple, but answering it may not be easy. The understanding of who you are can have many levels of meaning from the easy understandable level to the more complex ones. For example, at the one-dimensional surface level – the level of behavior and social roles – one understands self in relation to material things and daily functions: to job, residence, marital status, and parenthood. Or understands self in relation to run-of-the-mill vital statistics and information on a ‘profile’: age, height, weight, color and texture of skin, shade and length of hair, education level, religious and political affiliation, and so forth. From a more biographical perspective, you might indicate self-understanding by describing your parents, where you grew up, how your childhood was, why you have that scar, or why you prefer this brand of food, cosmetics, and clothes over any other. Still, these aspects only characterize your identity by exterior or external factors. Such identity-hooks, of course, are *not nothing*. But they are not everything either. Suppose you try to describe yourself stripped of exterior factors. Picture yourself in a room so white that you do not know where the walls end and the ceiling begins. How explain who you are on the background of this empty, stark room. Who are you then without material factors to orient you? Beyond objective, measurable, observable, external traits and roles, there is always a remainder of who we are. That elusive remainder engages the work of this thesis.

More precisely, this thesis seeks to identify the various layers of the complex understanding of self rather than just its surface presentation. This includes the second dimension of psyche or soul, and the third dimension of spirit. Psyche names the aspects of our innermost being; spirit names the relationships we have with higher states of being. Stated somewhat differently, the topic under research straddles the borderline between two academic worlds. Mainstream psychology, rooted in Western rationalistic dualism theorizes and explains on the basis of observing and measuring the exterior issues of change and transition—their cognitive and behavioral aspects. Although guiding philosophy, positivism, has dominated psychology since the 19th century, parallel paradigms have incessantly flowed alongside the mainstream, Humanistic, transpersonal and depth psychology—existentialism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, gestalt psychology – offer alternative slants, ones with a more complex or in-depth understanding of who we are. These approaches are human scientific (*geisteswissenschaften*) not natural scientific (*naturwissenschaften*). These approaches legitimize higher levels of self-awareness and functioning. They address the farthest reaches

of human possibility. Within their purview fall the levels below ordinary conscious awareness – (behavior without awareness; unconsciousness) and the levels beyond it (hyper-consciousness, spiritual consciousness, collective unconsciousness, and so forth). As this thesis unfolds, it will become increasingly clear that different levels of the phenomena must be taken into consideration if we are to understand the essential structure of the experience of undergoing a radical re-awakening and a significant life-altering shift.

Debating and sorting out the various claims of the competing paradigms in psychology (and on the intellectual scene in general) is not the purpose of this masters' thesis. Rather, it picks up and appropriates the findings of the one dimensional approach of the mainstream, and the results of the two and three dimensional approaches of alternative psychologies. It absorbs the knowledge each affords from its peculiar slant. In specific, it pans the nuggets of knowledge of what cognitive science teaches us about the conscious aspects of understanding. But it cherishes equally the gems of knowledge about aspects within us that are not consciously apparent-- those contributions provided by depth-psychology, Jungian psychology, and transpersonal psychology. This thesis comprehends how we are able to make a life-changing transition after beginning to understanding self on a new level. From Freud to Jung; from Beck to Buddha. It fits to elaborate. We are all accustomed to living on a basic existential platform. We more or less take it for granted. We lived our life understanding who we are and how the world around us functions against the background of that assumed and presumed framework. Learning new ways of understanding the world might lead to a feeling of waking up or of turning on the light in a dark room. Suddenly you understand everything in new light and see with a new set of glasses; you are moved to turn your life around. How to grasp this process? The phenomenon is a highly individualized. It cannot be captured with a normative research design that is tailor-made for grasping external, quantifiable relationships. Because why? Not only is the transformation between the new and old self-understanding something that happens within you, it typically happens also without your complete awareness of what is taking place during the 'moments' of transition. For most, the change is something we have to 'catch up with'. It is not there for a camera or the naked eye to see in one fell swoop. So a major concern of this thesis is finding and utilizing the appropriate method to access the phenomenon in all its richness. Put in another way, it is not the intention of this thesis to privilege any one way of theorizing about the phenomenon under investigation, nor to corroborate or even support any particular paradigm. It will not enshrine any particular method. Its purpose is to bring to light the experiences of self-awareness and transition,

examine them, reflect upon them, and account for them in the most *integrated*, *comprehensive*, and *holistic* way. The labor does not take place within the context of reduction, but of amplification; not within the context of *verification*, but within the context of *discovery*. Whenever you watch a theatre-play you can have a completely different feeling and understanding of it regards to where in the audience you are sitting. To capture as much of the meaning as possible you might have to view the play from different locations. The same goes for the researching the topics of awakening, new awareness, and change. To that end, this thesis cherishes a multi-perspectival viewing.

Subjects who provide data matter a great deal. Subsequently, you will hear in great detail and in depth about my participant-subjects. But a few words of introduction suit. To research the phenomenon, I enlisted people who had gone through significant inner transformations in a way that others could readily see and corroborate them. So there is nothing esoteric about the theme. Ordinary, disinterested, neutral, outside observers – people like you and me – can capture some of the essence of the magnitude of the transition and apprehend and appreciate what we human beings are able to do. One more time I make a disclaimer. I start by preferring nothing or privileging anything. I am intrigued by the phenomenon under investigation. That’s all. I want to track it down. Becoming aware, finding self awakened, coming to a crossroads, changing one’s life as a result—these occupy and preoccupy me. So I simply bracket the quibbles and quarrels between paradigms about what is really “scientifically” scientific. I could litter these pages by summarizing one more time the principles of the dominant quantitative, natural scientific paradigm. To what good? I could elaborate the arguments showing the necessity of a qualitative alternative. And I could spell out the differences between the various qualitative methods that have appeared on the intellectual stage. Again, to what end? Rather than spill the ink in some unnecessary attempt to show you that I “know the score”, I assume that in this millennia I am authorized to make responsible academic choices. I do not need a long elaborate justification for a qualitative approach to the phenomena under investigation. And of the many qualitative methods available, I am free to pick Amedeo Giorgi’s (2009) Husserlian based descriptive approach as being optimally suited for the study of psychological phenomena, and simultaneously methodical and rigorous enough to meet and match the most severe criteria of normal science.

Although I devote an entire chapter to method, I share some preliminary notions to orient you the reader. The phenomenological method best captures the theme of this research because basically it investigates “the structure of consciousness and the types of objects that

present themselves in the consciousness” (Giorgi, 2009, p. 87). The research question of going through a life-changing transition with an emphasis on how it started, how it unfolded, and how life changed because of it requires what phenomenology studies best: objects which present themselves to consciousness and consciousness as it flows through and across time. I conducted open-ended interviews with three people picked because they had gone through life-transforming transitions. Neither of them underwent their turning-points with a clinical psychologist. This was a conscious decision on my part as researcher. I search out a significant change in the Lifeworld, one possible to anyone and everyone. Tapping into the dynamics of what happens in a patient-therapist arena is another theme—although it might be the topic of another research project to interface spontaneous and therapeutic generated change. However, the open-endedness that hallmarks this entire project comes to bear in this matter, I chose informants who had to find their own core issues, work them out, and heal their own ‘problems’. It was also a conscious decision to choose people who had different arenas for the turning-point which dramatically changed their lives. The real names of my participant-subjects are clouded in anonymity for reasons of privacy, confidentiality and nipping in the bud any potential harm.

What we are today comes from our thoughts of yesterday, and our present thoughts build our life of tomorrow: Our life is the creation of our mind. – Buddha

1.1 Definition

1.1.1 The school of fish

In the thesis the school of fish will be used as a metaphor when explaining two things, how it can be distracted by predators, like the unconsciousness distracts the conscious flow of stream we have. The other way is explaining the time it can take to get the school of fish back together after the predators have separated them. I think using the school of fish is a simple way of showing that it can sometimes take a while to get them together again after a separation, like when you realise that you are not focused on something and have to work on gathering your thoughts back together. The metaphor was learnt when reading about the dynamic systems theory (van Geert, 2003) as a simple way of explaining more complex processes. This theory is used a lot to amongst other things explaining the highs and lows of the economical status in the society or to explain a child's development. Understanding that life, economics and other things can work like waves with highs and lows, like sinus and cosine frequencies in the mathematical terms, can help with the understanding and coping of life in general.

2 Method

Over the course of forty years, Giorgi (Fast; Giorgi, 2009) has demonstrated the dialectical relationship between approach (paradigm), method, and content in psychology. Whatever psychological phenomenon we study requires the proper method to examine it, and what methodological tools we wield depends upon our philosophical standpoint about the person-world relationship. Is the human merely a highly developed animal? Is the human merely a sophisticated computer? Or is human existence beyond and outside of the thought-frames and vocabulary of evolutionary psychology and cognitive science? The method one uses hinges upon one's answer. If our paradigm is too narrow, then our method will be limited, and certain phenomena will be overlooked.

The above dialectical picture is important to my thesis. To study my richly complex theme, I required a qualitative method. I leaned upon the openness and wide-scope of phenomenology in order to access subjectivity, individuality, and uniqueness. Herein, I present the phenomenological method that I used to research people who had gone through a life-changing transition in their lives. To access in-depth reportable experiences about the phenomena, I conducted open-ended qualitative interviews with three Norwegian women. Based upon a phenomenological program, I gave the initiative to interviewees to tell their own stories.

2.1 Methodology

I repeat. I have no obligation to justify using a qualitative method, or justify interviewing, or legitimize selecting phenomenology over any of the other possible qualitative methods. I will simply present the phenomenological method that I used so that you will see the source of my knowledge-claims and why they are valuable and valid.

2.1.1 The phenomenological program

Husserl's makes a plea for fidelity to the phenomenon. His battle cry is, "Back to the things themselves". To accomplish that end, he brackets or puts out of play all theoretical presuppositions. He wants to let shine in their own light the phenomena of the everyday Lifeworld. He does not want them covered by some half-developed theory (Giorgi, 2006). In daily life, on the ground and in the finitude of time, people have their being, their

relationships, and their lives. Instead of abstract ideas and ideologies, phenomenology addresses the world as we live it, day by day.

The phenomenological epoché (bracketing), therefore, removes what typically obscures the phenomenon: conceptual, ethical, religious, coverings or practical, political, and economic wrappings (Giorgi, 2009). This bracketing controls for the bias and prejudice that any and every ideological position brings to any investigation. Phenomenology wants us to **see**; it wants us to see freshly and to behold what we see. The over-arching concept which captures the above is the phenomenological *reduction*. Throughout the research process, we put into parenthesis everything that is extrinsic to the phenomenon itself so that we might faithfully track it. Of course, the expectation is not that the researcher functions as a blank. No. The researcher is human and therefore equally capable of empathy and distance. The discipline of the phenomenological researcher is to stay within the reduction, avoiding being swayed by external ideas, theories, or one's own 'pet' notions. Bracketing does not mean that we are making the "taken-for-granted world" (Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009, pp. 13-14) disappear. Remember your algebra. We put letters or numbers into brackets to temporarily ignore them in service of dealing with something else. Later, we take the brackets off. In this research, I take them off to dialogue with existing literature.

2.1.2 Foundational concepts

The leading phenomenological concept is "intentionality". Properly understood, the notion heals all Platonic-Cartesian dualisms. Consciousness is conscious of something which is not consciousness itself, Husserl tells us. Thus, we are not trapped thinking our own thoughts, split from the world. Our thinking is *of* objects in-the-world. With no hindrance, we can *describe* our experience of, our relationship to, and the meanings we impute to whatever appears to our consciousness—be that conceptual, emotional, imaginal, or erotic. We have a direct contact with the 'stuff' of the world; we co-constitute the objects of our daily life. Perspectivity is a second key concept. Our contact with anything or person is never total, exhaustive, or complete. It is always limited, in perspective, typically given from our body's point of view – from our *here* and *now*.

Three methodological acts link to the ideas of intentionality and perspectivity: description; intuition; imaginative free variation. Phenomenology describes in a direct intuitive grasp whatever it sees, feels, imagines. Intuition, in a phenomenological context, does not refer to some mysterious process, some special capacity that only certain people presumably exhibit.

It is the natural, spontaneous grasp of what we intend—the object of our memory, sensation, emotion, or passion. Thus the participant-subject tells the researcher her experience; and the researcher intuits in the data what the interviewee has described. It is common; you offer and I accept. You did not give me ‘reality’, or facts, or constructs; you gave the gift of your experience. I do not ask you for what I want or think you should have. I receive the gift. **That** is phenomenological data collection in a nutshell. Free imaginative variation comes into play because of the inherent perspectivity mentioned above. To reach the essential core of anything whatsoever, we must imaginatively walk around it. Look at that apple in the bowl. Its bright color grabs my eye, and the way that it shines holds my attention. I pick it up and rub it. Hungry, I bit it; it bites back, juicy and tangy. Am I going to allow anyone to disagree with me that it is an apple? Look at that orange in the other bowl. It is big and bright; I can almost taste its sweetness. I take it in my hand, ready to squeeze, ready to peel it. Something feels wrong. I smell it. It lacks smell. I quickly try to sink my teeth into it. Ugh! It’s plastic. To the eye alone it looked more ‘real’ than ‘real’. But when I varied my contact beyond merely seeing, it turned out to be a ‘pretend’ orange. Who would foolishly doubt my experience of being fooled? Giorgi (Giorgi, 2009) says that the essence is discovered through imaginative variation, the disciplined act of mentally adding to and taking away part of a particular description to find out what about the object or experience or phenomenon is essentially invariant and constant about it. What after multiple viewing will cohere? Dahlberg et. al. said that in the Lifeworld we see each unique experience is part-of-a-whole and a whole is the hanging together of parts (Dahlberg, 2001). “So long as one can employ the eidetic reduction, with the help of imaginative variation, one can obtain an eidetic intuition into the state of affairs and describe an essential finding that is intrinsically general” (Giorgi, 2006, p. 356).

It is outside phenomenology’s purview whether or not appearances are “real”. The descriptive phenomenological way of thinking discovers the psychological meanings expressed, implicitly and explicitly (Giorgi, 1989) and aims to depict their essential structure. The “real” is a concept of rational dualism. It is the philosophical belief that things are already there, independent of me, ready to be captured if only I am in the correct scientific attitude. Phenomenology suspends belief in the reality of whatever appears, puts into brackets its existence. Is a mermaid “real” or a Troll a factual occurrence? When Giorgi (2006) writes that the meaning the phenomenon cannot be reduced to facts, he lets us see that the billions of dollars Disney has made on Ariel, the mermaid, has nothing to do with her philosophical or scientific status. She, and the paraphernalia around her, sells. And Trolls? Go to any gift store

in Norway and you will find them looking at you, even long-tailed ones. Would not the Norwegian culture be poorer without them? To debate their reality is just an exercise in philosophical rationalism. Phenomenology just sets it aside.

2.2 Phenomenological analysis

Giorgi tailors Husserl's philosophical phenomenology to the psychological level of inquiry. He has developed a method of analysis that moves from original, naïve descriptions, to meaning-units implied in the descriptions, to psychological concepts that express those meanings in a scientific-professional way, and then to general, essential structures of what was originally described.

The four steps to the phenomenological analysis are (Giorgi, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008):

1. Read the entire description in order to get a sense of the whole;
2. Establish meaning units;
3. Name what is meant by the meaning units and whatever connections between them show;
4. Outline the transformed meaning units in order to obtain the structure of the experience.

Step 1: I listened to the recordings and read the transcriptions, while writing thoughts and reflections. This was especially when reading the second and third interview, because many links between the interviews occurred while doing the last two. I made a separate document writing these thoughts, so they wouldn't influence and contaminate the early versions of the interviews. I read the transcriptions and listened to the recordings many times while attempting to obtain a maximum openness to the description and trying to put my pre-knowledge about the phenomenon in brackets (Kvale, 1983), to get the overall impression of the interviews, and get what the informants communicated about the phenomenon and her experience of it (Giorgi, 1989).

Step 2: After first reading of the interview to get at a preliminary meaning of the whole, the central units of meaning emerged and in turn they were related to the whole (Kvale, 1983). Seeing the central units of meaning or meaning-units it was possible to identify themes in the interview. Since the interview had an open structure this step was important for the overall analyzing and it helped me to divide the interview into smaller parts. Dividing the interview

into meaning-units and themes happened spontaneous and in a natural flow so the true meaning was kept intact (Kvale, 1983). I had to keep a phenomenological reduction, “brackets”, around my taken-for-granted world in this step as well, to see their lifeworld and not contaminate the material with mine (Giorgi, 2009).

Step 3: To find a link between the themes, transforming the meaning units to both of higher and lower relevance is the notion of this step, and in this structuring the themes (Kvale, 1983). The researcher needs to put on an attitude of phenomenological reduction, put aside her understanding/skill about psychological theories and models, her convictions, attitude and preference and just focus on the data like it is in the transcribed interviews (Giorgi, 1989). Since one of the interviews was 150 minutes long, I made a grid system to organize and get a full sense of the interview. After organizing it this way, I sensed the whole view and made a mind map to organize it. I also made mind maps for the other two interviews, because it was an organized way to figure out how the meaning units were linked, not only within each interview but also between the interviews. The same colours were used for the same phases for all three interviews, and I made a comprehensive mind map to capture all three interviews, which was the fourth step.

Step 4: Integrating the findings from the individual interviews, questioning each meaning unit in connection to the research-question studied resulted in a narrative description of the themes. The last step was to get a structure of the interviews on the background of the work from the previous three steps. The structure needs to capture the essence and the full concept of what the informants tell about the phenomenon and their experience of it. In this step, I made one big mind map with all the three interviews in order to see the links between them. What the recurring themes were among the three, and then go back to the individual interviews and make a structure for each of them to capture the phenomenon without removing or adding anything vital to the interviews. The purpose of these structures is to compress the interviews and wording in such a way that the phenomenon was kept as a whole, but also that the individual experiences emerge clearly. With the emerging connections and themes it is easier to find the most relevant for the study, because “the data will always be richer than the perspective brought to it” (Giorgi, 2006, p. 354), and it is therefore important to reduce the amount of material.

2.3 The Sample

Finding people who had gone through a life-changing transition was done with a convenience sample, because picking random people would have had a high percent-rate of missing research area. I heard from different directions that I should contact a particular organization, who holds courses about self-development. I made contact with the leader of that organization and exchanged e-mails and talked on the telephone with her for two months. This led to interviewing Anna, who is a part of this organization. I also attended one of their courses, where I met Sara. The interview with Zoë was a convenience after talking about my topic of interest to everyone I met the past year. I wanted to have informants that had taken different self-development courses, because this study is not for analyzing one course and its result-rate, but rather the transitions a human being is able to go through if and only if they are motivated enough.

The informants told about the context in which the turning-point found place, in relations to the actual turning-point. They also elaborated how their lives had been both before and after this moment in time when the turning-point happened. Since all the interviews were done years after the turning-point they also shared a retrospective view and understanding of their experience.

2.3.1 Criteria for the sample

The biggest criteria for me in order to find the informants was that they needed to have undergone a huge life-changing transition and now felt like they were more themselves, more happy and did not have any problems with talking about the problems they had overcome. Like mentioned in other parts of the paper, people can go through life-changing transitions by going for a walk, emotional writing, painting, talking to friends, talking to a clinical psychologist among others. In this research it was important to find someone who had made this transition not primarily because they had gone into therapy. The reason for this is not to reject the possible effect of professional help, but to shed a light on the fact that one shoe does not always fit all. We are all individual human beings, and will therefore have individual and unique paths in order to achieve happiness and fulfilment.

2.4 Data Collection

The phenomenological approach suits to capture the informants understanding of his/her own experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I needed to be conscious of my role as a researcher in the

data collection, and analysis and to curtail the least possible influence with theoretical assumptions (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Though I choose to read up on literature on the topic in advance of the data collection, a thorough study of literature in the field of interest can increase the researcher's ability to discover more sides of the phenomenon. If another researcher had done my research, then maybe the data had been interpreted differently, and focused on other theories (Smith, 2008). Though if it was a different researcher, I think that he/she might have got a different interview altogether. An interview is something unique between the researcher and informant. This fact does not compromise objectivity, but promotes it. Knowledge does not depend only on what one sees, but what one sees depends upon how one sees and who does the seeing.

2.4.1 The interview

One of the most used methods within psychology is the qualitative interview and gives an opportunity for people to describe their lifeworlds and opinions (Kvale, 1983). This is a contrast to the multiple-choice questionnaires with fixed questions and already formulated answers (Kvale, 1983). The interview is used in this study because in order to capture something so personal as a turning-point, it would be impossible to do it quantitatively without losing the essence of the pure and unique experience, which the phenomena is. The open structure was used to give the informants freedom to talk about their experience in their own time and with their own words, without the imposition of the researcher's biases.

2.4.1.1 Procedure for the interviews

Before the interviews I had already been in contact with the informants at least once, either in person, over phone or e-mail. One of the informants was sent the information documents (Appendix 1), while the two others got them on the day of the interview. The informed consent form (Appendix 2) was signed before the interview started. The interview was recorded with an Mp3-recorder. The interview guide (Appendix 3), was used for all three informants, and before all three interviews I did extensive work with figuring out what type of follow up questions I could need on the background of what they talked about. I could do this because I knew about their stories before doing the interviews. Because the interview had an open structure, the interview guide functioned as only that, a guideline. It did not steer the interviews. The informants were given freedom to talk with the open structure, and I could then pick up on the important things, and ask questions about that. The interviews were thirty minutes, ninety minutes and one hundred and fifty minutes, resulting in substantial amounts of data-material. The thirty minute interview was however only a follow up interview, since

the informant already had most of her story in a written text. The interview with this informant was to clarify and get more detailed answers on certain aspects. The interviews were done in Norwegian and translated as a last step in the process, in order to keep the meaning of the context as true as possible to the real interview. Every interview has been handled confidential, by changing the names and places in the transcription, and having the files either on a locked computer or in a secure locker.

2.4.2 Technical support-material

An mp3-player was used to record the interviews, which was conducted in Norwegian since both the researcher and all the informants are from Norway and have Norwegian as their mother-tongue. The transcription was written in Norwegian since the interviews were done in Norwegian. The transcription was also true to the dialect the informants had, with both the grammar and phrasing intact. Small pauses were marked as ..., while larger breaks and pauses were marked (pause). Names and places were changed instantly in the transcription. The recordings will be deleted when the research is finished. The translation to English has only been made for the parts of interview that have been used directly in the paper, and is written "*like this*". The focus in the translation was to get the essence of the informants' descriptions over to English; this led to not always word-by-word translations. I feared that meaning would be lost if I did it differently, like transliteration (word-by-word).

2.5 Ethical issues

I applied to NSD (Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS) and got approval for my research before starting the interviews (Appendix 4). According to Kvale (1996), how deep and critically a researcher analyses the data is an ethical issue. The interest of the research was to investigate the phenomena of going through a transition. I have, because of this, not focused on all the details of the informants' worlds.

In this study it was important that the participants felt safe enough to talk about their emotional and personal lives in order for me as a researcher to get a view on why they have gone through this transition. I gave them fictitious names in the paper, so that they would be anonymous. And their histories shrouded in confidentiality. The informants signed a contract saying that they agree to be part of this research, and that their stories will be the research-material for this paper. In the contract contains the statement that the participant could back out of the research at any time if they had a change of heart. All these aspects of making the

research confidential and anonymous are very important since the informants shared personal stories about their lives (Smith, 2008).

Due to the ethical issues concerning the sensitive information in the interviews, I have decided not to attach the transcribed interviews. Since the founder of one of the courses tells her personal story, I have decided to exclude the organizations names for both courses. The focus has been on studying the phenomenon of going through a turning-point and the preceding transition, and not on which course creates the best effect.

In my research it was important to bracket my own experience, ideas and taken-for-granted world and keeping a neutral view on the data material. It is almost impossible to get a completely 'blank attitude', though this is what I aim and strive for as much as possible (Giorgi, 2009). However, it is important to realize that we can observe and experience empathy for another, but can never share entirely the other's experience (Smith, et al., 2009). My thoughts and reflections in the paper have emerged after perceiving the informants lifeworld. Like any method, the descriptive phenomenological method has its pros and cons. The method is adequate to reach the goal of investigating a phenomenon without falling back on theories for explanations and without making theories about it. But the method also is adequate to open to other methods and to later dialogue the results with other research about the phenomena. Not forcing the results (structures) into pre-existing models and theories does not mean the researcher forecloses on dialogue with relevant literature.

3 The stories of Anna, Sara and Zoë

The data shows that to understand the turning-point and the preceding transition of the informants, it is important to understand the context they were in, not only during the turning-point, but also before and after. This chapter will describe the informants' lives, starting with Zoë, then Sara and then Anna. The reason for doing this is because they have all gone through similar processes within, but explained in detail different things, so they are put in this order to best understand their lives. This is only an introduction about the transitions the informants have gone through, in order to become acquainted with each of them and to understand what enormous transformation they have gone through.

“The mind’s ability to change one’s lifestyle is extremely powerful”

(Goleman, 1997, p. 127)

3.1 Zoë’s story

Today Zoë is a happy young woman, living with her boyfriend and finishing her education. When talking to her nothing indicates that life has not always shown her the best side. A few years ago, however, life was completely different. She got the M.E disease, short for Myalgic encephalomyelitis (Larsen, 2009, p. 185) (it can also be called chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) (Larsen, 2009, p. 54)) at the age of fifteen, and it occupied her life for nine years. Zoë explains that the disease was very tiring and varied, where some days were good but then others were really bad. The big difference living with the disease is that the “normal” state to be in is having really bad days. After trying to live on her own during secondary school, she moved back home at the age of seventeen and spent her days in bed where all she managed to do was listen to audio-books. She was powerless; her memory had vanished, and she was on several types of medication because of all the pain in her joint and muscles. When visitors came she only had energy to either listen to them or see them. If she wanted to get out of bed she had to crawl or be carried. *“M.E. is such a weird disease and it doesn’t help no matter how much you sleep,”* she implies. All the doctors she went to told her that they had no cure or solution for her to get better.

On better days she thought to her self *“If it doesn’t help lying still, then I can just as well try to live and take the bad days as they come.”* And continues by asking *“How can I get well?”*

...because it would be great to get a few more good days.” The stubbornness to get better in turn led her to a doctor who recommended a course in England. He had heard of cases where people recovered from M.E. by attending these courses. Zoë got really excited and read up on the techniques they used and their ways of thinking. Although she had tried many of the techniques on her own, she understood that she might have done them wrong but was eager to try to attend despite of this. The course helped her to change focus. Instead of thinking about everything she did not have, she learned to think about what she did have. The techniques focused on finding your strengths instead of weaknesses. The main thought was that happiness is not something created by good luck or genes, but by getting to know yourself and your strong sides and learning how to use these to your advantage.

Before the course Zoë dealt with the pain either by mentally moving it to a different location on her body, or some how delaying it. The course helped her to understand that the pain needed to be stopped and dealt with, not transposed. She learned to understand that the pain was not part of her identity, her body or thoughts. Returning from the course she understood that the road to recovery would be long and tough, but she was determined to make it. It took a long time for Zoë to work her way out of the disease, but with using what she had learnt on the course, with both new ways of thinking and techniques, she succeeded. And like I said at the beginning of her story, she is now a happy healthy young woman appreciating life for everything it offers.

3.2 Sara’s story

I met Sara for the interview one snowy day after Christmas. When we settled in at a nearby café, and we took off the winter coats I saw that her pregnant stomach had grown even bigger than when we first met at the course in December. Her due-date was only a few weeks later, and Sara could not be happier. Not only was she pregnant, but she has the sweetest boyfriend and they could not wait to live as a family of three in their house. A few years ago she would never even dream of having this life. Sara had low self-esteem did drugs and had an abusive boyfriend. Like Zoë, Sara made a conscious choice to work her way out of her drug-addiction, after attending a course that she was advised to attend. Even though this course became a positive turning-point for her, she has had two major turning-points in her life, one was to start drugs and one was to quit drugs.

In order to understand the accomplishment of quitting drugs, the first transition needs to be highlighted. Sara was very close to her brother when growing up. They were only one year apart and were inseparable. Sadly, he died after falling sick when she was thirteen and it changed her life forever. She felt guilty and responsible since he was the one who died and not her. The whole family was present when he passed, and she was so heartbroken afterwards that she could not decide who to go home with. Her mother and step-father supported each other. Her father stopped drinking during this time because of her brother's death had enough with himself and his new sober girlfriend. Sara ended up going home with her older sister, but comments *"I felt I was in her way as well..."* Sara was all alone and felt vulnerable. All she wanted was for someone to give her a little love and attention. She constantly experienced negative and disturbing thoughts. It made her feel crazy. She hoped she would wake up and it would all be a bad dream. At length she started to cut her wrists and arms, as a cry for help. *"I didn't want to kill myself, I just wanted....some attention, but didn't get any. Not even when I went to the hospital to get stitched up here (she shows me where, by moving her right hand up along her left arm) did anyone say anything. I thought that this would lead to something... right?"* After years of feeling neglected and blaming everyone for her misery, she made friends with a girl who had everything she wanted. *"I knew she did drugs, but I thought she was so cool, and so pretty and she had everything...A house, car, kids and she was the coolest, and I thought..."* Though she had learnt about drugs in school, and worked at "youth against drugs", she started doing drugs thinking it would lead to a perfect life. During the interview she comments that *"in a way, it was to escape it all...without understanding it that back then"*. She got the life she always wanted and everything was "pink clouds" for the first two and a half years.

Bit by bit her fairytale-life started cracking up. The drive for getting high and the increasing expenses to be paid did not correlate with her income and staying out of trouble. Even though she kept the police on a distance in the beginning, they soon caught up with her. She even ended up selling drugs to youngsters and treated her family like "crap". She comments that *"It took as much time to get out, as the time it had been fun."* Every time she tried to quit drugs, she started a different one. She did community service for a year, went to a drug-consultant twice a month, and a clinical psychologist once a week, but nothing helped. Not only was she on drugs, which broke her down, she also had a violent boyfriend Alex. He also did drugs, and on top of this it turned out that he also was schizophrenic. Sara was regularly physically and psychologically abused by him, but *"I loved him"* and as long as he did not put

her in a hospital she thought it was okay. In retrospect she understands how bad this really was, and knows that staying with him had all to do with low self-esteem and being intoxicated by the drugs.

The course she attended was introduced to her at an exhibition, and she was persuaded to go. It taught her about how you create things yourself and how you store un-handled things in your body, showing her that she did not need to be a victim and that she could take control over her own life. *“I needed to take responsibility for my own life, no matter how much bad luck I had in the past. I chose to live a different life than the one I had been living until that moment.”* She quit drugs that weekend and has never looked back. In the weeks after, she pulled away more and more from Alex. He respected her choice to quit drugs. Being off drugs and away from Alex gradually made her stronger, and though the lonesome detox created a lot of tears and sorrow she got through it. Today a lot of people praise her for what she has accomplished, but says *“Most people don’t need to go through such a big transition... They would all have succeeded... but they haven’t got themselves into that big mess in the first place.”* Sara acknowledged what and why she made the choices she did, and is thrilled to have worked her way out of it.

3.3 Anna’s life

After hearing about Anna from different directions, I understood that I needed to interview her. She has the past twenty-something-years worked her way out of her *“spider web”*, which she has been tangled in until the breakage point. The turning-point came when she had a Ceaserean section (C-section) delivering her youngest child. She was awake during the surgery and had incredible amounts of pain. She experienced in one minute to be in the pain and in the next seeing herself lying on the operation table, from above. She was not in her body, but outside it, in a light. She realized in that moment what Zoë had learnt at her course, that you are not you body, pain or thoughts, you are something more. When she woke up from the surgery, the doctor explains that being awake during surgery sometimes happen, but he could not explain what or why it happens. The experience was very traumatic for Anna, and the incident made her very sick. The C-section became the door that opened the flood of suppressed emotions and memories that had been building up throughout her life. Though her sickness did not look life threatening from the outside, it was for her.

Anna put herself in the hospital with the help of a lawyer, lost all her faith in herself and tried committing suicide a couple of times. The sickness was around for a long time, because she had a lot of stuff or “*shit*” [dritten min] as she calls it, to deal with, like having an alcoholic father, being raped on several occasions, and unhealthy relationships. She took an education that was not right for her, and her list goes on and on. During the time she was sick, Anna met a kinesiologist who taught her about positive and negative thoughts and made her understand that even though she had always looked at herself as a positive person, this was maybe not completely true. She read a lot of self-help books, amongst other a book by Dale Carnegie, where the Norwegian title can be translated as “Stop whining! Start living!” (Though the English title is “How to Stop Worrying and Start Living”). Understanding that she could change her whole think-pattern, helped her out of the sickness: *“I got amazing development, not only on myself, but also on others, and I continued to seek within myself for episodes and things that I felt stopped me in life... I could find episodes that had influenced me from the time I was a little girl, and I removed them on cell-level... After seeing what I could do with my life, I started to help others....”* Today Anna runs her own organization where she teaches people to get through their own problems and has succeeded with this. Like she emphasizes in her courses and in her organization: *“No one can say that they can’t develop into something better. It’s all in your head. I can teach you the map to get out of your spiderweb, but you have to walk the road yourself!”*

3.4 Different but same

The stories the three informants tell are astonishing—ordinary miracles. There are many aspects and details in all three that make them unique and not comparable with any other life. Every human is unique and it creates diversity among us, but there are also aspects that can be categorized as general and part of the human condition of our moders/post-modern life. In the search for understanding aspects of the humans that are typical and general, I learned doing this thesis that there are indeed similarities between the turning-point and what preceded. The three informants all had different lives and different obstacles in their lives, but interestingly enough there turning-points and transitions are quite similar. In the analysis of the stories two themes emerge as the most important.

3.4.1 The two themes

The first deals with the ability to learn and comprehend the different patterns they had, and what techniques to use in order to change the patterns and way of living. The informants learnt different techniques in order to get through the transition, either by themselves like Anna did, or in courses like Sara and Zoë. The techniques build on the same principles about gaining awareness of who they are, what patterns trapped them and how to control their lives in a new way.

The second aspect deals with the less-than-conscious dimension, sometimes called the unconsciousness, and how it influences these patterns and how we think about ourselves. It also brings forth the idea that there is something more to humans, something that extends beyond the notion of parts and visible issues. Because in order for the informants to understand that the unconscious can take control and influence their way of thinking and behaviour, they had to realize that they were something more. Something that makes all the other aspects in life come together. This something will be explained later, and will go under the name X-factor.

3.4.1.1 Why the first theme is not enough

The traditional view in the West has been that we are either developing because of genes or environment, but if this was the case then neither of the informants would have been able to pursue their transitions. In the last century however there has been an increasing acknowledgement that there might be factors contributing to development that was emphasized by the nature versus nurture discussion. It is like when you are baking bread. You have always done it the same way and do not realise that you are missing some important ingredient, maybe like the yeast. How are you supposed to know something is missing when you have always done it one way, and that way worked? The factors contributing to development outside the realms of nature/nurture have not just emerged in our times. There has been an increasing awareness that there are important factors not captured by the debate.

Freedom to choose one's own destiny, and in this the freedom to change has been highlighted by Valsiner (Valsiner, 2007). Adler's view is similar to what Valsiner's concept of independent dependence (Hergenhahn, 2005). Where the dependent part is the environmental and biological raw material and the independent part links with human beings having a free will to choose his/her own destiny (Hergenhahn, 2005; Valsiner, 1997; Valsiner, 2007; van Geert, 2003). Even though Anna met a lot of alcohol abuse and physical abuse, she never fell

into the trap of starting. *“It was like a little voice in me told me to not start”*. When she was so sick that she put herself in a psychiatric hospital, not even then did she identify herself with sick people. Because she knew: *“What you give attention will grow”*. And continues: *“I wasn’t going to sit around and talk about my shit [dritten] for hours, I wanted to get well.”* Giving attention to her shit by talking about it endlessly went against her beliefs. Though everyone has freedom to choose, we must still learn to become aware of this freedom and learn how to see what options are in store for us. It can be difficult to search and want something that you do not even know exists. We must learn and understand that we have a choice. Our unconsciousness might prevent us from finding out that we actually do not enjoy or appreciate the way we live our lives, though that is a totally different perspective, relating to the shadow world (Humphreys, 2008) and the distractors (Chen, 2008). It has to do with what you identify yourself with. In the era where nature and nurture ruled, Anna might only have had the opportunity to go as far as her genes or environment would allow. Something in her however told her not to start drugs and not to focus on her illness. Even though you might be ill, do drugs or have some other issue, it does not mean you as an individual have to identify yourself with this. To say that Anna was sick, and had to spend some time at a psychiatric hospital gives a totally different picture then to say that Anna became a psychiatric patient because of her traumatic experience. An important aspect to remember is that how we view the world and what we think contributes to how we feel about who we are.

Another theory pertinent to the nature/nurture debate is Maslow’s pyramid on the hierarchy of needs. The need for self-actualization is at the top, which means to reach your human potential. The previous levels in the pyramid are the need for self-esteem, love and belongingness, safety and the physiological needs. *“What humans can be, they must be to be ultimately at peace with themselves. They must be true to their nature”* (Maslow, 1954 in Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 489). Maslow implied that it is impossible for any person to completely reach his or her full potential, and referred to the hierarchical needs. He said that as you climb the hierarchy, the needs become more fragile were the needs at the bottom, the physiological and safety, have a long evolutionary history and are therefore very powerful. While the higher needs are newer and newer ending with the newest, self-actualization. The further up the pyramid the more distinctly for human needs aswell and therefore do not *“have as firm a biological foundation”* (Maslow, 1968 in Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 490). This means that it is easy to interfere with the pursuit towards the highest block, namely the self-actualization. I think however that for many people the hierarchy looks different, because if it had been

directly it would have been difficult for the informants to push forward with their self-development and self-actualization. If you see the whole thing as a building, is it always about building the house from the bottom? Do you need the frame-work before you can put in the walls, ceiling and so on. The foundation of the house and the need at the bottom of Maslow's pyramid concerning food and shelter is the same in both. In relation to the informants I believe that in order to fix the building they needed to start from top, start with the roof, or the self-actualization as Maslow calls it. When the roof is fixed many of the defects and flaws inside will disappear, because they were caused by blind spots. Even though Maslow says that only people who have fulfilled all the other levels in the pyramid can reach self-actualization, I think that the women in this research have shown that working from the top and downwards can also be an option.

If the master-thesis only focused on the mainstream psychology and scientific literature, the paper would have ended here. The informants would have been considered by the theories and system, as lost causes and be doomed to a life in pain, both physically and psychologically. They were already on the track of being sent back and forth between clinical psychologist, doctors, and institutions. But you already know from the previous section that these women not only got out of their situations, they are also now in "normal" life situations with no heavy baggage from the past delaying their way through life.

3.4.1.2 Why the second theme also is important

"The mind's ability to change one's lifestyle is extremely powerful" (Goleman, 1997, p. 127).

When we grow up we learn how to view the world and how to cope with the world, to some extent, like they argue in the gene versus environment debate. When we get older, maybe in our late teenage years or early twenties, we realize that all these "rules" or "truths" we have lived by might not compliment the growing awareness of our own beliefs and thoughts about the world. Something in us might convince us, maybe unconsciously, that there is a need for a change. What is this thing in us that can make us change radically? The drive must be caused by some sort of variable or factor. Maybe it is the free will (Valsiner, 1997) or the longing for self-actualization (Hergenhahn, 2005)? Even though the West has come to realize that we are influenced by something more than genes and environment, by acknowledging free will, self-actualization and similar theories, I believe there is something more contributing to this drive.

Since it can be difficult to pin-point, the variable or factor contributing to the drive it will go under the name of X-factor in this thesis.

What is this mysterious thing called the X-factor? Anna says that it has nothing to do with being a distinct characteristic it is just that we, maybe especially in the West have forgotten that we all have this X-factor. Anna explain that *“In the middle of all the hell I experienced, there was always a tiny little piece in me that believed in something positive... or that something positive existed... even though I had no idea what it was, but there was always a drive in me, saying DON’T GIVE UP!...and this piece is the soul-piece [sjelelige biten] in me continuing that I should just persevere in the situation....”*. She continues that *“in the middle of something that is bad, we humans have something within us that will help us, if we listen...”* Anna tells that she *“had gone astray”* if it had not been for her grandmother, who had been there throughout her childhood years. *“Her words about never giving up and always believing there is something more kept me going through a lot of ‘stuff’”*. Anna learned to listen to her X-factor because her grandmother kept telling that she should never give up. Her grandmother understood the importance of the X-factor and taught Anna to listen to it. Though we can learn about this through influence from the surrounding world, I think we just as well can learn it on our own, because like Anna said *“We all have the ability, we have just forgotten how to use it”*.

Zoë called what kept her going, *“the positive part”* of her and *“stubbornness”* for wanting a better life. All three informants have different words to describe what keeps them going and keeps them pursuing for something more. Some people are religious, and say that their God guide them, some people say that they learned some lines to follow when they where small children, others have just something *“in them”*. I agree with Anna that many of us have forgotten that we have the ability to change our worlds with the lessons we can learn from *“this X-factor”*, whatever it is, that comes from within, and not only the exterior.

Do not stand underneath the stars and complain that there is no light (Mace, 2008). If you feel you are in the dark and that nothing is going your way, then try to find the light from the stars. The panic of being outside in the dark is because we have forgotten to look up at the stars. We think all the answers come from our conscious brain, but we should trust ourselves and find our guide, our X-factor, that can guide us through the dark nights. Even though it might be hidden from our consciousness it is always present (Easwaran, 2007).

Have you ever heard someone say something like: “No, I can’t, because we have never done that in our family?” or “Well, mathematics is the subject our family does best, so I’ll take an education in that, though I really would love to be a nurse”. It is therefore an important issue to show that we have a free will to choose as well as vitality and structure in order to succeed. In a lecture Olav Tufte, the best rower in Norway, held for students at my university last year (Tufte, 2009), he talked about his understanding of the word “talent”. He said that there was no such thing, and indicated that the only way to really succeed is hard and structured work towards the goal. Maybe the ones that have “talent” found the passion for it earlier than others, and therefore have practised it, either it being sports or recognizing the X-factor, for a certain amount of time before the others started? I believe the same goes for learning about yourself, your unconsciousness and the baggage you bring around. Marit Bjørgen, the best female cross-country skier in Norway, has talked about how she was only able to win races after she had taken a clean-up in her inner baggage (Aasen, 2010). Tufte also said that in order to succeed you need to go “all in”, and put down the effort, which is exactly what the informants have done.

3.5 Concluding remarks

The informants’ stories are amazing. They have managed to turn their lives around from something that drained them of energy, into a new life where they are full of life and have energy for what they want. They have dealt with what stopped them in life, and have learned techniques to handle new obstacles that come along. The next three chapters are about how the change they went through happened.

4 Change of focus

“Everything can be taken from a man, but... the last of human freedoms

*– to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances,
to choose one’s own way”*

(Frankl, 1963 in Boniwell, 2006, p. 68).

Humans cherish stability and predictability in both relationships and routines, but there is also an expectation that life changes. Seeing human lives in a constant transition where some transitions and periods of change stand out as especially significant in the individual’s life course. These can be seen as “turns in the road, changes in the direction or the trajectory of our lives” (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001, p. xv). Though the transitions the informants made are visible to the outside world, there are probably millions who have overcome just as big transition, but no one sees them, so we think that they do not exist. This chapter elaborates how the turn in the road was for the informants.

4.1 Making the choice to change focus

A change always starts with an acknowledgement. Some of these can be a bit painful to admit, but thinking that short-term pain will become long-term reward might help to get through it. Unfortunately, we need to realise that the brain wants to be at ease all the time, and might hold back things in the unconscious, so we cannot reach it. The decision to change and the persistence to go through with it can eventually lead the brain to unlock hidden agendas. A change is a journey of exploration to discover what is responsible for the continuing issues and problems in life and then finding how to free yourself from those issues.

In order to make progress, we have to change or loose our old habits and beliefs. When we loose a belief - however right it might have been - we feel unhappy, discouraged or angry. When we have lost something, we are in a protesting state until we get the new, better generalization that will bring everything together in a better state of organization. This is the same as when the school of fish reunite as one, after the predators have first separated them for a while. It requires introspection to unlock the hidden universal knowledge from our subconscious minds, just like it requires labour to release a statue from a block of marble

(Hogben, 1998). The introspection can happen not only with looking into ourselves, but also getting feedback from our surroundings. Anna, Sara and Zoë were surviving in their lives, but they had a longing, consciously or unconsciously, for more. Both Zoë and Sara wondered how their disease could be removed from their lives. In turn the X-factor led them to the edge of the cliff, questioning whether they should leap (Alapack, 2007). If they were ready to open up to change and to see what the change would bring. Leaping into the unknown does not automatically mean leaping into a black hole, it means taking a chance to broaden the horizon of the beautiful scenery beyond the edge of the cliff. The biggest decision for the informants was whether to jump or not. In order to do the jump they needed to push forward and take the next step. Everyone shapes themselves, some times we might like the statue (person) we have created, and other times we might have to work on it a bit longer to get the wanted result. Making the decision to take the chance on leaping and to change was stressful for the informants. It meant that they had to adapt (Goleman, 1997) by taking in a new and broader view on life and to themselves, and figuring out how this could mend with their lives. Their longing for something more lead then to the edge of the cliff, the crossroad, and they had to decide what they wanted to do. All three informants took a conscious choice to leap, while Sara and Zoë made the choice to leap by attending the courses; Anna made her choice after the C-section.

”Do not just live, live with passion. Do not just live planned, orderly life; take chances. Even failures that may result from taking chances could be used to enhance personal growth” (Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 193).

4.2 The turning-point

What caused the turning-point? They all learned that there are more ways to understand and look at themselves. Sara and Zoë learned this new perspective at their courses, while Anna understood herself in a new way when floating in the light over her body during the C-section. A turning-point, or switch, can happen in a second or over a longer period of time (Bohm, 1987). It all depends on the individual and what the turning-point is about. The informants went through life-transforming experiences, but it can also be smaller things like suddenly understanding how to do algebra.

“Turning-points are episodes in which someone undergoes a substantial change. (...) Turning-point narratives are usually events in which one understands something new about oneself or faces decisions about different paths to take in life” (McLean, 2006, p. 715).

Bohm tried to explain the transition and turning-point when you go from an unconscious state into a more conscious state of mind, with a magnetic field where there are two poles, a negative and a positive. The understanding of the shift come from gaining awareness around the shift, and explains that it is close to a shift in magnetic fields (Bohm, 1987). I understand Bohm’s theory in this way; the informants had issues that they were not conscious of (one pole). When the switch happened parts of what was hidden in the unconsciousness emerged into the consciousness and they saw themselves in a new light. After having done the analysis I understood that the turning-point to a more conscious state was only the beginning of the journey, because this only led to the decision whether to use the new information to change. Bohm also states that once the new doors have opened, it is impossible to close them. It was impossible for the informants to ignore the new understanding they had. Bohm’s comparison to the magnetic field, make me associate the turning-point with turning on the light in a dark room, and then decide whether to tidy up the mess that is revealed, or not.

The turning-point can also be understood by giving attention to how changing the perception on something changes the meaning. Chen writes about the cognitive devices of perception (Chen, 2008). His descriptions gives a simple explanation for how a turning-point can happen. He explains how there are two major views when perceiving the surroundings; the central and peripheral view (Chen, 2008). If the focus is centered on only one of these it can be difficult to perceive the other, and even more difficult to catch items or “distractors”, like Chen called them, in for example the peripheral view that steal the focus away from the central view. If there is an absence of understanding that there are things in the peripheral view (or unconsciousness), distracting the central view (or consciousness) it can be difficult to achieve the goals that can be seen in the radar. When Zoë read up on the course before attending it she learned that the techniques were similar to the ones she was already using, but she did not attain the wanted results. This changed when she learned that there are aspects that influenced her actions even though she had no idea they were there or how she could handle them. When there is an understanding that things can happen in both the central and peripheral view it is much clearer what needs to be done in order to get a clear view and reach the goals without distractors. When the informants learned new ways of seeing themselves they also (gradually)

gained access to both central and peripheral aspects with themselves. Gaining awareness of aspects that had been laying in the unconsciousness (peripheral view). Most of what they saw of themselves were aspects that had once been in the consciousness (central view), but for some reason had been ignored or not focused on, which gradually pushed into the unconsciousness (peripheral view). When the women made the choice to change, and saw themselves in a new light, their lives changed. To change the meaning in life also changes the state of being (Bohm, 1987), and to see and understand that there are different ways to view life, transformed everything.

To pin-point exactly when the turn in the road happened for the women is difficult, but they noticed after the courses and C-section that something in them had changed, and that they could never return to their previous selves. Opening up to new knowledge about how they and life works, gave them awareness to life that they did not have before. Even though the turn in the road had happened, like said earlier, it was only the beginning of their journey, and only the beginning of the transformation in themselves.

4.3 Concluding remarks

An important aspect in the turning-point for the informant was to understand this relationship between consciousness and unconsciousness, but also relationship about the mind and body. How things that are too painful to deal with or things that are peripheral to the consciousness might fall into different states of unconsciousness, whether by making hinders in the mind or moving them to another place in the body. Changing focus and seeing/understanding these aspects where crucial for the transition for the informants.

5 The active way out

“The good life is a process, not a state of being”

(Rogers, 1961 in Boniwell, 2006, p. 46).

There are no shortcuts to a better life. Mental training can be compared with physical training. The more persistent you are, the more you work out in increasing amounts to get in shape. If you keep up the training you will get results, both with physical and mental training (Cramer, Furuholmen, & Sandemose, 2008). Though the process of growth and personal life changes can be experienced as rather unpleasant, mental training can lead to a better life (Boniwell, 2006). As long as you harbour unwholesome feelings and unconscious emotional conflicts, you cannot achieve complete calmness within your self. The more we relinquish and resolve these issues, the more we gain insight and quiet the mind leading to calmness and detachment (Burns, 1965). Zoë speaks for all three informants when saying *“I knew it was going to be tough, but what I had been doing did not work, and I wanted to get better”*.

The hardest lesson to learn is that we have to take responsibility for our own life and happiness (Humphreys, 2008). All three informants at one point realized that getting better meant not putting the blame on the pain or other people, in other words exterior things, but taking responsibility for their own actions and changing the attitudes in them that stopped them from having the optimal life.

All three informants acknowledged that once they had seen the world with a new perspective, they could never look back. Since gaining access to knowledge is so easy in the world now days, the women stated they could have done nothing and remained unfulfilled, but this is also a choice (Bohm, 1987). They wanted the change, and when they had learned techniques to make it happen, they made the choice to push themselves through the pain and hard work to regain full control of their lives and not be held back by predators and distractors lurking in the dark, peripheral unconsciousness. This section elaborates some of the awareness processes they learned and used to achieve their goals (They will be elaborated later with linking them to different theories) :

- Awareness in the moment
- Awareness of the mind/body connection
- Awareness of the different levels of consciousness
- Sense of mastery, and how it increases security and confidence in oneself

5.1 Awareness in the moment

The informants had to open the field of attention and awareness in order to get new options and new solutions to emerge. By training to be in the moment and see what lay in the central and peripheral view they gradually gained access to more and more within themselves. Like Zoë suddenly recognized that even though she had a positive attitude to life, she also had a lot of negative voices in the peripheral location taking up a lot more energy than she ever imagined. When she gained control of these, the techniques she used finally worked. People run around on autopilot and forget to pay attention to themselves as a whole (Goleman, 1997). The informants had been using their energy on focusing only on the aspects in the light, central consciousness. Learning to be in the now and taking the whole view into account helped them through the process. Developing a habit of reflecting on their feelings from time to time “detecting the motives which produce seemingly spontaneous words and deeds” (Burns, 1965, p. 24) made the three women gain more and more vision of both the central and peripheral aspects in their lives. You need to take the bull by its horns and show who the boss is.

By learning to be in the now we have a chance to know ourselves and our mindset better. Without supervision, our thoughts run our lives without us ever knowing it (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Awareness in the moment creates an opportunity for us to hold our thoughts differently in a way that we have control of them and not the other way around (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Observation like this helps to get a birds-eye-view or to see yourself more from the outside, which helps with understanding what and how to change and organize aspects within yourself in a way that is “rarely obtained through logical deduction or rational explanations” (Burns, 1965, p. 23).

5.1.1 Mindfulness

Put it simply mindfulness means; to be present in the presence (Gunaratana, 2002). The informants learned about the importance of being and understanding themselves in the moment. Though none of the three actually used the term “mindfulness”, their descriptions about being here and now is best described by mindfulness. In Buddhism mindfulness is explained to be one of the early stages in order to achieve and reach a full meditation. Neither meditation nor mindfulness is as scary or alternative as it can seem when reading the words for the first time. They are a way of living, not a technique. Meditation and being mindful is not about trying to be anywhere else; it is about allowing yourself to be exactly who you are in this exact moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). “Stripped of its religious context, mindfulness meditation is simply learning to have an open accepting attitude towards whatever arises in one’s mind” (Goleman, 1997, p. 107). Nowadays mindfulness is a popular word and activity that many people worldwide use, or say they use. The word is used to describe the technique of how to be mindful, the state of mind one can be in, how to do training, cope with stress or work, or to meditate. Or like the informants did; learn more about themselves and how they function by understanding themselves in the present moment without being disturbed by the past, future or materialistic society surrounding them. Understanding who they are stripped from everything, like being in a white room stripped from anything.

An exercise used to understand if you can be in the moment consists of explaining what you feel when sitting on a chair. A lot of people who have never tried to be mindful say that they do not feel anything, and are thrown off when the observer asks “but don’t you feel that you are sitting on the chair? And how the sunlight shines on you when sitting in this position in the room?” and so on (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) (Goleman, 1997). Mindfulness is about being aware, about gaining awareness even about things in the peripheral view. Even though the informants understood at the courses and on the operation table that there are different aspects and ways to understand themselves and development within the self, it takes time and labour to get there.

5.2 Awareness of the mind/body connection

Mind and body are not separate, they function together like the Tao, also called Ying and Yang (Sharpe & Bryant, 2005) where both parts are equal and have their special qualities, in other words, they are interdependent (Burns, 1965). It is however important to understand that this Tao is not separate in the sense that soma (or the physical/body) and psyche (also known

as the mental/mind, or the somas “significance”) are generally considered to be; rather they are two aspects of one overall indivisible reality (Bohm, 1987). Zoë addresses the issue when she talks about how in her course, she learned to think that the pain she felt was not hers, she could control it. She acknowledged that she felt the pain, but she didn’t need to **be** the pain. In the instance of pain, she learned to reflect on it *“This is pain... It is a feeling... but I do not identify with it”*. She learned to change these thoughts into something else. This is similar to what one learns in mindfulness, to become aware of your thoughts and feelings, but not to get paralyzed by them. Only to see them as passing objects in the consciousness (Burns, 1965; Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

Anna divides human beings into two parts, a physical part and a non-physical part. The physical part contains the physical body, everything she saw during her C-section, in other words the exterior that we can see and hear, like the body and language. *“The non-physical part... as I call it... is the spiritual part of us... People have so many references to this word, but I see it as the part of us that connect us together”*. Some might call this the spiritual part of us, others might call it God, or the self, or the real me, or intuition and so on, in this paper it is referred to as the X-factor.

5.2.1 Inter-level relationship

Emotions and feelings affect the body, but also the nervous system (like with Zoë) and the brain (like how the brain/mind kept the past from Saras and Annas consciousness) (Goleman, 1997). Gottlieb talks about how you are influenced on different levels, in an inter-level-relation or a bidirectional influence on the development. He called this the probabilistic epigenesis (Gottlieb, 2001). Anna talks about this when saying that in her transition, she changes every level, from the visible levels through reactions, memories and even down to the cell-level. Gottlieb talks about the bidirectional influences and explains how we are influenced in different levels, both on the behavioural, environmental, neural and genetic level of activity (Gottlieb, 1998, 2001; Gottlieb & Halpern, 2002; Lickliter, 2007; Valsiner, 2007). *“The fine tuning of the interactions between the systems is not yet clear, but it is clear that these links do exist”* (Goleman, 1997, p. 59). Like when Zoë changed her think pattern, the M.E. disappeared. Or how Anna ended up very ill after all the memories and feelings from her past reappeared during the C-section.

If something happens and a huge tension is made without dealing with it, the ‘magnetic’-field (Bohm, 1987) in us can be off balance and it will be like this until we see the problem and

solve it. In order to have balance in the body there is a need of becoming aware of what the problem is, consciously, and then you can deal with it. Like with the informants, when they learned that past experiences are stored within them, perhaps hidden from the consciousness. They started searching for the root to their issues, and by searching on different levels they were able to pull the issues back into the consciousness and release the tension once and for all (Bohm, 1987).

5.3 Awareness of the different levels of consciousness

There are different levels of consciousness (Goleman, 1997), where Jung names three of these: the normal everyday consciousness, also simply called consciousness; underneath you have the subconsciousness or unconsciousness, in this paper referred to as unconsciousness; and the third level is the super- or higher consciousness, referred to as higher consciousness in this paper (Jung, 2001). William James described consciousness as an ongoing process, having its own themes within which the current foci of attention get their meaning. So the content of consciousness is, at a particular moment, a phase of a personal dynamic ‘stream’ (Smith, 2008). And in this, meaning that even though we can learn to become more conscious about the processes, there is a “stream” saying that there will always be phases in the process that we will not be conscious of. Like Freud is talking about with regards in his metaphor saying that only ten percent of the iceberg is visible above water, meaning only ten percent of the activity in the brain is “visible” to the everyday consciousness (Hergenhahn, 2005).

I find Freud’s methaphor as static as the discussion about nature versus nurture, and have therefore found my own methaphor for explaining the relationship between different levels of consciousness, with using the school of fish. Imagine keeping track of the fish in the middle of the night with a flashlight. The light only hits a small section of the school of fish, and everything surrounding it is pitch-dark. Where the consciousness is the visible parts in the dark water, and the unconsciousness is the dark. In order to learn more about how and why we function the way we do we need to invest time to get a wider perspective of what is going on; maybe with using a bigger flashlight? Before we can figure out why and how we function, we need to see what we are doing. In order to understand if the school of fish is in any danger from predators, we need a bigger flashlight. Putting it differently, would you send your car to a repair shop if they worked in the dark? Probably not, so why try fixing parts of you without even knowing what needs to be fixed.

The previous section elaborated how tension can move from the original spot, like a recent memory that we are highly conscious of, to a maybe more hidden level in the body. Like Zoë's issues with her body, where something in her made the muscles turn off their function. In Anna and Sara's case it was more an aspect of the tension being hidden in another level of consciousness. Jung explained it with a river, where the source is not created where you can see the river start (consciousness or the light). The source can come from deep down in the mountain where it runs in secret ways before emerging into the daylight (Jung, 2001).

The unconscious is a word and state that contains many meanings and issues. Jung names some of its content:

“Everything of which I know, but which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness” (Jung, 2001, p. 112).

When Sara began to work with her techniques and understood that unresolved feelings and memories are kept in one way or the other in the body or consciousness, she understood that her drugproblem was a result of everything that happened related to the death of her brother. How she had lost her best friend; how she blamed herself; how she felt in the way and invincible to everyone around her and so on. She had tried many options to quit drugs earlier, but it was only by digging within herself to find the root through the different levels of consciousness that initially helped her out of all the misery and pain the drugs inflicted on her.

The process of becoming aware of the content in each individual's soul is what Jung calls the process of individuation. The goal for this process correlates with the meaning of life. The archetype that expresses the goal is called the archetype of the self. The self represents an over-personal reality and at the same time representing the goal of the process of individual self-realization. This in turn contains both the conscious and unconscious and a reality that answer to the God (X-factor) within (Jung & Pollan, 2000). The unconscious is your friend, if you let it into your heart. If you treat it as your enemy, that is what it will be. The more you try to push what is in your unconsciousness away, the more it will resist (Jung, 2001). Saying

that even though it seems like someone switched the light on in a dark room, when becoming conscious, it is actually something the unconscious has understood for some time and suddenly pushes over to the consciousness (Jung, 2001). Like when Anna had her C-section and all the physical and psychical pain overwhelmed her, it seems like the unconscious figured out a way to make Anna deal with her past. The unconscious part of Anna had been hiding many unresolved issues and maybe her unconscious was full? Maybe like when you tidy your room by shoving everything into a closet and everything is going great until you “just” need one more thing to go in, resulting in the doors to burst open and everything comes rolling out all at once. In retrospect Anna says that what happened to her during the C-section saved her life, because she worked through all her “*shit*” once and for all.

“Observation of conscious life persuades us that not only are unconscious perceptions and representations (...) at times to be found in us, but that psychic life proceeds in that form most of the time, and only occasionally, at special points, does the agent within us reveal its presence directly, in appropriate images. Thus psychic life always goes far beyond the bounds of what is or may be present in us in the form of conscious contents or images” (Jung, 2001, p. 90).

In other words, there is just a small percent of what goes on in our brains that we are conscious of. Like the visibility of Freud’s iceberg, but if we focus and work on understanding more, this is possible but takes a long time to do. At the course Sara attended she learned that by mental training she could become better and better at understanding and using the unconscious part. “As an example of this relationship one can obtain a good illustration in physics for the ultimate unbroken wholeness underlying aspects that are nevertheless distinguished, by contrasting the relationship of electrical poles (charges) and magnetic poles”(Bohm, 1987, p. 5). There is always a bond even though we do not always see it. Like energy can never increase or decrease, it can only change form; things can only change between the different levels of consciousness. If something happens in the mind (mentally) and we do not do anything about it, this stress might take a different form, maybe in the body.

Flow is “the way people describe their state of mind when consciousness is harmoniously ordered, and they want to pursue whatever they are doing for its own sake” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008, p. 6). In other words, when the three levels of consciousness are in

harmony. Maybe the unconscious is hiding something from the consciousness or the consciousness forgets to trust the X-factor? Either way, it might be a good thing to understand what is causing this hinder, so you can continue the flow.

The school of fish is a good metaphor for showing how you can be disturbed by different things, like the predators disturbed the wholeness of the school of fish, meaning that the consciousness can be disturbed by different forms of predators. You do not only have the big visible predators, like Sara's drug problem, but also the more hidden predators like the unconscious thoughts that actually run most of your life if you do not become aware of their existence (Goleman, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Another reference for these predators can be called 'noise' (Sigmundsson, 2008) or distractors (Chen, 2008), that can come between you and your ambitions (Sigmundsson, 2008).

Self-organization is a “process of emergence creating an equilibrium state that is more complex than the initial state” (van Geert, 2003, p. 660), meaning once you have worked through a separation of your thought and pulled yourself back together, like the school of fish, it can lead to faster recognition of the predators in the future. This means that the self-organization happens when an emergence happens in a system (van Geert, 2003). You need to find the rest of the distractors; either they are the central and peripheral distractions.

With this saying that the focused mind, consciousness, awareness can be distracted leading to failure of the task you want to accomplish. “An incompatible distractor causes more interference at a peripheral location than at a central location” (Chen, 2008, p. 82). With this saying that the distractors have more effect if they occur in the peripheral location if you are not conscious of what distracts you, it will be harder to notice the distractors and harder to eliminate them. Like the school of fish, when split in many small groups, the self-organization in us will always pull the attention back together as one.

5.3.1 Automatic responses

When you do something for the first time it will take a long time to learn, because you have to go through the process step by step mentally in your brain, like learning to tie your shoe-laces. The steps will gradually be automatisized and disappear from your conscious until the whole process, like trying to tie your shoe-laces, becomes automatic (Anderson, 2002). Cognitive skills go automatic after you have trained long enough, if you use them. Zoë's course taught her to take control over her life, and gave her a chance to get rid of the disease-spiral she was in. It was important to become conscious of the destructive thinking-patterns and replace them

with more constructive ones. *“I suddenly understood that the body and mind cannot be looked at as two different things, because they are inter-related. If you think of the mind as a network of roads, the connections or thoughts you use regularly can be like highways, while the connections you use less become overgrown like cart roads. The highways are your strong habits, both the good and bad habits. The way to get off the bad highways is to take the next exit road and prepare for a bumpy ride. In time, these cart roads will become good highways!”* You have to deautomatize the patterns you have in order to understand how and what to change. Zoë continued that *“even though you realize the change right away, it takes a long time before it becomes automatic,”* and says that it took about a year of constant work in order to make the changes permanent. Sara had the same experience and continued this tread by saying that the development never stops; there is always something more to be fixed.

Cognitive structures in relation to the informants changes; they learned in the courses that many of the structures that we learn when growing up might not be the best way or the most similar way to who we are on the inside. All three informants said in their own way that even though they had felt happy and at ease with them selves before the transition, it was only to some extent. There was always something in them that made them feel that life should be “more than this”. Like one learns about how cognitive skills go automatic after doing them a certain amount of times, this notion can be used to understand more complex meanings such as a persons self-worth, self-esteem, self-control and so on. In order to make a change in a dynamical system, like that of a persons life, you need to put alot more effort and energy into changing the automatic reactions (van Geert, 2003). Zoë pointed out how you first need to use a lot of time and energy to understanding this way of thinking, and then you need to figure out what automatic reactions are destructive for you and which are not, then you have to make them de-automatisized (a word I have borrowed from Deikman (Deikman, 1966), which he used to talk about meditation). After doing this you need to do the change/transition in this reaction and then let it return to being automatic.

Sara and Zoë have very similar experiences when it comes to awareness of the automatic reactions. Both had to learn what caused the reaction. Sara, with her past history that had made automatic reactions towards dealing with things in life, like falling into the same pattern of violent boyfriends and finding new ways of getting high on drugs when she tried to quit. Zoë on the other hand had a different type of automatic reaction to become aware of her body’s reaction to things. She had to learn to understand how her thoughts and reactions made

her body stop functioning. Both women had to become aware of all the negative thoughts that was created within them, maybe on a very deep level, and then replace these thoughts with something else. While Sara stayed away from drugs and her boyfriend as much as she could to deal with replacing new thought and reaction patterns, Zoë had to learn what was “normal” and not, like how sleeping for twelve hours after going to the grocery store was not normal, but feeling tired after two hours of running in the woods was okay.

Anna’s story is a bit different, because even though she had to go through the same process of becoming aware, her life before the change was different. In the sense that all the “*bad stuff*” that had been piling up inside her had not led to an active reaction like that of Zoë’s M.E.-disease or Sara’s drug addiction, it was more a hiding of her problems so that she could live normally. Though this turned out to be like when you are tidying up the room, by throwing all the things into the closet.

5.3.2 To gain (some) control of the unconscious parts

You might ask yourself why in the heading above “(some)” written. The reason is that since we only have access and awareness to about ten percent of the activity in our brain, according to Freud (Hergenhahn, 2005), we will never reach a hundred by using techniques, but we might increase the percentage a bit.

Anna: “I knew from my own life that it isn’t enough to become aware... Because one thing is to just become aware...and yes, a lot can happen by doing this, but we need to go to a deeper level in us, you can call it a meditation level within us, where we can remove the incidents....or the things that stop us and create the fear we have... ”. We need to become aware of what we are doing and actively work our way through our own stuff.

One of the most important techniques Zoë learnt was to say “*Stop!*” It was about how to stop your thinking pattern and then replacing it with a new one. In this meaning that you need to become aware of what thoughts you are having, interpret them and replace them with a new thought. For this technique to work there must also be a continual work on these new thoughts, because the mind has many tricks to get you back to square one (Goleman, 1997). The key to succeeding is to be motivated enough, so you stick with the techniques even on the tough days.

For Anna and Sara one important technique was to create a room in your head, where you could be without all your worries and negative thinking. In this room they could build

themselves up, and also deal with things that were hard to handle. Anna said that she at first thought it was strange to create this room inside herself, but when she read that Thor Heyerdahl talked to his inner “Aku Aku” (Heyerdahl, 2006) she came at peace with her own way as well. They also started to “*sleep on it*”, which is something we humans have always done, but maybe not acknowledged the importance of it to ourselves lately. It is about not trying to fix everything with your conscious mind, but let the rest of your consciousness do some of the work as well.

5.3.3 To use the unconsciousness

Research about consciousness has shown that human beings can be put in different states of consciousness (Goleman, 1997). The flow of consciousness is flowing and shifting also in the state of being awake. Consciousness can vary from the normal awoken, analytic, intelligent state to something referred to as a not ordinary state of mind, which is characteristic for meditative experiences (Bastiansen, 2003). In one of the courses the participants were put in different states of consciousness reaching alfa, theta, and delta levels. These levels usually only happen in the different sleeping stages, and the normal awoken state has Beta-waves. The course teaches how to use the different states for actively doing self-development. The teachers in the course were tested, and it was verified that they reached the different stages of brainwave activity without being asleep. Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) writes about similar findings relating to meditation.

Today Anna teaches how to communicate with this X-factor or inner strength. She calls it the ESP-sense (Extra Sensory Perception-sense), and says that we have five senses for perceiving the outside world, and one for perceiving the inside world. *“We are all born with an ESP sense that we can use to change this planet to a better place. We have forgotten what is natural and have considered it to be supernatural or mystical. We don't understand how we function as humans, so instead of wholeness we create great imbalance.”* Anna has developed special ESP-courses, where she trains people in understanding their gut-feelings and in making the participant capable of using this sense for active self-development. Sara joined one of these courses where she “woke up”, became aware of her life, and it started her self-development process. Anna says that the sense can have three ways of communicating; some get all three, while others might only understand one. You have the gut-feeling, the intuition, and the clairvoyant part, and all are a part of this ESP-sense, positive part or inner strength. This is because every individual being has the ability to work on the same team (in harmony) as their whole body; they just have to open up for it. Towards people who are deeply

religious, this has nothing to do with taking your faith away, it is just saying that in order to have a good life you should also take time to get to know yourself.

5.4 Sense of mastery, and how it increases security and confidence in the self

What you learn at the course is like learning a language. You first have to learn the basics, like the course teaches, then you have to go home and practice it until the language is fluent. The more you speak (the more you use the techniques) the better you will be at it.

Anna nearly gave up many times, Sara had a hard time dealing with her past, and Zoë had a long process to go through before she had removed the disease. They saw the change on the inside right after the turning-point, but it took a long time to change and deal with their issues. But for every little achievement they got stronger and gained confidence in their abilities and the changes they could make in their lives. This is supported by the findings of Kabat-Zinn and The Dalai Lama. They say that by learning to see how the thoughts arise, it will eventually lead to a sense of achievement. This helps the confidence that in turn creates an even bigger change (Goleman, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

5.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter has shown how the process after the turning-point has been. The process needed dedication to the change that was happening, both in will and in sticking to the techniques that was learned. Since we are all different, different techniques worked for the three informants to their special needs. It is about learning who you are and how you work best.

6 Looking back after the transition

The best way to find your true path is to get off the path you are on, risk getting lost and believe from within that you will find your way (Valsiner, 1997). If you go in full-hearted the universe will do everything in its power to make it happen (Coelho, 2008). The informants took a chance on leaping into the unknown, and it changed their lives into the better.

We will never get peace in the outer world before we make peace with the inner world

(Dalai Lama in Egeland, 2009, p. 17).

6.1 The new perspectives on life

Once there is a new meaning and it is taken hold of by intention, reality has changed. “A change in the mental, is a change in the physical, and a change in the physical is a change in the mental” (Bohm, 1987, p. 16). Anna, Sara and Zoë learned that changing the perspective in life can be lifechanging, like it was for them. Kabat-Zinn supports their new understanding, with the results he got with people who attended his mindfulness courses (Goleman, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). The informants also emphasized the impact it has to get a new and broader perspective on life. There are many ways of looking at the world, and the more perspectives we take in, the more complete will our understanding of the world be (Bastiansen, 2005). The more perspectives the informants got on their patterns, the easier it was to change into someone more true to their inner selves. Anna changed when she learnt how things can be stored within us and that we need to take control over our own lives. Kabat-Zinn also acknowledges that to get awareness of how you are, with being in the moment, can often lead to a change in itself (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). This was the case for the informants, like Zoë learning to understand her thought-patterns in relation to her tiredness. When a new perception to life appears there can also be a change in meaning about the past (Bohm, 1987).

Sara understood after her course that “*sometimes you might think that you have control, but don't, because you are really destructive and..... often it is when you think you have the most control over your life that you actually have the least control*”. With this, Sara understands the impact the unconsciousness has on her, and how she cannot have full control of it. She acknowledged that in order to achieve peace within she needed to let go of some of the

control in her life. The changing of focus and broaden the horizon happened after some letting go of the control in certain part and instead regain control in other parts, like sticking to certain techniques even though they might not give short term pleasure.

6.2 Awareness of who you are

“Do not believe in anything – no matter where you have read it, no matter who said it, no matter if I said it – if it does not match your intelligens and way of thinking”
(Buddha in Egeland, 2009, p. 19).

The true potential in you can sometimes be hidden because of this artificial light (the ever chasing craving to be the best and perfect spouse, parent, volunteer, citizen, employee, person, friend, and daughter and so on). You need to find the natural light. You might be okay with your life, but like a quote written by Maslow “If you are a musician then you have to make music!” (Hergenhahn, 2005). So if you feel there is something missing in your life, then maybe you should take a step back, maybe into the unknown (darkness) to see if you find what you are looking for (the light and brightness of the stars) (Mace, 2008).

When Zoë came home from the course she was struck with a sad feeling, because suddenly she started to notice all the things that she had misunderstood in the last years when trying to get better. She started to hear all the destructive thoughts in her head that she had not been conscious of before. Before the turning-point, she had the idea that she was positive and after the course she understood that this was not quite true. This experience relates to Anna and Sara’s realizations that they where actually not as happy and with a high self-esteem before the turning-point as they had thought. Zoë made one huge discovery and had to make an even bigger decision when realizing that she had had the wrong understanding of her life. *“It was important for me to love my own life”*, and she continued that she wanted to be as much awake as possible, and she knew that in order to do this she had to go through an extensive restructuring of her life leading to the question *“Is this something I want?”*. These two quotes also went through Anna and Sara during their transitions from the turning-point until today. In other words, they all three make an active decision to change, because like Zoë continued *“it’s going to be tough, and it can’t be fixed with eating pills. I have to take full responsibility of this change!”*

“It’s very important that people take responsibility for their own lives and not simply accept authority in a way that reduces their own creativity and power” (Goleman, 1997, p. 121). It is about understanding and getting to know your own being. If you do not start to love yourself and all you are, then who else will?

6.2.1 You are more than the sum of your parts

Have you considered the inner resources, and the wisdom that exists in the body and mind (Goleman, 1997)? The courses Sara and Zoë attended did not cure them, but it taught them how to heal themselves. In this, to work through their troubles with using structure, techniques and a persistence for gaining a new better life. A cure magically makes it all better in some way, but healing transforms both body and mind on a deep level. This is the same teachings as Kabat- Zinn use in his stress-reduction courses, where he teaches about mindfulness (Goleman, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Both the informants in this paper and the patients Kabat-Zinn had sees things differently and have come to terms with their lives.

The informants learned that they are much more than the pain, suffering and endless thoughts. They learned to pay attention to their own bodies, and how to understand better the signs the body send. There can be acknowledgement that they have pain but know that this pain, either physical or mental, is just a feeling. It is not the real them, and they do not need to identify themselves with the pain. When we strengthen our connection with our inner core, or X-factor, it can lead to knowledge about the content of the mind, without the need to comment or change what spontaneously occurs of thought and feelings. This is the key to personal development, and to discover and handle what stresses us. When we gain awareness of our thoughts and feelings in a correlation, there will be an acknowledgement that stress is linked to the mind being either concerned about the past or future (Egeland, 2009). Anna, Sara and Zoë realized that the real them was so much more than they had initially given themselves credit for in the past. They gained control by focusing on the moment and accepting that they are much more than they ever imagined. Seeing themselves as more than all the parts, and in this being able to control how much they were influenced by the parts helped them through the transition.

6.3 The importance of techniques and structure

The brain or something in us will always try to sabotage our happiness, therefore important to have techniques and structures (Goleman, 1997). In order to get through life the way you

want, you have to understand how you work, in order to get the right information. Getting to know who you are and understanding how you receive information from your body and mind, is crucial for having flow in your life. It is also important to change old “truths” in order to make the flow happen. “Truths” are what we learn from the very beginning of our life, but might not satisfy us when growing older. Everyone has “truths” that stop life from being in flow. These “truths” can also be called rules or patterns that have been made up or collected throughout life, most of them unconsciously. We cannot take it personally that we unwillingly have got someone else’s “truth”, for example like we learn from our parents. Since we all have issues to deal with in life it is really all about deciding to change and sticking with the decision. Learning techniques and structures help us to have control.

One of the biggest lessons Zoë learnt from her course was the importance of talking to self in an effective way that the brain understands. She learnt that there is no point in trying to say stuff to the brain with negative quotation, because *“the brain apparently cannot pick up whether the things you are saying are positive or negative”*. Zoë did not know the relevance of communicating in the right way with her brain before the course. This lesson was something Anna and Sara also learnt. Zoë had to work a lot with the automatic reactions her body had to her thinking, where she had to go in and figure out what was normal and what was not, in relation to becoming tired. Anna and Sara on the other hand needed to work with the automatic thoughts appearing concerning the self-worth issue and what they had experienced in the past and how it influenced the choices they took in life. It is about communicating with both the conscious and unconscious parts in the brain. Like written earlier, it is about finding the peripheral and central “noise” (Sigmundsson, 2008) but also to communicate in the brain’s language.

Mother Theresa once said that we need to be true to the little things, because it is in them all the strength lies (Egeland, 2009). In relation to the informants, it means that even though they had gotten a new perspective on things and a new set of techniques it was important to do them everyday. Even the techniques that might have seemed trivial and not important needed to be done. When the informants felt they were over the worst part they kept on going, because aspects that seem trivial in the beginning might play an essential part (Chen, 2008) for the long-term development. It was about acknowledging that they are in constant development, and that in order to truly get up and beyond the place they had been, they

needed to stay true to their new way of living and not even once think that “but if I only relax once”, because it would send the whole development back to square one.

The Dalai Lama stated that “Ultimately it comes down to one’s own self-discipline, because no matter how elaborate external regulations might be, the human mind is so devious that it would be able to find loopholes” (Goleman, 1997, p. 176). Meaning that while getting to know the self, both the unconscious and conscious parts, there is a need to have an objective approach to everything as well. If the unconscious parts have ruled your life for many years you need to look into every dark corner of yourself to find all the unhealthy reaction patterns. Like when Anna and Sara understood how much they were affected by their childhood experiences.

To have techniques and structure has made it a lot easier for the three women to go through the transformation. When I met them they seemed at ease with life in general, which is, I feel, a rare condition in the Western world today. It seems that stress is occupying the majority of both people and time in general. I am not implying that the informants never have stressful periods, but trying to say that it is about how you cope with stress which is important. Goleman said that it all depends on how you see it, which in turn depends on whether you see it (Goleman, 1997). And like stated earlier, without physically making a choice to stop and try to see what is around you, there is no way of knowing exactly how or what that makes you stressed. The women learned in the transition that to truly have control is to be in the present, understanding what aspects of the past, future and other unconscious things that stress them. The informants used a lot of time and effort both consciously and unconsciously to think about what stresses them. Anna, by not being conscious that she is suppressing aspect from her past life, Sara, by somewhat consciously occupying herself with drugs, and Zoë who consciously and active trying to find ways to recover from the disease.

6.3.1 Pain makes pain go away

“Anyone who practices sport knows this: if you want to achieve your objectives, you have to be prepared for a daily dose of pain and discomfort. At first, it’s unpleasant and de-motivating, but in time you come to realize that it’s part of the process of feeling good...” (Coelho, 2008, p. 184).

Sometimes short time pain and discomfort can lead to long term peace and happiness. The time the informants spent on getting to know who they are and the patterns they have had was

well invested, because it led to where they are today, more at peace with themselves than ever.

It is not important what you think but how you think (Bohm, 1987). When the informants learned that it is not always about the information, but what you do with it, to see the world differently, with a new set of glasses, they realised that they would never be the same again. A part is only a part as long as it helps bring out the whole. Reading a few lines in this thesis will not make the whole paper understandable. With this said, the whole can not shine without the parts, because the whole would not be without the parts. The whole and the parts are interdependent on each other, only existing in the light of the other (Bastiansen, 2005). The whole is though more than the sum of its parts. There is a need for understanding a person's history, personality and location in time to understand his/her action at a given moment. For example, Sara learned about her parts, like how she never fully grieved over her brother, how she felt all alone in the world after he died, and always felt in the way. After understanding why she had started doing drugs, it was much easier to stop.

6.3.2 The time it takes to change

To see a change, like the informants in this thesis have had, it is easier to see by looking at the long term effect. Because even though the informants saw a change in themselves on the inside straight away, it took some time before the transformation was final. It might be easier to understand how such a transitional change as the one Anna, Sara and Zoë have gone through if you think that people live dynamical lives. In short-term the courses Sara and Zoë attended, and the operation Anna went through, made them change their focus and understand life differently. And like Bohm said, once there is a new meaning to life there is no going back (Bohm, 1987). The long-term effect of the turning-point happened after they returned home, when they took an active choice for keeping up what they had learned. Taking control of their lives and changing their paths to something more fitting with who they really were on the inside. Even though a great number of people attend self-development courses they miss the part about continuing the techniques and mentality when returning back home, though not doing anything when returning is also a choice. The three informants have shown with their experiences that sticking with the new pattern and actively dealing with everyday life by using the techniques and being persistent is life-changing.

Zoë illustrated why it takes such a long time to go through a transition saying that if you are on a diet and have stayed off chocolate for that time, and then one day say to yourself “...*but I wouldn't get fat if I only eat one little piece!*” Most of us know that if we take this little piece of chocolate, it is even easier the next time, and without knowing it we are back to the old habits that we tried to get rid off. In other words, Zoë explained that in order to make the transition and not relapse back to how it was before the turning-point, it was important to keep doing the techniques a lot longer than she felt she needed. Because when you see the finish line, it is not equivalent of having passed it, it just means that you will get there soon. Though acknowledging that such a life-changing transition takes time, Zoë had a new understanding that she is in a constant dynamic and developmental state. The new understanding made Anna, Sara and Zoë realise that life can still offer obstacles, but they have new tools for solving them (McAdams, et al., 2001). It is more about how you view the problem, and not as much that there actually is one (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

6.4 The self and the surroundings

The relationship between the self and the surroundings is an important aspect to understand the reactions an individual has. Because though we try to make people have an impression of us, either consciously or unconsciously we might not succeed, with the expressions we are giving off (Goffman, 1959). The best theatre-plays are the ones where the actor acts convincingly good so that the audience can only see the character the actor is playing, and not the personality of the actor. In other words, how well a person is able to mend the surroundings in such a way that the surroundings respond the way the person wants. Fast (Fast, 1970) talks about that “the self we show others and the outside world is rarely our true self”(p.55). We show different part of ourselves in different settings because of the surroundings at that exact moment. After Sara's brother died, she felt invisible and ignored by her parents. She felt they were too busy with their grieving to see Sara's reactions and her way of coping with the death. This feeling of neglect in turn led her to do self-harming, in the form of cutting her arms and wrists, and later she understood that “*It was to get attention from the outside world*”. The problem was that the outside world did not understand her way of acting, and misinterpreted her signs acting back with no reaction at all. However passive the outside world's role may have seemed Sara understood it as a reaction of her action to get attention, and that made her feel even more neglected (Goffman, 1959). The emotional pain she felt grew to the extent where she started to physically hurt her self in order to mend some

of this pain. *“Not even when I was sent to the hospital to get stitched up did anyone even raise an eyebrow”*. She acknowledges in the interview, that she probably would not have taken any help if they had reached out a helping hand, but she always hoped that someone would see her. After 5 years, in the never ending circle of self-harming and the feeling invincible, she made friends with the girl who had it all. Sara knew that the girl did drugs, but saw the drugs as the missing link between her life and the “perfect” life of her new friend. The decision to start drugs was easy, though Sara knew how bad it was. She had been a representative for youth against drugs in her teenage years, but thought drugs would lead to perfect life just like her friend had. Even though Sara had always been the good girl, and never done anything wrong, the feeling of being neglected for so many years made her not care about what the surroundings thought of her new “hobby”. And she says that when you start drugs, you never intend to get hooked. You are only *“trying it once”*, but the drugs contain addictive materials taking control over your initial thoughts.

When Anna was a young girl, she was raped on several occasions, but never told her parents. She probably hoped they would understand, but they did not know anything. This contributed to the feeling that the lack of acknowledgement from her parents was a reaction to her action (Goffman, 1959). Anna’s feeling of being overlooked and not understood might be one reason why she married at the age of sixteen. Her family in-law used to drink regularly and she explains that *“one time I had to jump out the window after being kicked in the abdomen while I was pregnant with my first child.”* Luckily her doctor understood her situation and encouraged Anna to end the marriage, which she did.

In Zoë’s life the problem was very different. The M.E. made her tired all the time and she received a lot of help from her family, friends and her surroundings in organizing things around her so it would help her. Even her classroom was organized so that she could lie down if she was too tired to sit. Her friends also came to visit so that she would not be completely isolated.

One striking thing with their stories is the way they talk about always pleasing the surrounding world. All three women talks about have they always been catergorized as good-women, always doing what was best for everybody else, and never complaining or demanding anything for themselves. It was always about keeping peace with the surroundings. If you focus all your attention on one aspect in you life, maybe you are overlooking important factors in other aspects with you life.

When the women made the choice to take a different road, they opened up to new ways of looking at the world. Like mentioned earlier, they had all three learned about how to see themselves from a different angle, having a different seat to watch the theatre-play which contains their lives. Though this has been as important aspects, the women also learned the importance of getting advice from other people. Because people may see a different, maybe a fuller picture of whom you are. Since you might focus too much on one aspect of you and in this miss the bigger picture of whom you are. Zoë says *“Some times you need others to tell you what your negative sides are, because you are so used to them yourself. There is often a tendency as well that these negative sides are protected unconsciously, leading to the necessity for someone to point them out!”* The notion of Johari’s window shows this in a good way. Where there are four equal parts, the open, blind, hidden and the unknown. The open window contains what you know about yourself that is also known by others. The blind window contains what is unknown to you about yourself but what others know about you. In the hidden window what you see is only disclosed for your eyes, while in the unknown window only others are able to see the content about you (Chapman, 2010). The informants had tapped into the “unknown”-window when learning and using the techniques and new perspectives, but learning even more when taking advice from others who saw what was in the “blind”-window.

The transition from the turning-point and to the person they are today have been a long and bumpy road for all three. Sara dealt with the transition mostly on her own. Zoë was told at the course that she had to get through the transition by herself, but unlike Sara, Zoë lived with her boyfriend and because of this had to include him in her new way on thinking. Her boyfriend helped her stay strong in the days where her body wanted to be tired. In Anna’s transition, the overwhelming amount of psychological and physical pain sent her to rock-bottom where she understood that in order to get through it she needed to take drastic action. After the C-section she got so sick that she put herself in psychiatric hospital, because she did not understand how to cope with it all on her own. It took her a few years to get her head above water, after going through countless suicide-attempts, and even more cases of giving up. The voice of her grandmother telling her never to give up, must have emerged into her conscious every now and again in order for her to constantly push herself towards becoming the healthy, happy, fulfilled woman she is today. Because all three knew the reactions the surroundings would have, they made a conscious decision in how to handle going through their transition. Anna said nothing, Sara pulled away, while Zoë gave instructions. Anna did not tell others about the

new thoughts she got after the C-section, about the course she build in her head and her new “alternative” view on life. Sara tried to make people reach and care about her, by cutting herself, after her brother died. Zoë told her environment how to act around her in order for her to succeed the transition. For all three women, when they changed themselves on the inside, they also saw changes on the environment. There is a saying: “Change yourself on the inside and see the effect on the outside”.

6.4.1 The protectors

Goffman talk about how defensive or protective techniques puts a safeguard around the individual (Goffman, 1959). It protects the individual or self of the threats from the environment. The ‘shadow world’ (Humphreys, 2008, p. 4) is the sum of all the protectors, and is something created to hide aspects of the expressions of the self and is explained like this:

“The shadow world is an illusion, a necessary protection, but unless understood, can lead to an extremely limited existence or illness or premature death. The challenge lies not in changing our protectors but in expressing what lies hidden. When the latter happens, equilibrium emerges and the acting-out or acting-in protective responses give way to a free, open and non-threatening level of expression of the self”
(Humphreys, 2008, p. 4).

Examples of behaviours and protectors can amongst others be like those Anna, Sara and Zoë experienced. The acting-out behaviours they experiences where amongst others destructiveness and blaming of others. The acting-in protectors they experienced where among others being shy, timid, self-critical and self-harming. Embodiments experienced by the three where amongst others headaches, back pain, and drug addictions (Humphreys, 2008). Goffman (Goffman, 1959) talks about expressions given or given off in addition to what you want others to see. This might be the same thing when referring to how one is acting out and acting in, because it all has to do with seeking attention, for Sara the self-harming and drugs was her way, Zoë had lots of physical pain, and Anna on the other hand suppressed her past. What they needed was to understand what was hidden in their shadow world, in order to overcome it and having control of their own lives.

There is evidence showing that when you repress pain as a child, it throws off the inner balance and harmony of the body, which desregulates the body on a profound level. This in turn can come out as a disease. In order to heal, “you can’t just go in and replace all the plumbing that breaks down,” (Goleman, 1997, p. 126) by filling your head with work, drugs, beauty-operations and so on. The only way to truly regain balance and harmony of the body is to understand your protectors and why they have appeared.

6.5 Helping others

Today all three informants help other people who have a hard time. Anna helps with the courses her organization holds. She has taught what she knows to a number of instructors who now also hold her courses both in Norway and other countries. Sara helps people who, like her have had a drug-problem, who also have attended one of Anna’s courses. She helps them to stay strong so they can recover as well. Zoë has started giving lectures about the things she has learned on her path to recovery. Though only in small amounts now days, I presume the amount will grow when she has finished her education.

Anna said “I’ve walked my way out of my own spiderweb, I don’t want to and can’t under any circumstances walk someone elses path for them. If this transition is going to happen, you must find your own way out”.

6.6 Concluding remarks

Changing focus, structuring their lives and having techniques to help them through tough times turned the informants’ lives around and helped them through the transition.

7 Discussion of the results and the method

In this chapter there will be a discussion about the results of the research about going through a transition and the method used for collecting the data material.

7.1 Discussion of the method

The underlying epistemology in this paper is the phenomenological – hermeneutic – existential way of thinking, where the subjective interpretation of the experience is seen as the truth (Taylor, 1985). To capture the true understanding of the lives of the informants', I found that the phenomenological method does this in the best way. Since phenomenology focuses on capturing the essence of the experienced as it appears for the informants, it is the best method to use in my study. If I had wanted the objective view of their experiences, there would have been a larger drive to find the brute data of their world, and this would have led to the use of other methods, both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research about the experiences people have had during a life-changing transition would never have reached an “ $a+b$ always = c ” form, like the classical scientific view emphasises (Taylor, 1985). Even though you know all the facts about a person you will never truly capture the whole meaning of their decisions and their X-factor, and can therefore never conclude that you have all the parts, which will lead to the same results (Smith, et al., 2009). Like mentioned earlier, we are too hung up on finding all the parts that we treat the whole as a part (Bastiansen, 2005), and in this misinterpret the meaning of the whole. Kierkegaard said “Subjectivity is the truth!” (Kierkegaard in Hergenbahn, 2005), so when the informants find their truths we might understand more of their world.

There is limited research on the topic. Since the topic does not lend itself to measurement, it is easily overlooked. Then, too, people are not conscious about what they have gone through, and therefore it is difficult to gather information from them (Luborsky, 1994). In order to conduct this research, I solicited people who had gone through such huge transformations on the inside that you could see it on the outside. This does not mean that transitions cannot happen without it being noticed on the outside of the human being, but in order to make my research reliable I wanted to find someone who had gone through life-changing transitions, in such a degree that there was no question of how life-changing it had been.

My initial goal for this research was to understand and highlight how a person has gone through a turning-point. I have however come to realize, while analyzing the interviews that it is just as important what they have done after reaching the turning-point. All the informants had gotten help from both professionally and by reading up on techniques and self-help books. It can be difficult to pin-point exactly when the change happens. So with doing an interview about the retrospect view of their experienced I managed to get data-material for my master thesis. The phenomena concerning the ability to change your life radically, like the informants have done, is what I believe to be one of the most unique abilities we humans have.

It was at times challenging to keep focus on the phenomena under the interviews and analysis, because the informants' lives where enthusiastically elaborated. Their lives contain so much more than can ever be captured in words, or in this thesis. At times forgetting momentarily all together the reason for the interview. Like when Sara goes in detail about how her ex-boyfriend abused her, I was paralyzed in the moment and at the same time astonished that she had managed to not only get away from him, but also to quit drugs. Even though I would have loved to call their stories miracles, I believe that the development they have been through is something we all could do if we only put our hearts in it. I admire, respect, and acknowledge what they have done, and hope by writing this thesis and telling as many people as I can about their lives, that I inspire others to find their own strength to go down the same path. My point being that it is a huge challenge to look beyond their descriptions and stories to see if there were any connections between them.

7.1.1 Reaching the research question

The outcome of my research will not end in an answer that can have two red lines, like you get when calculating the right mathematics puzzle. In the world today there is, I think, an overload of quantitative research on every little thing that exists, that then tries to generalize some theory to fit all the people all over the world. I believe that this might not be the best way to document the world's different phenomenona. People are different and therefore are influenced in different ways, it is very crucial to capture the personal meanings that they have. This can best be done with the phenomenological method (Smith, 2008). In this master-thesis, I discovered general, structural, essential pictures of the phenomenon of going through a transition. Though the informants' transitions are personal and unique, they also manifest patterns that are similar to others. Though none of the three mentioned it directly, by using

imaginative free variation as a tool I have found that the Buddhist notion of mindfulness captures most of the essence in the transitions the informants' have gone through.

7.1.2 Further research

If I were to do a different type of study on this subject of transition I would have liked to see if people from different parts of the world have the same type of transformation as the informants have had. That is if the circumstances surrounding the transitions are the same. I believe that there is some sort of development or change that happens related to the transition. This is supported by McAdams et al. (2001). And I believe that doing a cross-cultural survey to see if this is true could be interesting. This study could not however be conducted for my master thesis for two reasons, the first one is that the time is limited, and the other is that I would not know how to formulate the questions. If I were to do the first study with collecting data through more interviews first, and analyzing these, I would probably be able to make decent questions for the survey.

7.2 Theoretical support for the phenomenon?

7.2.1 Aren't we rediscovering the wheel? (Boniwell, 2006, p. 5)

When a phenomenon exists in the world, isn't that evidence enough for its existence? Why try to make up something "fake" in society and science to replace the real thing? Why not just acknowledge the existence of phenomena like the one in this thesis? In the Western world the nature-nurture debate has occupied the question of how we develop since the time of Aristotle and Plato, arguing that it can only be genes or environment contributing to the outcome of human beings. This view however neglected the importance of environmental and behavioural influences on triggering gene activity (Chakravarti, 2003; Gottlieb, 1998; Spelke, 1998), as well as other non-physical activities, like the soul and higher states of being that connect us though the latter has scarcely been researched. For over two thousand years we in the western world have emphasized that it was either genes or environment contributing to development, neglecting all together that there could be something more. In the Eastern world, however, the understanding of how we develop has been quite different, because in the same two thousand years Buddhist thinkers have been aware of "the mind's healing capacity" (Goleman, 1997, p. 1). Where in one of the writings of Buddha, it says that each and every person should find their own path in life, and that Buddha only elaborates techniques for you to follow in order to find your path. When travelling in India last year I found a text written in

a Hindu-temple. It said that in order to achieve peace within you, you need to be aware and take control of both your outer and inner demons, similar to predators (van Geert, 2003) or distractors (Sigmundsson, 2008). With this, understanding that the exterior demons, which is the main focus in the Western world, are not the only demons one needs to deal with in order to achieve peace within. The inner demons will however be a lot more difficult to become aware of, because they do not appear to the naked, untrained eye. The inner demons can lie under you consciousness and you must therefore learn techniques to pull them into your consciousness and deal with them appropriately, like the informants have done. It is only recently within the last few decades that scientists in the West have begun to comprehend the interrelationship between emotional states and mental and physical well-being, not only within psychology, but also in biology, physics, medicine and more (Goleman, 1997).

Concerning a major theoretical concept, the phenomena, of the unconsciousness and how it leads to consciousness only appears every decade or so in Western psychology, like under the study of William James (James, 1890) and Carl Jung (Jung, Read, Fordham, Adler, & Hull, 1966) to mention some. It fascinated me that our Western world only found the relationships between unconsciousness and consciousness interesting with large time-intervals, while the East have had a continual understanding of this for thousands of years. An interesting point to make is the blossoming idea the Western world has about the mindfulness, which is based on Buddhist traditions, and that the most original and most respected literature of Jung started after he had travelled in India, and learnt about Buddhism and Hinduism amongst other things (Jung & Pollan, 2000; Jung & Shamdasani, 1996). In other words, basically everything we Westerners think we have invented or learnt about this phenomenon in the last century can all be traced back to the East. In order to get the essence of the phenomena it is just as well to seek knowledge about is through Eastern doctrines, theories and religions. Most of their religions preach about having inner peace and keeping inner peace by for example doing yoga, including the four types, hatha yoga (the physical types of yoga), jnana yoga, karma yoga (the purification of heart), and bhakti yoga (the devotion of God) (Sivananda, 2007). There are of course many other names for the yoga types, but these four have all the parts. Yoga is all about having techniques and structure in your life and this is the essence of what the informants said as well. Doing yoga also makes you see the world in a totally different way than before, and even though the informants never talked about yoga, they all three realized that life is so much more than meets the eye. They learnt a new way to view life, they learnt techniques and structures to deal with whatever life offers and now they are in balance

or can find the balance with their inner selves in a way they never even dreamed of before. Nowadays there is a growing interest in “mindfulness” that springs from Buddhism. It is one of the preliminary steps in learning how to have a full meditation, dealing with how to become aware of oneself (Burns, 1965; Goleman, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Though neither of the informants mentioned Buddhism, Hinduism nor any other religion, their understanding and elaborating of the notion of becoming aware of their demons and dealing with this with the help of techniques they learned, either at the self-development courses (Sara and Zoë) or by themselves (Anna), led me to include this in the thesis. I have pursued the notions of yoga and mindfulness in this thesis consciously because even though there are thousands of books and theories in the world trying to explain the phenomenon like that of the informants, why highlight thousands when a handful shows all the aspects and more. It must be said that I do not believe Westerners are less intelligent than Easterners for not understanding this; it is just that they have appreciated traditions and learning from ancestors, while we have focused on finding the answers on our own. This leads me to think that we are rediscovering the wheel.

7.2.2 Scientific support

There are two big turning-points that we all have to go through in life. The first is when going from childhood to adulthood, and the other is from work to retirement. Luborsky (Luborsky, 1994) did a longitudinal study with interviewing his participant before they retired, when they were in the process, and sometime after. In the study he too wanted to figure out how the participants felt on the inside on while going through such a huge change in their lives. As he concluded in his paper, it is difficult to get people to talk about this transition, because hardly any really think about what is happening (Luborsky, 1994). McLean and Pratt (McLean, 2006) also did a longitudinal study, but studied teenagers who went from late adolescence to emerging adulthood. They sent out a questionnaire two years in a row while the informants were in the last years in secondary school, and then McLean and Pratt interviewed them a year or two after they had finished secondary school. It was also commented in the study that there are only a few studies about transitions like this (McLean, 2006). The lack of direct support from the science provokes many questions about the possibility of researching the phenomena. The Dalai Lama highlights the problem by emphasizing that the mere absence of empirical scientific confirmation about a phenomenon is no reason to throw it out (Goleman, 1997). Though the scientific world cannot confirm the soul, the X-factor or how exactly the unconsciousness influences the consciousness, and how we in turn can use all this, does not mean it does not exist! The scientific world takes little notice of things that does not have

empirical, significant results, especially from spiritual traditions, like where mindfulness originates. Their ignorance reflects the demands of scientific methodology, to some extent. They consider their job the discovery of facts about the physical not the spiritual world, and so, they conclude, spiritual insights have no bearing on science. The interesting thing is however that aspects, like the soul, were in the academic world until the seventeenth century, but was removed because the writers thought the aspect was so given that they left it out (Jung, 2001). And as time went by academia misinterpreted the absence, thinking it meant the soul was not important and not relevant, instead of understanding the naturally given importance of it (Jung, 2001). The two worlds of science and spirituality may coexist but, by definition, they are doomed never to collide (Sharpe & Bryant, 2005), unless we can see beyond the boundaries. The phenomenon under research needs aspects from both worlds in order to be comprehended to the fullest, to see it as a whole, and not fixate on aspects from only one of these worlds.

No machine can capture the awareness the informants have gained about their transition from an unconscious state (dark room) into a conscious state (light in the room). There will never be an understanding of the mind in this way until we have the technology to capture it correctly (Goleman, 1997; Kabat-Zinn, 2005). But just because it cannot be stated as a truth in science, it does not mean it does not exist (Goleman, 1997) or should be ignored or overlooked (Smith, et al., 2009). Sharpe wrote that science and spiritual tradition are so locked in their fields that they neglect the idea that they explain things differently, both are valuable descriptions but one should not be excluded just because the other is used (Sharpe & Bryant, 2005). I have found that this, let us call it stubbornness, has become a key piece in my research, because in order to truly understand and describe the phenomenon I have had to not only go past the boundary of psychology, but also mix the two worlds of science and spirituality. The notion of mindfulness, like said previous in the paper, comes from Buddhism, where it is a state of mind needed in order to pursue meditation (Burns, 1965) and yoga (Sivananda, 2007). Even though Goleman and Sharpe states that there is a lack in the correlation between the two worlds (Goleman, 1997; Sharpe & Bryant, 2005), the acceptance of mindfulness in the scientific arena (Kabat-Zinn, 2005), and also aspects like using methods of positive psychology in self-development (Boniwell, 2006), like at Zoë's course, show that there is a change happening, an opening for correlating the different fields. The reason for not using the newest theories of mindfulness and positive psychology is, like states earlier,

because I found the Buddhist writings to be more direct and pure in communicating the subject of interest.

7.2.3 What words describe the phenomenon?

Kierkegaard said that the subjectivity is truth, the person's truth is defined by the person's reality (Hergenbahn, 2005; Svare, 1997) In other words, he said that the self is constructed on the background of what the individual find as truth. Since this is determined by each individual the self will also have different values and beliefs. The explanation about the theatre-play used in the previous chapter can be used here can be understood as how you and another person sitting on the opposite side will have a slightly different understanding of the play. The self is an organization of all the various influences of his or her individual social and developmental history (Markus & Kitayama, 1994).

Many researchers try to explain this self-development, like Bauer (Bauer, 2004), and explain the moment when the turning-point when the understanding of one's life and the motivation to change occurs at the same time. I have in the process of this paper not only had to overcome understanding the informants view on this and finding the essence of their experiences, I also have had to find the essence in all the articles and books that researchers in many fields have written about the phenomenon. For one I must say, that the scientific fields do not really take in the whole, as the Gestalt psychology tried to emphasize, because they seem to just treat the whole as just another part (Bastiansen, 2005). Maybe it is like Anna said in the interview that the West have overlooked the fact that we have all the answers in ourselves, but we have forgotten how to use this ability, which is also emphasized in "Healing Emotions" (Goleman, 1997). I found that to explain the phenomenon under research I needed to go beyond the descriptions of the words, beyond the parts, to find the essence of the phenomenon. The search for the answers in life can never truly work if we only look for answers in books, courses or from other external material. Maybe this is especially true on a topic like becoming aware of yourself and the transitions we can go through. The only way to truly understand yourself and your actions is to look within yourself. This is emphasized by the informants, but also Humphreys (Humphreys, 2008), Kabat-Zinn (Kabat-Zinn, 2005), Buddhism (Burns, 1965) and many more. The old Buddhist story about the Gods who hid the key to inner peace and happiness within the human being, show that to go within yourself will give the best result. If you are trying to understand what spring-time is, you will miss the whole experience if you focus completely on the opening of a bud on tree. You have to take in everything, and see the season as one.

When reading about the self, being at ease with your self and how to get there if you are not, it seems to be a complicated matter reaching a state of being at ease with yourself. But what needs to be done is simple, but it does not mean it is an easy process (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Nearly every writer makes up his or her own word to explain how this self-development takes place, and might even tell why they have found the key and they are unique and the only ones who understand it completely. But like said in the previous paragraph, people view the world slightly differently, and it means that there are as many different interpretations about how you can go through a transition as there are people in this world. In order to see the objective reality it is important to understand where in the theatre you are sitting. If you understand yourself and what aspects of life you have understood from your unique sitting in the big theatre called the world, then you know the world better as well (Kabat-Zinn, 2005).

7.3 Discussion of the transition

Everyone can perform more than they actually do, but a lot of people do not know their own capacity. The capacity within oneself can be far greater than acknowledged (Kvalvaag, 2005).

I have read about how people use all sorts of ways to express and make meaning of the transitions they go through. All from walking pathways (Jørgensen, 2008), writing down their story (Pennebaker, 1997), painting pictures, talking to friends, family, and professionals like doctors, psychologist and so on. We all have to find our way. I do not think that two people in this world will have the exact same need, because we are all constructed differently, in the matter of environment we grew up in, what genes our parents gave us, and what type of person we are in general (Spelke, 1998). To live means continually constructing and reconstructing our lives, without knowing their outcome we revise the path we are on as new events are added. Understanding of our lives lie at the heart of those turns in the road that people think of as life transitions (McAdams, et al., 2001).

Things that trouble you will keep building up until a point, and then it will burst. We can understand it like facing a lion in the wild. The lion is much faster than you and will catch up with you at some point, if you run. You have a much greater chance of surviving if you remain where you are and defeat the lion right away. No need in postponing the inevitable impact. I believe that people here in the West have got too used to having a good life, and postpone their difficult feelings and difficult situations. It is like postponing the impact with

the lion, it will happen eventually. The problem with pushing away all the sorrow, sadness and unpleasant feelings, will not automatically make the feelings disappear into thin air. Do you think the hungry lion will suddenly stop chasing you and turn another way? It is like the central and peripheral predator that was talked about earlier in relation to the school of fish metaphor. The result of ignoring the feelings you get only push them from noticeable central and conscious predators into peripheral and unconscious predators that are harder to notice (Chen, 2008). We might not notice them in the same sense, and therefore believe they have disappeared, but we might notice that other parts of ourselves do not function optional. The flashlight only focuses on a small part of the school of fish, and then you might not notice all the predators eating away in the peripheral areas. Since we are all unique individuals and we all function differently, these predators also have a unique set of adapting to every individual. Zoë's whole body got paralyzed with the M.E, but she became well after understanding the processes and dealing with her lion. Sara had to learn how all her emotions and feeling from her brother's death had eventually led to drug-abuse and it in turn lead to her recovery. Anna thought she was doing okay in her life, until the dramatic experience during the C-section released the reappearance of everything she had not dealt with through the years. The three informants faced their lions and worked through everything leading them to their happy lives today. The process of self-realization will never completely finish, because we are in constant development. The important thing is that the three informants feel well with themselves and have cleaned up their baggage, and are now travelling with a lighter weight through life.

Anna might be a tough woman and a fighter, but with everything she has gone through most people would probably never have reached half her age. It is all about taking control of your own life. Stop blaming everyone else for your misery. Anna is not better than other people, or have super powers, she just chose to not be a victim of her past. Instead she became a maker of her future. The same go for Sara's and Zoë's lives. If you want to fly in an airballon, be sure to loosen all the sandbags that are holding you down. You may question how Anna in her course can tell you what path you have to go and how to take control of your life. Maybe you even get a bit upset or angry, and continue "how dare she stand there and talk about.... doesn't she know that I can't..." Maybe the reason for reacting this way might be because we are afraid of something. We might think we are afraid of what others will say about us when they learn what we have done or who we think we are, but the person we are probably is most afraid of revealing our inner selves to is usually our self. Maybe we are afraid that if we leave our lives to be decided by destiny, we will go under (Maslow in Hergenhahn, 2005, p. 490).

But it is not about leaving everything to destiny; it is about changing focus and rearranging the priorities in your life. Dalai Lama does not get how we in the West choose to look so down on our selves (Goleman, 1997), and I do not blame him. How we, maybe especially in Norway, unconsciously pull ourselves down with saying things like we should not be better than others or not stand out from the crowd. I feel the law of jante (Sandemose, 1933) has a tighter grip on us than we let ourselves acknowledge. The informants talked about how they had always been good women, always pleasing everyone else, but forgetting to prioritize themselves. Understanding that you have a choice, and can view life differently changed the informants' lives for ever. They saw that to take care of themselves, by respecting and taking their own things into consideration was not the opposite of being helpful and friendly with others. The change made them have more time and energy in relation with others, since they prioritized themselves from time to time as well. Maybe if more people realised this then the rapidly increasing disease of our time, called depression, might come to a stand still and maybe even decrease?

In trying to understand a psychological phenomenon there must be an understanding that psychological phenomena are complex (Jung, 2001). It is not possible to understand and identify every single one of the components of a phenomena or even finding one major cause for its existence (Bastiansen, 2005). The psychological phenomenon like the one the informants went through can only be comprehended if you take the whole experience into account, including not only the turning-point, but also the life before and after. Though there can never be a full knowledge of what happened and in this not fully comprehending the phenomena, there are still similar factors in their stories that make it possible to draw some connections and parallel understanding of what happened to them. The three stories seem like the stories of Dandelion-children, like the Dandelion flowers growing out of the asphalts, where no-one thought it was possible to live, these Dandelion-children manage to develop in directions one would not expect when looking at the conditions from their up-bringing. Though the notion of these children is that they are robust and that it does not happen a lot, Anna pointed out in her interview that *“some people believe they have a natural endowment with connecting to some spiritual level”*, which help us guide our way in life, but she continues *“we all have this endowment and the potential to be fantastic and in peace with our selves, but more than ninety percent of the worlds population close this off. The reason is that we are mostly left-hemisphere users, and in this forgetting that we can be more.”* Anna says that this ninety percent does not understand how this is possible, and says that they in this way

neglect the fact that they have just as much potential to reach total peace and happiness with the inner parts of themselves. If more people in this world learned how to become aware and understand more of what goes on in both our conscious and unconscious selves, I think there would be more cases like the informants.

People are found to vary across in knowledge in different cultures or circumstances, this variation teaches us something about our own potential and that of others (Spelke, 1998). So seeing what the Buddhist monks do, or the yogis, or maybe “just” the informants in this research, can teach you something about your own potential, and in this leading you towards something more. Human history, geography and ecology are relevant to understanding a particular person/individual (Chakravarti, 2003), but it is important not to forget that we have a choice. Our own free, independent self that helps us make decisions beyond the background we come from. In understanding that we are influenced between and on all levels, like Gottlieb said, then if we make an independent choice, this will affect all parts of us. Maybe even down to the genetic level (Gottlieb & Halpern, 2002).

It is all about finding your voice in this world. The informants found their voices and changed when they figured out, like I found my voice to express the thesis, when they understood that they had a voice within and that they could use this to shape their world. I find this similar to the theatre of the oppressed (Boal, 1979), consisting of three parts, the oppressed, the one who oppresses and a neutral part. You can only change one of them, and the natural assumption would be to make the one who oppresses realize his or her actions, but the only one you can really change is the oppressed. By teaching the oppressed to stand up for him or her self and show that they have a choice will eventually change them. The one who oppresses might not be aware of his or her actions. The oppressed must understand that in order to change they need to take responsibility for their own life and confront their obstacles in life. This is precisely what the informants had to do as well.

7.4 Concluding remarks for the discussion

The research has been a challenge both because it was a borderline theme, and the informants' stories made a bigger impression on me than I had initially expected, since I knew there were stories in advance. The phenomenological method seemed most suitable for this research

Find yourself

Know yourself

Trust yourself

8 Concluding words to the thesis

Life races by in an enormous speed, and we do not know how to get off the merry-go-round. The result for a lot of people is to ponder about the past and worry about the future, without noticing how destructive it really is. People do this because they think and hope that the future will be “perfect”, but they are missing the point all together (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). To truly embrace life, we need to learn to embrace life in the present. To live in the present is something that needs to be learnt, especially in our Western society, and in this we have to become aware of our focus in life and confront the obstacles blocking us from living in total freedom and sincerity (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). It has always been apart of us, we just need to reawake the awareness of its existence.

8.1 The informants and their development

Zoë asked herself on the road to recovery “*What is normal, of all the things in my everyday life? What is really me and what is not?*” The statement “normal” feels more like a hypothetical term than anything, the two questions she asked herself while going through the transition is highly relevant. I think it is more about what makes the body seem “normal”, or what needs to be done to feel at ease in everyday life. Zoë commented that in her transition she realized that the body actually tolerates a lot more than she initially suspected. I know the same goes for Anna and Sara, who also have wondered why they managed to go through such a huge transition. What made Anna never try drugs? Or what made Sara never turn back? The three found strength in them self and because of this managed to push through all the pain, tears and they did the hard work moving them into someone new and more fulfilled. Not new in the sense that they have got a completely new identity, but new in the way they view life, self and how to take on the challenges life throws them. I think what Zoë acknowledged by saying that “*we can tolerate a lot more than we think*” is important to remember. There is enough power and strength in us to make the change; we just have to take the chance to jump. Staying true to the X-factor and daring to jump helped Anna, Sara and Zoë.

Become conscious of who you are and how you are doing, can lead to life-changing transformations in your life (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) (Goleman, 1997) (Egeland, 2009), like the informants have had. The road the informants have been on since the turning-point is unbelievable, fantastic and nothing short of breathtaking. I am so touched and glad that there

are people in the world like them that have learnt to understand what amazing creatures we humans are and what we can accomplish if we really put our hearts in to it. Though some people might say “Oh, but they probably have some sort of gift for this”, I must quote Anna: *“Nobody can come and say that their lives can not be fixed, because, just look at me!”* Anna made a choice to change. She did not want to be dependent on her past, so she dealt with it and moved on. Today she is an inspiration for so many, but though she can give a map (techniques) of how to get out, every single person has to walk their own road, into tranquillity. Both Sara’s and Zoë’s journeys have also inspired them to help other people and are today working on making people aware of this unique gift we all have within us.

For the three informants, perhaps the most important revelation has been to understand how and why the things happened to them in life and then use the techniques to reconcile with their past in order to live in the now. Put another way; we all have baggage that we drag through life. Anna, Sara and Zoë cleaned up theirs so it is nice and light, so they will not be stuck using all their energy on being angry at the “stupid” baggage. Though their baggage looked different it drained all three women of their energy, they were able to take an active choice to change and sustained their decision. The baggage is not you, and it should not have focus on your journey through life. The focus should be on everything you experience and the things that stumble across your path. Living and feeling by being present in the now can help with dealing with the baggage of the past and the worries for the future. No matter how heavy or messy the baggage is, there is always a choice whether to live with it or do a good clean up in it. The three informants are different but have had similar experience with going through a life-changing transition.

8.2 Everybody can change into themselves

When we start working with self-development, it will become conscious and we can say that we have tangled our way into the unconscious level and need to un-tangle ourselves back to the conscious level. There is a beautiful Buddhist story, about the Gods who where worried about becoming redundant, because man was developing too fast and becoming too wise. They wanted to hide the secret to success, so no man could find it. The story ends with the eldest God saying, “I propose that we hide the key to success within man himself, because it is the last place he will ever look.” The power to heal yourself has always been within you, instead of looking to external medication and therapies for a cure.

Like said in the beginning of the paper, I wanted to write about people that had gone through a transition from an unconscious state into a conscious one, like going from a dark (Mace, 2008), shadow world (Humphreys, 2008), into a state with more natural light and awareness. The reason for them has been my belief that we humans have the ability to go through amazing transformations with ourselves, and I think that this ability is one the aspects that make us human beings so unique. Even though, while doing my research I have learnt that this aspect of humans can only be found in small amounts compared to quantitative research, I have found that there is an increasing awareness in science that human beings are not as mechanical as the research fields want them to be. I wanted to shed light on this unique transition, which I believe is one of the most spectacular thing that we human can do. The informants' experiences of transition are unique, admirable, and worth more to them than words can ever be described. Their stories are also true, but never true in the scientific research world, because they can not be reproduced; reduced to facts, have significant results that can become reliable and valid by checking them up to a list and so on. And you know what: they should not be reproduced! They should be understood and used as knowledge of what we are able to do, because like everyone else, Anna, Sara and Zoë are unique!

The paper is not stating that we all need to go soul-searching to be happy. It is just trying to say that if you do not feel comfortable with whom you are and with the life you have, then maybe you should search within to see if you find any answers or new ways to go through this path of life. If we all understand our own truth and our own selves, and in this we see and respect that other people might see the world and approach it differently, we might make this world a better place to live in. Life is not about following a specific recipe, because we are all different, so you need to find your own personal recipe that works for you. Life is not about becoming wealthy, famous, or best. Life is about living out your own potential!

8.3 Live life to the fullest! Always! (Ernest Hemingway in Egeland, 2009, p. 18)

The key to happiness is the acknowledgement that we all already are a part of the whole and that we deep down do not lack anything (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Understand that you have the X-factor, and learn how to use it!

“What lies behind us, and what lies before us, cannot compare to what lies within us”

-Buddha

“The secret is taking the first step”

-Mark Twain

“There is always one more way of doing it. Yours!”

(Alapack, 2007)

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Appendix 1 : The Information Document (In norwegian)

Appendix 2 : The Informed Consensus Form (In norwegian)

Appendix 3 : The interview guide (In norwegian)

Appendix 4 : The Approval from NSD (In norwegian)

Appendix 1:

Forespørsel om deltakelse i en kvalitativ forskning om selvutvikling

I forbindelse med masteroppgaven min i Human Development ved NTNU, ønsker jeg, Ingeborg Skaret Kjos-Hanssen, å få vite hvordan personer gjennomgår en selvutvikling, med spesiell tanke på personer som har gjennomgått et omfattende vendepunkt i livet. Når jeg tenker på vendepunkt legger jeg til grunn at livet etter dette blir vesentlig forskjellig fra hvordan det var før. Jeg er interessert i historien om vendepunktet og hva personen som har gjennomgått dette tenker om hendelsen. Det er derfor ønskelig fra min side å finne noen som har følt et slikt vendepunkt på kroppen.

Intervjuet kommer til å bli mest mulig åpent, for å la historien og erfaringene komme i den rekkefølgen som føles best for den som snakker om hendelsene. Sted og tidspunkt for intervjuet blir bestemt sammen. De opplysningene som kommer frem i intervjuet vil bli benyttet i tilknytning til masteroppgaven min, som skal leveres i juni 2010. Ingen enkeltpersoner vil kunne kjenne seg igjen i den ferdige oppgaven. Min veileder, Richard Alapack, og jeg har begge taushetsplikt med hensyn til deltakerne i studiet. Din deltakelse og de opplysningene som du gir vil bli konfidensielt behandlet. Intervjuet vil bli tatt opp på lydbånd, for på best måte å bevare det som er sagt i intervjuet. Opptaket vil bli slettet og alle opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet er ferdig, innen juni 2010. Det vil ikke bli lagret noen opplysninger som kan identifisere deg.

Studiet er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Ved spørsmål i tilknytning til studiet, ta gjerne kontakt:

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Appendix 2:

Informert samtykke

Jeg samtykker til at Ingeborg Skaret Kjos-Hanssen gjør et intervju med meg. Intervjuet blir en del av det kvalitative materialet som Ingeborg skal bruke til masteroppgaven sin. Intervjuet kommer til å bli tatt opp slik at Ingeborg kan ha intervjuet i klar tekst under hele arbeidet med oppgaveskrivingen.

Intervjuet vil bli anonymisert, slik at det ikke kan på noen måte kan spores tilbake til meg. Lydopptaket som blir gjort vil bli slettet når arbeidet er ferdig.

Jeg gir med dette mitt samtykke til Ingeborg om å være med på intervjuet, og vet at jeg når som helst i prosessen kan trekke meg fra undersøkelsen om jeg så måtte ønske det, uten å måtte oppgi noen grunn.

Dato

Underskrift

Appendix 3:

Intervju guide

Spørsmål 1:

Utifra det jeg vet om deg, har du gjennomgått en forandring/reise i livet ditt som har hatt stor innvirkning. Kan du fortelle meg om denne forandring? Hvordan startet den? Hvordan var livet ditt til da, og hvordan ble livet forandret?

Spørsmål 2:

Hvordan vil du selv forklare om hvorfor denne forandringen skjedde?

Spørsmål 3:

Hvordan har du det nå? Tror du at du ville kommet deg til samme plass som du er i dag hvis ikke denne forandringen hadde kommet?