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Development Towards Autonomy

A Q methodological study of how college students who seek counselling experience their development towards autonomy

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Abstract

College serves as a venue for development, where one aim is to produce autonomous students. In this process of developing towards autonomy difficulty and challenges occurs, and thus some students choose to seek counselling. Based on this it has been desirable to gain a deeper understanding of how college students experience this process. Hence, the research question of this thesis is: *How do college students who seek counselling experience their development towards autonomy?*

This thesis is conducted by using Q methodology. 14 college students who have been to counselling participated in this research. Based on the research question the participants sorted 36 statements in accordance with their recognition of themselves in them, from *least like me* to *most like me.* The statements were produced with the help of Fisher's balanced block design. The research design includes theory about self-efficacy, self-awareness in a developmental perspective, and the counselling relation.

Based on an analysis of the participants' Q sorts, a four-factor solution appeared. The factors represent different viewpoints existing among the college students who seek counselling, related to the development towards autonomy. These were further interpreted and given names. Factor 1: *Others make me feel strong, but I do not do what is required to succeed.* Factor 2: *All the expectations make me lack a feeling of control.* Factor 3: *I take responsibility for personal development, but not necessarily in school.* Factor 4: *Although I work hard I need others to believe in me.* The factors were discussed in relation to theory. What emerged was an understanding that the factors represent different points along the journey towards autonomy. At the same time, all of the students also have a tendency to prevent themselves from full potential of development. An increased self-awareness is believed to be necessary to overcome this, which can be attained with the help of counselling.

Acknowledgements

When I write the final words of this master thesis I realize that I have come to a crossroads in my life. As I look ahead, towards the future and endless possibilities, I find it necessary to look back; at my past and at the journey that has led me to where I am today. Throughout the time I have attended the master program in counselling I have learned more about my self than ever before. This process of developing and becoming more self-aware has been so challenging, yet so rewarding. The master thesis can be regarded as a development process itself. While I have studied development and the experience of autonomy among other students, I realize that I have developed too, and increased my sense of autonomy. I look back and I feel grateful. I can now continue on my future journey.

Many people have contributed to this master thesis and supported me in the process. First of all I would like to thank the research participants who made it possible to conduct this study. I would also like to thank my inspiring fellow students. To my supervisor Jonathan Reams, thank you for motivational support, and for helping me to trust the process and myself. My dear friends and family; I am so grateful to have you in my life. And last but not least, thank you Simen, for believing in me and providing me with support.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The emergence of the thesis' topic

During the years I have attended college I have experienced what a joy it is to learn, to grow as a person and to develop towards becoming a counsellor. I have also experienced the pressure to perform, to be insecure and to be discouraged by failure. Nevertheless, these experiences have strengthened me and provided me with increased self-awareness. This has enabled me to not only be in the world, but to intentionally act on it. My experiences made me want to find out how this is experienced among other students. Because I realized how important it is for me to strive for my human potential, I wanted to make sure others notice this perspective as well. I wanted to promote a positive view on humanity (Rogers, 1961).

Our Western educational system aims to produce highly developed students with a strong sense of autonomy (Cook-Greuter, 2005). This is a consequence of increased demands in our modern society, which in turn results in complex vocational roles to fulfil (Bandura, 1995). As adolescents enter college they will have to figure out what to do in life vocationally, and they will have to engage in new roles, and master new skills. They go through a phase in life where they develop both personally and professionally, and acquire valuable knowledge and competence (Bandura, 1995). However, research shows that 10-15% of Norwegian students struggle with low self-efficacy and reduced life quality, and 14 % experience symptoms of various psychological diseases. This is higher than in the general Norwegian population (Nedregård & Olsen, 2010). This might be due to the experience of pressure, demands and expectations a lot of the students face (Sørensen, Østvik, Lindtvedt, Gammon, & Wang, 2007). A heightened self-efficacy through self-awareness is believed to strengthen these students and help them to take control in their lives. This will eventually be beneficial not only to society, but also to the students as it will enable them to live in harmony (Kvalsund, 2003).

As a counselling student I believe in dialogue and that personal growth can be attained in counselling. Different counselling services offer students help concerning their student life, which is partly to ensure that young students experience life quality and self-efficacy. It became obvious that I should include a counselling perspective in my thesis, and thus it was desired to base the research on college students who have been to counselling. Autonomy was regarded as a suitable umbrella term of many of the aspects desired to look further into, and in order to study students' subjective experience of this a Q methodological approach was

chosen. The research question of this thesis is as follows: *How do college students who seek counselling experience their development towards autonomy?*

1.2 Concept clarifications

1.2.1 Autonomy

In the Western tradition autonomy has been linked to individual freedom and the possibility for harmonious development based on personal choices, desires and wishes (Charlesworth, 1993). Autonomy originates from the Greek words "auto" (self) and "nomos" (rule of law), which in Ancient Greece referred to a self-governed city (Dworkin, 1988). Nowadays the term is regarded as rather complex, and used in a broad fashion. It is associated with the concepts of liberty, freedom of will, self-rule, individuality, independence, responsibility, and self-knowledge, to name a few (Dworkin, 1988). Some of these concepts appear in the theory of this thesis; a person's level of *self-efficacy* concerns to which degree he or she feels in control of his or her life (Bandura, 1994), *self-awareness in a developmental perspective* is described as the increased differentiation of a person (Cook-Greuter, 2005), and *the counselling relation* seeks to describe how a person can develop his or her independence in relation to another person (Kvalsund, 2005). The concept of autonomy was believed to include many of these concepts, and was thus used as an umbrella term in this thesis. Autonomous students will not only be a valuable resource in a constantly changing society, but will also be enabled to establish a more congruent self-image, and internal harmony (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Kvalsund, 2003).

1.2.2 Development

"Human development is the expansion of people's freedoms and capabilities to lead lives that they value and have reason to value. It is about expanding choices" (United National Development Program, 2011, p. 1). Human development can be described in many ways. This thesis focus on development as a progression of different ways of making meaning of reality, or a progression of different stages (Cook-Greuter, 2005). Each level has its own logic and is at the same time part of a more complex meaning system. A movement from one stage to another indicates increased differentiation and a trend towards autonomy. An experience of development among college students is believed to increase their sense of autonomy, and thus enable them to expand their freedom and capabilities to lead lives that they value (Cook-Greuter, 2005; United National Development Program, 2011).

1.2.3 Student counselling

Counselling in general can be understood as a relation, as well as a conversation, between a counsellor and a person who seeks guidance (McLeod, 2007). The counsellor is the one who guides the person in his or her development process from a current, inadequate situation to a future situation characterized as desired. Counselling can thus be defined as helping people who seek help to help themselves (Lassen, 2002). The person seeking help can for example be a student, in the context of student counselling. According to Utdanningsdirektoratet (2009) (Norwegian directorate for education and training) a student counsellor should also know about the Norwegian education system, and have the competence to provide the students with information about education programs, vocations and the labour market. In this study research was conducted on students who have been to counselling at "Student services" or "Forvei", which are two counselling services located at NTNU.

1.3 The structure of the master thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter, *Introduction*, has presented the emergence of the thesis' topic, and a clarification of different essential concepts of this thesis. Chapter 2, *Theory*, contains the theoretical foundation, which the research design and the thesis are built on. Chapter 3, *Method*, gives a description of the Q methodological research steps, as well as the quality of the research, ethical considerations and reflections on the role of the researcher. Chapter 4, *Factor presentation*, presents the findings of this research, based on a four-factor solution. Chapter 5, *Discussion*, discuss the four factors in relation to theory. Finally, chapter 6, *Conclusion*, will present a conclusion to the research question, as well as looking at autonomy in a critical perspective. Limitations of the research and implications for practice and future research will also be presented in the last chapter.

2 Theory

In order to become more autonomous, which society needs, students should develop a higher sense of *self-efficacy* and level of *self-awareness*. These are highly related to each other, as the students need to be aware of their cognitive, behavioural and affective processes in order to take control in their own lives (Bandura, 1997). Student counselling is a service many students seek when they experience challenges related to the demanding student life. In the encounter with a counsellor difficulties concerning self-efficacy may be addressed, and self-awareness may increase. However, students have different needs when they come to counselling. Their needs will influence how *the counselling relation* will develop, and eventually what the students will gain from the encounter (Kvalsund, 2006). Self-awareness, self-efficacy and the counselling relation are essentials for this thesis, as they make the foundation for the research design (More about this in chapter 2). This chapter will give a further presentation of these aspects in relation to theory.

2.1 Self-efficacy

Society and the educational system impose different challenges on college students (Bandura, 1995). In order to meet these challenges the interesting part has not so much to do with what they concern, but rather how the students perceive themselves as being in control of themselves (Bandura, 1997). This leads us to the concept of self-efficacy, which can be defined as "people's beliefs about the capability to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). In other words, self-efficacy addresses how effective and competent the students perceive themselves to be. This perception is basically built on belief and not on what is objectively the fact (Bandura, 1995). Nor is it a static estimate of self-esteem; it is rather dynamic and domain-specific (S. D. Brown & Lent, 2006). Students' perceived self-efficacy is a key resource in self-development, adaption and change (Bandura, 2006), and it influences how people think, motivate themselves, act and feel. In turn, self-efficacy will have an impact on the students' academic ambitions and accomplishment, and how well they prepare for different occupational careers (Bandura, 1994)

2.1.1 Low sense of self-efficacy

Self-efficacy has a profound effect on students' cognitive functioning (Bandura, 1994, 1995) In order for them to function well, effective cognitive processes are required. Students' personal efficacy is based on their degree of *belief,* which is a result of how they manage to predict events, and whether or not they have enabled ways to control these events. Students

with a low sense of self-efficacy believe that they are not capable of mastering challenging situations and thus predict that the likely outcome is failure. Their self-doubt increases and their analytic thinking becomes less consistent. This makes the student focus on what might go wrong rather than pursuing success (Bandura, 1994, 1995).

Self-efficacy not only affects prediction of events but also beliefs of what the students manage to do (Bandura, 1994, 2006). Given that students with a low sense of self-efficacy predict poor outcomes, they rarely pursue high goals. Self-doubt makes them lower their ambitions and the level of effort put into challenging tasks or situations, and display weak commitment to the goals they set for themselves. A strong influential source to low self-efficacy is the experience of failure. Repeated failures will undermine one's efficacy and lead to a lack of feeling in control. It will also become harder to recover after constant setbacks and failures. Even the experience of success may result in low efficacy if success is achieved too easy. Results are then expected to be quick and effortless, and therefore, the students easily become discouraged by failure (Bandura, 1994, 1995). Sooner or later failures will be perceived as personal threats. So instead of addressing the challenges and enable ways to take control over them, the students find it easier to avoid them in order to sustain their self-esteem (Dweck, 2000). Eventually the students will lose faith in their own capabilities and their ability to control their own lives. They easily give up and no longer take responsibility for their own actions. Instead, outcomes are perceived as a result of coincidence or what other people do, and so they become victims of the world around them (Rotter, 1982).

The level of self-efficacy also influences a student's affective processes and thus their sense of well-being (Bandura, 1994, 1995). When students with a low feeling of self-efficacy approach different events with the belief that they will not master them, self-doubt emerges and level of distress and anxiety increases. People with low self-efficacy also tend to be victims of depression much easier. The ability to control stressful events seems to be essential regarding level of well-being, so when students are exposed to stressors the deciding factor concerns their perception of the ability to control them (Bandura, 1994).

2.1.2 High sense of self-efficacy

Students with a strong feeling of self-efficacy exercise control over their own consciousness, and thus believe in their own competence and efficacy (Bandura, 1994). They manage to regulate their own thought processes (Bandura, 1995). Self-regulation is important when it comes to learning, and the development of self-governed students. Highly effective students select appropriate learning strategies, and evaluate and correct insufficient effort (Bandura,

1995). This makes them more likely to fulfil educational demands and prepare for future vocations (Bandura, 2006). Students with a high feeling of self-efficacy approach a challenging situation with the belief that they are capable of mastering it, rather than letting their self-doubt take over control (Bandura, 1994, 1997).

Challenges are in fact motivating. Students with strong self-efficacy cultivate an internal interest and strong commitment to activities (Bandura, 1994, 1995). When students set goals for themselves, self-efficacy will determine not only which goals they choose to pursue, but also how long they will sustain motivation, how much effort they put into it and how resilient they are in the face of defeats. Students with a strong sense of efficacy will pursue goals and make choices of actions where the intention is to accomplish the goals they set for themselves. The stronger sense of self-efficacy, the higher goals the students will set for themselves (Bandura, 1994). When the students encounter setbacks and defeats they recover quickly. Part of possessing high self-efficacy is to stick with it through tough times. Only then will the students establish a resilient sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995, 2006). Though mastery experiences serve as the greatest source of perceived efficacy, setbacks contribute to an acknowledgement that a certain amount of effort is required to succeed (Bandura, 1994). Therefore, students will attribute failure to inadequate effort. They realize that there is a correlation between their actions and the results of these, and based on this they perceive themselves as agents who can control and choose their path of life (Rotter, 1982). They also possess what Dweck (2008) refers to as a "growth mindset"; they believe that their skills can develop through hard work and effort.

Eventually the students with a high sense of self-efficacy will attain a heightened feeling of well-being (Bandura, 2006). High perception of efficacy lowers stress and anxiety (Bandura, 1994). It also makes the students feel less vulnerable. While low feelings of efficacy make students impair themselves with anxiety and inefficacious thinking, the students with high feelings of efficacy will interpret their reactions and find out that their vulnerability is a result of poor performance (Bandura, 1995). The ultimate factor is how the affective processes are perceived and interpreted, not their level of arousal (Bandura, 1994)

2.2 Self-awareness in a developmental perspective

In order to experience a strengthened sense of self-efficacy, self-awareness is necessary (Bandura, 1997). Self-awareness means turning attention towards the processes going on in a person's inner life. It concerns to which extent a person is in contact with and aware of affective, behavioural and cognitive patterns (Jordan, 2002, 2011). An individual can be in

possession of self-awareness to very different degree (Jordan, 2011). Internal processes are constantly operating in one's interior and can influence our actions in both desirable and undesirable ways. By becoming conscious of the processes and making them objects of attention a person will be able to actively reflect on these processes and generate strategies for self-development. The person then intentionally acts on emotions, thoughts and behavioural habits without being had by them (Jordan, 2002, 2011).

To better understand the complexity of self-awareness and how self-aware students experience themselves to be, a developmental perspective can be useful. Various theories address this perspective. Joiner and Josephs (2007) describe development of self-awareness as increasing capacity to *sustain* the internal processes, Rooke and Torbert (2005) turn to the concept of *action logics* to explain how people develop, and Cook-Greuter (2005) incorporates it in her theory regarding *ego development*. According to the latter theory development can be looked at as a progression of different ways of making meaning of reality, or a progression of different stages. "Each new level is both a new whole logic with its own coherence, and – at the same time - also a part of a larger, more complex meaning system" (Cook-Greuter, 2005, p. 3). Moreover, the meaning system is constituted of three interconnected components that concern *doing, feeling and thinking*. The cognitive component looks at how people think of themselves and the world, and how they structure and interpret experience. The behavioral component addresses how people interact with other people, and which needs people act upon. The affective component has to do with how people feel and how feelings are dealt with. In this thesis three developmental stages are used to more closely comprehend students development of self-awareness. These are *the conformist stage, the self-conscious stage* and the *conscientious stage* - representative of 80 % of the western, adult population. These conventional stages constitute a movement from integration to increased differentiation, and also towards abstract, analytic functioning (Cook-Greuter, 2005). It can be seen as the trend towards autonomy (Angyal, 1965).

2.2.1 The conformist stage

The students located at the conformist stage possess only the most basic level of self-awareness (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007). Their cognitive structure is based on concrete operations, which enables them to organize thinking in simple patterns and categories. Events and people are thus perceived and evaluated through external distinctions, like appearance and material possessions. Students at the conformist stage do experience an increasing level of abstract thinking, which makes it possible for them to take on a second

person perspective (Cook-Greuter, 2005). They realize that the world not only consists of other people, but of people who have thoughts and feelings concerning them. Attention is then turned away from the Self and directed towards others (Joiner & Josephs, 2007)

The conformists are defined by their relationships to other people. They have a strong desire to belong to someone, and for this reason acceptance becomes important (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007). They are deeply concerned with what others think and feel about them, so in order to be accepted they are willing to sacrifice a lot of their own values and beliefs. They will do anything according to their group's norms and rules (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Rooke & Torbert, 2005). To belong to a certain group allows the students to feel protected and be part of a greater entity, and the more status the group has the more valuable they experience themselves to be. Though relationships are important to the conformists they are not as genuine and meaningful as relationships ideally may be (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Kvalsund, 2005). Because of the constant strive to live up to others' values and beliefs their relationships are mostly based on what they believe is expected of them. Success and satisfaction is therefore measured through keeping up with significant others and to feel resemblance to them (Cook-Greuter, 2005).

The conformists feel worthy when belonging to a group (Cook-Greuter, 2005). The biggest fear is hence to be disapproved, abandoned or to lose membership to this group. Undesirable feelings occur frequently, like shame and anger towards themselves. However, these feelings are mostly suppressed or projected onto others instead of being displayed. As a result they easily put themselves down or believe everyone else feel badly about them, when they actually feel badly about themselves (Cook-Greuter, 2005). Stability and safety are what makes the conformist feel satisfied, and change is therefore perceived as a threat (Rooke & Torbert, 2005). But to be able to move forward, and into the next stage of awareness, change is essential (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

2.2.2 The self-conscious stage

As the students start developing into the self-conscious stage, self-awareness is much more apparent (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). An increased third person perspective provides the student with some introspection and self-understanding, and their cognitive capacity allows them to think in an independent and abstract manner (Cook-Greuter, 2005). They no longer operate with polarities, like *right* or *wrong* and *good* or *bad*, but notice that there exist nuances in human beings. They are capable of taking a step back and observe what happens (Cook-

Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007), so that thoughts and feelings can be seen as objects. This enables them to reflect upon their own interior life (Jordan, 2002)

At the conformist stage people were placed in categories, and perceived as nothing more than members of groups (Cook-Greuter, 2005). However, at the self-conscious stage, other people are experienced as individuals with unique traits. This increased awareness of differentiation between people makes the self-conscious students feel more differentiated themselves. As a result it becomes important to express more of their newly discovered Self (Cook-Greuter, 2005). Thus their main preoccupation is to improve and advance their skills and knowledge. This is a way of exercising control and is also believed to gain respect from others (Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Rooke & Torbert, 2005). To assert their own needs, desires and values also becomes important as it is a way of showing themselves off (Cook-Greuter, 2005). To be accepted by others is still important to the self-conscious student, but now it is because of their uniqueness. They will do anything to sustain their self, and for that reason they are reluctant to opening up to others' views. It may jeopardize their strong sense of identity. In many ways they feel superior and believe they have all the right answers. Others are therefore assessed according to their own standards and capability (Cook-Greuter, 2005).

The main anxiety for the self-conscious person is to lose their increasing sense of personhood (Cook-Greuter, 2005). They fear getting drawn back into the mass. The constant pursuit to sustain superiority may lead to a tendency of perfectionism, and they will judge themselves harshly if progress is not attained (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007). However, the self-conscious students assert more feelings than the conformists, and have a strong sense of resistance internalized. When feeling vulnerable they will much rather put on a strong front than to put themselves down. A movement towards next stage will enable the students to experience an even stronger sense of identity as a result of an increased awareness of the Self (Cook-Greuter, 2005).

2.2.3 The conscientious stage

When students reach the conscientious stage of ego development their level of self-awareness is robust and much more complex (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Rooke & Torbert, 2005). This makes it possible for them to live by a consciously examined system of beliefs and values (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). They are now truly seen as adults with an independent frame of mind, who think in well-established, rational terms (Cook-Greuter, 2005). Their third person perspective is expanded to enable the students to reflect on their past and future selves. Self-knowledge is highly valued and conscientious students will constantly

strive to learn and discover more about themselves. In general the conscientious students are more aware of their own intra-psychic life, and are capable of true introspection (Cook-Greuter, 2005). They are not absorbed by this internal life; on the contrary, internal processes are taken as objects of their awareness (Jordan, 2002).

Conscientious people experience enhanced self-differentiation, but unlike the self-conscious person it is not important to constantly display their strong personhood to others. Other people are respected for the values and beliefs they possess (Cook-Greuter, 2005). To feel accepted by others is not quite as important any more. They thrive more on their independency than on affiliation to others. This means that they can operate in relation to various groups and various people without feeling torn. They are foremost loyal to themselves and their values and beliefs. This does not mean, however, that they act egoistically. On the contrary, the relations they engage in are enriching. Relationships are not about being admired for what has been accomplished, but are rather meaningful and genuine (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Rooke & Torbert, 2005). The conscientious students will join any group or event in order live up to what they believe in. Life is all about improving their knowledge about the world. Thus, they are constantly looking to find answers to complex issues, and uncover the "truth" about human nature (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Rooke & Torbert, 2005). They set high goals for themselves and have a strong motivation to reach them. Through hard work and internal motivation the conscientious people accomplish and achieve what they aim for (Cook-Greuter, 2005).

The conscientious students experience themselves to be less vulnerable to rejection and loss of significant others. Positive self-regard is experienced foremost when they achieve what they have set out to do for themselves. However, the desire to succeed can lead to exhaustion, and when goals are not reached disappointment may occur (Cook-Greuter, 2005). Nevertheless, the conscientious students possess a strong sense of identity (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). They operate as independent selves in the world and their motivation is based only on their desire to accomplish something (Cook-Greuter, 2005). With this follows a strong sense that they can control their own destiny (Bandura, 1994; Joiner & Josephs, 2007).

2.3 The counselling relation

What seems apparent about the notions of self-efficacy and self-awareness is that they both address the Self. Until now the main focus of this chapter has been on the complexity of internal life, and how people make meaning of reality. However, according to the philosophy of Macmurray (1961) one cannot look at individuals as isolated selves. An individual is a

person when he or she is related to other individuals. Thus, being a person means being in relation to others (Macmurray, 1961). The source to come to know oneself is therefore not present in the individual itself, but in the meeting between the Self and the Other. This makes the counselling encounter a unique arena for the students to attain self-knowledge (Allgood, 1995).

To understand what it means to be *persons in relation*, and how a counselling relation may evolve, the dimensions of interpersonal relations may be addressed. These are *dependent*, *independent* and *interdependent* (Kvalsund, 2005). The dimensions are dynamically connected to each other, and may operate at various times and at various levels, but they can also be an indication of a development process from dependency to independency and further to interdependency (Allgood, 1995; Kvalsund, 1998). Relational qualities can never be defined in advance, or be enforced; they will have to develop naturally and be defined accordingly (Kvalsund, 2005). As a counselling relation develops it can turn out to be both positive and negative. This will depend on whether or not the counsellor acknowledges the students' increasing independency and empowerment (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

2.3.1 Dependency

Relations based on dependency indicate that a person is dependent on another in order to develop. A dependent relation often occurs in the early years of life, as one is dependent on a caretaker to cover certain needs, and thus to grow and develop as a person (Kvalsund, 2005) This makes their relation asymmetrical (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Dependency may also occur in a counselling relation. When students come to counselling they often need help in addressing difficulties, and thus they become dependent on the counsellor's competence to be capable of that. The counsellor is also dependent on the students to fulfil the intentions of being a counsellor. A counselling relation will therefore always be based on dependency (Allgood, 1995).

Many people regard counselling as a service where one is given advice (Kvalsund, 2006). Based on this, students may come to counselling with the expectation to be provided with answers and solutions to their issues. The counsellor is then the expert who has the competence to make choices on the students' behalf (Kvalsund, 2006). If help is considered necessary and both student and counsellor recognize this, the dependent relation can be regarded as positive (Kvalsund, 2005; Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Providing the students with advice and recommendations may in some occasions be appropriate in order to help the students (Kvalsund, 2006). According to Utdanningsdirektoratet (2009) (Norwegian

directorate for education and training) part of a counsellor's competence is to have knowledge about the educational system and educational programs. As many students experience a hard time making occupational choices, being provided with such information may be helpful to some students (Bandura, 1995)

Having to figure out what to do in life is often related to demands of modern society. For some students these demands make them lack a feeling of control in their lives (Bandura, 1995). By addressing this feeling in counselling the students may experience to be provided with a feeling of support and recognition (Kvalsund, 2005). Humans often have a desire to help and find solutions, which makes it positive for the counsellor when he or she gets the opportunity to help the students (Kvalsund, 2006; Skau, 2003). The counselling process may also be more efficient when the relation is based on dependency, and when the counsellor provides the students with advice; to give advice requires less time than to stimulate to reflection (Bredland, Linge, & Vik, 2011).

However, if the help is sustained longer than necessary, the relation will be characterized as negative and possibly independent (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Though advice and recommendations can be helpful, the students should be able to gain more from facing their own issues instead of letting the counsellor fix them (Kvalsund, 2006). Having to deal with difficulties can be tough and requires that the students stick with it through the uncertain period (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). To surrender to the dependency may impair the students' possibilities to gain control in their lives. It could get in the way of strengthening the students, and instead weaken their possibility to grow and develop as a person (Kvalsund, 2005).

2.3.2 Independency

Independency in a relation gives a reason to believe that there is no longer need for help in order to develop (Kvalsund, 2005; Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). The call for independency often occurs in the stage of adolescence. This is due to not being dependent on a caretaker in order to act in the world. If there is recognition for this increasing empowerment the relation can develop to benefit both parties, where both can live independently from another. (Kvalsund, 2005) Such an illustration can be seen as more symmetrical because both are equally independent in their relation (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

A counselling relation based on independency suggests that the students are capable of making choices based on their own decisions. Thus, they are no longer dependent on the counsellor's knowledge and competence (Kvalsund, 2005). An increased independency in the

counselling relation is regarded as positive if the counsellor recognizes the students' capability of taking responsibility for their own actions. The students should then be supported in the exploration of their inner resources and human potential. The answers lie within the students, and in the context of the counselling encounter the answers are allowed to emerge. If independency gains entry the students will find own solutions to their issues, and the counsellor will thus only provide them with recognition and confirmation (Kvalsund, 2005).

Although one strives for independency in a relation and cherishes autonomy, an independent relation may also diminish as a result of the lack of recognition (Kvalsund, 1998, 2005; Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). If the counsellor does not support the students' increasing independence the student may feel like creating a distance in their relation to the counsellor. Presence is then regarded as a threat. The scenario may also be the other way around. Being self-governed is all about having to take responsibility for the choices the students make for themselves, which means that they have to endure more uncertainty. Even though the students are capable of taking control in their lives, it is often desirable that others make decisions for them. The relation can then easily be drawn back to dependency if the counsellor does not sustain independency (Kvalsund, 2005).

2.3.3 Interdependency

Interdependency can evolve when both parties in a relation feel enriched by each other's independency (Kvalsund, 2005). This means that they need to belong to each other, but only to develop their independency, and to live in harmony. There is a dynamical movement between the relational dimensions, thus dependency, independency and interdependency are all present at the same time (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Through a developmental perspective the student and the counsellor possess a greater understanding of what it means to be in relation to the other, and they can accept both the positive and the negative aspects that follows. Instead of threatening them, the complexity of relations only makes them stronger (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

An interdependent counselling relation is established the moment the student and the counsellor can develop individually in each other's presence. The students are perceived as subjects with feelings and thoughts, rather than objects, which can be seen in relation to Buber's (1964) thinking of "I-Thou" relations. The counsellor believes in the students' potential and strengthens them in their development of independency. In order to do so, the counsellor should also express certain attitudes towards the students (Gjerde, 2010; Kvalsund,

2005). This is more related to Rogers (1961) philosophy, which stresses the helping relation and an environment providing empathy, genuineness and acceptance.

If these conditions are present the dialogue can emerge. Through dialogue a person can truly fulfil his or her potential of growth, because the dialogue makes learning and discovery of oneself possible (Kvalsund, 2005). It is essential to state that learning is only possible if the student and the counsellor are willing to open up to each other, although this can be both frightening and uncertain (Svare, 2008). Interdependence in the counselling relation enables the students to get to know their inner potential, and thus the opportunity to move towards a greater sense of autonomy (Kvalsund, 2005).

3 Method

This study aims to gain insight in how college students who seek counselling experience their development towards autonomy. In order to obtain the subjectivity existing around the theme, Q methodology was found appropriate as a methodical approach in this study (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010; Watts & Stenner, 2012). This chapter will present the methodical steps in Q method, as well as the quality of the research, ethical considerations and the role of the researcher.

3.1 Q methodology

Q methodology made its first appearance in 1935, and was introduced by William Stephenson (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). It comprises a scientific approach, a research technique, a conceptual framework as well as an analysis method (Brown & Good, 2010 in Thorsen & Allgood, 2010) The main motivation behind the development of a new methodology was the limitations which the prevailing R methodology, or the quantitative approach, was believed to have (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The R methodology and the natural science associated individual differences with the standardization of scores, which made traits, abilities and characteristics the subject of objective measurements. According to Stephenson this type of research only supplies information about a population, not an individual (Stephenson, 1936 in Watts & Stenner, 2012) He pursued a holistic methodology that embraced all aspects of human beings; thoughts, feelings, opinions, attitudes, values, experiences and behaviour (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010; van Exel & de Graaf, 2005; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Through such an approach one would be able to explore nuances in preferences, motives and goals (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). Ultimately, Q methodology aims at eliciting the *subjectivity* that exists around a theme. Subjectivity is a key concept in Q methodology and concerns the state of understanding a phenomenon based on a person's own perspective. It has to do with individual constructions of the world, and how people make meaning out of experience (Wolf, 2010). This can be seen in relation to a phenomenological perspective, which is about connecting to the world of experiences and let the phenomenon appear as it is experienced to a person (Kvalsund, 2005).

In order to make subjectivity subject of research, Q methodology integrates elements from both qualitative and quantitative techniques (McKeown & Thomas, 1988) The emphasis on people's meaning making system is similar to qualitative studies, while the systematic use of factor analysis is more of a quantitative approach (Befring, 2007). The research participants in a Q methodological study will be presented with different stimuli in terms of

statements or visual objects, which they will sort and rank in accordance with the recognition of themselves in the objects. Through this process, subjectivity will appear (Wolf, 2010). Hence, the subjectivity is not an isolated aspect of mind (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Through the act of sorting the subjectivity becomes available for others. In fact, subjectivity *is* behaviour (Wolf, 2010). Subjectivity is understood through the impact on, and in relation to a context, or immediate environment. This is what is called *operant subjectivity*; an essential aspect of Q methodology (Watts & Stenner, 2012) When subjectivity becomes operant through the Q sort, the subjectivity can become subject of research. This leaves the researcher with the opportunity to reveal something new; through *the abduction principal* one is able to gain insight in all the subjectivity existing in a *concourse* (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010).

3.1.1 Concourse

The concourse is a universe comprised by all possible communication surrounding a theme (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). This communication is based on attitudes, experiences, opinions and values existing in the concourse, and is hence an expression of subjectivity as well as shared knowledge and meaning (Watts & Stenner, 2012). One can regard it as a cultural context based on subjective experience (Wolf, 2010). There are endless of concourses, one for each context and situation that exist (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010; Watts & Stenner, 2012). To get hold of the communication of the concourse one can study literature, media, everyday conversations, interviews and so forth. In this thesis the concourse includes shared knowledge and meaning about the experience students who seek counselling have when it concerns development towards autonomy. This concourse was identified through personal experiences, relevant literature and conversations with four study counsellors, as well as two people who have been to student counselling.

3.1.2. Design and Q sample

The Q sample is a set of statements retrieved from the concourse (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). It is desirable, but yet challenging, to develop a Q sample representative of the concourse (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In order to ensure a balanced sample that embraces different meanings about the theme, Fisher's balanced block design has been used in this thesis. This design helps structuring the process of developing statements, and to create a representative picture of the concourse (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010; Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). Fisher's balanced block design is constituted of effects, levels and cells. The effects are the overall themes gathered from the concourse. These are in turn divided into levels, or smaller themes,

to provide a broader picture of the effects. The cells display the number of levels found within each effect (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). Table 1 presents the design used in this research.

Table 1 - Fisher's balanced block design

Effect	Level			Cells
Self-efficacy	A: Low Self-efficacy	B: High Self-efficacy		2
Self-awareness	C: Conformist	D: Self-conscious	E: Conscientious	3
Relation	F: Dependent	G: Independent	H: Interdependent	3
Total combinations				18

Three effects were included in the design. The first effect represents Bandura's notion of *self-efficacy*. The effect is divided into two levels; *low self-efficacy* and high *self-efficacy*. These levels aim to describe how the perception of personal efficacy can influence the students' resilience in the face of challenges, and to which degree they are in control of their own lives (Bandura, 1997). The second effect, *self-awareness*, is based on theory concerning development of mental complexity. The levels within this effect *are conformist, self-conscious and conscientious*. These represent the stages which people go through as their level of self-awareness increases (Cook-Greuter, 2005). The third effect concerns *the counselling relation.* The associated levels are *dependent, independent and interdependent*, which can illustrate some of the complexity related to being in relation to another person (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

Based on the design, the Q sample was developed. The researcher constructed the statements by creating combinations of the design's cells. In total 18 different combinations were possible (2 x 3 x 3 = 18): ACF, ACG, ACH, ADF, ADG, ADH, AEF, AEG, AEH, BCF, BCG, BCH, BDF, BDG, BDH, BEF, BEG, BEH. When working on the Q sample of this research, approximately 100 statements were produced. This was done by gathering information from the concourse (interviews, literature, media etc.), and writing and structuring sentences based on Fisher's balanced block design. In collaboration with my supervisor the number of statements was reduced to 36, with two associated replications of each combination. In order to represent the concourse in the best possible way, the replications of the combinations are constituted of both positive and negative loaded statements (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). To ensure clarity in the statements several fellow students read through the sentences and gave feedback regarding sentence structure, typos etc. The statements were further designed in Norwegian due to the P-set, and translated into

English for the sake of the thesis. Eventually the 36 statements were numbered randomly by putting all of the statements in a bowl, and then drawn out one by one. Random numbering was conducted to avoid displaying a structural pattern to the Q sort (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). Statements 25 and 2 are examples of positive and negative sentences derived from the combination BCH.

> *25 Good conversations with a counsellor make me experience myself as a strong person.*
> *2. Having a deep dialogue with someone is only reserved for those who are close to me.*

The process of creating statements required a great amount of time in order to ensure that they were representative of the concourse. This may be a challenging part of the research process, but very important indeed (Watts & Stenner, 2012). There will always be a possibility to exclude valuable stimuli found in the concourse when creating statements, largely due to the statements being influenced by the researcher's subjectivity. However, the one who sorts does not necessarily make the same meaning of the sentences as the researcher (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). Nevertheless, being aware of the impact I may have as a researcher is important to point out in this research.

3.1.3 P set

The p set is the people who conduct the Q sort, or those who represent the culture of the concourse (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). The selection of the P set should be done with caution and consideration (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Although certain participants are easier to obtain, some effort is required in order to ensure a relevant set of participants. It is also desirable to get hold of a relatively heterogeneous group to capture the complexity of the concourse (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Only a limited number of research participants are required in a Q methodological study due to the purpose of the study. The purpose is to establish existing viewpoints within the concourse, and to make it possible to compare differing viewpoints (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005).

In this thesis the P set is NTNU-students who have been to student counselling. It was found appropriate to let the counsellors at Student service take care of the recruiting of the students, due to time constraints. They were provided with 50 envelopes, which were distributed between eight counsellors. They were also handed an information sheet (Appendix 5), where the aim was to inform about the project and about the counsellors' role in it. The counsellors were encouraged to recruit whomever they felt appropriate, in order to ensure a heterogeneous P set represented of both women and men of different ages (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The students who wanted to participate were given a pre-addressed and stamped

envelope, and were asked to return it either to Students services or by mail to me. The period of the data collection was estimated to five weeks.

However, although it appeared at first convenient to get hold of current students visiting counselling, such an approach did not appear to generate sufficient participants. For that reason I had to widen my search to include students in a wider time frame. This change could be a possible limitation of the study, but the original plan could also have been just an unnecessary restriction. The latter participants were recruited through a snowball sample technique and via Facebook. A snowball technique is not ideal to ensure a heterogeneous p set, but can be convenient in such cases (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The context of the research was also expanded to include another counselling service called Forvei. In total 14 participants were willing to participate in this study. Their Q sorts are what the factor analysis in turn will be based on.

3.1.4 Q sort

Q sorting is the action in which the P set sorts the Q sample (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). Through the Q sort the participants are able to express their own viewpoints surrounding the theme. How they make meaning of the statements is thus the foundation for the ranking (S. R. Brown, 1980). In this study the participants were provided an envelope with the 36 statements (Appendix 1), matrix, Q instructions and condition of instructions (Appendix 4), and an information sheet with an associated consent form (Appendix 2). The Q sorts were conducted at various places and at various times. It is appropriate to be present during the Q sort in order for the participants to comment on statements etc. (Ellingsen, 2010). However, due to the circumstances explained above, and because of the time schedule, this was not feasible.

The Q instruction is of great importance in Q methodology in order to make the procedure comprehensible, and by providing meaning to the statements. Without the instructions the statements are nothing more than describing facts (Kvalsund, 1998). Especially when one is not present during Q sorting, the instructions should be as clear as possible (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Further, the condition of instructions helps the participants by giving direction to their attention, and thus lets them know which perspective they should have in focus when sorting (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). This study has the following condition of instructions: *When you now are about to do the sorting, base your thinking on yourself in the encounter with the counsellor. It is desirable to reveal how you experience yourself and what your needs are in counselling – and it is your subjective experience that is of value, so try to be as open and honest as possible.* The participants who had not been to

counselling recently were asked to base their sorting on the time when they went to counselling. Based on this condition and the Q instruction the P set ranked the statements and placed them in the matrix/scoring sheet, in accordance with how well they recognized themselves in the statements. The matrix is a scale from *least like me* (-5) *to most like me* (+5) (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). Figure 1 presents a completed Q sort.

Least like me   **Most like me**

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+ 4	+5
16	15	2	1	6	4	3	5	18	28	11
	34	20	13	7	9	8	19	33	36	
		32	14	17	10	25	27	35		
			24	22	12	26	31			
				23	21	30				
					29					

Figure 1 Completed Q sort with 36 statements

The statements placed in the extremes of the matrix are those which are the most significant to the person who does the sorting, either in a positive or a negative manner (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The ones ranked closer towards the centre of the scoring sheet are rather neutral or ambiguous, or they could represent indecisiveness (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). Figure 1 displays how the distribution of the matrix gets steeper towards the middle in order to leave more room for ambiguity etc. However, it is important to remember that the ranking system is relative, which means that a statement placed on the zero point does not necessarily imply that it is of insignificance. It only indicates that the statement is of greater psychological significance than those placed on -1, and are agreed less to than those placed on +1 (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This is important to bear in mind if the participants find themselves being forced to rank an item which conflict with their resemblance to it (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). The completed Q sort results in a rich and holistic picture of the participant's subjective viewpoint on the theme (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010; Wolf, 2010). It represents the moment when the sorting took place, as well as events, experiences and previous shared communication (Wolf, 2010).

3.1.5 Factor analysis

When the process of collecting data is completed the next methodical step is to analyse the data and extract factors (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). This procedure is rather technical, and is thus in some occasions referred to as the scientific base of Q methodology (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). The 14 completed sorts were added to a program called PQ-Method version 2.33, along with the Q sample (Schmolck, 2012). The program conducts a calculation of the

Q sorts and compares them with each other. Those who correlate highly represent a factor, which means that they share some of the same viewpoint regarding the theme. Similarly, these participants will correlate low with those representing another factor, or another shared perspective operating in the concourse (Brown, 1993). The different factor extractions can be regarded as representations of common, operant subjectivity (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010).

The calculation in this study was performed with a Principal components analysis (PCA); a method for data reduction and factor extraction (Watts & Stenner, 2012). PCA automatically extracts 8 unrotated factors. These are displayed mathematically in a table along with eigenvalues and the variance of each factor. Factors with an eigenvalue higher than 1 are considered significant, and are thus the basis for the selection of factor solution (S. R. Brown, 1980). Four unrotated factors have an eigenvalue higher than 1 in this study. Table 2 presents the unrotated factors and their associated eigenvalues and varianc

Table 2 - Unrotated factors

Unrotated factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Eigenvalues	5.2312	2.0043	1.4561	1.1271	0.8703	0.7337	0.5826	0.4596
Expl. Variance %	37	14	10	8	6	5	4	3

Further it is desirable to rotate the factors in order to make them as clear and apparent as possible (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010; van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). The designated factors are then positioned around a central axis point according to statistical criteria (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005; Watts & Stenner, 2012). One can either conduct the rotation manually through Judgmental rotation, or letting the program do it through Varimax rotation. In this study the latter method was performed. This rotation method contributes to finding the factor solution most suitable to show the diversity of subjectivity existing in the P set (McKeown & Thomas, 1988), and creates factors that the researcher can seek to understand through abduction (Watts & Stenner, 2012). In this study different factor solutions were tried out, with respectively 2, 3 and 4 factors. These were in turn analysed, which gave different reports of information about the factors. Based on the reports one can decide which factor solution is the most appropriate. By looking at the correlation between factors and the study variance, a four-factor solution seemed to be most appropriate in this study. Correlation statistics measure the level of agreement between factor scores. The goal is to attain a low correlation between the factors, in order to reveal as separate factors as possible (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The variance points to the range of meanings being explained in the study. It is desirable to cover as much of the variance as possible (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005; Watts &

Stenner, 2012). A four-factor solution accounts for 69 % of the study variance (Table 2). Table 3 gives a presentation of the correlation between the factors.

Table 3 - Correlation between the factors

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Factor 1	1.0000	0.0493	0.2847	0.3540
Factor 2	0.0493	1.0000	0.0709	0.2883
Factor 3	0.2847	0.0709	1.0000	0.1291
Factor 4	0.3540	0.2883	0.1291	1.0000

Each factor is defined by different Q sorts. Table 4 (Appendix 9) displays the different factor loadings of each participant. The names are fictional, due to securing the P set's anonymity. A factor loading expresses how much a Q sort correlates with a factor, or is associated with the factor's viewpoint. The participants are scored on a scale ranging from +1 to -1, from perfectly positive correlation to perfectly negative correlation. A correlation of 0 indicates that there is no correlation (Langdridge, 2006). 12 Q sorts define the different factors in this thesis, respectively five on factor 1, two on factor 2, two on factor 3 and three on factor 4. Two of the Q sorts are excluded as they correlate with several factors, and are thus not defining any of them. According to van Exel and de Graaf (2005) the aim is to have four to five participants defining each factor. However, they further state that this number often is two to four (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). Although it was desirable to have more Q sorts defining each factor, a four-factor solution was experienced to be most suitable in this study, for the reasons mentioned above. In addition, all of the factors were significant despite few loadings. This statement is based on Humphrey's rule, which claims that a factor is significant if the cross-product of a factor's two highest loadings exceeds twice the standard error (Brown, 1980, p. 233 in Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 107). One can assume that a bigger P set would have increased the common variance in the factors, which is the proportion of shared meaning between Q sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2012). However, a factor represents the same viewpoint regardless of how many defining it (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010).

3.1.6 Factor interpretation

Based on the factors derived from the factor analysis, the aim of Q methodology, and this study, is to provide an increased understanding of the operant subjectivity existing in the factors (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010; Watts & Stenner, 2012; Wolf, 2010). The factor interpretation is based on the factor arrays for each factor, which is displayed in the analysis report. The factor array constitutes the average pattern of the sorts defining the factor

(Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). It is important to bear in mind that it is the factor's scores, and not the individuals', that is the ground for the factor interpretation.

Three posters of the factor arrays were made to attain an overview of the factors. To conduct the interpretation process the main focus was on the statements placed in the extremes (+5, -5, +4, -4, +3, -3), due to their psychological significance to the factor (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). Statements placed on the other columns can be of significance as well, and some of these statements were thus included in the factor interpretation. Distinguishing statements for each factor and consensus statements between the factors were also further examined. The distinguishing statements are those who are ranked in such a manner that the factors statistically differ from each other (Appendix 8) (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). The consensus statements are statements ranked similarly and can give an indication of how the factors are alike (Appendix 7) (Watts & Stenner, 2012). During the interpretation process it is important to regard the factor array in its wholeness. Each statement can have different meaning to the factor regardless of the ranking of them. The interpretation process should be a dynamical movement between the parts and the whole, between the isolated statements and the operant subjectivity of the factor (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010).

There are no clear guidelines for the procedure of the factor interpretation, and thus the researcher has a lot of freedom in this part of the process (Kvalsund, 1998). As a researcher it is desirable to work in accordance with the Abductory principal, which enables the researcher to be open minded (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010) This may decrease the possibility to let the subjectivity of the researcher control the interpretation process (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005).

3.1.7 Post-sorting interview

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the factors, conducting a post-sorting interview with those correlating the highest with each factor is desirable (S. R. Brown, 1980). These participants can contribute by giving additional meaning to the statements and the ranking of them. Thus the interview often serves to enhance the richness and the quality of the data (Gallagher & Porock, 2010 in Watts & Stenner, 2012). However, it is important to remember that their understanding of the factor array is not the "correct" meaning of the operant subjectivity. They represent the factor, but they do not represent it alone (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Also, it is of importance to state that the participants do not necessarily represent the same factor forever. Although the viewpoint remains, those representing it will develop and perhaps acquire a new viewpoint on the subject (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Four interviews

were conducted with one representative from each factor. The basis for each interview was the average factor array of the relevant factor. The focus was mainly on the area of psychological significance, but the central area was also highlighted to attain an overall picture of the factors. The participants were also able to comment on what they found unclear and incomprehensible. The information provided in these interviews was valuable, and helped me attain a deeper understanding of the findings.

3.2 The quality of the research

3.2.1 Pilot sort

Preliminary to the Q sort pilot sorts were conducted with a fellow student and a student connected to another Norwegian university. The former had been to counselling previously. It was desirable to attain rich feedback on the statements beforehand of the Q sort, and thus it was desirable to get help from different people, with different background and counselling experience. With the help of these students, and some other fellow students who read through the statements, I was able to adjust words and sentences that were experienced as vague and formulated poorly. Those conducting the pilot sorts were also able to comment on the distribution of positive and negative loaded statements. The feedback provided by these students was helpful in producing the Q sample, and by ensuring quality (Ringdal, 2007).

3.2.2 Generalization

Generalization typically points to the ability to apply the findings of a study and generalize it to a wider population (Befring, 2007; Watts & Stenner, 2012). In Q methodology the aim is not to generalize from the P-set to a wider population, but rather to reveal established viewpoints within a concourse. Also, generalizing to a population would be prohibited based on so few participants. However, generalization is not precluded in Q methodology. But instead of identifying stabile, human traits and viewpoints, the aim is to recognize theoretical concepts and categories within a concourse. While the viewpoints and its associated concepts remain, humans develop and may establish new viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

3.2.3 Validity

Validity is in R methodology known as the issue of measuring what the study claims to be measuring (Ringdal, 2007). Because there is no external criterion for subjectivity and personal viewpoints, validity does usually not apply in Q methodology (S. R. Brown, 1980). However, subjectivity in itself can be a subject to measurement if the participants are given clear conditions of instruction (Kvalsund, 1998). When creating the Q instructions and the

condition of instruction I emphasized on being clear and to make simple formulations. However, in order to ensure validity it could have been appropriate to be present during the Q sorting. The research participants would then have been able to ask questions and I could have ensured that the condition of instructions was clear and understandable.

3.2.4 Reliability

Reliability concerns that repeated measurements with the same measurement instrument will give the same result (Ringdal, 2007). In Q methodology one usually applies a test-retest reliability coefficient. According to S. R. Brown (1980) most Q sorts has a correlation of 0.80 or more. This means that it is likely that the same person will sort similarly by repeating the sort. What this points to is that although people develop and possibly change their viewpoint their values and meanings are relatively stabile (S. R. Brown, 1980). This gives support to the decision of including people who had not sought counselling recently. Table 5 displays the reliability for each of the factors in this research. These are respectively 0.952, 0.889, 0.889 and 0.923

Table 5 - Reliability

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
No. of Defining Variables	5	2	2	3
Average Rel. Coef	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800
Compsite Reliability	0.952	0.889	0.889	0.923
S.E of Factor Z-scores	0.218	0.333	0.333	0.277

3.5 Ethical considerations

All research projects carry along ethical questions, which the researcher has to consider (Postholm, 2010). Taking into account that this research is based on the study of people, ethics and morality have been of importance during the whole research process. For this reason the research project was reported to Norwegian social science data services (NSD), and was approved (Appendix 3). Further, guidelines retrieved from The national research ethics committee for social sciences, law and humanities (NESH) were followed (NESH, 2006). Of special significance was the requirement of informed consent, which means that the participants are informed about the research project and their involvement, as well as the possibility to resign at all times. The requirements of anonymity and confidentiality are also important aspects to take into account in research. These involve protecting the individuals from being exposed in a harmful matter (NESH, 2006). All the research participants in this study were given written information about the purpose of the research and how the participants would be attended to, as well as an associated consent form (Appendix 2). When

working with the data material all the participants were given pseudonyms, due to the requirement of anonymity. In order to comply with confidentiality the data material was also stored in a safe place.

3.6 The role of the researcher

As a researcher it is important to be aware of one's role and responsibilities (Allgood & Kvalsund, 2010). Therefore, reflection on this is necessary. First of all the researcher has an ethical responsibility, which was referred to in the section above. When studying other people the researcher needs to take into consideration the consequences different choices may have on the participants. Consent, confidentiality and anonymity is therefore of strong importance (NESH, 2006)

Secondly, the researcher needs to make her subjectivity apparent in order to sustain quality in the research (Postholm, 2010). The researcher will always have attitudes, values and opinions, which are brought into the research process (Allgood & Kvalsund, 2010). My subjectivity will have an impact from the very start of the project till the end of it. In fact, my subjectivity will contribute in creating the results (Allgood & Kvalsund, 2010). Stephenson (1986, p. 57 in Wolf, 2010) stated that the interpretations derived from the factor analysis are the researcher's own, and not the Q sort's. However, the results are based on the Q sorts, which makes the interpretation a dynamic process between the researcher's and the participants' subjectivity (Allgood & Kvalsund, 2010). The challenge will be to let the phenomenon emerge as it is, and put prejudices and pre-knowledge aside. This is difficult, as this will never be fully possible (Kvalsund, 2005). A Q methodological researcher should, however, strive to adopt such a phenomenological reductionist approach (Allgood & Kvalsund, 2010). Further, a hermeneutic perspective is necessary. Hermeneutics has to do with being aware of the pre-understanding one brings into a research process in order to be open-minded and humble in the interpretation process (Grenness, 1997).

My subjectivity and pre-knowledge have made an impact from the day I chose a topic (Wolf, 2010). This was based on personal experience and interests, which further influenced the choice of theory and thus the Q sample. Although theory has been the ground for the Q sample, I have created it. My involvement therefore makes the Q sample a representation of my subjectivity (Allgood & Kvalsund, 2010). For example, I can recognize myself in the statement that has to do with setting boundaries for oneself, as I have recently realized how difficult, yet important this is. My subjectivity also has an impact on the choice of a factor solution and the interpretation of them (Allgood & Kvalsund, 2010). The chosen factor

solution was based on different criteria, like the level of correlation between the factors. A two-factor solution would also be appropriate in order to have all the participants defining a factor. However, I made a choice and this choice is based on my subjectivity. Further, my subjectivity has made an impact on the factor interpretation, which is of special importance to make apparent. I notice and make meaning out of different statements, which another person might not have done (Watts & Stenner, 2012). For example, the statement "I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others" sounds negative to me and appears to be indicating that the person acts egoistically. But as you will see later in the thesis this statement can have a completely different meaning to someone else. I value the aid I have gotten from different participants in the post-sorting interviews. They have helped me to see new perspectives and also to put aside some of my pre-understandings. I believe that highlighting the researcher's role was appropriate to do in advance of the factor interpretation to make the reader aware of the impact my subjectivity has on the results.

4 Factor presentation

In this chapter the four-factor solution will be presented and interpreted. An interpretation of the factors will be done by looking at the average factor array of each factor (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). Each factor will foremost be presented based on the statements placed in the extremes of the matrix, due to their psychological significance to the factor (Kvalsund & Allgood, 2010). Some of the distinguishing statements of each factor will also be pointed to, as well as some of the statements ranked closer towards the zero column. This is in order to best be able to regard the factor in its wholeness. Further, abstracts from the post-sorting interviews will be added to attain a richer factor interpretation. There will also be a section where the similarities between the factors are presented, based on the consensus statements. Finally the factor presentation will be briefly summarized.

To clarify, the bold number behind each statement is the factor's ranking of the statement in the matrix. If these are distinguishing statements this will be mentioned. The numbers of the distinguishing statements are bold in the factor array. In the last section, where the consensus statements are presented, all the factors' value of the statement is displayed behind each of the statements. For a completed list of Q sort values for each statement, see appendix 6.

4.1 Factor 1 – Others make me feel strong, but I do not do what is required to succeed

Five people represent factor 1. This is Beate (0.5967), Ane (0.7862), Mari (0.5619), Tor (0.8776) and Karen (0.6099). The numbers behind each name display the participants' correlation with the factor. Tor correlated the highest with factor 1, which means that he represents the operant subjectivity in the factor largely. It was therefore of interest to conduct a post-sorting interview with Tor.

Least like me										Most like me
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+ 2	+3	+4	+ 5
16	15	2	1	6	4	3	5	**18**	28	**11**
	34	20	13	7	9	8	**19**	33	**36**	
		32	14	17	**10**	25	27	35		
			24	**22**	12	**26**	**31**			
				23	21	30				
					29					

Figure 2 - The average factor array for factor 1

4.1.1 I know that I can if I want to

Based on statements 11, 36 and 28 the students representing factor 1 seem to have belief in themselves and the faith in being able to succeed. However, statements 11 and 36 may also indicate that although they know they can, they do not always do what is required in order to succeed. This could be to avoid the experience of failure, as poor results affect them badly (no. 27).

> 11. I know to a large degree what I want. At the same time I know I can work harder to achieve it (**+5**, *distinguishing statement*).
>
> 36. I am determined that I can if I want to (**+4**, *distinguishing statement*).
>
> 28. The feeling of mastery is important to me (**+4**).
>
> 27. I can let bad results put me down (**+2**)

As a result of possibly avoiding the experience of failure these students might feel that hardship and pressure do not have a significant impact on them. Instead they might choose to feel in control and believe in their own possibilities. Statements 13, 24 and 22 on the other side of the matrix may support this assumption. These statements and no. 27 (displayed above) are ranked close to the central area of the matrix and may therefore not be of strong psychological significance to the factor. It could, however, support an overall picture of it.

> 13. I am a person with willpower, but I experience to get insecure when facing adversity (**-2**).
>
> 24. I feel that I have no control. There are so many expectations and demands in today's society that I have to live up to (**-2**).
>
> 22. I expect to do well in school, so it will affect my self-esteem if I do badly (**-1,** *distinguishing statement*).

The post-sorting interview with Tor could confirm many of the interpretations that have been made. He expresses a confidence in being able to accomplish almost anything, but as he wishes to prioritize different things in life he normally does not "go all in" when facing a task or situation. The feeling of mastery would only be a bonus. After some thinking Tor mentions that he probably has a tendency to use self-handicapping strategies, meaning that he finds excuses to avoid a task, and external reasons for why he performed poorly. He also says that because he does not always work as hard as he can, defeats and bad results do not influence him a great deal.

4.1.2 I feel strengthened by others

Statements 18, 35 and 31 can illustrate that those defining factor 1 feel strengthened through their relations to others, and have become stronger due to important people.

> 18. I have always been surrounded by strong and independent people. This has given me strength (**+3**, *distinguishing statement*).

35. To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself (**+3**)

31. I always strive to be the best version of myself. It is inspiring when I meet someone who helps me develop (**+2**, *distinguishing statement*)

Statements 16 and 32 may indicate that the students representing factor 1 value their close relations with others, and appreciate talking to them if necessary. Statement 15 may illustrate that the students respect their significant others to the extent that they do not act on the expense of them.

16. I am not used to sharing my thoughts with others. I am probably a little afraid of what others will think of me (**-5,** *distinguishing statement*).

15. I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others (**-4**)

32. I find it difficult to trust in others. That is why I often avoid talking to others, although I need it (**-3**).

Tor tells that his family and friends are very important to him, and that he relies on them when going through a tough time and when making choices. But he also manages to make choices on his own. He values their feedback, which makes him more certain in the choices he finally makes.

4.1.3 A counsellor can help me when I cannot find the answer myself

The students defining factor 1 seem to grow in their relations to others, and statement 35 (displayed above) points to the importance of having a good conversation with someone. However, it may appear that a conversation with a counsellor is of less importance. Statement 33 may indicate that a counsellor is helpful in occasions where the students do not have the answers themselves, or can be provided with support by others, like statement 18 suggests (displayed above)

33. A counsellor can help me with specific issues. The rest I take care of myself (**+3**)

Based on statement 1 it is possible to stick to the same assumption; the students do not need a counsellor in order to feel more self-confident. However, statements 34 and 2 may illustrate that they do not have a problem with opening up to a counsellor.

34. I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor (**-4**)

2. Having a deep dialogue with someone is reserved for those who are close to me (**-3**).

1. I need a counsellor who believes in me when I don't believe in myself (**-2**)

In most occasions Tor asks family and friends when he needs help, but as he was in need of study related information he did not get hold of himself, he sought counselling. This does not mean that he finds it scary to talk to a counsellor.

4.1.4 Summary of factor 1

Factor 1 and its representatives seem to express strength and a belief in their own capabilities. However, the factor also appears to be holding back, meaning that they do not give their all in

order to succeed. This might be to avoid failure, and thus they seem to not be too affected by hardship and pressure. Further, factor 1 relies on others as they contribute to strengthening the factor. Because the factor 1-students find support in themselves and others, a counsellor appears to be needed in order to attain information they do not possess themselves.

4.2 Factor 2 - All the expectations make me lack a feeling of control

Factor 2 is defined by two women; Tiril (0.8633) and Susanne (0.7336). Tiril loads the highest on the factor and thus she took part in a post-sorting interview.

Least like me										Most like me
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
15	20	9	13	36	17	22	**2**	35	**24**	**34**
	12	7	4	18	30	3	19	27	28	
		6	25	33	29	**32**	1	**16**		
			26	23	11	5	10			
				21	8	14				
					31					

Figure 3 - The average factor array for factor 2

4.2.1 I value the feeling of mastery, but it is not present in my life

Statement number 28 communicates that the feeling of mastery is of importance to factor 2. However, one could question if this feeling is present based on statement 24, as the statement expresses a lack of control in life. Statement 27 can tell us that these students respond badly to poor results, and could also be an indication that they have experienced failure repeatedly.

28. The feeling of mastery is important to me (**+4**).

24. I feel that I have no control. There are so many expectations and demands in today's society that I have to live up to (**+4**, *distinguishing statement*).

27. I can let bad results put me down (**+3**)

Statements 20 and 12, which the factor disagrees with, can support the same assumption. These could signal that the students lack a feeling of control when it comes to school and student life. Seen in relation to statement 7 the lack of control may have resulted in low self-confidence.

20. If feel that I master my studies, but after I have been to counselling I am left with a greater uncertainty than when I walked in (-4).

12. I master student life well. Coming to counselling gives me a confirmation that this is true (**-4**, *distinguishing statement*).

7. I believe in myself, but I do not believe in counselling (**-3**).

Tiril is familiar with the interpretation made of factor 2. She explains that she has always been uncertain about her career choices, and how this has led to low motivation and

thus bad results. Eventually it has resulted in a lack of feeling in control and a lack of confidence in herself. Mastery to her is confirmation that she can accomplish something. Over and over she has experienced the opposite, which has made her discouraged.

4.2.2 I care about what others think of me

Based on statement 16 the students representing factor 2 seems to worry about what others think of them. This could be seen in relation to statement 24, which emphasizes on demands and expectations from others. Statement 24 is displayed above.

> 16. I am not used to sharing my thoughts with others. I am probably a little afraid of what others will think of me (**+3,** *distinguishing statement*).

On the minus side of the matrix, statement 15 may be an indication that the students rarely let their actions get in the way of others as this can cause others to dislike them. This could be supported by statement 6, which can be an illustration of how their self-esteem is affected by others.

> 15. I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others (**-5**)

> 6. In the past I was a person who needed others in order to feel good about myself. Now this is not as necessary anymore (**-3**)

In the post-sorting interview Tiril says that others' opinions are significant to her. She often gets reminded that she does not have everything in place when she talks to others, and worries what they think of her study situation. She adds that she recognizes herself in statement 17, but because she found the statement a bit ambiguous she placed it in the centre of the matrix.

> 17. It is someone else's credit that I feel good about myself (**0**).

4.2.3 I find counselling valuable, yet uncomfortable

Based on statements 34 and 16 it appears that those representing factor 2 are uncomfortable with seeking counselling. Opening up to a counsellor may be a threat to their self-esteem. However, statement 35 could indicate that they recognize the value of counselling. Statement 16 is displayed above.

> 34. I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor (**+5,** *distinguishing statement*)

> 35. To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself (**+3**)

Statement 20 and 7 can support the assumption that counselling is perceived as something positive, and that it was in fact helpful. These statements are displayed above.

In the post interview Tiril could confirm that she finds it uncomfortable to disclose herself to a counsellor. Usually she needs time to "moult" and open up. She explains how she

would probably gain more from counselling by coming more frequently. Nonetheless, she did experience the counselling encounter as motivating and left it with a good feeling.

4.2.4 Summary of factor 2

Those representing factor 2 value the feeling of mastery, but in most occasions they lack a feeling of both mastery and control in life, which seems to have resulted in low self-confidence. They seem to worry about others' expectations and opinions, and find it uncomfortable to disclose themselves to others. Disclosing themselves to others might be regarded as a threat to their self-esteem. Coming to counselling may therefore be intimidating, but is also acknowledged as valuable.

4.3 Factor 3 - I take responsibility for my personal development, but not necessarily in school

Two men represent factor 3. This is Stian (0.8855) and Magne (0.6365). Stian correlates highest with the factor, but was not able to participate in the post-sorting interview. The interview was then conducted with Magne.

Least like me   **Most like me**

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
26	**30**	2	11	1	3	21	14	10	5	**4**
	34	**17**	12	7	6	29	**15**	19	**31**	
		32	18	16	8	33	22	27		
			23	20	9	35	28			
				24	13	36				
					25					

Figure 4 - The average factor array for factor 3

4.3.1 I lack internal motivation in school

Based on statements 4 and 5, it may seem that those representing factor 3 have problems with motivating themselves, and need external stimuli in order to feel motivated. No. 27 may also indicate that low internal motivation has lead to bad results in school.

> 4. I know what I should do, so now that I have been to counselling it has mostly to do with having someone to get me started (**+5**, *distinguishing statement*).
>
> 5. I need some pressure to perform well (**+4**)
>
> 27. I can let bad results put me down (**+3**)

Statements 26 and 12 may support the interpretation. These statements give an indication that the students could increase their level of effort in order to master their studies.

> 26. I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well (**-5**, *distinguishing statement*).

12. I master student life well. Coming to counselling gives me a confirmation that this is true **(-2)**

Magne explains that he does not necessarily need pressure if what he does is perceived as interesting, but when it comes to school he often needs time pressure in order to perform well. He further explains that because his ambitions in school are not the highest, he does not have to perform perfectly, which also makes it easier to handle failure. However, if he dedicates to something and performs poorly, this could have an impact on his self-esteem.

4.3.2 I take responsibility for my own personal development

Although the previous section emphasized low ambitions and lack of motivation, this does not seem to be an adequate picture alone of factor 3. It appears that the factor feels less motivated in school, but not in life in general. Based on statement number 31 those defining factor 3 seem to value development and growth, and it appears that others can help them do so. However, statement 15 may imply that these students do not let others get in the way of their personal progress.

31. I always strive to be the best version of myself. It is inspiring when I meet someone who helps me develop (**+4**, *distinguishing statement*)

15. I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others (**+2**, *distinguishing statement*)

By looking at statements 31 and 15 in relation to no. 17, 30 and 26 on the other side of the matrix, it appears that those representing factor 3 are capable of making progress themselves, and take responsibility for their own lives. Other people are thus not essential in order for them to develop, but they can contribute in a positive manner. Statement 26 is displayed above. All of the statements in this section are distinguishing statements, which means that they are characteristic for factor 3.

17. It is someone else's credit that I feel good about myself (**-3,** *distinguishing statement*).

30. I often experience that others make me move out of my comfort zone. I wish I could do it more on my own initiative (**-4**, *distinguishing statement*)

Development is of great importance to Magne. He was previously part of an organisation that emphasized strongly on self-development. According to him statement 31 could be ranked highest on the matrix. He further tells that he values feedback, both positive and negative. Others are therefore important in order for him to develop. Magne adds that he would feel a stronger recognition of himself in statement 15 if the statement were formulated in a more positive manner. As a former leader Magne is familiar with making decisions on behalf of others. However, in such cases making decisions can be seen as constructive and necessary.

4.3.3 I want to reflect on myself in counselling

Statement 4 (displayed above) implies that those representing the viewpoint of factor 3 need a counsellor who can motivate them, and help them to get started. Statement 10 and 19 may indicate that a counsellor can be helpful by encouraging them to reflect on themselves. This can be seen in relation to the desire to develop, as displayed in statement 31 above.

    10. It is encouraging to see my weaknesses and strengths along with a counsellor (**+3**)

    19. To me it is valuable to reflect on myself when I come to counselling (**+3**)

Statements 34 and 32 on the other side of matrix may support this assumption. The students defining the factor disagrees with these statements, which could mean that they are open to reflect on themselves in counselling, and that they value talking to others.

    34. I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor (**-4**)

    32. I find it difficult to trust in others. That is why I often avoid talking to others, although I need it (**-3**).

In the interview Magne explains that to him the phrase "to get me started" had nothing to do with him being unmotivated in an unenthusiastic manner. On the contrary, he was motivated to figure out how to move forward and solve his issues. Magne says that he needed someone to help him locate "the problem" and to find solutions to it. He adds that it helped putting what was difficult into words, in collaboration with a counsellor.

4.3.4 Summary of factor 3

Factor 3 seems to struggle with motivation, but only when it concerns school. Besides school related activities those defining factor 3 strive to develop and improve, and are capable of taking responsibility for themselves and their own personal progress. However, others can help them develop, which makes counselling a suitable arena for increased self-knowledge and growth.

4.4 Factor 4 - Although I work hard I need others to believe in me

Factor 4 is defined by Truls (0.6539), Malene (0.7950) and Siri (0.8035). Siri correlates the highest with the factor, and a post-sorting interview was therefore conducted with her.

Least like me   **Most like me**

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+ 1	+ 2	+ 3	+4	+5
15	7	2	6	8	4	1	5	3	22	28
	32	**10**	16	14	12	11	**9**	**13**	**26**	
		18	33	17	19	24	21	27		
			36	20	30	25	29			
				23	31	35				
					34					

Figure 5 - The average factor array of factor 4

4.4.1 The feeling of mastery encourages me

Based on statement 28, which is ranked highest in the matrix, the feeling of mastery is of great significance to factor 4. However, a lack of this feeling seems to affect the students negatively, as statements 22, 27 and 13 points to.

28. The feeling of mastery is important to me (**+5**).

22. I expect to do well in school, so it will affect my self-esteem if I do badly (**+4**).

27. I can let bad results put me down (**+3**)

13. I am a person with willpower, but I experience to get insecure when facing adversity (**+3,** *distinguishing statement*).

Statement nr 7, which the factor disagrees with, may imply that the students experience low self-confidence. This may be due to the lack of feeling of mastery.

7. I believe in myself, but I do not believe in counselling (**-4**)

Siri explains that she is dependent on the experience of mastery in order to sustain motivation. When she experiences defeat she has a tendency to attribute it to herself, and thus she easily becomes discouraged.

4.4.2 I need others' confirmation in order to see my own strengths

Statement 26 displays that the students representing factor 4 need confirmation from others that they are doing well in school. This may indicate that they are dependent on others in order to believe in themselves and their own strengths. At the same time the students seem to possess a strong willingness to work, as statements 26 and 13 point to. Statement 13 is referred to in the section above.

26. I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well (**+4,** *distinguishing statement*).

Statements 32 and 6 on the opposite side of the matrix can support that these students are dependent on others in order to feel good about themselves, due to not recognizing their own strengths (statement 18). Statement 15 may indicate that the students are not experiencing themselves to be determined, and thus not independent people.

15. I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others (**-5**)

32. I find it difficult to trust in others. That is why I often avoid talking to others, although I need it (**-4**).

18. I have always been surrounded by strong and independent people. This has given me strength (**-3**).

6. In the past I was a person who needed others in order to feel good about myself. Now this is not as necessary anymore (**-2**)

Siri finds it difficult to trust in herself and her own strengths. She knows that she works hard and does well in school, but she has a tendency to focus on her weaknesses. This is why others have to give confirmation that what she does is actually good. Besides that she regards herself as a person who knows what she wants, but also as an emphatic and adaptable

person. She describes herself as extrovert and someone who is dependent on socializing, as well as a person who finds support and comfort in others.

4.4.3 Counselling can be supportive

Based on statement 26 (displayed above) and 29, both ranked on the plus side of the matrix, it may appear that those representing factor 4 are in need of a counsellor in order to gain motivation and self-confidence. Respect is highly valued in counselling, as statement 3 points to, and may be due to the need for support and confirmation.

> 3. There is room for development only if respect is present in counselling (**+3**).
>
> 29. Coming to counselling can help me get in touch with my internal motivation (**+2**).

Factor 4 disagrees with statements 7 (displayed above) and 2, which may indicate that the students acknowledge the value in counselling. No. 10 may undermine this assumption, but it can also imply that the students do not wish to focus on their weaknesses in counselling. The word "weaknesses" is listed first in the statement, which could have had an impact on the placement of it. Because these students seem to be in need of recognizing their strength, one would think that a focus on their strengths in counselling is in fact desirable.

> 2. Having a deep dialogue with someone is reserved for those who are close to me **(-3).**
>
> 10. It is encouraging to see my weaknesses and strengths along with a counsellor (**-3**, *distinguishing statement*)

In the post-sorting interview Siri explains that because she has a tendency to doubt herself, and focus on her weaknesses, she needed a counsellor who could motivate her and help her to focus on her strengths. She adds that statement 34 was placed in the centre of the matrix because of the word "scary". She found the word a bit strange in the context of counselling.

> 34. I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor (**0**, *distinguishing statement*)

4.4.4 Summary of factor 4

The students representing factor 4 thrive on mastery experiences. Success and others' confirmation are the best sources to believe in themselves. Otherwise the tendency to focus on weaknesses is too strong. As a result these students seem to be dependent on others in order to feel good about themselves. Thus, counselling was sought in order to be recognize their strengths and thus become more motivated.

4.5 Consensus statements between the factors

The previous sections have emphasized the differentiation between the four factors, partly based on the distinguishing statements of each factor. This is desirable in order to describe the different viewpoints existing in the concourse of this thesis. However, the consensus

statements can also contribute to an understanding of the different factors (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). There are five consensus statements between the four factors. These are statement 20, 23, 27, 29 and 35.

Based on statements 20 and 27 it seems that all the factors have a common agreement that bad results can affect them negatively and perhaps make them feel that they do not master their studies.

> 20. I feel that I master my study, but after I have been to counselling I am left with a greater uncertainty than when I walked in (**-3**, **-4**, **-1**, **-1**).
>
> 27. I can let bad results put me down (**+2**, **+3**, **+3**, **+3**)

However, all the factors agree that having a good conversation with someone could help them believe more in themselves, and to a certain degree help them to get in touch with their internal motivation. Statement 35 and 29 can support this assumption.

> 35. To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself (**+3**, **+3**, **+1**, **+1**).
>
> 29. Coming to counselling can help me get in touch with my internal motivation (**0**, **0**, **+1**, **+2**).

Statement 29 and 23 are placed close towards the centre of the matrix. This could mean that the students experienced the statements to be vague or incomprehensible. However, the statements could also point to a tendency that all of the factors believe that coming to counselling, and reflect on themselves, can contribute positively. Statement 20, which is displayed above, may also indicate that all the students representing the factors gained something from coming to counselling.

> 23. It is not desirable to come to counselling in order to think and ponder, as this it something I tend to do a lot of at school (**-1**, **-1**, **-2**, **-1**).
>
> 20. I feel that I master my study, but after I have been to counselling I am left with a greater uncertainty than when I walked in (**-3**, **-4**, **-1**, **-1**).

4.6 A summary of the factor presentation

This chapter has sought to provide an understanding of the four factors. The factors represent viewpoints related to students' experience of developing towards autonomy. Factor 1 appears to be strong and independent, although it seldom challenges itself. Factor 2 seems to be overwhelmed by societies' and others' expectations, and thus lack a feeling of control. Factor 3 appears to lack internal motivation in school, but take responsibility for its own development. And factor 4 seems to be in need of others confirmation in order to see its own strengths. What appears is that they all seem to be in different places on their journey towards autonomy. The next chapter will discuss these viewpoints in relation to theory.

5 Discussion

The aim of this thesis has been to study *how college students who seek counselling experience their development towards autonomy.* By analysing 14 Q sorts 12 of these helped establish four factors, all representing different viewpoints existing in the concourse. These were further studied and interpreted. Each of the factors was given a name, which represents the factor's operant subjectivity. Factor 1 was named: *Others make me feel strong, but I do not do what is required to succeed.* Factor 2: *All the expectations make me lack a feeling of control.* Factor 3: *I take responsibility for my personal development, but not necessarily in school.* Factor 4: *Although I work hard I need others to believe in me.*

In this chapter the factors will be discussed in association with theory. Theory from chapter 2 will be the foundation for the discussion. However, due to the abductory principle it is appropriate to highlight the theory regarded as most suitable when explaining the factors (Thorsen & Allgood, 2010). Thus, not all of the theory presented earlier in this thesis will be discussed further. This theory is still of importance, though, as it makes up the foundation for creating the Q sample. The abductory principle also made it necessary to include new theory. These theories will be presented consecutively in the text. The chapter will be divided into four sections, each of them depicting each of the factors. In addition, some of the statements will be displayed in the text in order to give support to the discussion. This may be helpful to the reader. The numbers behind the statements are the factor's placement of them in the matrix, and DS is the abbreviation of "distinguishing statement".

5.1 Factor 1 - Others make me feel strong, but I do not do what is required to succeed.

When adolescents enter college they will meet new and challenging situations, which is part of growing up and preparing for a vocational life. This implies that the students will have to possess a certain level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006). At first glance, the viewpoint of factor 1 expresses a relatively high sense of self-efficacy (36. I am determined that I can if I want to! +4, DS/ 11. I know to a large degree what I want. At the same time I know I can work harder to achieve it, +5, DS) These students believe in themselves as being able to master almost anything, and perceive themselves as being in control of their lives (Bandura, 1994). According to Bandura (1997) such an attitude will be beneficial in the students' lives, as they will possess a heightened feeling of well-being.

However, through the interpretation process, and based on the post-sorting interview with Tor, the above statements seem to have a possible different meaning as well. The

statements can display strong self-confidence, but also a tendency to avoid doing what is actually required to succeed. Based on this understanding of the factor it may appear that these students believe in themselves, but do not act in accordance with what characterizes a person with a resilient self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995). In order to establish a resilient self-efficacy one has to engage in challenging situations and stick with it through tough periods (Bandura, 1994). This could indicate that these students are not setting high goals for themselves, which in turn would mean that they have no foundation for correcting insufficient effort. In the interview, Tor mentioned that he sometimes uses self-handicapping strategies. If self-handicapping is the case with factor 1 this could imply that these students avoid effort in order to protect their self-esteem. The theory of self-handicapping suggests that some people make choices that prevent them from being responsible for defeats (R. L. Higgins, Snyder, & Berglas, 1990). This could mean that the students make excuses when they perform poorly, but take credit when succeeding. By doing so they avoid attributing failure to the lack of ability, and thus sustain high self-esteem (R. L. Higgins et al., 1990).

As a result of avoiding challenges and attributing failure to external factors, pressure and hardship does not affect people who resort to self-handicapping strategies (R. L. Higgins et al., 1990). On the basis of the factor interpretation, factor 1 could display a self-handicapping behaviour, and thus avoid being influenced by failure (13. I am a person with willpower, but I experience to get insecure when facing adversity, -2). They are then likely to externalize the adversity and make up an excuse for why they should avoid it. This will also prevent the students from suffering from self-doubt and anxiety, which are characteristics of those perceiving a low sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995). However, as self-handicapping is rather a defence mechanism, these students could indeed be affected by failure if they heighten their effort, and thus have to attribute potential failure to internal factors (27. I can let bad results put me down, +2). In order for the students to develop further and establish a resilient self, awareness of their self-defensive strategies is required (Bandura, 1997).

Self-awareness is in this thesis understood as the way students make meaning of reality. Based on a developmental perspective, self-awareness can be viewed in relation to three out of nine stages of ego development; the conformist, the self-conscious and the conscientious stage; all representing a movement towards an increased sense of autonomy (Cook-Greuter, 2005). The students of factor 1 seem to operate within two of the three developmental stages. Made visible through interpretation, and the interview with Tor, is that significant others are of great importance to these students (I8. I have always been surrounded by strong and independent people. This has given me strength, +3, DS). First of all this indicates that they

possess a self-awareness that enables them to take on a second-person perspective (Cook-Greuter, 2005). Secondly, these significant others seem to have made an essential impact on the students, by providing them strength and possibly a belief in being able to succeed. Based on such assumptions it appears that these students partly operate at a conformist level. They seem to rely on certain types of people, and these peoples' values and opinions are deeply respected. Tor explained that he most often seeks help from family and friends when he is facing a difficult decision. In return, the conformist students are allowed to feel protected and part of a bigger entity (Cook-Greuter, 2005).

Although these students seem to be dependent on significant others, it appears that this dependency is more an expression of interdependency in the relations; they are dependent on others in order to develop their independency (Kvalsund, 2005). The relations they engage in are genuine and meaningful, and have provided the students with strength and growth. This has enabled them to become empowered human beings. They are capable of making decisions on their own, but they value others opinions and different perspective on a subject. This type of meaning making is more typical of a conscientious person. A conscientious person will engage in relations that will contribute to development and increased self-knowledge (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Rooke & Torbert, 2005). In turn, these meaningful relations may not only provide the students with strength, but also contribute to increase the students' awareness of their behavioural, cognitive and affective processes (Jordan, 2002)

Counselling may be an arena where the students can become more aware of their internal processes (Kvalsund, 2006). According to Macmurray (1961) one can only get to know oneself through our relations with others. This seems to apply for factor 1 and its representatives, as they see themselves as strengthened through their dialogues with other people (35. To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself, +3). However, based on the factor interpretation it appears that the types of dialogues that contribute to growth are mainly reserved for those close to the students. Hence, factor 1 seems to be in need of counselling due to other reasons.

What emerged from the interpretation of the factors was that those representing factor 1 sought counselling in order to attain information that only a counsellor could provide (33. A counsellor can help me with specific issues. The rest I take care of myself. +3) In the case with Tor, study-related information was needed (Allgood, 1995; Kvalsund, 2006). To provide students with such information may in some occasions be appropriate in counselling. The relation may then be characterized as dependent, as the student is in need of information that only the counsellor possesses. If help is considered necessary though, a dependent relation can be regarded as

positive. Factor 1 seems to appreciate help and thus the relation between the students and the counsellor can be experienced as positive (Kvalsund, 2005).

However, even though one can regard the students' need of information as a sign of dependency, statement 18 and the operant subjectivity of factor 1 were foremost understood as an expression of independency. These students seem to be able to make decisions on their own, and thus to take control in their own lives (Bandura, 1997; Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). After the necessary information is received, a dependent relation would therefore quickly develop into independency, as the students express that they will take care of the rest themselves. This presupposes, however, that when help is provided both the students and the counsellor recognize this. Only then will the students experience to develop their independency and to move forward to interdependency and autonomy (Kvalsund, 2005).

Factor 1 expresses self-confidence and independency, and appears to be strengthened through their relations. At the same time they seem to steer away from the situations that can actually help them gain a greater self-efficacy, self-awareness and thus autonomy. The factor has a development potential, and the foundation needed to move forward, so in order to experience a greater sense of autonomy they will have to engage in situations and use their significant relations to increase their knowledge and awareness of themselves.

5.2 Factor 2 - All the expectations make me lack a feeling of control

While the operant subjectivity of factor 1 seems to express a strong self-confidence, the viewpoint of factor 2 communicates a rather low personal efficacy (24. I feel that I have no control. There are so many expectations and demands in today's society that I have to live up to, +4, DS/ 12. I master student life well. Coming to counselling gives me a confirmation that this is true, -4, DS) (Bandura, 1994). These students seem to lack a feeling of control when concerning student life, but also in life in general. They feel that they do not master school, and that expectations and demands imposed by society are difficult to live up to. This may have led to failure and defeats, which could have resulted in a decreased self-confidence and self-esteem (Bandura, 1994, 1995). Bandura (1990) suggests that challenging standards can be positive as it mobilizes people towards a goal. However, the discrepancies between standards and reality may in some occasions be maladaptive. This can be seen in relation to the notion of real and ideal self; the distinguishing between the self we possess and the self we desire (E. T. Higgins, 1987; Rogers, 1961). As people develop and their cognitive ability evolves, they become increasingly aware of the external ideals and standards of society. In order to match these, the discrepancy between their real self and their ideal self may increase (Harter, 1999).

In relation to the viewpoint of factor 2, these students might have internalized the standards of the educational system and society, and as a result experienced to enhancing the discrepancy between their real and ideal selves. This might have led to repeated poor results (27. I can let bad results put me down, +3). According to Bandura (1994) one of the greatest sources to low self-efficacy is the experience of failure. Repeated failures will eventually undermine one's perceived efficacy, and thus contribute to the prediction of future defeats. Based on the factor interpretation it appears that these students have experienced failure repeatedly, and that the likely outcome next time is thus believed to be failure. This will trigger the emergence of self-doubt and lower their self-confidence. In turn they will avoid challenging situations in order to preserve their self-esteem. However, this will also make them lower the possibility to experience a feeling of mastery, which apparently is important to these students (28. The feeling of mastery is important to me. +4) (Bandura, 1994). To enhance the awareness of why these students experience to lack a feeling of control in their lives may increase their self-efficacy and thus help them move forwards (Bandura, 1997; Jordan, 2002).

An increased self-awareness will enable the students representing factor 2 to recognize the possible discrepancy between their real and ideal selves. Also, by becoming conscious of their internal processes they will eventually be able to intentionally act on these processes, instead of being absorbed by them (Jordan, 2002, 2011). However, at the moment it appears that these students are indeed absorbed by their ideal self, and thus the demands and expectations surrounding them. In an ego development perspective such a meaning making may be typical of a conformist (Cook-Greuter, 2005). By operating at the conformist stage these students will care deeply what others' think of them, as a result of the fear of rejection (16. I am not used to sharing my thoughts with others. I am probably a little afraid of what others will think of me, +3, DS) (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). They thrive on others' positive feedback in order to feel good about themselves, and thus they do everything in accordance with these people's values and norms (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Rooke & Torbert, 2005). This may explain why the factor 2-students rarely let their actions get in the way of others; they possibly undermine their own opinions and values in order to sustain acceptance from others (15. I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others. -5) (Cook-Greuter, 2005).

Moving on, if factor 2 indeed has experienced repeated defeats as a result of trying to match external standards, they might feel badly about themselves. This interpretation could be supported by Tiril's contribution in the post-sorting interview. She explained that she feels discouraged and rather weak by all the failures she has experienced. She added that she worries what others might think of her situation, and feels that others always remind her that

she does not have everything in place. What might have happened is that those representing factor 2 project their bad feelings about themselves onto other people, and thus experience that others feel badly about them as well (Cook-Greuter, 2005). Projection is a way of making meaning of something, based on what is already known and familiar to a person (Kvalsund, 2005). A movement towards the next stages of ego development will increase these students awareness of their own meaning making. Eventually, a conscientious frame of mind will emerge and enable them to live by their own consciously examined belief system (Cook-Greuter, 2005)

In the relation with a counsellor, enhanced self-awareness may occur (Kvalsund, 2006). However, this presupposes that the students are willing to open up and expose some of their internal life (Kvalsund, 2005). Factor 2 seems to find counselling intimidating, as they are not used to sharing their thoughts and feelings with others (34. I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor, +5, DS). They do, on the other hand, believe that a counsellor can help them enhance their self-confidence (35. To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself, +3). In such a way it appears that these students are dependent on a counsellor to be provided with support and recognition (Kvalsund, 2005). In order for the students to feel comfortable with sharing their thoughts and feelings an environment based on empathy, genuineness and acceptance may be helpful (Rogers, 1961). Such an environment can make the students feel included based on who they really are, and regardless of their strengths or weaknesses (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005).

Further, factor 2 could experience counselling differently if trust is established in the counselling relation (Gjerde, 2010). Tiril explained in the interview that it would be easier for her to share her thoughts with a counsellor if she came to counselling more than just once. As trust is built over time, attending counselling several times would thus be a possibility for trust to be established in the relation between the factor 2-students and the counsellor (Gjerde, 2010). However, in order for the relation to develop, and make it possible for the students to gain self-knowledge and self-confidence, the students will have to make an effort as well (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). They will have to face the uncertainty and their fear; the fear that appears to concern being rejected by others. This fear will decrease as the students get to know themselves better, and recognize the necessity of being themselves (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Eventually, the students will experience the emergence of independency in their relation to the counsellor, and possibly the need to establish a stronger sense of autonomy.

As factor 2 seems to experience a low sense of autonomy, these students will have to increase their knowledge and awareness about themselves in order to move forward. By increasing their self-awareness the students will experience a shift from external to internal control. This could be done in collaboration with a counsellor. However, as the student need time to open up, attending counselling several times would be beneficial to establish trust. Eventually, the students will experience to be in control of their own lives.

5.3 Factor 3 - I take responsibility for my personal development, but not necessarily in school.

Similar to the previous factor, factor 3 appears to have experienced poor results (27. I can let bad results put me down, +3). What is also apparent is that both factor 2 and factor 3 seem to have experienced defeat due to the lack of personal and internal standards. However, while factor 2 struggles with external expectations, factor 3 seems to be in need of external stimuli in order to actually perform well (5. I need some pressure to perform well, +4). What emerged from the factor interpretation is that factor 3 lacks a feeling of internal motivation. According to Bandura (1994) a person with high self-efficacy will set high goals for themselves and sustain motivation and commitment to it. Based on this perspective, factor 3 expresses a rather low self-efficacy.

Deci and Ryan (1985) look at the difference between internal and external motivation. A person who is experiencing an internal motivation when doing a task will find the task interesting and as a reward in itself. On the other hand, those having an external motivation will perform the task due to an external factor or reward. According to Deci and Ryan (1985) there are different external factors that can trigger motivation. Deadlines are an example of such factors, and may operate as a type of time pressure. Magne explained in the interview that he often needs time pressure in order to perform well. In college most students must adhere to deadlines, and thus this external factor in many occasions diminish the students' intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). As the factor 3-students seem to acknowledge the lack of effort they put down in school, this might be a result of low internal motivation (12. I master student life well. Coming to counselling gives me a confirmation that this is true, -2). This may have led to poor results in school. However, low internal motivation due to high external motivation might also have resulted in low effort in school. The task is no longer interesting in itself and thus there is no reward in performing it (Deci & Ryan, 1985). By increasing their awareness of their need for external motivation an internal motivation can eventually be established. This will help them gain a stronger self-efficacy in school (Bandura, 1994, 1995).

Although factor 3 seems to possess a low self-efficacy in school, this does not appear to apply to life in general. In an ego development perspective factor 3 seems to operate mostly at the self-conscious stage and the conscientious stage (Cook-Greuter, 2005). In accordance with the self-conscious stage these students seem to be able to distinguish between their performances in different domains. This indicates that they possess a cognitive ability that enables them to think in more complex ways, and notice nuances in people (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007). While conformist students would have regarded themselves as either good or bad, students who operate at the self-conscious stage will be capable of regarding themselves as both good and bad, depending on which domain they focuses on. This can be seen in relation to theory about self-perception, and the distinction between domain specific and domain general perception of oneself (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009).

Secondly, factor 3 seems to value self-knowledge and development, similar to a conscientious stage person (31. I always strive to be the best version of myself. It is inspiring when I meet someone who helps me develop, +3) (Cook-Greuter, 2005). They appear to engage in relations that contribute to their personal development, instead of thriving on the acceptance of others. And unlike a self-conscious person, these students seem to have adopted a conscientious frame of mind when it comes to being open to other perspectives and other people's opinions. This is in order to learn more about themselves and the world. However, the students representing factor 3 will not let anyone get in the way of their personal growth (15. I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others, +2, DS). They are not dependent on others in order to face challenges and do what it takes to move forward. They are foremost responsible to themselves (17. It is someone else's credit that I feel good about myself, -3, DS) (Cook-Greuter, 2005). In many ways these students seem to possess a strong sense of self-awareness, and according to theory a movement from a conformist frame of mind to a conscientious indicates a trend towards autonomy (Angyal, 1965; Cook-Greuter, 2005).

However, a high self-awareness does not match a low self-efficacy, as it is necessary to be self-aware in order to strengthen one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). One could therefore question why the students defining factor 3 do not experience a higher personal efficacy. Because their self-efficacy seems to be related to school, this could mean that the students actually lower their ambitions intentionally, which in turn could be in order to focus on other domains in life. Also, it is important to keep in mind that human beings are constantly developing, which makes it possible for these students to strengthen their self-efficacy, and continue their journey towards a greater sense of autonomy (Cook-Greuter, 2005).

Counselling is strongly valued to these students. They recognize that talking to a counsellor can be appropriate in order to develop further (19. To me it is valuable to reflect on myself when I come to counselling, +3). It also appears that the need for counselling is related to the lack of motivation in school (4. I know what I should do, so now that I have been to counselling it has mostly to do with having someone to get me started, +5, DS). Based on such assumptions, these students seem to be self-aware enough to recognize in which domain they need support (Cook-Greuter, 2005). One could assume that these students are independent enough to realize that they are dependent on a counsellor in order to move forward (Kvalsund, 2005). Then they take responsibility in their own lives by addressing their issues to someone who has the competence to help them (Allgood, 1995).

In many ways interdependency seem to be present, or at least evolving, in the relation between the factor 3-students and the counsellor. Firstly, these students seem to appreciate feedback from others, as this helps them gain knowledge about themselves. According to Kvalsund and Meyer (2005) feedback can contain valuable information about oneself, and a recognition of what is created in the encounter between the internal and the external; between *my* experience and the *other's* experience. Secondly, these student wish to reflect on themselves in counselling. Through dialogue with the counsellor the students can truly fulfil their potential of growth, as dialogue makes discovery of oneself possible (Kvalsund, 2005). If the interdependency is allowed to emerge, the counsellor and the student can develop independently in each other's company. There will be a dynamical movement between all the relational dimensions, and the complexity of their relation will only make them stronger (Kvalsund, 2005).

The students representing factor 3 appear to be independent, responsible and appreciating development. However, their self-efficacy in school seems to be low due to the need of external motivation. Although these students seem to have a solid self-awareness, operating mostly at a conscientious stage, they will have to increase their awareness about their strategies in school in order to perform better. Counselling can be helpful here, and appears to be why the students sought counselling. If they choose to want to gain even more knowledge about themselves a sense of strong autonomy may soon be established.

5.4 Factor 4 - Although I work hard I need others to believe in me

The feeling of mastery has a strong psychological significance to the students representing factor 4 (28. The feeling of mastery is important to me, +5). In fact, this feeling appears to be necessary in order for these students to sustain motivation and their self-esteem. The same

way that repeated failure is a source of low self-efficacy, repeated successes are the greatest source of high self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994, 1995). This means that the more success and mastery experiences these students face, the stronger their belief in themselves as being able to take control and master life will be. This should eventually establish a resilient self, which will enable the students to recover quickly if faced with adversity (Bandura, 1994). However, because the students representing factor 4 apparently lose faith in themselves quickly, it could be a sign that they do in fact experience failures frequently (22. I expect to do well in school, so it will affect my self-esteem if I do badly, +4). It could also be seen in relation to what Siri told in the post-sorting interview. She explained that she has a tendency to attribute failure internally, and successes to external factors. Theory about locus of control has a tendency to regard internal locus of control as adaptive, and external locus of control as maladaptive (Lefcourt, 1991). However, because people with an internal locus of control more readily take responsible for their own actions, they are more exposed to experience low self-esteem in the face of failure (Furnham, 2009). This could be what the factor 4-students are experiencing.

What also seems apparent is that these students need confirmation in order to feel good about themselves, which can be seen in the context of Bandura's theory of sources of self-efficacy (26. I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well, +4, DS) (Bandura, 1994). According to this theory social persuasion serves as a booster when it comes to peoples' belief in being able to succeed. When being verbally persuaded people are more likely to activate effort and sustain motivation, due to the drowning of their own self-doubt (Bandura, 1994). The students will gain a lot from developing a strengthened and more resilient self-efficacy. However, it presupposes that these students develop a greater self-awareness (Bandura, 1997).

In an ego development perspective the meaning making of the factor 4-students could match a conformist's frame of mind (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007). Conformists are in many ways defined by others, which could apply for the students defining factor 4. Although they work hard, they need others' confirmation that their performance is good. This indicates others' values and opinions are what counts, not necessarily their own.

However, even though the students representing factor 4 seem to be dependent on others' confirmation, it appears that it is in order to live up to others' expectations and standards. They are mostly dependent on others to recognize their own strengths. This leads to us to another aspect made visible through the factor interpretation, and the interview with Siri; these students' need to focus on their strengths, rather than their flaws (10. It is encouraging to see my weaknesses and strengths along with a counsellor, -3, DS). Such an aspect can be regarded as typical

of a self-conscious person (Cook-Greuter, 2005) While a person operating at the conscientious stage would appreciate any kind of feedback and viewpoints, those operating at the self-conscious stage are more reluctant to others' opinions in order to preserve their Self (Cook-Greuter, 2005). By developing further these students will be able to not only appreciate their strengths, but also their weaknesses. And by noticing different processes going in their interior, they will eventually be capable of intentionally acting on these processes; instead of letting them control their lives (Jordan, 2002).

In relation to a counselling encounter the students seem to hold on to the desire to discover their strengths and not their weaknesses. It appears that the factor 4-students are dependent on a counsellor for the same reasons that they are dependent on others; to let go of their self-doubt and to trust in their own effort. Counselling also appears to help them get in touch with their internal motivation (29. Coming to counselling can help me get in touch with my internal motivation. +2) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). One could interpret this to concern the lack of self-confidence in being able to succeed. If these students quickly lose faith when experiencing failure, this will perhaps lead to a lack of motivation (Bandura, 1994). Thus, by coming to counselling these students can gain confidence in themselves enabling them to establish a more resilient self-efficacy, and which in turn will mobilize motivation (Bandura, 1995).

In order for these students to develop, respect seems to be of significance in counselling. This can be seen in the light of Buber's I-thou relations, where people are regarded as subjects with feelings and thoughts, rather than as objects (Buber, 1964). If the students are met with respect and regarded as subjects in counselling the room to experience their strengths and resources may be present. Eventually, the counselling relation can evolve from dependency to independency, and hopefully interdependency. As the students gain strength they will become more independent, but they will also have the potential to become even more empowered in the counselling relation (Kvalsund & Meyer, 2005). Instead of just increasing their self-confidence based on an awareness of their strengths, they also have the potential to gain an even greater sense of autonomy by including and evaluating their weaknesses (Cook-Greuter, 2005).

Those representing factor 4 appears to be hard-working students. However, in order to notice this and their own strengths they are in need of mastery experiences, or confirmation from others. If these needs are not met they have a tendency to focus on their weaknesses and doubt themselves. Thus they seek counselling in order to focus on their resources and to gain motivation. What appears to be lacking in these students lives is a belief in themselves. In order to move forward the students do right in focusing on their strengths, but eventually they

will also have to include their weaknesses to gain a greater self-knowledge. Only then will they be able to become autonomous.

5.5 The similarities between the factors

The four factors of this thesis differ in many ways, as we have already become aware of. However, based on the consensus statements between the factors there appears to be certain aspects that are perceived equally by all of them. Firstly, regardless of their level of self-efficacy these students seem to have a common agreement that facing failure may have a negative impact on them (27. I can let bad results put me down, +2, +3, +3, +3*). This might be an indication that the students who represent all of the four factors have at some point experienced poor result, defeat or adversity in school. However, it could also imply that none of the factors have established a resilient self-efficacy yet (Bandura, 1994). By possessing a resilient self-efficacy these students will experience a greater belief in being able to succeed and also recover more quickly after failure (Bandura, 1995).

Secondly, regardless of which developmental stage the students operate at, they all seem to express a desire to become more self-aware through an enhanced belief in themselves (35. To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself, +3, +3, +1, +1). They further believe that other people can help them accomplishing that. This supports Macmurray's assumption that people will only get to know themselves through their relation to others (Macmurray, 1961). This presupposes that they engage in enriching relations that will help the students to base the belief in themselves on a more consciously examined belief system (Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

In order to develop, counselling can contribute positively (Kvalsund, 2006). This appears to be the final, common viewpoint of all of the factors. All of these students have been to counselling, which makes it possible to state that they already in the first place was favourably disposed to seeking counselling. However, after the encounter they still regard counselling as positive, and seem to have gained something from it (20. I feel that I master my study, but after I have been to counselling I am left with a greater uncertainty than when I walked in. -3, -4, -1, -1). This could mean that they all were met with respect, and that the counsellor expressed empathy, congruence and acceptance towards the students (Rogers, 1961). Regardless of their need from a counsellor, and the relation established between the students and the counsellor, all of the students seem to acknowledge the value of having a dialogue and to reflect on themselves in counselling.

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5.6 A summary of the factors

Based on the factor presentation, this discussion has sought to provide an increased understanding of the factors. Factor 1 expresses independence and high self-confidence, due to the feeling of strength provided by others. However, a resilient self-efficacy and self-awareness is not established yet as they tend to use self-handicapping tendencies. Factor 2 appears to experience a rather low self-efficacy and self-awareness, as they are lacking a feeling of control in their lives. Others' expectations and opinions seem to worry them, even in a counselling relation. Factor 3 seems to be lacking a high self-efficacy in school, but value and pursues development in life in general. This makes them seek counselling in order to reflect on themselves and move forward. Factor 4 is hard working, but has a tendency to focus on their weaknesses instead of their strengths. This is why they need others or a counsellor's confirmation in order to feel good about themselves. Next, the conclusion will respond directly to the research question in order to gain an even deeper understanding of the college students' experience of their development towards autonomy.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The students' experience of developing towards autonomy

With a Q methodological approach this research has sought to answer the question: *How do college students who seek counselling experience their development towards autonomy?*

In relation to the research question it appears that the students representing the four factors experience to be in different places in their development towards autonomy. What is obvious then is that the different experiences can illustrate points along this journey. One could see this in relation to ego development theory, where development appears in stages, and where the stages indicate a movement from integration to increased differentiation (Cook-Greuter, 2005). The factors seem to operate within, and move between, several of the three developmental stages included in this thesis. Factor 1, factor 2 and factor 4 all show tendencies to operate at the conformist stage. However, factor 1 and factor 4 also seem to be able to operate at higher levels, respectively at the conscientious stage and the self-conscious stage. Factor 3, on the other hand, seems to be operating mostly at the conscientious stage.

Ego development has in this thesis been related to the concept of self-awareness, meaning that a movement from one stage to the next indicates an augmentation of self-awareness (Cook-Greuter, 2005). By possessing a strong self-awareness these students will not only be able to notice cognitive, affective and behavioural processes, but also to consciously act on them (Jordan, 2002). Thus, a movement towards autonomy means a development towards a more robust, more complex and more independent frame of mind (Cook-Greuter, 2005). However, regardless of which stage these students operate within, none of them seem to have established a robust frame of mind. In order to preserve their Self, all of the students seem to prevent themselves from developing to become truly autonomous: Factor 1 tends to use self-handicapping strategies, factor 2 avoids challenges due to the lack of control, factor 3 is prevented from moving forward because of the need for external motivation, and factor 4 avoids development as a result of internalizing failure and externalizing success. What is apparent then is that an increased self-awareness is required in order for these students to experience autonomy. However, self-awareness cannot be attained by the students alone, as the source to come to know oneself is not present in the individual itself, but in meeting between the Self and the Other (Allgood, 1995). This makes the counselling relation a unique arena for the students to experience a strengthened self-efficacy, a higher self-awareness and thus a greater sense of autonomy.

6.2 A critical perspective on autonomy

Based on this research, students seem to be developing and expressing autonomy to very different degree. Although one can argue that autonomy, self-governance, independence and so forth are positive, I also find it important to question the pursuit of autonomy. Although autonomous students are sought after in a constantly changing society, this thesis has revealed that some students find the society's expectations as overwhelming. The pursuit of success and independence are to some people more tiring than positive, and not necessarily desired. This is something I can recognize myself in. After a year in the master's program in counselling I remember I said; "I am so tired of reflection". I felt that the expansion of my awareness was overwhelming and exhausting, and I longed to think in concrete terms; to live in a simple world. Now I can appreciate the ability of moving forward and developing a more complex frame of mind, but sometimes I still find the pursuit of autonomy as tiring.

Also, as autonomy can be an expression of individualism (Dworkin, 1988), one may question the evolvement of an increasingly individualistic society, and what impact such an evolvement will have in the long run. Will the autonomous students act at the expense of others? Will they manage to act collectively? As human beings to some degree always will be dependent on other people, absolute autonomy, in the sense of complete independence, will be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain (Kvalsund, 2003). A person will not be more than an isolated Self without his relations to others (Macmurray, 1961). Thus, a completely individualistic society is unlikely to occur. However, a critical look at the evolvement of an increased individualistic society is still believed to be important.

The purpose of highlighting these perspectives is not to start a new discussion, although a further discussion of this would be interesting. The purpose is to emphasize that I as a researcher have only provided knowledge and increased understanding of how students experience their development towards autonomy, not to imply that the pursuit of autonomy is what is "correct".

6.3 Limitations of the research

Throughout the research process there have been both exiting and tough days. In periods I was faced with adversity and unpredictability, and really difficult choices had to be made. In such periods I have found support in the words of my supervisor; "Trust the process" and "Research is about making choices". Along the way I have made choices that I have found most appropriate based on the particular problem. However, there are many things that could

have been done differently in this research, and thus a reflection on this could be educative. I will only highlight what I find most important, due to the length of the thesis.

A possible limitation of the study is the small P set. In order to ensure a bigger one, I realize that I could have chosen a different approach to increase the response rate at Student services. I could, for example, been present at Student services and recruited students myself. This would have made me as a researcher more responsible, and given the opportunity to provide the students with necessary information. Although the counsellors were handed an information sheet, one could assume that they did not have sufficient knowledge about the project. This may have prevented the students in getting the information needed in order to complete the Q sort. By being present I could have given the student sufficient information if something was unclear, but because of time constraints this was believed to be unpractical. As the approach did not generate sufficient participants I used a snowball technique instead, and posted information on Facebook. This did indeed increase the P set, but posters at school, adds on social media etc. could have ensured an even bigger P set, and thus prevented that two of the factors are only defined by two people.

Another possible limitation of this study is the change in focusing on current students visiting counselling to including students in a wider time perspective. Although the students were given condition of instructions that told them to base the sorting on the time they went to counselling, it is unknown if this really occurred. It could have be difficult for the students to remember their experience in counselling, especially if the students represent another viewpoint today than at the time they went to counselling. However, S. R. Brown (1980) suggests that although people develop, their values and opinions are in fact relatively stable. This could give support to the widening of my search to include students who did not attend counselling recently. Also, the original plan could be regarded as a restriction that was unnecessary in order to answer the research question.

6.4 Implications for practice and future research

This study has sought to gain a greater understanding of how college students who seek counselling experience their development towards autonomy. What this implies is that the aim of this study is not to establish absolute viewpoints and to reveal a stable picture of the participants. Neither is it to generalize the findings to all students. The aim of this study is only to capture the students' subjective experience related to the theme.

First of all, an increased understanding and knowledge about the theme may be useful to college students. This knowledge may help them become aware of their opportunities to develop, and what is required in order to develop a higher self-efficacy, self-awareness and thus autonomy. Secondly, a deeper understanding and awareness of how students perceive themselves, and what their needs are, may be helpful in counselling. This knowledge can contribute to make counsellors better prepared to meet the students in the best possible ways, and based on the students' needs. Finally, the knowledge derived from this thesis may be helpful in a bigger, societal perspective. The students are our future, and thus it is important to not only impose on them with demands and expectations. In order to actually attain highly developed and autonomous students, it is equally important to understand how students operate in the world, and to make sure that they live happy lives.

There are many ways to study a phenomenon, and this research has only contributed to gain knowledge about one area. Considering future research, it could be interesting to focus even more on a counselling perspective. By conducting a study where the participants' sorts before and after counselling could contribute to gain knowledge about the effect of coming to counselling. It would also have been interesting to include the counsellors' perspective, and have them sort as well. This could contribute to an increased understanding of how both the students and the counsellors experience to be in relation to the other in the counselling encounter. Finally, this study was conducted with students, due to various reasons mentioned in the introduction. However, students are only one population of the society, and thus it could be interesting to study how other groups experience themselves in their development towards autonomy.

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8 Appendices

Appendix 1 Design and Q sample

Effect	Level			Cells
Self-efficacy	A: Low Self-efficacy	B: High Self-efficacy		2
Self-awareness	C: Conformist	D: Self-conscious	E: Conscientious	3
Relation	F: Dependent	G: Independent	H: Interdependent	3
Total combinations				18

1. I need a counsellor who believes in me when I don't believe in myself. (ACF)

1. Jeg trenger en veileder som har tro på meg, da jeg ikke alltid har tro på meg selv. (ACF)

2. Having a deep dialogue with someone is reserved for those who are close to me. (BCH)

2. Å ha en dyp dialog med noen er kun forbeholdt de som står meg nær. (BCH)

3. There is room for development only if respect is present in counselling. (ADH)

3. Det er rom for utvikling kun dersom det er respekt til stede i veiledning. (ADH)

4. I know what I should do, so now that I have been to counselling it has mostly to do with having someone to get me started. (ACG)

4. Jeg vet hva jeg burde gjøre, så når jeg nå har vært på veiledning er det mest for å få noen til å sparke meg i gang. (ACG)

5. I need some pressure to perform well. (AEF)

5. Jeg trenger et visst press på meg for at jeg skal yte bra. (AEF)

6. In the past I was a person who needed others in order to feel good about myself. Now this is not as necessary anymore. (ADG)

6. Før var jeg en person som trengte andre for å føle meg bra. Nå er det ikke like nødvendig lenger. (ADG)

7. I believe in myself, but I do not believe in counselling. (BEH)

7. Jeg har tro på meg selv, men jeg har ikke på tro på veiledning. (BEH)

8. Sometimes counselling can be a little intangible. To gain something from counselling I want it more concrete. (ADH)

8. Av og til kan veiledning være litt lite håndfast. For at jeg skal få noe ut av veiledning ønsker jeg det mer konkret. (ADH)

9. I find it difficult if someone tries to control my student or life situation. (AEG)

9. Det er vanskelig for meg om noen prøver å bestemme over min studie- eller livssituasjon. (AEG)

10. It is encouraging to see my weaknesses and strengths along with a counsellor. (AEH)

10. Det er oppløftende å se mine svakheter og styrker sammen med en veileder. (AEH)

11. I know to a large degree what I want. At the same time I know I can work harder to achieve it. (BDG)

11. Jeg vet i stor grad hva jeg vil. Samtidig vet jeg at jeg kan jobbe hardere for å for det til. (BDG)

12. I master student life well. Coming to counselling gives me a confirmation that this is true. (BEF)

12. Jeg mestrer studietilværelsen bra. Å komme til veiledning gir meg en bekreftelse på at det stemmer. (BEF)

13. I am a person with willpower, but I experience to get insecure when facing adversity. (AEG)

13. Jeg er en viljesterk person, men jeg opplever å bli usikker av mye motgang. (AEG)

14. I find it hard to set boundaries for myself. This is difficult to recognize. (ACH)

14. Jeg har vanskelig for å sette grenser for meg selv. Det er vanskelig å erkjenne. (ACH)

15. I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others. (BEG)

15. Jeg er en veldig bestemt person. At jeg skal få viljen min kan gå ut over andre. (BEG)

16. I am not used to sharing my thoughts with others. I am probably a little afraid of what others will think of me. (ACG)

16. Jeg er ikke vant til å dele mine tanker med andre. Jeg er nok litt redd for hva andre skal tenke om meg. (ACG)

17. It is someone else's credit that I feel good about myself. (BCF)

17. Det er andres fortjeneste at jeg føler meg bra. (BCF)

18. I have always been surrounded by strong and independent people. This has given me strength. (BCG)

18. Jeg har alltid vært omringet av sterke og selvstendige mennesker. Det har gitt meg styrke. (BCG)

19. To me it is valuable to reflect on myself when I come to counselling. (BDH)

19. For meg er det verdifullt å kunne reflektere over meg selv når jeg kommer til veiledning. (BDH)

20. I feel that I master my studies, but after I have been to counselling I am left with a greater uncertainty than when I walked in. (BDF)

20. Jeg føler jeg behersker studiet mitt, men etter veiledning sitter jeg igjen med en større usikkerhet enn da jeg gikk inn. (BDF)

21. I can get really frustrated if I do poorly on an exam or an assignment. Then I find it helpful to talk to someone who can give me support. (ADF)

21. Jeg kan bli ordentlig frustrert om jeg ikke gjør det bra på en oppgave eller en eksamen. Da hjelper det å snakke med noen som kan gi meg støtte. (ADF)

22. I expect to do well in school, so it will affect my self-esteem if I do badly. (AEF)

22. Jeg forventer å gjøre det bra på skolen, så dersom jeg gjør det dårlig vil det gå ut over selvtilliten min. (AEF)

23. It is not desirable to come to counselling in order to think and ponder, as this it something I tend to do a lot of at school. (BDH)

23. Det er ikke ønskelig å komme til veiledning for å tenke og gruble. Det gjør jeg mye ellers når jeg er på skolen. (BDH)

24. I feel that I have no control. There are so many expectations and demands in today's society that I have to live up to. (ACF)

24. Jeg føler at jeg ikke har kontroll på noe. Det er så mange forventninger og krav i dagens samfunn som jeg må leve opp til. (ACF)

25. Having a good conversation with a counsellor makes me experience myself as a strong person. (BCH)

25. Gode samtaler med en veileder gjør at jeg opplever meg selv som en sterk person. (BCH)

26. I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well. (BEF)

26. Jeg jobber hardt for å nå mine mål, men jeg trenger bekreftelse fra andre på at jeg gjør det bra. (BEF)

27. I can let bad results put me down. (ADF)

27. Jeg kan la dårlige resultater dra meg ned. (ADF)

28. The feeling of mastery is important to me. (BEG)

28. Følelsen av mestring er viktig for meg. (BEG)

29. Coming to counselling can help me get in touch with my internal motivation. (BDF)

29. Å gå til veiledning kan hjelpe meg å komme i kontakt med min indre motivasjon. (BDF)

30. I often experience that others make me move out of my comfort zone. I whish I could do it more on my own initiative. (BCF)

30. Ofte opplever jeg at det er andre som får meg til å bevege meg ut av komfortsonen. Jeg skulle ønske at jeg kunne gjøre det mer på eget initiativ. (BCF)

31. I always strive to be the best version of myself. It is inspiring when I meet someone who helps me develop. (BEH)

31. Jeg jobber alltid for å bli den beste versjonen av meg selv. Det er inspirerende når jeg møter noen som bidrar til at jeg utvikler meg. (BEH)

32. I find it difficult to trust in others. That is why I often avoid talking to others, although I need it. (ADG)

32. Jeg har vanskelig for å stole på andre. Derfor unngår jeg ofte å prate med andre, selv om jeg trenger det. (ADG)

33. A counsellor can help me with specific issues. The rest I take care of myself. (BCG)

33. En veileder kan hjelpe meg med konkrete problemstillinger. Resten ordner jeg selv. (BCG)

34. I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor. (AEH)

34. Det er skummelt å reflektere over meg og min situasjon sammen med veileder. (AEH)

35. To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself. (ACH)

35. Å ha en god samtale med noen kan bidra til at jeg får mer tro på meg selv. (ACH)

36. I am determined that I can if I want to! (BDG)

36. Jeg er fast bestemt på at jeg kan hvis jeg vil! (BDG)

Appendix 2 Participation request letter and informed consent

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

Som masterstudent i rådgivning ved Institutt for voksnes læring og rådgivningsvitenskap (IVR) skal jeg våren 2014 skrive min avsluttende masteroppgave. I den forbindelse er det ønskelig å se nærmere på studenters subjektive opplevelser knyttet til det å være i veiledning. For å kunne gjøre dette er det nødvendig med hjelp fra 15-30 studenter som har vært i kontakt med Studentservice for veiledning, og jeg henvender meg derfor til deg med forespørsel om deltakelse.

Forskningsmetoden som blir brukt er Q-metode; en egnet metode til å utforske subjektivitet. Du som forskningsdeltaker er tildelt en konvolutt med 36 utsagn, sorteringsskjema/rutenett og instruksjon. Du blir bedt om å sortere utsagnene i sorteringsskjemaet med utgangspunkt i hvor like eller ulike de er deg. Q-metoden kan med dette bidra til økt selvinnsikt og at du blir bedre kjent med deg selv. Sorteringen vil foregå etter en gitt instruksjon og vil ta 30-45 minutter.

I tillegg til selve sorteringen ønsker jeg å gjennomføre en uformell samtale med noen av deltakerne i etterkant av sorteringen. Dette er for å best mulig forstå de ulike synspunktene som kommer frem i analysearbeidet. Dersom du som forskningsdeltaker godkjenner det, vil denne samtalen bli tatt opp på lydbåndopptaker, men den vil ikke bli transkribert. De som er aktuelle for en slik samtale vil bli kontaktet. Dersom dette er greit for deg ber jeg deg skrive telefonnummer og/eller mailadresse på sorteringsskjemaet sammen med ditt navn.

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du som informant kan trekke deg når som helst uten å oppgi grunn. Du er heller ikke pliktet til å oppgi informasjon om deg selv om du ikke ønsker dette. Som forsker er jeg underlagt taushetsplikt og alle opplysninger som blir samlet inn vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Ingen vil kunne bli gjenkjent i oppgaven da all informasjon anonymiseres. Kun min veileder og jeg vil ha tilgang på opplysningene. Veileder eller andre ved Studentservice er kun delaktige i form av rekruttering og eventuelt i oppbevaring av materialet. Materialet vil til enhver tid bli oppbevart på et trygt sted, og ved prosjektslutt vil det bli slettet og makulert. Etter planen skal prosjektet avsluttes 30.06.2014.

Min veileder er Jonathan Reams, førsteamanuensis i rådgivningsvitenskap ved NTNU. Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Ønsker du å delta i undersøkelsen er det fint om du skriver under på samtykkeerklæringen. Send den ferdig frankerte konvolutten med **samtykkeerklæringen** (klipp ut eller lever hele arket) og **sorteringsskjemaet** til adressen som er påskrevet, eller lever den til Studentservice. Det er ønskelig at den leveres så fort som mulig etter at du er ferdig med sorteringen, men helst innen 21.03.2014.

Dersom du har spørsmål angående studien må du gjerne ta kontakt med meg eller min veileder.

Mail: ███████████████   Telefon: ████████
Mail: ███████████████████

Takk for at du ønsker å bidra til min masteravhandling!

Med vennlig hilsen
Hanne Halvorsen

Samtykkeerklæring:

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta.

_____

   (Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 3 Approval from NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Jonathan Reams
Institutt for voksnes læring og rådgivningsvitenskap NTNU

7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 13.01.2014   Vår ref: 36739 / 2 / HIT   Deres dato: Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 18.12.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

36739	*Students experience of self-efficacy in the context of the counselor encounter - Studenters opplevelse av mestringstro i en veilederkontekst*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Jonathan Reams*
Student	*Hanne Halvorsen*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.06.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Hildur Thorarensen

Kontaktperson: Hildur Thorarensen tlf: 55 58 26 54
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal det innhentes skriftlig samtykke basert på muntlig og skriftlig informasjon om prosjektet og behandling av personopplysninger. Personvernombudet finner informasjonsskrivet tilfredsstillende utformet i henhold til personopplysningslovens vilkår.

Innsamlede opplysninger registreres på privat pc. Personvernombudet legger til grunn at veileder og student setter seg inn i og etterfølger NTNU sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet, spesielt med tanke på bruk av privat pc til oppbevaring av personidentifiserende data.

Prosjektet skal avsluttes 30.06.2014 og innsamlede opplysninger skal da anonymiseres og lydopptak slettes. Anonymisering innebærer at direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger som navn/koblingsnøkkel slettes, og at indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger (sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. yrke, alder, kjønn) fjernes eller grovkategoriseres slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes i materialet.

Appendix 4 Condition of instructions and Q instructions

Instruksjonsbetingelse:

Når du nå skal sortere skal du ta utgangspunkt i deg selv i møte med veileder på Studentservice. Det er ønskelig å få frem hvordan du opplever deg selv og hva du ønsker å få ut av en veiledningstime - og det er din subjektive opplevelse som verdsettes, så prøv å være så åpen og ærlig som mulig. Stol gjerne på din umiddelbare reaksjon når du leser et utsagn. Det er ikke noen svar som er mer riktige enn andre.

Sorteringsinstruksjon:

1. Du er tildelt 36 utsagn. Les utsagnene og foreta en grovsortering hvor du deler utsagnene i omtrent tre like store grupperinger på bordet foran deg.

   Gruppe a) De utsagnene som beskriver deg, eller som du er enig i, legger du i en gruppering til høyre.

   Gruppe b) De utsagnene som ikke beskriver deg, eller som du er uenig i, legger du i en gruppering til venstre.

   Gruppe c) De utsagnene som er nøytrale, eller som ikke gir så mye mening for deg, legger du i en gruppering i midten.

2. Du skal nå gjøre en mer detaljert fordeling, der du skal gi tallverdi på hvert utsagn fra -5 til +5. Vær nøye og bruk god tid på å være så nyansert som mulig.

3. Les først gjennom utsagnene i gruppe a) de som er beskriver deg, og velg ut det utsagnet som du mener er <u>mest</u> likt deg. Plasser utsagnet lengst til høyre (+5), i henhold til sorteringsskjemaets mønster. Velg så ut to utsagn som du er mest enig i blant de gjenværende utsagnene, og plasser dem på +4. Fortsett på denne måten med tre utsagn på +3, fire på +2, og fem på +1

4. Deretter gjør du det samme med gruppe b) de utsagnene som beskriver deg <u>minst.</u> Plasser ett utsagn lengst til venstre (-5). Plasser deretter to utsagn på -4, tre på -3, fire på -2 og fem på -1. Se skjemaets mønster.

5. Til slutt plasserer du seks utsagn på kolonne 0 (I midten); de som er nøytrale for deg, eller ikke gir spesiell mening.

6. Når du er ferdig med sorteringen ser du over på nytt for å sjekke at du er enig med de valgene du selv har gjort. Gjør endringer dersom du er misfornøyd. Kontroller at du har plassert riktig antall utsagn i hver rute.

7. Skriv utsagnenes nummer inn i rutene på sorteringsskjemaet og lever dette.

Lykke til!

Appendix 5 Information sheet to the counsellors as Student services

Informasjon om forskningsprosjekt til veiledere ved Studentservice

Mitt forskningsprosjekt

Jeg går master i rådgivning og skriver denne våren min avsluttende masteroppgave. Det er derfor ønskelig å undersøke studenters subjektive opplevelser knyttet til det å være i veiledning. I den forbindelse har jeg tatt kontakt med dere på Studentservice.

Metode

I dette forskningsprosjektet bruker jeg Q-metode. Denne metoden egner seg til å undersøke subjektivitet, på en systematisk måte. Informantene får utdelt 36 utsagn som de skal ta stilling til. Disse plasseres i et sorteringsskjema/rutenett med utgangspunkt i hvor godt deltakeren kjenner seg igjen i utsagnene (fra -5 til +5). På denne måten kan metoden bidra til økt selvinnsikt. Ved å analysere sorteringene er det ønskelig å finne ulike syn som finnes knyttet til det aktuelle temaet. Det vil ta 30-45 minutter å sortere.

Rekruttering

Dere kan bidra ved å rekruttere studenter som har vært på veiledning. Hvem som helst kan delta, da det er ønskelig å undersøke ulike studenters opplevelser. Dere må selv kjenne på egne begrensninger, så hvem dere spør og hvor ofte/mange dere spør er opp til dere. Det er ønskelig med 15-30 deltakere som fullfører undersøkelsen, så jo flere som ønsker å delta, desto bedre. Fortell gjerne hvordan studentene kan få noe igjen ved å delta og at deres bidrag er verdifulle. De kan lære seg selv bedre å kjenne, og de bidrar både til min masteravhandling og til å få økt innsikt i det som undersøkes.

Dere har fått utdelt til sammen 50 konvolutter på Studentservice Dragvoll og Gløshaugen. I hver av disse ligger det: Et informasjonsskriv m/samtykkeerklæring, en sorteringsinstruksjon, et sorteringsskjema, 36 utsagn og en sjokolade ☺ Det gis én konvolutt til hver student. Studentene kan sortere hvor de vil, men de bør ha litt god plass rundt seg til å sortere. Etter at de har sortert og skrevet under på samtykkeerklæringen legges sorteringsskjemaet og samtykkeerklæringen i den ferdig frankerte og adresserte konvolutten, og gis tilbake til dere, eller sendes i posten til meg. Det er informert om at det er ønskelig at konvolutten returneres

så fort studentene er ferdige, men helst innen 21.03.14. Dette er også planlagt sluttdato for rekruttering, men dersom nok deltakere deltar avsluttes rekruttering tidligere.

Til slutt vil jeg minne dere om konfidensialitet og anonymitet. Studentene er informert om at dere oppbevarer materialet, men at det kun er min veileder og jeg som har tilgang på det.

Jeg tar kontakt underveis for oppdatering. Dersom dere lurer på noe er det bare å ta kontakt med meg.

Tusen takk for hjelpen!

Med vennlig hilsen

Hanne Halvorsen
Telefon: ████████
Mail: ████████████████

Appendix 6 Factor Q sort values for each statement

No.	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
1	I need a counsellor who believes in me when I don't believe in myself.	-2	+2	-1	1
2	Having a deep dialogue with someone is reserved for those who are close to me.	-3	+2	-3	-3
3	There is room for development only if respect is present in counselling	+1	+1	0	+3
4	I know what I should do, so now that I have been to counselling it has mostly to do with having someone to get me started	0	-2	+5	0
5	I need some pressure to perform well.	+2	+1	+4	+2
6	In the past I was a person who needed others in order to feel good about myself. Now this is not as necessary anymore	-1	-3	0	-2
7	I believe in myself, but I do not believe in counselling.	-1	-3	-1	-4
8	Sometimes counselling can be a little intangible. To gain something from counselling I want it more concrete.	+1	0	0	-1
9	I find it difficult if someone tries to control my student or life situation.	0	-3	0	+2
10	It is encouraging to see my weaknesses and strengths along with a counsellor.	0	+2	+3	-3
11	I know to a large degree what I want. At the same time I know I can work harder to achieve it.	+5	0	-2	+1
12	I master student life well. Coming to counselling gives me a confirmation that this is true.	0	-4	-2	0
13	I am a person with willpower, but I experience to get insecure when facing adversity.	-2	-2	0	+3
14	I find it hard to set boundaries for myself. This is difficult to recognize.	-2	+1	+2	-1
15	I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others.	-4	-5	+2	-5
16	I am not used to sharing my thoughts with others. I am probably a little afraid of what others will think of me	-5	+3	-1	-2
17	It is someone else's credit that I feel good about myself.	-1	0	-3	-1
18	I have always been surrounded by strong and independent people. This has given me strength.	+3	-1	-2	-3
19	To me it is valuable to reflect on myself when I come to counselling.	+2	+2	+3	0

20	If feel that I master my studies, but after I have been to counselling I am left with a greater uncertainty than when I walked in.	-3	-4	-1	-1
21	I can get really frustrated if I do poorly on an exam or an assignment. Then I find it helpful to talk to someone who can give me support.	0	-2	+1	+2
22	I expect to do well in school, so it will affect my self-esteem if I do badly.	-1	+1	+2	-1
23	It is not desirable to come to counselling in order to think and ponder, as this it something I tend to do a lot of at school.	-1	-1	-2	-1
24	I feel that I have no control. There are so many expectations and demands in today's society that I have to live up to.	-2	+4	-1	+1
25	Having a good conversation with a counsellor makes me experience myself as a strong person.	+1	-2	0	+1
26	I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well.	+1	-2	-5	+4
27	I can let bad results put me down.	+2	+3	+3	+3
28	The feeling of mastery is important to me.	+4	+4	+2	+5
29	Coming to counselling can help me get in touch with my internal motivation.	0	0	+1	+2
30	I often experience that others make me move out of my comfort zone. I whish I could do it more on my own initiative.	+1	0	-4	0
31	I always strive to be the best version of myself. It is inspiring when I meet someone who helps me develop.	+2	-1	+4	0
32	I find it difficult to trust in others. That is why I often avoid talking to others, although I need it.	-3	+1	-3	-4
33	A counsellor can help me with specific issues. The rest I take care of myself.	+3	-1	+1	-2
34	I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor.	-4	+5	-4	0
35	To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself.	+3	+3	+1	+1
36	I am determined that I can if I want to!	+4	-1	+1	-2

Appendix 7 Consensus statements

These statements do not distinguish between any pair of factors. All statements are non-significant at P > 0.01. A star* indicates that the statement is non-significant at P > 0.05.

.01	No.	Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
	20	If feel that I master my studies, but after I have been to counselling I am left with a greater uncertainty than when I walked in.	-3	-4	-1	-1
*	23	It is not desirable to come to counselling in order to think and ponder, as this it something I tend to do a lot of at school.	-1	-1	-2	-1
	27	I can let bad results put me down.	+2	+3	+3	+3
	29	Coming to counselling can help me get in touch with my internal motivation.	0	0	+1	+2
	35	To have a good conversation with someone can help me believe more in myself.	+3	+3	+1	+1

Appendix 8 Distinguishing statements

All statements are significant at P < 0.05. A star* indicates significance at P < 0.01 related to the factors placement.

Distinguishing statements for factor 1

.01	No.	Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
*	11	I know to a large degree what I want. At the same time I know I can work harder to achieve it.	+5	0	-2	+1
*	36	I am determined that I can if I want to!	+4	-1	+1	-2
*	18	I have always been surrounded by strong and independent people. This has given me strength.	+3	-1	-2	-3
	31	I always strive to be the best version of myself. It is inspiring when I meet someone who helps me develop.	+2	-1	+4	0
	26	I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well.	+1	-2	-5	+4
	10	It is encouraging to see my weaknesses and strengths along with a counsellor.	0	+2	+3	-3
	22	I expect to do well in school, so it will affect my self-esteem if I do badly.	-1	+1	+2	+4
*	16	I am not used to sharing my thoughts with others. I am probably a little afraid of what others will think of me.	-5	+3	-1	-2

Distinguishing statements for factor 2

.01	No.	Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
*	34	I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor.	-4	+5	-4	0
*	24	I feel that I have no control. There are so many expectations and demands in today's society that I have to live up to.	-2	+4	-1	+1
*	16	I am not used to sharing my thoughts with others. I am probably a little afraid of what others will think of me.	-5	+3	-1	-2
*	2	Having a deep dialogue with someone is reserved for those who are close to me.	-3	+2	-3	-3
*	32	I find it difficult to trust in others. That is why I often avoid talking to others, although I need it.	-3	+1	-3	-4
	26	I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well.	+1	-2	-5	+4
	12	I master student life well. Coming to counselling gives me a confirmation that this is true.	0	-4	-2	0

Distinguishing statements for factor 3

.01	No.	Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
*	4	I know what I should do, so now that I have been to counselling it has mostly to do with having someone to get me started.	0	-2	+5	0
	31	I always strive to be the best version of myself. It is inspiring when I meet someone who helps me develop.	+2	-1	+4	0
*	15	I am a very determined person. In order to have it my way it may affect others.	-4	-5	+2	-5
	17	It is someone else's credit that I feel good about myself.	-1	0	-3	-1
*	30	I often experience that others make me move out of my comfort zone. I whish I could do it more on my own initiative.	+1	0	-4	0
	26	I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well.	+1	-2	-5	+4

Distinguishing statements for factor 4

.01	No.	Statements	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
*	26	I work hard to achieve my goals, but I need confirmation from others that I do well.	+1	-2	-5	+4
*	13	I am a person with willpower, but I experience to get insecure when facing adversity.	-2	-2	0	+3
	9	I find it difficult if someone tries to control my student or life situation.	0	-3	0	+2
*	34	I find it scary to reflect on myself with a counsellor.	-4	+5	-4	0
	10	It is encouraging to see my weaknesses and strengths along with a counsellor.	0	+2	+3	-3

Appendix 9 Table 4 - Factor loadings

An X behind the Q sorts in the table shows the defining sorts of each factor. Two of the Q sorts are excluded as they correlate with several factors, and are thus not defining any of them.

Q sort	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
1. Tina	0.1787	0.3521	0.5627	0.4157
2. Truls	0.3865	0.0527	-0.1092	0.6539X
3. Beate	0.5967X	-0.0271	0.5614	0.1662
4. Ane	0.7862X	-0.2156	0.0942	0.0654
5. Tiril	0.0737	0.8633X	-0.1033	0.0621
6. Malene	-0.0367	0.2942	0.0232	0.7950X
7. Susanne	-0.1892	0.7336X	0.2086	0.1810
8. Stian	-0.0054	0.0155	0.8855X	-0.1462
9. Mari	0.5619X	-0.0665	0.4027	0.3717
10. Magne	0.3873	0.0842	0.6365X	0.4452
11. Per	0.5023	0.5185	0.4246	0.1635
12. Tor	0.8776X	0.0918	0.0903	0.0542
13. Karen	0.6099X	0.3527	0.0090	0.3706
14. Siri	0.1489	0.0252	0.2482	0.8035X
% Expl. variance	22	14	16	18