



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
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CONSIDERING BIOGRAPHICAL LEARNING THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES

Observing an adult's self-recognised learning and development through experience

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Abstract

- Aim:** This thesis aims at aiding a better understanding of how a person reacts to and understand their own role and place in changing life contexts. The thesis provides a groundwork for understanding the meta-cognitive processes of self-reflective biographical learning perspectives. Biographical learning is here understood to be an existential self-aware process that requires the individual to reflect on and incorporate their experiences in their own biographical narratives. This biographical development is viewed through a lens of transformational learning which is understood as the process of turning experiences into a compounded life narrative.
- Theory:** Biographical learning and transformative learning. This thesis explores how these two theories of learning combine aspects of the human experience and tries to explain how individuals develop throughout their lives. The aim is to expand on the understanding of individual meta-cognition as an aspect of learning as the individual is aware of their own biographical progress through life, and at the same time recognising the value of experiences as the formative aspect of a developing biographical narrative, calling for transformative learning to be considered as an inextricable part of the process. Without transformation there would be no biographical development.
- Method:** The method used to gather data was an adaptation of the Biographical Narrative Interview Method. The interviewee was allowed to freely tell of their own experiences once an initial inquiry was made.
- Results:** The results show how the process of living life is experienced as multitude of instances of interacting with the worlds around while also carrying an inner narrative dialog with oneself, regarding one's situatedness in life. Moments of reflection upon oneself and one's journey provide break points in the life journey and constitute instances of reflection upon one's biographical life story.

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."

Soeren Kierkegaard - 1843

Foreword

I would like to thank my supervisor for his patience with my slow and reluctant sharing of the progress that I made in authoring this thesis. It has been a long and slow process culminating in a paper that explores a question that is close to my heart. What does it mean to be human?

In this thesis I have attempted to explore one facet of that question. Namely, how do individuals develop and learn to be. It is by no means a question that has been answered in this thesis, but an exploration of it has been made. It is my hope that those reading this paper begins to explore for themselves the question of who they are and how they came to be.

This thesis can be viewed in primarily two ways. Firstly, it is a piece of work exploring the proposed combination of two theories of learning, biographical learning, and transformational learning through experiences. In this first of two approaches to the thesis I have put forward a suggestion of combining two theories of learning and set out to look for fruitful evidence of this approach to learning in meta-cognitive processes as recorded and described by an individual's own self-reflected and reported experiences of living life with changing and demanding circumstances and learning and developing from those experiences. In order to observe how the theories of learning interact and express themselves great care was taken to not abstract and separate the interviewees narrative from the context they told of. This meant that an initial analysis and a secondary analysis were both conducted. The initial one follows the narrative closely and make few attempts at abstraction, merely observing the processes described. The second analysis attempts theoretical abstraction on the observations. As such care was taken to not remove the context of the individual's narrative and a theoretical abstraction was made possible by analysing the observations rather than the narrative itself. Secondly, this thesis can be very much viewed as a documentation of the very process it interests itself with. This thesis documents my own experiences of going through transformative experiences and through those develop as an individual. I am no longer the same person I was when I began this project. I've had to change the approaches chosen, I've had to include new ideas and reflections, and I've had to solve problems as they arose during the project. As such, I've left descriptions of the process of writing this thesis in the final version. They provide insight into how interactions between the internal individual dimension of human life, the goals, ambitions, and desires, interact with the reality of the external world and the conditions it puts on us. Read this way, the thesis become an example of its very own nature. The documentation and reflection of what learning is and the attempt to understand that question becomes in and of itself an example of how the proposed theoretical approach configures in the growth of the individual. The thesis thus becomes my biographical narrative, open for observation and analysis as a process of development through living life and experiencing life.

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Introduction

For the last couple of years, the world has been dealing with a global pandemic, Covid-19. During the pandemic societies has been under enormous stress dealing with the disease and changing living conditions as a result. Highly contagious and potentially deadly the virus could not be ignored. Restrictions on individual mobility were put in place by governments across the globe, affecting how people lived their lives.

Here in Sweden those restrictions meant closed workplaces and recreational spaces. Limitations on traveling, decreased contact with family and friends and continually changing restrictions for how to behave.

Due to the unknown nature of the corona virus during the first year of the pandemic, treatment of those who fell ill were a challenge. Large numbers of sick individuals arrived to find a healthcare system that was ill prepared to receive them. This meant overfilled hospitals and difficult working conditions for those working there. Bergman, Falk, Wolf and Larsson (2021) authored an article about the experiences of nurses involved in ICU-care during the pandemic. They described the conditions as challenging, highlighting increased stress due to ethical decision making where nurses were not able to care fully for their patients.

The aim of this thesis is to explore how one individual experienced these events in her life. Focusing on informal adult learning through biographical learning theory, informed by transformational learning through experiences. Focus lies in how a person's biographical narrative, their biographicity and situatedness, combine in creating the individual's response to and interpretation of impactful experiences that they were forced to experience. The pandemic has provided an opportunity to observe how external, global, events impact an individual's experiences and self-awareness. The period of the experience and the external pressures put on the individual are clearly definable and observable in the biographical narrative.

The societal changes that occurred during the pandemic provide an opportunity to study how individuals perceive themselves in relation to their experiences of working in exposed environments. Environments that they have had little to say about what their role is. By studying a nurse, it was possible to observe how the external pressures emanating from societies' needs impacted those who experienced them (the effects of the pandemic on procedures and social restrictions) directly. Providing a platform to talk about her own perception of her experiences, this thesis provides an opportunity for the lived experience of one of those effected by organisational changes in a society in crisis to be heard and analysed from an educational theoretical perspective. Perhaps providing in the future, better accommodations for preparing and meeting workers/individuals needs in changing work and living environments. Highlighting the need to see individuals as holistic entities that move between contexts and bring their biographicity and situatedness with them.

Utilizing biographical learning as an overarching concept and a base in transformational learning through experiences to understanding adult informal development, a holistic approach towards learning is adopted. Experiences, social contexts, existential quandaries, and meta-cognition are dimensions with which the data is analysed. Anders Hallqvist (2014) wrote on the merits of biographical learning's holistic approach, describing its recognition of the interaction between the individual's perceptions of and understanding for the self as a reflective entity, comprehending what they experience and its effect on them, as learning.

Background

Why this thesis at this point in time? During the last two years the lives of people have been affected deeply by the Covid-19 pandemic. This thesis strives to cast some light on how one individual

understands and reflects upon her experiences of this time, working as a nurse, and how who she is and what she brings with her in her life story (biography) interact and intersect with her experiences during this time. Researching the effects of biographicity and situatedness in experiential learning.

Articles have been written about the experiences of healthcare professionals and on individuals of all kinds during the pandemic. Few have focused on how those individuals themselves understand and relate to their experiences. Fewer still have looked at how adult informal learning is understood by the subject themselves. This gap is addressed in this thesis by looking at the incorporation of experiences into the personal narrative and understanding of one's situatedness during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic there were restrictions on individuals' movements, their freedoms, and isolation from social settings. As a result of restrictions imposed on the populous there has been attempts made at identifying measures with a lessening effect on loneliness and feelings arising from a lack of freedom, the restrictions, and mandates of personal protection gear. One author who reflects on these suggestions is Holly Linkous (2021). She discusses the potential of adult educators to bring meaning and belonging to adult learners during the pandemic. Examples given are new hobbies, home renovations, self-care etc. The adult educator's role according to Linkous is to provide a vehicle for meaning creation. Guiding reflections, connecting individuals who would otherwise not interact or to simply provide knowledge that the learner might explore.

Holmes (2002 a) argues for recognising that a difference exists between learning and training in human development. Mostly stemming from a professional/private-life perspective. In particular, he finds a difference in agency and expected outcomes. Where learning is a neutral term and does not indicate a preferred outcome, positive, negative, or neutral, training is a directed effort to change behaviour. Holmes argues that continued professional development does not constitute learning as it does not necessarily focus enough on the individuals progress, and might be mandated by the organisation, removing agency from the individual. This is too restrictive a view of what learning *is*. The social context of where an individual's developmental process takes place is not the deciding factor of whether or not it is learning. The individuals process decides whether or not learning has occurred, not the context of that process. Learning as a phenomenon has to be understood foremost as an individual endeavour, the context does not dictate whether or not it is learning or something else, the change in the individual does that. A standpoint taken all too rarely.

Research objective

Purpose

This thesis aims at furthering the understanding of the complexities that make up adult informal learning. Looking at a process through which an adult understands and incorporate experiences in their narrative stories through biographical learning. The thesis explores how the Covid-19 pandemic as an experience was incorporated in and affected how the individual thinks about themselves in regard to who they are and how they view their surroundings, with the goal of observing the metacognitive process of self-aware evaluation of experience as a biographical narrative incorporating method.

To emphasise the importance of experiences as the individuals learning process of adjusting to new circumstances, the study embraces a biographical learning perspective, which allows for the individual's self-aware understanding of their process of growth as an individual to become visible.

Of particular interest in this thesis is the combination of professional settings and private ones, providing a holistic understanding for the interaction of the separate roles an individual occupies throughout their existence. Incorporating experiences from separate areas of their lives into a holistic understanding of who they are. A continual process that deals with experiences dialectically as the

individuals adapt to and incorporate new experiences, feelings, impressions, and realisations into what they experience as their persons, their narrative biographical self-understanding.

The study looks at how an individual deal with and understand their experiences during Covid-19 and use those in adapting their life stories to explain who they are as an individual. Slowly developing into who they will become.

Relevance

Living life as a human demands a continual adaptation to new circumstances. Circumstances that do not care for us as beings. We must adapt to and deal with life's capriciousness if we are to flourish. Paraphrasing Nietzsche as he is presented in Aho (2014) – the goal of every living being is to tomorrow become more than what it is today. All beings alive strive to grow and become more. If we as humans are to live and thrive, we have to learn how to adapt to new experiences and circumstances.

We live in times of large-scale societal changes. How we live and where we live are fundamentally changing. Two authors who have written about this are Zygmunt Bauman and Richard Sennet. The world's population is urbanising, forcing us to live in close courters, find stable incomes and provide for ourselves in increasingly competitive circumstances. At the same time international trade has uprooted the very structures that enabled people to live in cities. As an example of such changes, consider the move of manufacturing from the western world to the eastern. When opportunity for employment disappeared from western countries the people living there had to find new sources of income. The introduction of information technology (IT) in almost every aspect of daily life, increases the demands on the individual to adapt to new technologies, which is something that Sennet (1998) reflects on. As an example, we will consider the changes in how people work. We are increasingly switching employers and fields of work, the expectation to be available (to be reachable all hours of the day) to the employer have increased, and the distinction between work and free time have become muddled. When conditions for living life change it is important to understand how individuals' experiences and perceives themselves during these changes. Better understanding how a person reacts to and understands' their role and place in changing contexts is valuable as it provides a groundwork for facilitations. Whether these be as support to a family member, or a professional helping someone understand their own situatedness, or as an employer looking to ease processes of change in an organization.

This study looks at experiences of changing living and working conditions. It strives to better understand how an individual can perceive themselves during times of unpredictable change. A goal of this study is to further the knowledge of how experiences function as an instance of learning, a process of individual growth. Learning on an individual level in contextual settings with limited individual freedom.

A result of such knowledge could be better comprehension and use of active reflection in order to facilitate change and encourage understanding of how individuals shape themselves through biographical reflection. Facilitating creation of new meanings and goals for the individual when living conditions change. Additional value of insight can be found in how individuals process external pressures. Pressures that might be present in organisations and which as a result are looking to help employees' coup with changes to, or challenging, work environments, providing guidance on how to lessen such stresses amongst organisation members. The thesis could be seen as a potential steppingstone for further exploration of systematic changes and how those effected are met by organisations. Laying a groundwork for understanding how organisational changes affect the individual who incorporates those experiences into their personal narrative.

Graeme Martin in 2012 highlights a need for further research into the meaning that individuals attach to their experiences. Meaning that when looking at what drives an individual to rethink themselves and their knowledge the motivation behind that drive is rarely explored in any depth. He also brings up

that the growing expectation for continual learning throughout one's life is not met with proper understanding of what contexts and experiences promote such efforts on the part of the individual. The understanding of what makes an individual engage in continual change is under researched. Martin argues for a highly contextualised understanding of motivation for learning. Biographical approaches need to be considered in the context of the social circumstances of the individual.

Research question

To understand the impact of experiences during challenging life periods, interviews and questions were aimed at exploring how the participant experienced their situation and how they relate what they have lived through to themselves and how they orient themselves to the circumstances in which they found themselves.

Adult learning, as it is understood in this thesis, happens when the individual incorporates their experiences into who they are, how they view themselves and the world around them. Slowly creating the individual who they will become.

And so, the question becomes, how can we observe the dialogical aspect of experiences assimilating into the biographical narrative constituting self-aware adult informal learning.

The research question guiding this inquiry is "how do adults understand their own progression of experience-based learning and how does this express itself in the way they understand themselves and their experiences?".

How do they perceive their experiences as a part of their person and how do they express their experiences of challenging life periods as lived experiences that they carry with them and inform them of their existence as an individual at a given moment in time.

Theory, biographical learning

This section explores the theoretical background and previous works written on the subjects of biographical learning. Concepts found in biographical learning theories are explored and placed in relevance for understanding adult development through experience as an instance of learning.

Alheit and Dausien (2002) return to an aspect of biographical learning when describing that biographical learning is the integration of distinct parts of life into a coherent personal narrative. A person's history, their knowledge, and experiences as well as social constructs that make up the situatedness of that individual. That situatedness is the basis for the concept of biographicity. Biographicity is the background against which the individual judges' new experiences and knowledge. It is the contexts that make up our learning milieus. They connect biographicity with learning through the medium of lifewide learning. When learning is viewed as a human condition rather than as an action it becomes possible to see that simply through interacting with one's surroundings, a person can engage in learning when they explore or encounter something that catches interest/causes a disruption to the flow of activities, it becomes something that has to be understood in order to continue with the activity. When gaining that new understanding a change is produced in the individual. Either new knowledge or an expanded life history, either way the experiences become part of the individuals "biographical stock of knowledge" (p.15) of who they are, what they know. Alheit and Dausien conclude this view on knowledge development and learning in stating that learning is a socially structured interactive process where individuals develop and grow by interacting with the world around them and reflecting upon who they are, both in relation to others and themselves.

In 1994 Peter Alheit published an article where he laid the groundwork for his concept of biographical learning and biographicity. The article discussed the concepts as he first conceived of them, they have since been adapted and modified by numerous researchers as they have worked with them. In order to

understand Alheit's concept of biographical learning, one must consider the individual's situatedness, how the individual *is* the contexts they exist in. Alheit's idea of situatedness as an integral part of adult informal learning is the basis for this thesis. It provides a lens through which it is possible to observe how individuals interact with and adapt both their behaviours and their concepts of themselves in accordance with a rapidly changing living situation. His article explored the conditions that enabled what he saw as the groundwork for adult development. It considered how individuals in modern society live their lives in rapidly changing environment and how this forces individual to be constantly adaptable. Making learning a condition for participation in society. One thing to note in the article from 1994 is that it is quite hesitant. Understandable considering Alheit was presenting new learning concepts and commenting on the evolution of society. Where he observed increasing demands on individual mobility, which was not an as extensively explored concepts as it is today. Since first publishing the concept of biographical learning has grown, both in impact as a form of viewing adult self-understood learning processes and in strength as a legitimate theory of learning. According to Alheit researching biographical learning is done through the biographical narratives of who we are, what our experiences are and what we can conceive of our futures. In 2009 Alheit provides a summary of his concept of biographical learning and biographicity in the book "Contemporary theories of learning" by Knud Illeris. While the chapter is short and condensed it provides a good starting point for an exploration of his ideas and their application. Some of the concepts Alheit discusses in his chapter is lifelong learning, lifewide learning, biographical learning and biographicity, informal learning, non-formal learning, adult education, and social contexts, all of interest for this thesis as they pertain to the how's and why's of adult self-understood learning.

From here on the concepts and the evolution of biographical learning theory is explored. The concepts will throughout the following sections be related to the goals of this thesis.

Peter Alheit (1994) talks about disruptions in the life course of individuals as points of interest when exploring occurrences of learning. Experiences that promote reflection and agency he promotes as important when trying to understand what brings forth changes in how an individual understand themselves. Understanding disruptions in life as important experiences in a person life is critical for this thesis as it seeks to understand how changing living conditions affect individuals and how those effects lead to instances of learning. Alheit problematises the structures through which our lives play out. Structures are all that we come to learn to expect in life, further on in the thesis these will be described as "frames of reference". These structures are the boundaries of our existence as we can perceive it. The relationships we develop, the routines we create for ourselves, our hopes, and dreams for the future. As such structures are continually put in conflict with external forces, interactions with the external world, they are malleable and subject for introspection as we encounter new information (stimuli) that causes us to become aware of our own structures. We have the ability as humans to step back and reflect upon ourselves. As we reflect upon our situatedness and our responses to influences from beyond our own person, we are able be active in the creation of our own future selves. (An important part of living life as a human is the realisation that we cannot change the past, we can only influence the future. As such we are limited in our responses to external stimuli. We can have an immediate reaction and we can reflect upon our reactions. At times there are even time to make decisions that are thought through.) We have the ability to become agents of agency in our own lives. This carries a significant implication to contemplate, we as individual's are living in communities, societies that we adjust to and live in coherence with. Societies that for the last few decades has placed increased value into the adaptability of its citizens. Anders Hallqvist (2014) refers to this changing human coexistence when he discusses how who we are in relation to society is changing from a given role (examples are roles such as being a teacher, doctor, shoemaker, farmer) that one fulfils in society throughout one's life, into a task that one has to continually adapt to as one moves through different aspects of modern life. One can no longer be just a teacher, one also has to be able to change to new roles over a career. We are isolating roles in society increasingly, separating factions of daily life from one another. Hallqvist references Giddens, and Bauman among others when discussing this changing way of life. Both have written extensively on the way that we as part of society interact with one

another and the ways that we structure our lives and societies change. Bauman considered the subject intricately in his publication of “44 Letter from the Liquid Modern World” (2010). Richard Sennett wrote more focused on the upheaval of roles as an identity one has within a society in his book “The corrosion of Character” (1999). There is less expectation for individuals to follow predetermined life-courses in society, and as a result it lands on the individual to be the one in control of their life’s trajectory and to carve out their paths in life. In 2002 Peter Alheit and Bettina Dausien authored an article where they expanded on the concepts put forward by Alheit in 1994. Alheit and Dausien begins by exploring interactionistic aspects of learning, they state that it is in response to others that we become aware of new possibilities. How we interact with the external world is not the most important aspect but rather that we do, is. When we see or hear of other’s actions and opinions that holds up a mirror to ourselves. A mirror that enables us to regard ourselves, our wants, and our ambitions. This is a process that does not ever stop, throughout our lives we are continually put in situations where we become aware of ourselves through the interaction with something other than ourselves. This the authors maintain is a basis for considering humans as lifelong learners. It also brings into consideration the biographicity and situatedness of our existence that biographical learning consists of. When the conditions for our existence change it forces us by interaction to consider ourselves in relation to the change that is occurring. As an example, when conditions for employment change, we must consider ourselves in relation to new demands and view ourselves in that new context.

In recent years, the way formal education and learning has developed often time do not take into consideration the informal and non-formal aspects of human development. Particularly not in public discussions on educational structures and needs of society, those discussions focus on formal aspects of developing individuals’ abilities. The value of a biographical learning narrative is in the acceptance and recognition of the lifelong and lifewide learning process of human development and adaptation. Alheit and Dausien (2002) recognises this and puts forward the Commission of the European Communities (2000, p.3) conclusion regarding human learning going forward “Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts.”. They also recognise changes in how society is structured that Hallqvist (2014) would later describe using Bauman and Giddens. Alheit and Dausien (2002) discusses the reality of living life in European societies in modern times as a continuous process of adapting to new and growing expectations of flexibility towards an ever changing and growing (culturally, technology) society. Those who cannot keep up, or those who will not accept new members into societies will fall behind societies development. Education that promotes learning how to learn is presented as a good method of inclusion for individuals in this changing society. This learning includes informal and non-formal learning situations. The value of biographical learning is here noticeable. When an individual reflects upon their experiences in their own life context, meaning creation takes place as a result of contemplation on one’s experiences as part of who one is, meaning in turn affects how one view themselves as part of the changing contexts and how one acts in accordance with it. This enables the individual to take agency in and for their own lives.

In 2012 Hallqvist, A., Ellström, P-E. and Hydén, L-C. published an article discussing different approaches that have been made to interpret and utilize biographical learning. One thing they do is condensing the concept of biographical learning to its basic parts. They collect several ideas of biographical learning and look at the aspects connecting them. An important one is that the concept of lifelong biographical learning concerns people’s abilities to cope with rapidly changing environments in which they live. Biographical learning is a process of learning that occurs in contexts of external pressures to adapt to new situations. They argue for the value of biographical learning by stating that biographical learning considers both individual aspects as well as it recognises the social conditions of the individual when considering the process of learning. It is a wider perspective on learning than many other theories as it includes informal and non-formal settings of learning opportunities. It considers learning as a lifelong and lifewide condition of being human. The theory brings those various aspects of human life together into a coherent view on learning, normal everyday aspects of being human is viewed as much as formal settings of education and learning as a fundamental part of

how humans grow. The authors also include reference to John Dewey's theory of experiential learning in relation to biographical learning approaches, which are explored further on in the thesis. Where he states that learning is a continuous process of engaging with the surrounding milieu and adjusting to it. Learning then becomes the ways an individual reacts and responds to events they encounter. This adds to the understanding of this thesis approach to biographical learning, the combination of new experiences and the individual's perception of themselves and who they are, it is a dialectical interaction.

Hallqvist (2014) discusses the development of the theoretical basis for biographical learning as it has developed. One aspect that has been put forward is the theory's understanding of how experiences affect individuals and brings forth actions. Hallqvist points out that biographical learning research accepts that learning takes place in a multitude of settings. It is not limited to formal settings of instructions. Learning happens when new experiences are given time to coalesce into new knowledge and new behaviours. He as well points to changes in what sort of learning society values. He points to developments in the needs of labour markets, how individuals who are able to learn anew are wanted and that such individuals require different forms of formal education. This places a need for educators to teach learning (information gathering and evaluation) rather than strict facts. Hallqvist (2014) summarizes his recounting of the development of biographical learning by composing five guiding questions that he identifies in most uses of the biographical learning theory. Thus, managing to express a collected impression of what forms of learning the theory engages with. The five guiding questions are; the connection between action and making sense of actions; what is knowledge what does it mean to learn something - is it one's patterns of action or the insight into the relationship between the self and the surroundings; are individuals active and conscious in their reflections leading to changed behaviours, or is learning simply reacting to new circumstances in ways that cause least resistance; should focus be on experiences or on discourse regarding experiences; is the approach to learning overly optimistic in its view on human ability to change themselves based on reflection.

Sam Duncan in 2015 writes about agency viewed through biographical learning. He does this by exploring introspective aspects of biographical learning. In that we as humans have the ability to abstract ourselves from our narratives, we are able to consider our actions and adjust them based on our desires. An important consideration that Duncan makes is that when discussing individual biographical narratives what we are actually discussing is in fact not the actual historical events of an individual's life, but rather the story that that individual tells about their life histories. What they talk about and what they do not, as well as what they might have forgotten, all shows on what has been important and impactful experiences. Learning according to Duncan occurs in the process of organising one's biography, we learn who we are by understanding ourselves through reviewing our biographies. Biographical learning is a person's process of making meaning out of their experiences interacting with the world beyond the own body.

Biographicity

The idea of biographicity – the situatedness of an individual and the context in which learning has to be understood as taking place.

In his article from 2021, Alheit, P. expands on the idea of self-perception through biographical reflection. He discusses relationships between individuals and their surroundings. The formation of internal thought patterns and habituses (structures, frame of references) is constantly in contrast to the here and now. We can only ever understand ourselves as a history, all that we can know about ourselves is our experiences, yet we have to live in the here and now. We live through stimuli, stimuli that is reacted to by who we are, our habitus. Alheit makes the point that we as beings exist in our biographicity, that it is our situatedness in the moment and those experiences we bring with us to it through our biographies/histories, including perceptions of our futures, which constitute our existence as individuals. The interaction of these three dimensions, past present and future, is what we as individuals *are*, the past, the present and the future together makes up our experience of self in the

moment. To underscore the importance of frames of reference (experiences, structures, habituses) Alheit points towards the function of our sensory organs. That we can only make sense of stimuli if we have a frame of reference for that type of stimuli. If we see or hear something, for those stimuli to mean anything we have to have some sort of previous experience with similar stimuli. Otherwise, those impressions will not mean anything to us, and we would have to find the source and interpret new situation constantly. Humans deal with a constant input of external stimuli, what allows us to quickly interpret and assign meaning to those impressions is our frames of references. This is not a flawless process, often we misinterpret or misjudge the meaning behind a stimulus, this can create problems in numerous ways, but it is the process of relating to an external world that allows us to go by our days without constantly having to interact with new and confusing impressions. It is therefore an essential part of growing and learning as humans that we are allowed to gather experience which we can interpret and comprehend to create understanding for our surroundings. Gathering new experiences to create new knowledge, new frames of reference, could be said to be, over time, a transformative process. Jack Mezirow (2008) makes the point that transformative learning occurs both in instrumental and communicative learning when the established cognitive processes of an individual are exposed to situations where they no longer function. The critical part of transformative learning is an active self-reflection. He states that transformative learning is a meta-cognitive process where a person reassesses the reasons for their actions and perceptions. Behavioural patterns can only ever fail to function if they are exposed to new conditions, as such interaction with an external world is necessary for an individual to be put in a situation where they need to evaluate their actions, where they can become aware of themselves in a new light. This ties in with Alheit's idea of biographicity, it is only in interactions with others (including the surrounding physical world) that we become aware of ourselves, and our actions. That awareness can lead to changes, transformations, in and of the individual. Biographical learning occurs as a reflection and awareness of the self and its position in relation to others that stimulates a change in the individual.

Evans (2013) explores the potentiality of an individual's biographicity to change through narrative life stories as opportunities to reflect on one's life potentialities. When an individual discusses future actions, desires, or reflects on other ways to have managed a situation, or how to be different in the future, that individual expresses the "unlived" lives that their biographical narrative allows them to explore. This is made possible through experiences and the relation those experiences have to the individual's conceptualisation of the external world and their place in relation to it. Evans includes an interesting feature of how life stories are unfinished. The narrative of who we are, is constantly a process of becoming, one which renews itself throughout our lives. We are never finished as stories as long as we live. This unfinishedness relates to how we interact with others. It is through others that our self-perception extends beyond our *selves*. When we interact with an external stimulus, we become aware of our *selves* as an entity. This stretches to how we interact with other's stories, how we talk about each other and how we influence each other's perceptions of ourselves through how we talk about ourselves and them.

To give an example of how the interaction between internal ideas and external interactions in how an individual may be affected by their biographicity (situatedness) Evans, R. in 2014 describes assimilatory patterns among second-generation immigrants in Germany. He describes the immigrants as "culturally-aware" of their differences from native Germans and how that creates a perceived separation from society at large. Although the immigrants have adapted to the German culture from the culture they were born in, their parents' cultural heritage, their connection to another biographicity, a different culture, means that they have to deal with separate identities of belonging, leading to them feeling at odds with both identities. These individuals have skewed concepts of cultures that they are ascribed as belonging to by others while not feeling as part of those cultures. While they are connected to their parents' culture, the involvement in cultural traditions rarely extends beyond holidays and what ritualistic habits their parents still adhere to, challenges to the individual's sense of belonging are created as the individual is seen by society as part of a different culture than they themselves perceive themselves belonging to. They might have grown up in a household with connections to a different

culture than the German one surrounding them, but the individual nonetheless feels a belonging to the German culture which influenced their upbringing. A point that Evans make here is that the individuals adapt to their surroundings. At time this might lead to conflicting feelings of belonging and identity. Nevertheless, the individual responds to external influences on their biographicity. In his case German culture, the individuals can either assimilate completely with the German culture in order to be seen as being a part of it or exist in a periphery to the normative German culture. In his article Evans take a problematic approach to what an individual's *self* is. It would seem that Evans take the stand that the way a person adapts to and learns to be part of a new contexts through biographicity, and biographical learning occurs as a result of the person losing parts of themselves. This I believe to be a problematic view of an individual's growth through life, it assumes that there exists a "true" individual at some point in one's life and that changes to that, risks losing something. It would be more pertinent to say that while developing into who we are becoming, parts of who we were, are no longer needed/relevant and therefore might not be used. Such a statement would be supported both in Evans's case of migrants dealing with living between cultures and an individual's life living through changes in a coherent culture (societal changes). This is further supported when Evans's account for biographical learning as a process of assimilation of new events into the life-story of the individual.

Nestor, K.s (2015) dissertation brings a deeper understanding to the biographicity concept. She looks at the social and relational aspects of the creation of the individual. She emphasizes the value of understanding the social context of the individual when attempting to understand how they create their own life narratives. How they view themselves is reflected in the context through which they become aware of themselves. We are never individuals in isolation, but rather pieces of a larger collective.

In 2014 Hallqvist, A. describes the development of Alheits concept of biographical learning and biographicity as well as some of its' critique. An interesting critique Hallqvist brings up is that of biographical learning being naïve in its assumption of an individual's ability to affect one's own actions. There are concerns that biographical learning doesn't consider social structures as strong as it probably should when understanding why an individual learn and or act in new ways.

A problem here with biographical learning research is that there exists an inherent unknowability about the subjects' responses. There always remain questions of whether the interviewee is telling all they know, how capable are they at describing their thought, what have they forgotten, and a multitude of other unknowable factors.

Literature review

As of the writing of this thesis we are still living in uncertain times. The pandemic, while locally decreasing in severity is still very much an ongoing problem on a global stage. Restrictions on freedoms of movement have been harsh with varying degrees throughout the world and people have had to adapt to being restricted, worrying about ones' loved ones and their ability to fight off potential infections, to name some of the pressures that people have had to accept as a new normalcy of living through the pandemic, and there are more, too numerous to count here. One that is significant enough to discuss is the abrupt ways that people's plans for the future where erased. As the full effects of the pandemic hit society, the future that individuals saw for themselves where altered. This is an important aspect to remember in this thesis as the subject matter of biographical learning is intrinsically connected to the individual's perception of self which is based on their ideas of their pasts, presents and futures.

In order to tackle the subject of experiences effects on individuals' growth and learning the literature review focuses on the conditions of situatedness that an individual lives through. In order to understand how living through a global pandemic has affected individuals one must consider the milieus in which those lives were lived.

Experience

What is experience? This section explores several aspects of experiences. What they are and what some implications and effects of them can be. Understanding what experiences are is important for the analysis and depth of this thesis. It allows for better understanding of what the interviewee are describing. Considering what experiences are also provide understanding for biographical learning theories as they are applied in the thesis as it contributes to understanding the interaction between the self and stimuli.

How to understand reflections upon life and experiences

How can we understand what an experience is? One way of defining what experiences are is to simply state that experiences are that which an individual has lived through. All input that a person's sensory organs have been exposed to can be said to be an experience. But that in and of itself is not enough. Experience can also be understood, they can be reflected upon and take on new meanings and create further new experiences as they create new thoughts and impressions.

Viewing experiences is as simple stimuli leaves out nuances and intricacies of what those experiences means for the individual when they interpret and understand themselves. When an individual experiences something they are not simply the recipient of external stimulus. They are in and of themselves a context, they have a background history of previous experiences against which they understand their new experiences. As researchers we have to consider that there are aspects of the individual's context, their biographicity, that influences how they perceive themselves and how they communicate that with others. Aspects that we as observers may never know. The stimuli that are perceived by the individual is understood through their internal frameworks, their frames of references. Both biological, psychological, and sociological structure that dictate how that stimulus is internalised and understood. We must work with this knowledge and to the best of our ability interpret the stories we are given. Considering experiences in the contexts where they are understood and ascribed meaning to is something that the biographical learning perspective does well. It interests itself for the interpretations made to experiences and the context in which the individual experiences themselves. This means that the stories should be considered as new experiences, new instances of contexts in and of themselves.

Following here, dimensions of experience will be discussed and reflected upon. Both generally and for the thesis implementation and understanding of what an experience is and how it can be understood and analysed. Of particular interest in this thesis are dimensions of existentialism, self-awareness, social contexts, and meta-cognition. These lay the groundwork for understanding the individual as a self-aware being in a social context that they can reflect upon, both as an outsider (externalise themselves from the story) and as an integral part of the context.

Dimensions of experience

Dimensions of experiences is the context through which an experience is lived and understood. Dimensions that are of interest for understanding the approach taken in this thesis towards understanding how experiences interact with the perception of the self will be discussed here. This is a limited sample of dimensions that could be discussed. Limitations were made to focus the analysis.

Existential

Existential dimensions of an experience are factors that impact our understanding of ourselves as an entity separate from our surroundings. When experiences force or encourages us to reconsider our place in life they affect us on an existential plane. An aspect to keep in mind here is that often time this is a cumulative process. It is a rare and powerful experience that in and of itself leaves us reflecting upon ourselves on our place in life. Often reflections are the culmination of longer processes accumulating new experiences that lead to a point where the individual no longer view either themselves or their surroundings as they ones did. As an effect of increasing experiences and learning the individual must reorient themselves in relation to their own understanding of their existence and

their place in life to make sense once again. Authors who have expanded on such concepts include, among others are Jean Paul Sartre and Soeren Kierkegaard.

Queries that typify existential reflection and growth is the reflection on the self in relation to the personal biographical narrative, how one view and relate to the surrounding world. Where one perceives oneself to be in life. Other's thoughts might concern the very fabrics of space that make up existence. Questions such as who we are, what our purpose is, is there a purpose to life, how do I know what is real, further expands on the existential experience of being human. Seeking answers to questions of being and meaning.

Thoughts and reflections such as these make up a fundamental aspect of who we are as human beings living in the world. When experiences force us to come into contact with or expand our understanding of who and what we are, they affect us on an existential plane.

For the purposes of this thesis, existential experiences will be utilized to analyse how experiences from a healthcare worker during the Covid-19 pandemic configure in the self-perception of who they are, what they have previously gone through and what expectation they had/have for the future. This allows an analysis of how and what the interviewee attach meaning to their experiences of living and working through a pandemic.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is closely related to existential dimensions of experiences. They both require the ability to abstract oneself from the here and now and to think about one's own place in relation to the world. Being self-aware of one's experiences means being able to think about them and their meaning in a purposeful manner. It is not enough to simply be able to recount what one has done. One needs to be able to reflect upon those experiences and the circumstances that surrounded them. The ability to put one's experiences in relation to factors such as the need for something to occur, understanding the reasons for actions made by others and why they might have been made, require the ability to comprehend the surrounding world as something beyond the self. Something that has other needs and requirements than one's own.

Hallqvist (2014) points out that the stories that people tell about themselves provides information regarding how they view themselves in relation to the world. Giving us access to view how they present their own self-awareness. In order to tell a story about oneself one must first reflect upon oneself as a separate subject from the world surrounding them, and how to relate to the recipient of one's story. The reflection upon the self extends to include understanding of one's own actions, it provides a possibility for agency. An aspect of self-awareness that Biesta and Tedder (2007) interests themselves with. They discuss the role of adult education in the emancipation of individuals and explore the agency of the individual through *context-for-action*, a conceptualisation of what makes an individual act upon their ideas, what enables an individual to act. Agency, they argue is at the intersection of an individual's perception of their past (actions and experiences) and their imagined future. Where the individual perceives themselves of being in relation to who they are, where they've come from and where they can see themselves going. Here it is relevant to relate to Alheits concept of un-lived potentiality, all the potential futures and decisions that an individual possesses for living. Life choices and life paths are constricted only by the individuals own narrative understanding of their possibilities. A point that is raised is that modern life seems to demand a higher degree of individual agency. That people living today needs, due to societal changes, to be more in control of their life progressions. It is not enough to be what one is, but it is necessary to be in a state of becoming. This is something that both Sennet and Bauman expand on in their writings.

Social contexts

Social dimensions of experiences concern questions such as when and where an experience occur. In what social context it happens, were there others there, was it a shared experience, did they talk about it together later on? What were the cultural constitutions of those involved? These are all aspects that

constructs the social context through which the individual has to understand what they've gone through. These questions can easily be expanded to include specific queries. Examples could include which others were there, how do they know each other, what role did the individual play in the scenario, have they been able to talk with others about their experiences? Some of these demands quite a high degree of self-awareness and understanding of the circumstances for the individual to be able to meaningfully discuss them and put them in contexts of meaning.

When analysing the responses given by the interviewees these aspects provide a view into how the interviewee relates to their surroundings.

Meta-cognition

Understanding the self as an entity that lives, feels, and deals with experiences and having the ability to reflect upon oneself in regard to those experiences, constitutes the dimension of meta-cognition. What experiences might mean, how they affect the individual, and what the results/effects of them might be, are aspects of meta-cognition in self-awareness in a biographical learning theoretical perspective on human self-awareness.

During this study, the aspect of meta cognition provides the possibility to reflect upon how the interviewee reflect upon their experiences.

In her dissertation Hallqvist (2012) reflects upon the concept of *serendipity* in biographical learning, a concept that focuses on a person that despite previous reflections might chose to act against what they perceived themselves of doing. This brings an element of contradiction to this thesis, it allows for the irrationality of humans, that they can contradict their own decision. Showing on meta-cognition in decision making. Individuals can change their decisions after they made them. Most often because of new circumstances.

Aspects of experience

There should be made a distinction between dimensions of experience and aspects of those dimensions. Experience dimensions are, for the purpose of this thesis, the surrounding concepts of how an individual perceives and understands their own experiences. They are on an existential and meta-cognitive level of individual comprehension. Aspects of experiences are sub-ordered those dimensions. They are lenses through which the dimensions can be broken down to examine parts of the whole experience comprehension. There exist many more aspects and dimensions than are mention here. These distinctions are vague and problematic but lay a groundwork for how experiences can be worked with as a component when regarding self-awareness in adult informal learning.

Time is a multifaceted aspect of understanding one's place in the world. Going through life one carries with them all the previous experiences and the times through which one has lived. One looks towards the future when making decisions but bases those decisions upon previous experiences. Previous experiences are set in relation to one another when reflecting upon experiences that are connected by meaning rather than causality. There are numerous ways in which time place a role when talking about individuals' perceptions of their experience. For the study conducted here time is limited to when, past present or future and how, how are events related in the story.

Location can be considered another aspect of experience. It relates to were something occurred. It includes what kinds of connection the individual has to a place where they had an experience. Was it a workplace, in the home, in public or in the mind of the person? The last place relates back to the aspect of time, experiences include imagery, when an individual imagines their future, what they will do, how they will do it etc. they are creating an expectation for themselves, this can in and of itself be viewed as an experience.

Emotion as an aspect of experiences deal with the emotional impacts of experiences. Here understanding previous experiences throughout a person's life can help clarify how and why an

individual reacts the way they do. Earlier experiences that the individual has lived through affect how they perceive and experience new situations. It is part of the individual's habitus, their frames of references.

How a person talks about their experiences is another aspect to consider. How do they express themselves; do they have difficulties expressing thoughts and emotions, are they abstracting emotions or themselves as a person when describing their experiences? There are many factors to consider in a person's speech.

Agency could be regarded as an aspect of experience. Evans (2014) understands the ability of an individual to reflect upon themselves in order to guide decision making processes as a form of agency. That agency should be understood as a result of experiences constituting the individual's biographicity and situatedness, laying the groundwork for knowing what the individual wants to do. Life-long learning, as a result of continual experiences, is here viewed as a mechanism of the ability to adapt to different contexts and circumstances in life.

One could also look at more concrete aspects of the experiences. Such as what happened and how was it interpreted? How did it happen and do accounts from different witnesses agree with one another? Elsewhere one could look at who did what in a situation. How do the different roles the participants occupy in a given situation influence how they act, and later of perceptions of their experiences? In this thesis these last aspects will mostly play a secondary role, only considered when they present themselves clearly.

Transformational learning

In this section we take a deep dive into Jack Mezirow and his concept of transformational learning. Focusing on how experiences are and can be transformational, and over time be considered fundamental processes through which biographical learning occurs.

What follows is not necessarily a chronological accounting of the development of the concept of transformative learning. It is a conceptualisation of how the theory can be understood and utilized by reading Mezirow's work and some commentary on it that has been expressed throughout the years.

Mezirow (2003) describes the goal of adult education as aiding individuals in realising their potential for critical self-reflection, making individuals aware of themselves and their perceptions concerning living life. In this there exists a connection between Mezirow's transformative learning and Althei's biographical learning where the individual understands themselves through their experiences and how they interpret those. In 1994 Mezirow described that transformative learning relies on constructivist assumptions. Meaning that meaning making and learning occurs through individual interpretations and reinterpretations of experiences. In 2009 he expands on this concept. Explaining how transformations occur primarily through one of two processes. Either it is an epochal experience where a reorientation of how the individual thinks and acts change due to an impactful experience. Or they can be cumulative where habits of mind and behaviours change over time as a result of the experiences the individual has. Often transformative learning occurs on an unaware basis. Changes in behaviours and thought patterns develop and evolve as a result of living life and experiencing new and unknown things. For example, a conversation with someone that introduces new ideas. Mezirow (2009) defines transformative learning as the process transforming non-functional internalised frames of references. That when an assumed frame of reference (habitus, mindset, perspective etc.) becomes problematic for the individual in its environs, the individual needs to be able to change accordingly (learn new behaviours and ideas). Once a frame of reference is acquired, individuals tend to move on, we do not continue to constantly evaluate that particular idea. It is first when it runs into a situation where it does not function that we tend to reconsider it. It is common for this to require effort, our settled frames of references are there to guide us, when we have to re-evaluate, then it takes time and effort, both emotional and mental. Mezirow describes frames of references thus (2009 p.92) "Habits of mind are

broad abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting, influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes.”

Mezirow (1994) illustrates the process of transformational learning through several phases. Firstly, a disorienting dilemma, an event that causes an individual to reflect upon their assumptions/habitus, occurs, starting a process of self-examination upon one’s own reactions. A critical assessment of assumptions (preconceptions, frames of references, habitus) follows with an exploration of new ideas and possible new behaviours to engage in. Attempting new behaviours and adjusting to new habitus is a reaction to the process of becoming aware of one’s own actions and their maladaptation to a situation. As described, this can be a long process of continuing development (cumulative transformational learning) or, it can be the reaction to an impactful enough experience (epochal transformational learning).

Mezirow (1996) frames of references mainly consist of two distinct aspects. A meaning perspective consisting of general habitus (habits of mind, frames of reference etc.) and a meaning scheme consisting of specific ideas about the world (feelings, beliefs, attitudes etc). In 2009 Mezirow discusses how transformative learning generally requires critical self-reflection. A process where the individual critically assesses their own pre-conceptions (frames of reference, habitus) and actions in order to evaluate the viability of them.

Individuals perceive themselves through their habitus. In his paper from 1996 Mezirow takes the view that a person understands their own sensory inputs through their previous experiences. Experiences, previous and immediate situational awareness, in combination, dictate how the individual perceives the world around them while at the same time predisposing the individual to how they interpret new experiences. Mezirow expands on this notion in 2009 where he argues that - what we expect to happen affects how we experience a situation, often becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. The internalised habits of mind inform us of how a situation is to be understood, when these fail to explain an experience, we are forced to re-evaluate our habitus. This is often a difficult process where one needs to evaluate their own patterns of behaviour and expectations of the world, they live in.

Transformational learning is based on social dimensions, on communication (Mezirow, 1996). It is through interacting with our surroundings that we experience the world around us. It is important to remember that individuals are situated in a social context, we bring with us a cultural heritage that is internalised, and which create the basis for our interpretations of our experiences. We have learned these ideas through communication with those surrounding us in our lives. Using Habermas distinction between instrumental and communicative learning Mezirow (2008) expands on this aspect in experience-based learning. The combination of experiences and the communication of those experiences with others. The social sharing of experiences leads to a creation of a culture, a narrative, of a community of practice, it creates a collective narrative that an individual can belong to. An aspect of communicative learning is the focus not on objective truth but rather the best judgment of the situation. It is a dimension of understanding reality that rely on agreement of those involved in the phenomenon, observing the same situation. It doesn’t really matter if the understanding is objectively true, what matters is how the interaction with the phenomenon is understood, both individually and collectively. Making collective experiences a good place to study how interactions with others form our understanding of ourselves and the worlds surrounding us.

When a frame of references (preconception) encounters a situation where it no longer functions it brings awareness to that habitus. We are forced to examine the encounter and our reaction to it in what Mezirow (1994) calls a “disorienting dilemma”. A disorienting dilemma is resolved by critical self-reflection upon assumed biases that have been internalised throughout life, often stemming from cultural socialisation. Mezirow (1997) describes the process of transformation through disorienting dilemmas as a subjective reframing of frames of reference. A disorienting dilemma needs to occur. Something happens that causes the individual to critically reflect on their assumed frames of references. They become aware of their situatedness in a way that causes them to reflect on

themselves. Mezirow's disorienting dilemmas can be likened to biographical disruptions in biographical learning theory. In 2013 Hallqvist, A and Hydén, L. discussed "biographical disruption" as a concept of biographical self-understanding. The idea of a disruption or a disorientation in one's life-narrative can be exemplified through the Covid-19 pandemic's effects on people's plans for their futures. A disruption or a disorienting dilemma is an event that derails the individual's biographicity, the understanding of who they are and how the situation they find themselves in should be comprehended. Hallqvist et. al. highlights an understanding of individuals as fluid in their understanding of themselves. A disruption might not be earthshattering, but it constitutes an instance where plans and conceptions need to be realigned to fit with a new understanding of and approach to reality.

Expanding on what critical reflection is, Mezirow (1998) describes it as either an implicit or explicit process. As an implicit process it is understood to be the cumulative process of choices that we make. We are not inherently aware of all of our values when we make decisions. These are the internalised habits of mind that are the results of our cumulative experiences. Explicit processes are those times when we are immediately aware of our choices and decisions, making active decisions. (Mezirow, J. 2009. p.96) "Transformative learning is essentially a metacognitive process of *reassessing reasons* supporting our problematic meaning perspectives." Mezirow 2009 encapsulates transformative learning as a metacognitive process of reassessing problematic habituses, borrowing from Bourdieu's vernacular. These include cultural factors that lay the ground for the biographicity of the individual. The self-awareness of the subjectivity of the individual comes into question.

Further exploration of transformational learning

Mezirow (1996) describes through Habermas the dialectical nature of transformative learning. Learning is a dialectical process where experience and knowledge about the world interacts with interpretations of them. It is a process through which instrumental knowledge becomes communicative in internalisation of experiences. Experiences are influenced by the individual previously learned behaviours and ideas/knowledge, many of which come from socio-cultural tradition. As such it is important to critically reflect on such knowledge in order to develop as an individual.

There is a distinction between instrumental and communicative learning that Mezirow (2009) makes and is critical for understanding Habermas. That instrumental learning engages with learning about the environment surrounding the individual, manipulating it, improving performances, among others. The developing logic used in instrumental learning is hypothetical deductive. Communicative learning engages with learning that occurs when we interpret an interaction with other. When an individual concerns themselves with understanding what another tries to communicate. This learning occurs through a multitude of mediums, speech, texts, paintings, pictures, movies, music etc. Important to remember when considering Habermas' instrumental and communicative learning is that when considering communicative learning it is important to regard new information and new ideas. As experience-based learning, communicative learning is based on the subjective understanding of any communication. It is fundamental to consider the effects of the subjectivity (to borrow from Alheit, the individual's biographicity) of any such communication. It is easy to become reliant on tradition and culture to explain aspects of the individual's experience interpretation, rather than for the individual to evaluate the situation.

Mezirow (2003) expands on the methodological approaches to understanding instrumental and communicative learning. Instrumental learning lends itself to quantitative methods and communicative learning to qualitative methods.

According to Mezirow (2009, p.94) transformative learning is a metacognitive learning theory where evidential (instrumental learning, experiences etc.) and dialogical (communicative learning, discussion, readings etc.) combine to form new knowledge and behaviours. Used to understand adults' reassessments of their understandings of the world surrounding them. Here it is possible to connect to Alheit's idea of a changing subjectivity and biographicity. "12. Development in adulthood is

understood as a learning process.” Mezirow (1996, p.164). He also describes in 2003 (Mezirow 2003) transformative learning as an adult metacognitive mental process of thought.

Historical context

According to Calleja (2014) Erving Goffman's conceptualisation of frames is the basis for Mezirow's understanding of frames of references. These frames according to Goffman constitutes a collective idea (culture) that governs how people from a collective interprets certain aspects of the world around them. Mezirow individualises that process, viewing it from the individual's perspective rather than from a group perspective. Calleja (2014) also expands on how Mezirow interpret and utilize Jürgen Habermas "lifeworld" concept. Mezirow sees them as meaning schemes, frames of references, which inform how the individual understands the world around them and their experiences.

As Hoggan (2016) discusses, transformative learning is sometimes viewed through an emancipatory perspective where subjects view themselves as agentic actors in their own life. The individual is not simply a wanton for an external world to affect. This falls close to the biographical learning approach assumed in this thesis, individuals find themselves living in their biographicity, they are able through an awareness of themselves and who they are to make choices and act upon them. Hoggan (2016) identifies common themes in transformative learning research, changes in a person's worldviews and assumptions, beliefs attitudes and expectations are common themes in transformational research findings. These aspects of individual frames of reference inform how an individual conceives of the world around them, when the individual encounters a situation where these are not enough to explain the situation or where they lead to misinterpretation, they cause internal conflicts. Expectations do not align with the observed surrounding reality. This is what Mezirow describes as a disorienting dilemma. An aspect that Hoggan defines is developing awareness. A new awareness or a new understanding which is when a persons' worldview is changing, they become aware of shifting values and ideas about themselves and the world. An example given is the process of becoming aware of the social structures that define the society in which the individual lives. A third dimension described is self-in-relation, this is where an individual becomes aware of themselves in relation to their surroundings and a change in how they regard themselves occurs. Hoggan also describes changes in self-knowledge where individuals extend their knowledge about themselves and act in accordance with their own values to a greater extent. Hoggan describes this as a process of increasing authenticity. Personal narrative is another dimension of transformative learning that Hoggan identifies. Showing how developments in the narrative an individual use to explain who they are is the result of compounding effect of experiences. This dimension is a connector between transformative learning and biographical learning.

Methodology

As has been shown in previous sections, this study interests itself with the lived life experience of its participant and the meanings they attach to those experience. To gather data that align with the research objective, a phenomenological approach to experience and meaning making is assumed. It therefor follows that a realism ontology, where the individual exists in an independent reality which they interpret based on sensory input analysed and understood through frames of references which constitutes the individuals biographicity and situatedness, is assume. The epistemological assumption is such that subjective experiences are what constitutes that which the individual knows about themselves and the world around them. It is a subjective approach the understanding of one's own place in the world. The gathered data is then analysed thematically (according to the theoretical assumptions made in this study, searching for patterns and connections between experiences and self-awareness), and interpreted as subjective truths, taken at face value as the subjects meaning creation. An inductive data analysis is made on the collected data to find meaning in the subjects' narrative. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe this as a method commonly used by qualitative researcher as they build categories, themes, and observe patterns in the collected data. Build a comprehension of the phenomenon from the ground up.

In order to develop validity in this study, guidance is found in Creswell and Creswell (2018) as they examine how validity in qualitative research is achieved. They describe the validity in qualitative research as a factor based on the accuracy of the researchers understanding of the subjects' stated data. Confirming that what has been understood was in fact said, the validity for drawn conclusions develops. During the writing of this thesis this is approached through member-checking. The interviewee was provided the possibility to read and comment on the analysis done on their interviews. As this is an exploratory study rather than a confirmatory study, it is possible to account for contradictory stories that the participants give during their interview, the narrative is always expanding and growing, accounting for perceptions that change. Validity is improved by recording the interviews, providing the ability to later go back and check the source material. These recordings are transcribed after the interviews and the recordings erased in order to comply with the EU's GDPR laws, [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) Compliance Guidelines](#). Reliability is developed by accounting for the process of data collection and analysis during the writing of the thesis. By recording the steps' taken, provisions are made that can verify what has been done, why it has been done and where potential missteps have been taken. Creswell and Creswell (2018, p. 275) highlight the value of documentation through the research process. They further underline the value of rechecking your progresses to make sure that definitions doesn't change and those transcriptions are made correctly.

Phenomenological approach

The theoretical framework in this study is based on Peter Alheit and his idea of biographical learning and biographicity and supplemented by Jack Mezirows theory of transformative learning as base for the individuals biographicity and biographical self-understanding. The method to gather data that investigates such learning experiences is approached from a phenomenological view of experience and meaning. Phenomenology is described by Larsen and Adu (2022) as a multi-faceted philosophy with varying ontological and epistemological reasonings. The common ground on which they stand is the assertion to find subjectivity and existence in lived lives. The ontological assumption for this thesis is that of realism combined with an experience based epistemological approach to knowledge of the self and the world surrounding the individual.

The goal of a qualitative researcher in phenomenology is according to Larsen and Adu (2022) to understand the experiences of participants and, or, to describe the researchers understanding of and interpretation of those experiences. They provide a good example of how theoretical frameworks can be applied in phenomenologically informed research. They focus on two primary methods this is done. First is to use theoretical frameworks as a guide where the theory informs the creation of focus areas, ideas/conceptualisations of the phenomenon that is to be investigated. It also provides guidance when creating themes and concepts to analyse with. Second is to use a theory as a standpoint. The phenomenon is viewed through the lens of the particular theory. In such approaches the researcher needs to comprehensively account for the theoretical framework as this creates the basis for the analysis. The approach used in this thesis is the second.

Larsen and Adu (2022) argues the use of phenomenological examination of experience as an inductive analysis. The method arrives at conclusions through examination of data which aims at generalisation. That theories when used in phenomenological research fills a descriptive role rather than an explanatory one. This means that the theory informs of a perspective from which to view the data rather than a map with which to confirm the theoretical assumptions over the phenomenon. Phenomenological studies examines the experiences of the subject. Gathering data from participants who have direct experience of the phenomenon that is researched. The most common way of collecting data is through interviews. The goal here is to achieve understanding of the meaning ascribed by the participants to their experiences. A goal that lends itself well with the efforts of this study, to understand how individuals perceive their experiences during the pandemic and how they dealt with the circumstances surrounding them. How they adapted, found meaning, and learned through changing life conditions.

Narrative research

In this thesis narrative research interview was chosen as the method of inquiry. Choosing to look at how an individual describe their experiences and their reflections on those experiences provides a possibility for investigating how an individual perceives themselves through their experiences. Meaning that what is of interest in this thesis is the process of the individual attaching meaning and understanding to that which they live through, their experiences. Narrative research goes well together with the theoretical approach that is assumed. Biographical learning is well placed to research how individuals learn and grows from living through different events throughout life. It is a process that never ceases. Narrative research methods are useful when gathering data from subjects regarding their own perceptions of who they are. The method allows for the interviewee to expand on what they find most valuable in their life story. However, narrative research is not one single research method, the term compiles a multitude of approaches and methods. In this study BNIM (biographical narrative interview method) is used as it provides a suitable starting point for investigating the perceived experiences of the research subject.

Reflecting on the use of narrative research Hallqvist (2014) makes an argument for biographical interviewing as a research method when studying life narratives. He states that the reason for interviewing and gathering personal stories is because those stories tell of how people view their experiences. That the way a person talks about their life provides insight into how they view life and the world, ascribing meaning to them. A symposium on narrative research “Narrative Research on Learning – comparative and international perspectives” from 2006 (ed, Sheila Trahar) provides a good discussion on the uses and praxis in narrative research. The authors raise quite a few good questions regarding the research method. These questions also have implications for ethical considerations when performing interviews. The authors discuss the effects of social connection between interviewer and interviewee. What are the social relationships that affect them? Is there an expectation of providing certain answers? They ask themselves of the conditions of the interviews. Who is asking whom and what social pressures are active in that situation? What ability to express themselves have the subjects? These and many more factors are important to consider when performing interview-based research. Some will be addressed here the methodology section of this thesis and other will be discussed in ethical considerations.

Social conditions of the situation, such as who is participating, what are the accepted social norms, are there any hierarchical relationships that dictate specific behaviours? All of these and many more aspects of any given situation has bearing on how the situation should be interpreted. In the case of the interview in this case the interview was conducted at the interviewees place of work, in a place where she was comfortable. She was aware of the conditions for participation and agreed to them. As a student writing their thesis, I was regulated by the conditions handed to me by my institution. There are multitudinous more aspects to recount but an in-depth look at the social conditions constituting this particular thesis could in and of itself make up a thesis. As such, no great attempt will be made to account for the social conditions of the interview. Even knowing that these social conditions are important to consider in narrative research as they create the conditions for the situation where the data is gathered, there is limitations of time and space to write, as well as keeping focus on the purpose of the inquiry.

Stefan Bernhard 2015 points out that narrative biographical interviews are instances when a person develop their stories and organises them in coherent manners that fit that person’s interpretation of events in their life. This he argues has some implications for how stories must be viewed when analysed, a person’s life-story is broken down into smaller stories that make up events in the lived life and understood as instances or occurrences, life is viewed through isolated events that together make up the life story. These events are not isolated in that they do not influence each other but in that they constitute a single narrative event. Second of Bernhards arguments is that narrative-biographical stories exist in social contexts. Thus, they must be viewed through the context of the individual. That

would in biographical learning theory be the situatedness or the biographicity of the individual. This second point Bernhard (2015) argues, is approached through life narrative focuses in narrative research. That the entirety of the person is looked at. This provides a better understanding of the individuals life biographicity as they view it.

BNIM

Biographical narrative interpretive method from here on BNIM is an approach to narrative research that focuses on open-ended interview settings. The research question is initiated by the researcher and from there the interviewee is allowed to steer the telling of their narrative. This allows for the research subject to introduce freely what they perceive as important in their story. Eichsteller (2019) describes the methods history and its applications. As a research method it is based in the telling of past events, it looks at the biographies of the subject. Through the telling of the lived life story the method looks at instances of agency, self-awareness and meaning creation. It also makes note of the social contexts of the individual. Through time the method has developed in a number of manners, in a number of research fields and cultures. It is a method for searching for subjective perspectives, applicable on many different areas of research. The multifaceted development of the methodology necessitates clarity and thoroughness when describing the use of the method. Approach, data gathering, data analysis, validity and reliability, trustworthiness and peer validation are all important aspects to account for when using a method that focuses on the interpretation of others told narratives.

Allowing the personal narrative to drive the story allows for the individuals perceptions of events and experiences, limiting the researchers influence on the story. Autobiographical narratives (self-told biographical narratives) according to Eichsteller (2019) have four critical qualities. First, it taps into the individual perception of who they are and their place in the world. Second, it is the interviewee or narrator who provides the story, the narrators interpretation of events, the importance and meaning they ascribe to events. Thirdly, it is possible to use the method to research individuals' experiences of certain social structures through their interpretations of their experiences. Lastly, autobiographical narrative methods focus on small numbers of participants.

Corbally and O'Neill (2014) describes the research method differently. They claim that it focuses on three aspects of the interviewee's life. First, the biography, the person's life story. Second, the narrative which the interviewee tells about themselves. Third, placing those stories in their social context for interpretation. The first interview session is often followed by additional sessions where greater focus can be put on specific subjects that came up during the first interview, clarifying the narrative of the interviewee.

Of particular value within BNIM for this study is that it can be adjusted to focus on a person's story of particular periods of their lives, allowing for a greater focus on experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. At the same time allowing for the participant to fully explore and tell of their experiences in a non-restricted interview. They can for themselves decide what is important to say and steer the story as they see fit.

These two complementary uses of BNIM allows for an understanding and use of the method where interviews are conducted through open narrative interviews that start with a single broad inquiry which aims at eliciting the interviewee to speak about themselves. In addition to the interview, further data is normally recorded by the researcher who documents contextual and situational observations, some of these were discussed in the previous section "Narrative research" and will be further reflected upon in the discussion. Corbally and O'Neill (2014) describes two levels of narrative that the BNIM uses to analyse life stories. A personal level where the individual understands themselves and a socio-cultural level where that person's experiences are situated in a social context. The method follows interpretivism in that it attempts to understand the ways the subject understands their own experiences.

2-step method

During the planning of the thesis there was an attempt to utilize a 2-stage methodology where first the participant would be interviewed and later be asked to comment on the analysis and interpretation of their experiences. There would also have been a follow-up interview. This proved to not be possible. It was difficult to find participants and the methodology had to be changed to focus on a single subject. There was an attempt made to reach out to the interviewee with the analysed data to get a response from them regarding the accuracy and interpretation of their experiences. The participant however, declined the offer to review the analysed data.

Sample selection

For this thesis nurses who had worked in Covid-19 ICUs were chosen as sample group. The aim was to investigate how the experiences of those forced into extreme work environments affected their self-perceptions. How their previous life experiences effected their handling of new, high-pressure, and unstable working conditions.

It proved almost impossible to find subjects to interview for this work. The aim was to interview nurses who had been involved in Covid-19 care at emergency wards. This is a selective group of individuals and it proved difficult to get in contact with people willing to share their experiences. Getting in contact with gatekeepers was easy enough but it proved hard to get further than that. Personal contacts, managers at hospitals, friends' relatives who knew relevant people etc. were all used as potential connections to relevant people. It however proved almost impossible to get responses from actual potential subjects. Since then, there have been some response from one of those contacts who discussed the reasons why it turned out to be difficult to engage nurses in the project. They, the nurses, were tired and exhausted, participating in interviews for research was too much of an ask for their limited energies and spare time.

Eventually there were some who got in contact showing interest in participating. One of those proved a good match for the thesis research objective and an extensive interview was conducted.

In an attempt to gather more participants, the perimeters for the research were changed to include any who had worked closely with those impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. This yielded some interest, but it proved difficult to coordinate any meetings and interviews and it was decided to continue with the one participant and adapt the research aims accordingly.

Data

The data collected in order to explore the research questions consists of the participants own narrative story of their lived experiences. An interview was conducted with the participant. The interview was recorded and transcribed. The transcription was analysed at a later stage.

The interview method used was the BNIM (biographical narrative interpretive method), that dictated the types of data that was possible to collect. The interview was held in a setting that for the participant was familiar and comfortable. As preferred due to the nature of the interview technique the location was secluded, calm, quiet and free from interruptions.

Data collection

The process of data collection was difficult. Gatekeepers to relevant subjects were hard to find and once they were found it was difficult to locate subjects interested in sharing their experiences. Why this proved difficult proved to be somewhat of a puzzle. There was one gatekeeper who provided some reflections on the matter. According to that person, the individuals I was looking at for participation were all more or less exhausted and partaking in a study was not something they had the energy for.

This is understandable as I was primarily looking for nurses who had been involved in the care of Covid-19 patients at ICUs.

Coming in contact with people who knew relevant gatekeepers proved rather easy. The issues arose there, one or two connections away from me and it became increasingly difficult to encourage people to show interest and willingness to participate in interviews.

Once contact with an interested subject was established, a time and place for the interview was agreed upon. The interview was recorded and transcribed. The interviewee was informed of the possibility of participating in member-checking.

Interview

Inspiration for how to approach the interview was found in Hallqvist, Ellstrom and Hydén (2012) and Manen (1997) where they account for how they initiated their interviews. Hallqvist et al. initiated their inquiry by asking the participants to tell them about their experiences regarding a certain life event. Manen provides examples of how an initial starting question can be followed by associated questions that brings the interviewee back to the original question of the interview.

These two approaches were combined in that the interview began with a general inquiry regarding the lived experiences of the participant concerning their life throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. These questions were then followed up with, based on the responses given, appropriate follow-up questions. This eased the social constructions of the interview setting to more of a normal conversational flow. However, care was applied during the interview as to not guide the subjects' answers. Simply mirroring and confirming their story as it was told.

The inquiry issued to initiate the interviewees story was as follows, translated from Swedish: *So... I am thinking here now... that I'll start by asking a bit about who you are. What you have experienced during these last two years. How you reflect on those years. That is, it is very open for you to describe what you find to be important. It is up to you what matters and what is of importance to you and should be told...*

The interview was conducted in Swedish, and the data is presented in the next chapter, results.

Results

A reflection on the execution of this second half of the thesis will introduce the results section. From here the thesis divulges and becomes essentially two pieces. In the first one a theoretical framework was proposed and explored. In this second one, that framework is used to attempt to understand another person's expression of growth and change. The approach used was to closely follow the narrative of the interviewee and make observations on how they expressed themselves living through changes, how they describe their development as an individual using a narrative to describe their experiences. In closely observing and following their story the context and intention of the narrative is preserved. A theoretical abstraction of the data, narrative, was conducted in a second analysis conducted on the observations made in the interviewee's narrative. This approach was conducted in order to not lose the context and intention of the participant. When abstracting from a deeply personal narrative it is easy to lose sight of the individual living, experiencing, and perceiving that narrative. It is easy to theoretically abstract without taking care to preserve the intentions and nuances of the narrative, as much as it is even possible to understand another. As such the results section is a theoretically secondary object. It is where we listen to the interviewee. If, in an initial analysis we don't attempt to hear and follow what they say, how can we hope to make justice to any claim of knowing what they have conveyed to us as research participants? This question is further reflected upon in the concluding thoughts of the thesis.

The result section is a starting point for viewing the raw data as it was conveyed in the interview. In the analysis a more theoretical approach to that data is presented.

Model of analysis

According to Max van Manen (1997) in analysing a text or account of lived experiences two interpretations of those experiences are made. First is the interpretation made by the individual who had the experience originally. The interpretation of the account of that experience is in and of itself a new experience with an interpretation. When looking for meaning in such an account it is important to remember that what is seen by the interpreter of a narrative might very well not be what the narrator tried to convey. It is also important to note that the simple act of recounting an experience changes that experience. When conveying into words an experience there occurs a reconstruction of impressions into language, making them subject for cultural and social norms bound in communication. Bernhard (2006) makes the argument that when analysing a story, it is worthwhile to break it down to smaller components. Allowing for focused analysis of certain parts of the narrative. How to do this and what to focus on is dictated by the research question that is attempted to be answered.

The interview material is looked at through a lens of biographical learning through transformational experiences and self-awareness. Discussing various aspects of the theory and its implications.

Results of initial data analysis

I began by analysing the data from the interview. Once that was done, I sent my initial analysis to the interviewee so that she could comment on it and answer some questions that emerged during that initial analysis. She, however, did not wish to comment on the analysed data.

The interview was conducted in Swedish and the analysis of the data was made on the non-translated material. In order to present the data, I performed the translations. Adjusting for idiomatic differences as best I could, preserving what I understood to be the intentions of the interviewee's comments. Thus, there are discrepancies when comparing the translated to the non-translated transcriptions. When translating I have also made accommodations for censure of names and places and adjusted the text to still be coherent when read. The unadjusted non-translated excerpts will be provided in the appendix section.

First the results of the analysed data are presented. Afterward further reflections and theoretical analysis are presented in the analysis and discussion section. The italicised sections/words are where I have asked questions or engaged to show that I am listening/attentive to the conversation. The analysis of excerpts from the interview is presented above the excerpt. Further reflections and analysis of the gathered data is presented in the analysis section.

A lot of the themes and reflections that is included in the telling of the interviewee's experiences tie in with other parts of the story. The account of the experiences goes back and forth, changing between different themes and connections between aspects of her life. It is important to remember this as one reads and considers her story. It shows an awareness that includes holistic properties in her awareness of her own existence. Life is not just an accurate accounting of events in chronological order, it is messy, and it is compiled in such ways that events carry with them meanings and connections that tie them together even when they seem unrelated. This is important to remember when analysing a narrative looking for meaning and self-awareness.

The analysis will primarily follow the chronological order of the interview but at times sections from earlier or later in the interview have been added to show on correspondence between themes and aspects that relate to each other in meaningful ways. The first sections will seem somewhat non-flowing and haphazard. In an attempt to present the interviewees situatedness several aspects of her

life narrative have to be presented and related to each other. As is often the case of human life, it is a messy and jumbled process to describe who one is.

The transcript is cut off for commentary throughout the sections.

Early on in the interview, it became clear that how the interviewee had perceived the objective of the interview to be, was different from what my aim was. She had thought the interview was to revolve around her work experience at an ICU-ward for Covid-19 patients and not her perception of life during the Covid-19 pandemic. This meant that she had to re-evaluate her expectation on what she was going to talk about in the moment. Causing a rapid realignment of how she approached the interview. In order to accommodate the different interview focus, she asked for guiding questions throughout the interview.

2. “when I read the information, I’ve sort of though... from the perspective of a nurse, if you’d like... *Mm.* How it’s affected, um, well, what it was like... the little I was involved, how it affected work here (regular workplace) *Mm.* um, but privately, I’ve not thought much about it previously *Mm.* but it has had effects, but you’ll ask questions I hope so I can know what to continue talking about?”

This is interesting as it shows adaptability in the subject matter. She is able to quickly adjust her expectations and evaluate what she might need to do in order to perform a task, in this case participate in an interview where the expectation of the requested material did not align with what was really asked.

As a starting point for the interview, she was asked to present herself. This provided a picture of how she perceives herself as an individual, what she considers to be valuable information about herself. Throughout the interview as she describes herself and her experiences, she offers deeper insight into who she is, how she functions and how she perceives herself in relation to her surroundings. Nevertheless, the initial presentation of herself is important, it provided a base for understanding her biographicity and situatedness. It is the ground on which she relates her experiences back to herself. It is from there one can begin to understand how she views and experiences her life. It is from her biography that she asserts meaning to her experiences. She describes herself as 42-year-old, working as a nurse and has been since 2004. She has worked in different fields, orthopaedics, radiation treatments, cytostatic treatment. She is specialised in oncology but is currently working in psychiatry. She suffered a burnout in 2015 after which she changed field of work to psychiatry. She has followed no professional education towards psychiatry other than her original training as a nurse. She is married and has two children. She exercises, likes good food and to meet her friends.

By her account, nursing as a profession is varied and there are many fields in which one can work. Early in the interview she states that she has no specialisation in psychiatry and little experience in the field. This is something she returns to during the interview, her experience of how the organisation that employs her approached the organisation of employees during the Covid-19 pandemic. Her experience was that nurses were, under the circumstances, equated with each other, a nurse is a nurse is a nurse. It mattered little what specialisations one had, or what life experiences one brought with them when the organisation needed to adjust to the pandemic. During the second wave of Covid-19 (Christmas 2020) rearrangement of nurses and healthcare workers was implemented in the organisation she works for. She felt that she had been clear about her ability to work in different environments to her superiors. Nonetheless she was told to work in a Covid-19 ward. A type of work she had not done in 15 years. This led to anxiety and stress. She felt insecure with the work she was tasked to perform in the Covid-19 ward. Increasing anxiety was the fact that she was unfamiliar with the work process, the computer programs, and routines. Raising stress levels and negatively impacting her journey back to health from her previous burnout.

22. “Then it started again during the autumn and before Christmas there were new restrictions. At that time, we had moved to our new offices, then it was brought up again (the redistribution of

workers, nurses particularly). And one was to sign up to work shifts at our hospitalisation ward. Can't remember exactly how it worked, nevertheless... and then I had, I felt I had told them that I could work at a somatic ward, that if I were to be moved, I could be moved to a clinic or an oncology clinic and that someone from there could take my place at the ward (Covid-19 ward), someone with experience from working at a medical ward. It ended up with me being assigned to the ward (Covid-19 ward). Last I worked in a hospital ward was... I quit in February 2007. That's like 15 years ago *Mm*. And I don't know those systems. Like, I hadn't even worked with care-close warehouses, for example, we had not... that started to arrive when I worked at an oncology clinic, but *vi* never need it, we had all medications at hand. Um... and (name of computer program), and some other systems that are used now, were never used then... ehm... I don't know them. Nevertheless, I were then told that I were to do a few shifts at... what the newly opened ward was called... it was the old (redacted) or (redacted) anyway. A surgical ward I believe that was remade."

We will return to this section of the interview later. It is used here primarily to show the situatedness of her role as a nurse at her place of work, a situation that did not consider her personal wishes and needs. Reflecting on how exposed people are to their surroundings this adds to the analysis of social dimensions and social conditions as a factor when considering the experience of an individual. The individual may strive for the best in any given circumstance that they can achieve, without their surroundings taking note of or accommodating those needs.

Tying together her experience of being ignored and being relocated to a Covid-19 ward, she early on in the interview argued for an organisational negligence that she perceived. She discusses what she perceives as difficulties of generalising the experiences and knowledge of nurses. Arguing it is a varied profession with differing experiences and interests among its' practitioners'. Which according to her seemed to be a neglected aspect when redistributing nurses during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a juxtaposition to being forced into a new field of work it is interesting to considering that by her own account and situatedness it is possible to shift between specialties (she changed a few time). However, it is important to consider that she chose to change fields on her own, taking time to do so, accepting that she had to learn a lot. This is interesting as it shows on a need for and ability to adjust to individual interests and organisational needs.

Returning to her biographicity and life story. The interviewee suffered a burnout during the autumn 2015, an experience that has been formative in her life ever since. Evidence off the impact of her burnout is noticeable throughout the interview and will be a recurring theme as it plays a role in many of her experiences during the pandemic.

She describes the experience of burnout and eventual return to work as follows:

6. "No, I experienced burnout in the autumn of 2015 *Mm*. Exactly, when I worked at the oncology clinic at the hospital... um and um, it took a very long time to get well *Mm*. for different reasons... but I had for a long time exerted myself before I got burnt out. And then it was hard to go back to the same place... um... so there were a lot of stressors that were triggered and um... (takes a deep breath) initially I had no manager and then I got a one that wasn't necessarily particularly understanding and pushed... A lot harder. *Mm*. for that I should remain there even after I had quit and... like that... so I never really got well there. And it was hard and... yeah, that is a place where it is difficult to work and slow down and relax at the same time. It's like... if you're there you do the work, fully, somehow. *There is no... can you do this for me for a bit while sit here and recuperate*. Aah yes exactly. Or there will be something to do that gets added on... it was very difficult to, and even then, when I only were to work 25%... it was often that something was added, and it was difficult to end my day at 12... um... and then I worked administratively a period... with different qualitative registers at the clinic, it was the same clinic. Um and when I was to increase my work to 75% it was then that... the manager I now have had asked HR if there were any nurse that could come. *Mm*. to her clinic at 25%. *Mm*. and that's how I ended up here."

Showing the difficulties of recovering from a burnout in social settings that do not consider the individuals experiences and needs. She also shows the difficulties of coming back to the environment that caused her burnout. This will be shown again later on when she talks about what factors made the forced participation in Covid-19 care work damaging to her. Unpredictability, changing demands without consideration for her ability to cope and adapt to new work situations, disregard for her wishes and her manager's recommendations, etc. are among the factors influencing how she describes her experience of the pandemic. One aspect that she discusses is how she was prepared for and included in coming changes. She describes organisational changes that affected her. She had little information about any changes and no influence over how she would be impacted by those changes. Such experiences caused stress, stressors that were exacerbated by living in times of societal upheaval, the Covid-19 pandemic. Enhanced by the unpredictability and the lack of care shown for her needs of planning and structure.

As a result of her burnout, she chooses to go into a medical field that she previously expressly stated that she would not work in. That is a substantial change in how she lives her life. Something can be seen to have changed here. It is a substantial change in a person to choose to actively seek out that which previously was not viewed to be an option. One question to pursue here is whether or not it is due to external pressures, such as not enough consideration shown by her the current workplace for her needs, is it due to an internal change in her perception of who she is and what her needs are. Did the burn-out lead to internal structural changes that made it possible to consider work that was previously not seen as possible? Was it the combination of external changes and the experienced need for something different that could aid in her recovery? Either way she chooses to change workplace when the opportunity presents itself, in order to get away from the environment that caused her harm.

7 "um yes... yes it had been a very long time in rehab and... um... very little information really, I think, because I worked with [redacted]... and then they were to stop using those... there had been a large budget cut, it must have been the autumn of 2017, there was a large budget cut at [employer]... and then they had to reduce the um those who did those [redacted]... even though they were mandatory... they didn't have the money for it anymore and then they had to... stop. And I wasn't informed about that until very late in the process and so... there really was a lot of... stress... in that. Even if the manager I had then was fantastic and... so, um... no but I slipped in on a banana peel... into psychiatry. And I've always said that I will not work with [redacted] and that I will not work in psychiatry... but I've really liked it here."

To further show on a large distancing from her former work she recounts difference in how she approaches her work. This ties in to how she describes her previous work tasks.

8 "That to. It was very, it is very different compared to the work I've previously done... simply the whole psychiatry change, how one thinks and how one works, it is very different"

She describes structural differences between workplaces that she has had. Ones where structure, haste and routine are leading the work. And one where time to reflect and to converse over solutions are prioritised. It would be interesting to hear how she perceives these two different environments. Their strengths and their weaknesses, which she prefers and how her preference has changed through her life, this however is not possible within the scope of this thesis.

9 "well you get for example like me who worked with cytostatic treatments at the end. Then you have... a diagnosis... or... so then you get to the cytostatic clinic and have a doctor's appointment, there it's decided which treatment you'll have. And then work starts according to the specific schedule. Then there can always be some adjustments, based on the side effects and other factors. But it is rather clear what's to be done. Fast decisions and... stuff happen kind of fast. Um... and very clear... instructions and routines about how things are done based on diagnosis or... other acute circumstances that might arise... um... (redacted) psychiatry as I've experienced it is rather more... slow, like, it's... and it is supposed to be, it is very different. Well, it is a lot more... how to describe it, every appointment takes... mentally, a lot... for the professionals, and it requires

reflection before any documentation and other... different tasks, or how else to put it... other factors to consider that might affect treatment or... the next step so to say.”

She describes that her chosen profession as a nurse, which is work that has long been promoted as being humanistic in approach and consideration for patients are emphasised, is in her experience, mechanical. The mechanical wording is potentially due to my input during the interview, but she was in that general area of descriptors as my suggestion of the word “mechanical”.

10 “I’d probably say that. And also, that um. That you have a certain number of treatments in any given day. Even that is not always good. Because they’re so different... um appointments do take different amounts of time. But it is still very much... the doctor meets many patients in a day, one of which is a referral, the others are treatments. It’s the same for nurses, they see a certain number of patients every day, the different treatments take different amounts of time, and the day is structured after that. It is very... organised. *Could one almost say that it is somewhat mechanical?* It can be that at times I would... yeah it can absolutely feel like that at times, that it’s a conveyor belt... one can feel that. Because the next one is waiting, the next patient, regardless of what happened earlier the next patient... um... arrive at their appointment. But that was almost even worse before, I worked at the radiation treatment at [redacted].”

Here follows a longer section of the interview which focused more on the burnout aspect of the interviewee’s experiences.

She talks about the difficulties of perceiving one’s own limits. It is easy to push through the signs of burnout and to just continue on. She also reflects on how much easier it is to recognise signs of unwellness in others. Some questions that would have been asked if she had agreed to a follow-up interview would have been if she now after experiencing the burnout find it easier to recognise these signs, both in herself and in others.

11b “No, and it is very hard to understand it for yourself. I would say. One can look at another and be able to tell and then ask them – oh my, take it easy, are you really going to do that as well? But for oneself, it’s easy to just go on. *Oh, I can do one more day... it’s not That bad.* Yes, somehow, it’s not really possible to do anything else... oh I don’t know.”

It is a combination of both private and professional life contributes to the overall life experiences. Causing both stresses and joys.

11c “*I imagen... um. Before 2015 there, your children were quite young. Yes. That also requires time and energy.* Absolutely, there’s not only one reason that you get burnout from if you ask me. Had I had a stressful job but been able to really only rest at home I would have been able to compensate for the work environment. *Mm.* but of course it contributes when you can’t sleep well enough, that you... have to leave tired and sad children at the day-care. Of course, that does something with you as well. *Yeah, I imagen that there’s a lot of emotions to go through in a day.* That there is.”

With a clarifying question, it is understood here that life’s expectations and demands of the individual does not stop simply because one activity is finished or that one transitions from one role to another.

11d “and constantly a feeling of not being able to get to work at time... and, like it’s a lot, and when you finally get to work it’s like Bam! And that’s it. You muster through work all day and then you get the kids... so there, it’s a lot. *And somewhere in between you’re to be a person as well.* Exactly.”

She expresses difficulties of tying together insight into herself and her limited ability to participate in activities while at the same time feeling a wanting to participate. It is presented as conflicting emotions. Another example of questions that arouse in the initial analysis is how she has changed her approach to these situations as a result of her growing experience with burnout and insight into her own limits.

11e “*And be able to feel that the limit is reached... but... what can you do about that.* It is just that, to understand that no matter how fun it might be on Saturday to meet someone or accept a party invitation... there’s... it’s too much really, I mean, it becomes too much even if it’s a nice thing... and that’s hard to accept/understand. When everything is... when even... even fun and nice things take energy, but it’s hard to really realise that. Then. *I imagen that often there’s an aspect of one not really wanting to accept that it takes energy.* Yes, no because it also gives energy... but um, one doesn’t haft to organise three activities on a Saturday. Um but it is...”

She describes her road back to normalcy and work after her burn-out. A year in recuperation and rehabilitation, then slowly increasing the amount of work she did every week showing on a slow progress in rehabilitation. This is also an example of learning and relearning as she slowly gets to know herself again and challenge her own abilities.

11f “*Yes. And there you had a three-year period... with first recovery, then rehabilitation and then a slow return.* Yes, that must have been it. Because I got ill in the autumn of 2015 and then I started working again in September 2016... yeah... then it must have been 2018 when I started here, in Mars *Then you started at 25% you said?* Yes, I was working at 50% and had done so for half a year... or more... administratively. In a clinic with quality registers.”

The effects of the burnout were asked for and she describes them talking about how the burnout affected her. Both during the time of her experiencing the burnout but also how it has affected her long-term. It is an experience that she carries with her. It has changed how she lives her daily life, what she expects herself to be able to do during a day. She describes her limitations and that still, years after, she still finds herself exceeding her limitations. She falls back in old patterns of behaviours that she knows to be detrimental. She expresses sadness and regret over her changed limitations in life. And even though she has learnt a lot about herself during these experiences (the burnout and the recovery), if she could, she would have had it made undone. Here there is some room for theoretical exploration. The fact that she falls back into old patterns of behaviour speaks to a challenging experience of learning to adjust to an unwelcomed new state of normal functionality. It is likely that it is a combination of several factors that make it difficult to adjust to new and to disregard, old behaviours. A sorrow for what was lost will affect the acceptance and adjustment to new realities of life. The surroundings adjustments to one’s new living conditions and the feelings surrounding that change might not allow for the necessary changes in behaviour and thought patterns (frames of references) to be fully realised.

11g “*I think that... such experiences affect you’re core as a person. Um... that when one is confronted with one’s limitations in a definitive way. I imagen that that is something that you’d carry with you for a long time. Absolutely. Is that your experience, do you carry it with you?* Yes, it has impacted, really, my whole life. I can really feel how... well, partly I have been very sensitive to sounds. That has primarily been very difficult. And that has... affected me very much. There was a very long time when I couldn’t do anything after work. I had to go straight back home and rest... then I could go and pick up the kids. I had to do that for at least a year... um... and such things, things that otherwise wouldn’t face me, it’s easy to just go to... well, to just go to Systembolaget and pick up a bottle of wine, but that was too much. The priority was to get through the working day and then... rest, to later... be able to get through the afternoon and evening. Um it was a very long period... and I, it can kind of come over me sometimes now as well when I’m at work and I must sit down and slowdown when I get home, it is so easy to just go on with the next thing that needs to be done. To put in a basket of laundry, to cook and all those things you know. *Yes.* So... um. So that is... I still experience that... even if I somehow have gotten used to it I still at times revert to my old behaviours. *Mm.* And my husband as well at times forget that... that um, I don’t function the same anymore as I once did. *Mm.* He... its apparent how the brain has been affected I would say. Even the memory, for example, I rarely had a calendar, I could somehow remember, which weekends I would do what... I had it, you know. If someone had told med something I remembered that. But now it can be like... it’s not the same anymore... (here she lowers her voice, sounds sad over her changed situation, my reflection) it’s simply not. I have to write things down and I have to... it has been a source of sorrow, when you become aware of how

much it has affected you. Because then you feel that I hadn't had to... even if I have learnt a lot from it, I would rather have been without this experience and understood earlier... that um, not to push on so hard..."

Here she shows on a willingness or a need to accept this new reality for her living her life. She has accepted her new limitations and has made adjustments that allows her to live life as she wants to. Even though she also recognises that she does not always adhere to these changes and does occasionally revert back to old habits.

11h "But at the same time... it works now as well... so, once you get used to it. It's a different approach to do things simply. *Yes, you have to have a different... what was I going to say... you have to think a bit differently. It's not the same as it used to be, but it can work anyway.* Yes, precisely. *One has to accept that... no... I must rest a bit.* Definitely."

Showing on a need for adapting to new circumstances in order to live on. Long-term it does not help to not adjust.

11i "I have a friend who has severe post-covid, and she has... had the exact same symptoms as I had during my burnout. The not having enough energy to do things, not remembering things, sound sensitivity and such and... that's a bit depressing. *Mm.* When you realise it at the same time that... it... it just is, you haft to adapt and adapt a different mindset somehow. *Yeah, and the world around you don't really adjust for that.* No."

She has had to change strategies in order to convey to her surroundings that she is not able/willing to do too much, not risk her health.

11j "*I imagen it to be a massive readjustment?* Yes, it is that. But it is oneself that change strategies around so to say... to get others to understand that no... I can't do that, or I don't have the energy today, or I must cancel this or that... it's not everyone that understands that in one's surroundings..."

At times it was difficult to remember when some things occurred. Which is quite a human thing to not be able to do, it is not often one is requested to account for when exactly something diffuse occurred. The slow introduction to work and the pandemics slow onset makes it harder I believe to pinpoint when they occurred. It was not necessarily a strong impression but rather a creeping change of perceptions of life. This could be seen as an example of most human development through life. It is rare that singular instances provoke fundamental change in an individual. It is through living life day by day that we slowly build a biography of ourselves. It is no wonder that some formative events in our lives are only possible to recognise once they have already passed and been added on by new experiences. It is as Kierkegaard expressed it "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards." while we live in the here and now and for tomorrow and who we will become, it is yesterday that inform us of who we are.

12 "*But then you got here in 2018.* *Mm.* *When began...* [name of a co-worker]? *No, Covid I meant.* *Aha* yes. That was... *in the spring of 2020 it really began right?* Yes... precisely... in mars. *Mmm...* *at that time you had started here at 25% you said?* The year before... no, two years before. *Two years before and started at 25%.* *Had you gone up in time?* Yes, but I started at 75% then... first of January... the question is which year if it was 2019... *Ah.* Or 2018... 18 it must have been. *You said 2018 earlier so I've written 2018.* *Ah...* we'll say 2018 then. But wasn't it in mars 2018 I began here and then in January 2019 I went up to 75%"

She experienced it as a good thing to change work environment. She got a bit of a fresh start, and she got new more relaxed work pressures/demands. She perceives the change of environment as a good experience. It has allowed her to live a less stressed and freer life.

13 "...*the recovery went well.* *Yeah...* and like that it has been really great to start anew, in (redacted) psychiatry, because it was a completely different tempo. And it was something new you

know. And it wasn't all of this, since I had been working administratively only in the beginning... um so... it's been really good, and a lot freer as well. It hasn't been the end of everything if I've been 15 minutes late in the morning. I've been able to us flex time. That wasn't possible when I had booked patients. *No... that makes a big difference, it's another freedom.* And that has been really healing for me. To not have... that pressure."

She reflects on others' actions and reactions

15a "I thought that oh lord sure we can keep distance and such... but it was just so much, worry, almost hysterical I thought."

Relates others' actions to her own experiences and knowledge.

15b "Because, I don't know but if you work in healthcare, you're pretty used to some virus infections and how, like, and aware of how you should wash your hands and everything and to keep distance and so..."

Tries to understand their reactions and where they come from.

15c "All of a sudden it was like all so wimpy. So over... but there were so many people that were worried of course... um that... didn't have some basic... knowledge about it. I mean, there were so much written about it, it was so hyped in media that of course they..."

She eventually comes to realize the situation of the pandemic and the impact/severity of it.

16a "full of myself I thought that it would only be to remain calm. But um then it got worse, in mars it became... I can't remember the exact restrictions then... but it was that we were to avoid... *Large gatherings.* One was to... avoid, yeah you weren't to meet to many people. *Yes, it was then as well that talk began about closing schools and such.* Yes... um precisely. I wouldn't say that I was worried... it did become apparent that it was serious. But... but... I never thought... nobody really thought it would keep on for so long... *oh God no*"

In relation to others' actions during the first few months of the pandemic she shows something of cognitive dissonance regarding her perception of them. She has shown efforts to understand others' reaction but seem to not quite be able or willing to understand/accept them.

16b "Um... so that... um... no... but then... everyone has interpreted it so differently. I have always felt that one can meet up outside and that one can... but everyone hasn't even wanted to do that... I've probably felt that it's hard that others have been so worried for things that are completely unreasonable..."

Here it's possible to observe resistance towards external changes that are removed from her as an individual. In other parts of the interview, she talks about how decisions impacting her directly is a larger source of stress and anxiety for her then the Covid-19 virus was. It is easier to deal with things that are further removed from her person then those that have a direct impact on her and her emotions.

17 "were to close the schools, I'm not sure when here as we work in (redacted) psychiatry then then it was always said that there would be a lot required to do that here in Sweden because... there are so many other risk factors with that... then they did it in the end, even just a little but... thank God not like in... many other countries. *No, the younger ages have been kept in the schools.* Precisely. *And it is... the children's development that is very important. But there, there were a lot of speculation there in the beginning.* Yes... that there was. But... um as I recall it, I mostly took it easy. Like, such things are not what causes me anxiety. Based in my experience from the burnout and such. Such things are not what triggers me the most."

She comes to a realisation of something that has changed due to the pandemic and that she has lost. The possibility of travel and free movement. It is a realisation that was made possible by a change in

the external conditions that govern her life. When these change, they showed on previously assumed aspect of living in modern society that are no longer true. External changes make us aware of our internal habituses as they no longer are viable behavioural patterns.

18a “Sooo that it’s, it is... but then I don’t know how it was after... it was a lot of this, that you weren’t supposed to... that you couldn’t travel anywhere... all boarders were closed and so. It was a very unusual situation. Because that’s never happened before. But then one also became very aware of how freely we otherwise live... we can book travels basically anywhere and anytime we like. That was something one really came to face. I thought. And then... we weren’t even supposed to travel outside of our own little region and beyond ones... um so of course that affected... how we lived. And thought. *Don’t think I ever really thought about feeling limited in travel. But of course, we were...*”

This section further exemplifies the process of coming to a realisation of changed freedoms of movement/travel.

18b “Yes, but it was also this idea I had that we were going to travel, we were supposed 2020 to go and see friends in Spain and had to cancel. And to the last minute I felt that, no, of course we’re gonna go... and I had... in my head planned a few trips that we were going to make... and all of a sudden, we couldn’t do those anymore.”

She talks about plans, hopes and ideas for the future that she has made and had intended to realise. When the pandemic hit, she had to abandon them, or push them further into the future. This can be seen as an aspect off how individuals live in a spectrum of time dimensions. One where we have lived (experiences), one we perceive in the moment, and one that we foresee ourselves living in the future (both soon and much later on in life).

18c “*Those plans came undone.* Yeah, it all just had to be push on to the future. *I didn’t have any such plans; I had just been to the Canary Islands.* Yeah, you had just had your replenishment on travels. *Yeah, I was there the week before everything shut down.* Aha. *So, it was the last sets of flights then, and then I didn’t have any further travel plans made.* No. *And so I didn’t really think of it like that.* No. *But it is very interesting, Kind of, the whole... you’ve got an idea over things that you want to do over the next few years...* Mhm. *And all of a sudden those just disappear.* Yeah... oh I maybe, it might have become a bit much of that I imagen because I, I’ve thought that... as the kids turn 10 and the older one 14, I mean how many years will she still want to travel with us. And so, I’ve felt a bit that I want to size the opportunities and travel with the whole family. And then there might be years when we don’t want to go away and leave a teenager home alone. So, I’ve felt that these are things I want to have done, or I’ve rather, travel with the children.”

She recounts how life has taken on a different pace after the pandemic began. It is slower, not as many things that "needs" to be done. Here we see examples of various aspects of experiences. Time dimensions are present as she compares the past to the present, she is self-aware as she describes changes in herself.

19a “and that I can feel myself that I’ve gotten used to a different pace of live somehow. *Mm.* All of a sudden it feels as though, oh but are we really going to go away this weekend as well, we were away last weekend. Don’t have the energy. *Life got a bit more... concentrated, it got slower and calmer.* Yes precisely.”

She identifies both good and bad aspects of a slower, more limited life. On one hand it has been good for her as it as aided her management of stress and activity to fit with her health needs (resulting from her burnout), on the other she does feel that she has missed out on important gatherings and occasion. This changes her situatedness in life, the conditions for existing has changed and as such her place in life changes. For her it seems to be, to a considerable extent, for the better.

19b “It suited me well. With my history with burnout very well. Cause it’s been a lot easier to be spontaneous with meeting friends and people who one might not know all that well and such, or... parents of the kid’s friends, or, one has been able to, everyone has been a lot freer, not as booked up as previously. There haven’t been matches or cups and, like bam bam bam. And such. On both good and bad. Because neither have there been any Lucia celebrations or choir recitals. And I mean, we’ve missed out on many such things. But... it has also meant that we ourselves have had it calmer.”

While her workplace did not experience large changes to their operations during the Covid-19 pandemic, there were some introductions of PPE (personal protection equipment) and limitations of field observations. She was included in a group of individuals that were identified as knowledgeable and educated in healthcare work (nurses, nurse aids, etc) which did increase her stress levels. Not knowing if she would have to change workplace and assignments caused her stress. Also not being told in advance of changes to her workday was a significant stressor. Being told that she might have to move to a different hospital ward than she was educated to work at again caused further stress. She did not feel appropriately knowledgeable to manage the assignments she might've been given in that new work setting.

20 “So that doesn’t really affect me as such as we work with investigations, of children med [redacted] so, so it wasn’t... there were a long line, and, so there was never any discussion about stopping the work, no, the department continued as usual. What was affected were the special educators who couldn’t do any field observations as an example. But for, for the doctors it was the same as before, even after we got these facilities. Ah yes but for the psychologist it’s been the same, other than them having to use the PPE. What was... for my part, quite early on I became some sort of, well the manager was to report to the higher ups how many nurses or health care staff they had, or if there were anyone who worked with something else but had a health care education. And stuff around that. And during that they started talking about us having to fill in on [redacted] if it became necessary. If like there were to become an emergency and staff from there would have to go somewhere else. That we from here were to be replaced there. And work. And then I felt that I who’ve never worked with psychiatry before. Even if I was currently working at [redacted] I still didn’t work with the children. *No*. Um so that felt really foreign to me. I don’t know any psychiatry at all, so that I then would, that made me very stressed. At that point we had a very short introduction. All of a sudden. Which I found out the very same day.”

Quick changes and not being told sufficiently in advance what she is to do is something she expresses as a big stressor. Being put in uncomfortable situations with new work assignments contributes to her feelings of unease.

21a “That, like, “at half past one, I’ve forgotten to tell you”, stuff like that stresses me a lot, “half past one you’re to be at [redacted] and get an introduction in case you’re to work there” It was just so sudden, like Bam! *There was a quick change to adapt to there and then*. Yes. As well as that when we were at [redacted] for the introduction, to me it’s as if I were to work in outer space, somehow. I’m very much schooled in somatic healthcare and have only really worked in healthcare as a nurse in somatic settings.”

In the stress she experienced and feelings of lack of skill she would rather go back to a workplace that caused her to burnout than to work in the new Covid-19 wards.

It is interesting that the prospect of new and intimidating work is seen as a worse option than returning to an environment that has already caused significant harm. The unknown combined with inadequate training and feelings of not being able to perform is apparently a stronger deterrent than returning to a proven harmful and unsustainable work environment. It is an interesting path of action, even when factoring in that the return to her old harmful workplace would be limited in time as a mediator of the perceived risk to her health.

21b “So I felt that I... I’m not gonna be able to do any good there. And then you know, really quickly, everything just, went through the entire ward, and there was the restraining bed. And I just felt that “Restraining Bed” no. this is too much... I got very stressed by it. And then I don’t know. So, I talked some with my manager that that it is better that I go back to, if necessary, I can do more good, in a somatic ward, that it is better that I go back then. I mean when you know that it’s for a limited time, then I can easily return to say an oncology clinic. Where I’ve previously worked. And like, I know how to do most treatments there.”

During the second wave of Covid-19 (Christmas 2020) it was once again actualised with rearrangement of nurse and healthcare workers. This time she felt that she had been clear about her ability to work in different environments. Nonetheless she was to work directly in a Covid-19 ward. A type of work she had not done in 15 years. This led to anxiety and stress.

22a “Then it started again during the autumn and before Christmas there were new restrictions. At that time, we had moved to our new offices, then it was brought up again (the redistribution of workers, nurses particularly). And one was to sign up to work shifts at our hospitalisation ward. Can’t remember exactly how it worked, nevertheless... and then I had, I felt I had told them that I could work at a somatic ward, that if I were to be moved, I could be moved to a clinic or an oncology clinic and that someone from there could take my place at the ward (Covid-19 ward), someone with experience from working at a medical ward. It ended up with me being assigned to the ward (Covid-19 ward). Last I worked in a hospital ward was... I quit in February 2007. That’s like 15 years ago”

She felt insecure with the work she would be tasked with in the Covid-19 ward, adding to that anxiety was the fact that she was unfamiliar with the work process, the computer programs, and the work routines. This increased her stress levels. Negatively impacting her journey back to health from the burnout.

22b “And I don’t know those systems. Like, I hadn’t even worked with care-close warehouses, for example, we had not... that started to arrive when I worked at an oncology clinic, but we never need it, we had all medications at hand. Um... and (computer program), and some other systems that are used now, were never used then... ehm... I don’t know them. Nevertheless, I were then told that I were to do a few shifts at... what the newly opened ward was called... it was the old (...) or (...) anyway. A surgical ward I believe that was remade.”

Difficulties remembering the exact dates. She tells of the uncertainty of the entire process of adapting to the pandemic at work. Not knowing when or what she was to do in her role as a nurse. This as she has shown previously is a negative stressor for her.

23 “It all started then or on the first of January 2021. That I was to do a few shifts my manager tells me. I mean my regular manager. And that I was to call her who was ordained temporary manager at the ward (Covid-19 ward). And... um... that might have been the 23e of December already... my manager told me... and then I would have been able to be ordered to work over Christmas. That’s it yeah. Or... I could have had to do... but I never heard anything. I worked here on the 23e of December and then there was talk about them being able to call me the very same day and tell me I had to come in.”

The whole situation is causing her stress and anxiety. She is not provided clear instructions of what to expect, does not feel comfortable with the work and is stressed over a situation where she can’t do what’s asked of her. The unknowing seems to be a recurrent trigger for her stress levels. Did the experiences of her burnout increase or create a larger need for control over her life/work situation? Has she always, had it? How does she cope with stress?

24a “then I never heard anything, and I can’t recall if were in the days between or the start of January when it... it must have been in the beginning of January, that I were to call this other

manager and ask her what should come and do. That felt sort bad, partly because of my experience of burnout plus that I felt that I haven't worked in a medical ward for 15 years. It's it's not preferable. I mean, partly I was super stressed about it but also that I don't really know, not only that I'm stressed, but also that I felt that it's beyond my ability/knowledge."

She was not provided a timeframe for her involvement at the Covid-19 ward, her experience with burnout and her limitations were not taken into consideration. She felt that she had not been given sufficient information.

24b "Ummmm... and then when I talk with this other manager it became clear that I were to go there and start from, let's say that we talked on the Thursday then I were to start working there on the Monday, full time... for the foreseeable future. And it was like that until... that ward closed down and nobody knew when that would happen. And there was also... very little/bad information provided to me I felt. And very... yeah... my manager had also informed them that it was unsuitable to move me, based on that it was such a long time since I worked in somatic care and my history of burnout."

She expresses frustration with the organisation. It, in her mind did not take into consideration the abilities of the workers it (the organisation) shuffled around. It was assumed that they all knew what to do wherever they were assigned. She finally accepts her new assignments on the basis of what else is there but to carry on and do the work.

24c "But, but still it was like, it is that way at times with nurses, a nurse is a chess piece. Now we'll move you there or there. Like so. *You'll solve that assignment*. Yes, and they think that a nurse is a nurse is a nurse. And that's rarely the case. It is highly specialised depending on where you work or have worked. It is very different work. Even if the basis is the same. Um... so she really tried to speak on my behalf and tell them... oh well, that didn't matter, I was to show up there anyway. And I thought that, No but I'll just have to pull up my arm sleeves and just do it."

There had to be large adjustments made at home in order for her to work at the Covid-19 ward. Exacerbating her experienced stress. What steps did she take to combat/manage her increased experience of stress? Any actions taken or did she continue on with life as usual, just with higher levels of stress?

25 "Umm, that required quite a lot of adjustments to daily life. All of a sudden, my husband works evenings every fourth week, and the week that I was to start... work in the Covid-19 ward he was working evenings. It meant that, it required big adjustments. It meant that the oldest daughter would have to be alone in the mornings... she can't have been because he was at home sleeping... well it was something. *Mhm*. That just became a lot. All of a sudden, everyday life had to change a lot for the whole family. Um and I had then, one can think that after these days at a new job, also were to have... full responsibilities at home, so... my husband didn't get back home until after midnight that entire week. So, there was a lot of stress put on there. One can say. But when started I tried to keep it all at a distance somehow, but that didn't work, so I just had to pull up my sleeves and get to work."

Here she recounts what the working conditions were, how they affected her (negatively) and relates it to her current workplace (the one she was removed from).

26a "But um already the very first day... it felt like I had been through a centrifuge in a manner... *Mmm*. Cause there were so much noise. Like there is in a somatic ward. All the time machines that make noises. It was pretty much... I can't remember how many bed posts there were, but there were. There were phones calling, and people... like, here I can step away, I have my own office that I can shut the door so that I don't hear the others... it's very luxurious... *Mmm*. Umm and like, all those sounds, plus that I felt that I didn't know what I was doing. Nor did I know any of my colleagues, there were new completely new work tasks that we were expected to know. Eight patients to do rounds on and keep them under observations so they survived. *And somehow steer*

the work in the ward as well. Yes, steer the work and also report in what's being done in the different systems and order medications from the correct storages so that it's not getting taken from some other places that isn't available the same day."

Her she talks about how the new work directly negatively affects her health. She also relates her impressions of the ward and the work to her previous experiences of burnout. She recognises her limits, reflects on the possibility to cope. She shows on a deep understanding of her own situatedness and how that is affected by her surrounding environment. She also took steps to be removed from a harmful environment.

26b "So much stuff, one almost feels that... oh I felt rather quickly that this was not going to work. I wouldn't be able, it's not worth my own health. That wise I have become. A few years ago, I might have stuck with it anyway. But that I have... I have learnt that much. That it is not worth... there's no one who gets happier by me burning out again. So, I started to signal already the second day to that manager there that, I don't feel... 'oh well you'll have to continue anyway'. I thought oh well I'll have to give it a week then. But then I got so scared that they would all of a sudden schedule me, and you feel so bad about that because everyone else's work so hard."

She talks about feelings of wanting to help but lacking the ability. She recognises her limitations in ability and education. She also provides more instances of increased stress that she experiences. Giving examples of colleagues who work double shifts, her putting too much pressure on herself to be available and not let anyone down etc. and she recognises that these conditions do in fact push her back into a burnout state.

27 "And one is used to be a part of it and help out... but, at the same time I feel that I can barely be of any use. It was very... and that's often the case in healthcare, that even if it is said that you'll get a proper introduction and go beside someone. A certain number of days, its, just like that your teacher gets sick and then it's just to... like... then you can forget about that introduction. That's the way it is. And people were sick, and others worked extra shifts. Just to hear that people had, the first day that I was there that she who worked the night, she had also done the evening shift. And so, she was going to work again that evening. Like you know those... being tossed back and forth. Cause that's how they do, that was the case in the past as well. *Mmm*. But most people are so duty bound that they go the extra mile for each other... to a ridiculous degree and they do those shifts. And I felt that I just can't do that. I would not be able to coup if the evening staff didn't show up and I would have to stay until 22:00. I wouldn't have been able to manage... um so I felt that quite quickly. And then I told them, so I was also terrified of being put on the schedule the following week. Cause then they counted with me. That I wouldn't just go along. Because then it gets so... *Mmm*. Then I become this old, I can't be sick a single day, I can't (takes a deep breath) ... just that it feels like so much depends on me"

Four days was enough to put her back on sick leave. The pressure to perform and the uncertainty of the whole situation was enough to incapacitate her from working.

28a "And if I'm sick, I'll leave the others in shit. *Mm*. That's a difficult feeling... so I was only there four days that first week... um... and that was... it was really like, literally, like having been through a centrifuge. Um. And after that I was home on medical leave for a week after."

Not knowing what she would be expected to do for work, is a recurring theme that is viewed as a cause for much of her experienced stress. Even though her new manager realised that it was not sustainable for her to work at the Covid-19 ward she did not get clear instructions of what she was to do instead. Which further exacerbated her symptoms of burnout as the unknowing increased her stress levels. Even if she does realise her own limitations from previous experiences she still admits to feelings of failure. That she was not able to perform in the required work settings. It is an interesting relation between knowing one's limitations and accepting them as right and true for ones

being/existing. Why else should she feel sorry for not being able to perform certain tasks if she did not think she ought to be able to.

28b “and then it was very unclear what I was to do. Because my manager here, she was like ‘What’s the other manager said?’ oh only that there’s no one who wants me to get sick so I’m not to be there. But then it wasn’t like ‘oh then you’ll come back here’. It was very unclear, a lot was unclear about... so I, I experienced it as very unclear about where I was to go and in that you really only feel dumb and, like a failure somewhat, when you’ve not been able, too, manage it. Umm, well, in the end I started back here. But I did have lingering effects all throughout last spring, I had noticeable symptoms of my burnout from just those days I was there. I had heightened sound sensitivity and increased stress levels.”

She expresses sorrow over her returning burnout symptoms and feel that the whole situation was unnecessary. She had provided information about her competencies and her limitations to her supervisors. While that is true, she also shows on an understanding and acceptance of the situation surrounding her. It was a time of chaos and unknowable changes; this she accepts as a factor in how she was treated by the organisational changes to her work and health. She to a certain degree accepts that it was the needs of an extraordinary situation, a global pandemic, which forced the organisation to take steps to lessen the effects off the pandemic rather than individuals failing to consider her as an individual with abilities and limitations. She does express some resentment towards this process. It was, according to her, not done properly and was done too quickly leading to detrimental decisions that could have been managed differently and more efficiently.

29 “So you had resurging symptoms of burnout? Yeah. And that (takes a deep breath), feels so very unnecessary, because if they had actually, yeah since... um um. Even I knew to tell them before that this was not a good idea, and my manager. They could have, I could have done some good maybe. If they had only done a little bit more research about what I could do. *Had they only planned three steps ahead.* Yes, and not simply treated us as game piece. *Perhaps a bit more like chess pieces then?* Maybe. *Like, this piece fits well here and then we can move the next one.* Yeah. Um so that’s something I’ve felt. That the organisation could have planned better. On the other hand, it was basically total chaos. I can understand that it’s not easy to organise either.”

Here she talks about effects of long-term employment at the same ward/office. How one over time develops knowledge and expertise that at times is hard to define. An aspect that she feels that organisations often, at least recurrently, fail to realise. Giving examples such as if a vacancy of an older experienced colleague is replaced with a new young one, organisations seem to consider the vacancy completely filled, not accounting for the immense experience and expertise lost. And as a result, expect too much of the new hire and the workplace to continue functioning at the same level. This would show on an understanding of that developing ability through experience is a form of learning. It is a progression of knowledge and ability. She also seems to express sorrow over a discrepancy between the individual motivations for engaging in healthcare work and the organisations view of its employees. Conflicting emotions between the personal choice of working in healthcare and the organisational demands for providing largescale healthcare systems.

30 “Yes, and that, it can be like that, you do become good at what you do. Um. But it feels, in my experience it’s often that you’re... you’re not really... they don’t see it as... it feels as if the employer doesn’t see it as such, but rather that they see... I’ve had other workplaces before where very senior colleagues have quit. And then they feel that ‘oh well then we’ll just hire a new nurse’ and it. *And then they think that it’ll just work as before.* Yeah, because then they’ve filled that vacancy with a new nurse. But of course, it’s not the same level of care anymore. *No.* Because, a newly examined nurse can never... doesn’t have the same knowledge and experience. *No of course not, they haven’t worked for 40 years yet.* No, and then, it feels like... but that a completely different subject. *No but.* To me it feels so sad that sometime employers doesn’t... understand, that they don’t listen to their staff, and their experienced staff. Because... I would say that all healthcare staff from the beginning, wants to help patients. That’s one’s intention. I think that

employers should listen to... to that. Because somewhere it's stated that they want to provide good healthcare. And then, they should provide the means to that."

Being tasked with working at the Covid-19 ward created large inconveniences and changes to her daily life. These were experienced as difficult and unwanted. The family had to restructure their whole life. She had also taken steps in her life to not have to work evenings and weekends, something she would now be forced to do. This was a difficult and challenging process. Adding stress and worry.

31 "Yeah it was really difficult then. Because it has affected so much. When I all of sudden were to change my schedule and start working every other weekend. That's how it was my husband also works weekends. So, we wouldn't have any... time off together. The kids were really upset, because, they didn't understand why, we wouldn't start to plan (the weekends, my interpretation). My eldest daughter what was she then, she was 12, and attended 6th grade. She started to do a schedule, for when mom and dad would work, so that she could have some semblance of structure in it all and could understand it. Umm and it affected...oh we had had plans to go ski for example. But now you can't really get more than 3 days off anyway so that would probably have ruined it anyway, but um, I was very happy that my birthday was on a Saturday last year. Just imagen how fun, then we could have celebrated properly. But no, I would have had to work then. One of them, the one who turned nine last year, also had her birthday on a weekend, that I also thought, it's very nice when you work mon-fri, when I work at medical wards, we didn't do that, and I still think that's wonderful to always have the weekend off. Um... so that it just got to this, am I not gonna get to be free when it's her birthday. Many such thoughts surround private life. Of course, it affects me when I would have to start working both evenings and weekend. Um...when you're not used to do it. And I've never liked to work evenings and weekends because I sleep badly and so. But also, to be missing things, like, well when the kids are home mostly. And so that affects and creates a lot of stress. But then you try think that 'oh well it's just for a short period of time' in, ten years we'll barely remember this as a break in the flow of life. Well, one tries to convince oneself that it will be like that."

When she perceives that no one has listened to her when she has told them what she can and cannot do she feels anger. She also reflects on her own actions. Her perception is that she has become much better at saying no and drawing lines when it comes to others' expectations of her. However, this time she feels ignored and provoked when her objections are not taken into consideration, and she is forced to deal with extra stress. This shows she is adapting to and trying to accommodate her changed needs in order to take care of her health, she has changed her behaviour in order to better fit her situatedness. Even if those needs and demands are not always met by her surroundings, she now insists on them to a larger extent.

32 "But still I got rather angry as I recall. Like 'Damn it this isn't, don't want to'. I... um... mm... *You've made the decision not to work like that.* Kinda, I have chosen not to work like that, I have been on medical leave. And I have been clear about... I've gotten quite good at being clear with what I can and cannot do, which I wasn't before my burnout, then it was more like, I'll manage that as well somehow and I can do this, and I can do that. But I have become more... I get provoked when no one's listening on me, you know. Once you say something, and there's so much talk about that one should inform about one's limits and abilities. And then to not be heard when you do say something. *Mm.* That gets to me, I feel provoked in a manner."

She demonstrates an unwillingness to perceive herself as being put in a greater position of disadvantage than others. She equates her experience of burnout and inability to manage extreme stress to the same effect as someone missing out on vacation plans. Of course, others also experienced difficulties, but here she shows an unwillingness to accept that she was put in a situation that really was harmful to her health. One could ask the question whether this a coping mechanism or not, being dismissive of how difficult something really was?

33a “Even people that know you well but might not be used to you saying no, even they might not really perceive that you tell then no. But then it also affected me strongly when I first entered the Covid-19 ward. Um. All the staff were kind off, there wasn’t, I wasn’t in any worse position than anybody else really, more than that a few had other experiences (less suited, my note) of course. There were so many that, well, all of a sudden somebody couldn’t... well, go on a journey that was booked, or go on a ski trip that they instead had to cancel... others had worked a lot in Covid wards during the spring in 2020.”

Here she tells of lines she will not cross in her profession. It is not worth her health to be working at the Covid-19 ward. It is only a job and her experiences with burnout, the effects of it, and how she values her life informs her that it is only a job and not worth losing all else over. Even if others might think so. She also describes the effects of her short stint in the Covid-19 ward. She did end up on sick-leave and the effects of her involuntary participation in the Covid-19 healthcare system left her with lasting re-emerged symptoms of her burnout. It took several months before she was back to the stage she was before her involvement in Covid-19 care. This she expands on few paragraphs later.

We see an example of her biographicity here. Her situatedness and life experiences tells her that this is an unsustainable situation, that, due to the consequences on her health, it is not worth it to continue working in that environment.

33b “And had been promised not to be involved again because she worked mon-fri and was a single mom to her child. And just like that she was still forced into it and working evert other weekend... like, everyone suffers in such conditions, even if everyone tries to keep their spirits up. Well, well, stuff like that affects me as well, and I go like, no it is not worth it. It’s not, it is just a job... um... yeah. *Mm, that it is.* And so that... but it took a long time after that actually, before I, was back to how I was before I got forced into it, mentally that is.”

Express irritation over how she was treated. It would in her opinion have been easy to accommodate her needs if her superiors had talked with each other and planed. Instead of putting the responsibility on her. This is a further expansion of what she described of her experience with her employing organisation earlier.

33c “Then I got, in the end I did get it pulled out of my managers that I was. That I was, I was welcome back here at the office. You see, she had pushed the decision over to my new manager, and she said, ‘oh lord, it’s she (her regular manager, my addition) that’s your manager, you’ll have to talk to her and so... Yeah and she only responded with ‘and what does she say?’. I just felt that they had to talk to each other. Like... it was so clumsily managed in relation to my burnout and that I had just been on medical leave because of it. They would most likely only have had to call and say to me what decision they’d made. Bam. Rather than, me having to go between them. *Mm.* It was like that.”

Her she shows on decision-making that was strongly influenced by her previous experiences. Based on her earlier interactions with the different social systems regarding extended sick leave (Försäkringskassan etc.) she decides that it was easier and a less stressful option for her to return to a workplace that she knows she can manage. Her previous experiences clearly influence her later actions, reflections and reasonings in making decisions.

34 “in the end, but then I still didn’t feel completely well but I also felt that I could manage it anymore... it also takes a lot of energy, this whole thing of navigating an extended medical leave, to start it up again with Försäkringskassan (Swedish for the national insurance fund) and just couldn’t... And I knew that I had it well enough... at my regular workplace. *Mm.* And so I went back to work after a week at home because I just couldn’t do it all again. *It was easier to go back to work that you knew was manageable than to...* Yes, I knew it worked and I couldn’t deal with Försäkringskassan, because then there’s so many meetings and there’s rehabilitation and they call to make sure you’re doing what you’re supposed to. I just felt that I... I could not handle that

anymore... *You had experienced a lot of that during your initial burnout?* Yes. Just like that, and it is quite stressful. Because there's, do I get a medical certificate? Will they approve it or won't they, and then a case handler calls and makes certain that you follow the rehabilitation correctly... (takes a deep breath) yeah..."

Again, the subject of memory and being able to correctly recognize the order of events in life appear. When trying to recount the spring of 2021 she has trouble actually recalling anything. She knows that she worked, and that she had lingering effects of the additional burnout she experienced at the situation related Covid-19 and her work. These diffuse memories could be an indicator of worse effects related to the burnout than she herself is able to deduce. This would have been an interesting aspect to inquire more about if she would have been interested in a follow-up interview.

35 "Well I had symptoms of that little burnout remaining for a long time... then what happened, um, now it feels like I don't have any memory since May and until the autumns then, summer holidays, no but, I've been working as usual here. Here I've at least had it a bit, I do have it rather good here with my own office where I can be without being... interrupted. Well, I do get distracted easily by sounds, but here I can shut the door when I need to think... um."

Upon reflecting on her learning after Covid-19 she primarily mentions a change in flexibility in everyday life. It is easier now to restructure plans and make changes. She also attributes this change in her behaviour to her burnout and the changes and the teachings it forced her to make.

36a" *"When we sit here and talk, do you, are there any thoughts that pop up around these past two years? How can I put it better... If there's anything I've learnt, you mean? Well, if there's, any insights, or realisations that you do or think differently about... Well something that I at time think about, where I've come to think differently, cause previously, And I'm not sure if it has to do with Covid precisely but rather based in... well a bit of Covid as well, well, yeah it probably has been affected by Covid... this sort of... sometimes when you schedule things, it can be birthday celebrations or things you've made plans with others to do. Previously it's been that, when you've made the plans, when and where to meet up, then you did it, there were no other way about it. After Covid it feels as if, well, it's more like if we're all well we'll see each other on Saturday. Mm"*

She enjoys a perceived social change where it is now more acceptable to cancel or change plans close in time. This she seems to feel allows her a greater flexibility in adjusting for her health needs.

36b "Umm, and to some degree I can feel that that's something I take with me. That's something that I appreciate, because I'm like you know, if I've said that I'll do something or be somewhere at a certain time I'll be there no matter how I feel or... Say I crash my car on the way there, even then if I've said I'll do something I'll manage to do it... um, now I can feel that, oh I don't know what example to give. But sometimes it's like, let's say that we've decided upon one day, and made plans and someone is really amped about it, I can now feel a bit more that 'yeah we'll do it', And I know somewhere in the back of my mind that... it could also turn out that we have to cancel because someone couldn't make or got sick. I feel as if quite often, people have more understanding for that now, I suppose it's been somewhat like that ever since we got kids, if they suddenly vomit right before you're to leave to go somewhere for example. But it has become more relaxed somehow."

Making the most of time and possibilities is a new priority for her. It has become more important not to push enjoyable experiences on to the future, cease the day/moment, to some degree. This includes not engaging in activities that hold little or no meaning for her. When she mentions it, I get a feeling that it is a deeper change than simply embracing a common quote such as "carpe diem" and then continuing on with the same sets of behaviours and values. It seems to strike a deeper chord in her as she expresses it. This could be me assuming and looking for things. It would have been interesting to have her input on this.

37 “Just have to think a bit... oh I don’t know. But I suppose I’ve also reflected a lot about... well, what it is that I want to do... things that I want to experience. That’s something that I feel as if I’ve really learnt. Before. That you don’t know, if you, next time you might be there, or you may become ill, I mean both a larger sense but also in a small in a manner of speaking (Swedish saying implying existential dimensions and practical here and now. One might not be alive tomorrow or one will be, or you might lose your health for the rest of your life, or you might just miss the buss. You could also be able to attend without any issue). *Mm.* That, you really should do stuff while you can. You don’t need to postpone. *You don’t need to postpone going to swim until next week, you can do it today.* Yes, if that’s what you want to do. *Yeah.* Um... just as much I can feel that I don’t care at all. Why should I devote time on something. It doesn’t matter if I’m too... if there were to, start falling bombs next week or whatever, then maybe this is not what I want to spend my time doing, I’d rather do something more fun. So maybe a larger awareness about what’s important. That is something that I’ve, brought with me from all of this. And who the important people in my life are.”

Here she shows on different roles she has in life and how they compete against each other at times. Even if she in her professional role knows why she cannot do certain things, in her personal role, her wants and needs come into conflict with that knowledge.

38 “Really. And my youngest was supposed to be Lucia at... Christmas. And we were to be allowed to come and watch, on the Friday but that Wednesday they sent out that there, were new restrictions. I just felt that ‘I’ll just go there anyway; I will see it!’ we got to see a recording. And one of the psychologies here was just like ‘but surely you in your role as a nurse can understand that you can’t just walk in there on Friday’. And I was just like, I’m so tired of this! *Your role as nurse had to stand back for your role as mother.* Yes, I’m foremost mother to my children. And we did get to see it digitally, but it’s not the same... *Of course, it’s not.* No, and she was so happy that we would get to be there you know. *Yeah.* And I just felt that... *You got the new two days before.* Yeah, that was not fair.”

Analysis

This is a summery and a second more theoretical analysis and reflection upon the learning and self-awareness which were observed in the results section of the thesis. Observed aspects of biographical learning viewed through transformational learning brought on by experiences are reflected upon and discussed.

Basing an understanding of the human experience of learning and growing throughout life in how experiences are remembered and understood in relation to the self, biographical learning provides good platform to base explorations into the mechanics of how those experiences are lived through and understood. In basing my understanding of Peter Alheits biographical learning theory upon Jack Mezirows transformation learning and his inclusion of experiences as fundamental building blocks in human development. This analysis and reflection contribute to a holistic perspective on adult self-comprehension in their own development as a human being. This assertion puts this work in the realm of meta-cognition and existentialism as a ground for development/learning.

In the data that was recorded during the interview it became clear that the subject on several occasions was aware of her own situatedness. She could reflect on her position in regard to her surroundings. She could abstract herself from her immediate experience of events and regard them without involving herself as a subject in those events. She could reflect on the decisions made by her employing organisation and see that regardless of her involvement the decisions made would still have had to be made. She also showed a willingness to adapt to changing life conditions as well as she showed a reluctance to accept and adapt to changes that were unwelcome, even if she eventually had to accept her new situatedness and incorporate these new conditions, experiences, and approaches in her developing biographicity. The adaptation and acceptance of new conditions for living life is how she

as an adult learner performs learning on a meta-cognitive level, combining processes both aware and unaware into her development and understanding of her own self.

Throughout the interview she references her experiences in a non-chronological order. This observation suggests that chronology, the actual order in which experiences occurred, is less relevant than how experiences affected being. This shows a multitude of parallel process of development. Experiences are ordered after her understanding of their implications and the experience relative relation to each other rather than to a chronological order of events. She is also able to describe how certain life events influence her in the here and now. That past experiences affect how she reacts and progress through her daily life. One such example would be her reluctance to be involved in what she saw as an unstable and unknowable work situation. Her previous experience of burnout influence how she approached the forced changed in her work situation. Conditioning how she managed the situation, how she reacted to living in uncertainty which she described as a difficulty since her recovery.

The mere fact that she is able to describe her own process of changing through her life experiences show that she is aware of herself as a being. She understands to some degree how she is affected by external events; how internal processes condition her comprehension of her surroundings and how her being in the here and now is informed by her past and her prospective future decisions.

The following sections are aimed at showing how such processes of experiences and transformational learning constitutes a biographical learning development.

During the interview, the participant on several occasions shows how she has become aware of her situatedness and chosen to actively change it. She is telling a story of important decisions that have had big implications on her daily life. She also re-evaluated her previous intentions and perceptions on who she is and what her capabilities are. She reassesses her position in life and makes changes accordingly to how she progresses into her future. Both biographical reflection and transformational learning are present in that process. Biographical reflection as she considers her biography in order to abstract her own experiences into something tangible that she can understand, and transformational learning in that her experience combine into a need to adjust and change. Existentialism can be observed in the process. She evaluates who she is and from that evaluation draws conclusions on how to best act accordingly to who she perceives herself to be, ability and intentions included. During the interview she clearly states and describes changes in her behaviour. A process of developing learning can be seen in the simple act of stating changes. Cementing changes to her behaviour by stating them aloud, holding herself accountable to others as she describes to another who she is and who she is aiming to be. Showing on a continued effort to perpetuate her changed situatedness. In a different paper there could be room to incorporate social psychology and how group dynamics work to explore the functions of stating aloud to another what one intends. She is able to describe her biographicity, providing examples of the habituses she inhibits, what internalised socialisation of cultural norms and values she possesses and is able to reflect on these to varying degrees. An example that can be considered is how she describes her life, her biographicity as both a source of stress and of joy, showing on an awareness of how her surroundings affect her. She reflects upon the difficulties of enacting changed behaviour, it is not as simple as becoming aware of one's own situation and change, there are other factors to considers. Such as feelings of wanting to participate in social events with people who are important to her, which at times clash with her need to take care of her mental and physical health. This shows self-awareness. She describes her new situatedness in her biographicity and biography when she reflects on choices she has to make in life. This, while at the same time as she is able to consider her changed life-situation, putting into contrast how she remembers her old self and her abilities then with how she perceives herself now. Showing on a high degree of self-awareness. Here meta-cognition becomes a relevant concept to consider. The participant is clearly able to reflect on different states of her development throughout life and has the ability to embody different stages of her biographicity and situatedness and consider them as relevant. She is able to move through her biographicity and learning progress in a temporal manner that allows her to reflect upon aspects of her

collected experiences and view them as she saw them in an earlier stage of life. She is able to abstract her herself from her surroundings. She sees others as individuals, and she considers their actions in relation to her experience of them. Through that she is able to view other actions as situated in their situatedness. Others have different experiences and backgrounds than she does and might not react and view things the same way that she does.

Even if she knows and can describe her limitations and what actions which help her, she still perceives a difficulty in living her "new" life. This difficulty is quite likely exasperated because she regrets what the experience of her burnout has costed her. This shows that can be difficult to adjust to changes in one's biography, it is a continuous effort to realign oneself with one's experiences. Life does not stop happening because we experience something. We must adjust to our new biographical story, even when an experience is unwanted or even detrimental. Again, showing on a meta-cognitive process of being able to move through her own biographical understanding of her life and experiences, adopting habituses that are longer active or relevant. She is able to feel that who she once was is no longer who she is. In her story she describes how she views herself as having adjusted to her new limitations after experiencing the burnout. She claims to have mostly adjusted but also describes how she at times experience difficulties in adhering to those limits. This shows that simply recognising and accepting that adjustments have to be made, that it is still a difficult process of changing old behaviours, even though they may no longer be beneficial, even detrimental. The acceptance and adjustment to the effects of different experiences is in and of itself a process of experience. And as many developmental learning processes it is a duality of going back and forth between being, becoming and being again. It is a process that involves factors such as recognising oneself in a new state of being, becoming okay with being in that state, and combing this process with existing in a situatedness that can be more or less accommodating. She gives examples of how we as individuals are not in control of their situatedness when she describes how her wishes were ignored when she was placed in a Covid-19 hospital ward. It is also apparent that for her, issues that she perceives as emotionally distant or less of a threat to her immediate person are easier to emotionally manage. Rather than when uncertainty affects herself and her daily life immediately, that seems to cause her strong feelings of stress. She describes this as an effect of her suffering the effects of the burnout.

Later on in the interview it became apparent that the interviewee describes how external changes forced introspection and caused changes in her situatedness and biographicity as a result of external pressures making her have new experiences. One example was, as already touched upon, not knowing what would happen to her work situation due to changes in the pandemic's development which caused her stress as she did not know how that would affect her work assignment. This could be viewed through an existential lens where the unknown is perceived as an immediate threat to that which is known. Causing the person to seek to control, avoid, or know the unknown. Showing on how the existence of a biographicity and situatedness in and of itself can promote actions by an individual. Leading to a progression through life. The interviewee's situatedness, her reliance on her manager for her work placement, is a source of contention in her recovery. She is not able to control her work and simply the possibility of being forced into situations that are detrimental to her health are detrimental to her recovery and overall health. She struggles with her exposure to her situatedness. She accepts that there are things beyond her control, even though she does not like it. It becomes a source of frustration. It is also an example of meta-cognition that she is able to reflect on the relation between her internal needs and those of the external world. Showing a high degree of situational awareness. She knows what is going on around her, how that affects her and others around her, and knows what a sustainable life balance is. She had to adjust her behaviour in order to perform functions that society required of her. She describes her needs and what she needs to do in order to affect her situatedness to fit her abilities further showing on awareness of her situatedness and social context. She is also able to clearly describe the effects of her burnout on her mental capabilities. She now experiences difficulties with remembering dates, too much noise etc. she is also able to relate to how she used to be and can

see the differences. She has been forced to adapt to a new state of being, even if she at time still has difficulties accepting these adaptations and revert back to her former habits.

Discussion

Writing a discussion on what has been shown and discussed through this thesis is a challenging task. The subject is elusive and any claim of knowledge questionable. It will always be possible to read the material and reflect on it differently. Analysing, understanding, and discussing aspects of daily life beyond a surface level of comprehension will be a never-ending task for those who pursue it. This thesis constitutes my explorational attempt at understanding how human beings as individuals make sense of their experiences and learn and develop from living life. I am fully aware that there are multitudes of aspects and factors of adult self-understood development, learning, that I am not able to consider in this thesis. I reconcile myself to discuss some of the aspects that I have found during my work to be of value when considering the impacts of events on an individual full of experiences and a sense of self.

This discussion section is dedicated to further discuss the combination of theories of learning and the implications of them in a holistic approach to adult development. Attempting to understand the complexities of adult informal learning.

Transformational learning as a basis for understanding biographical learning processes through experiences as I have understood them and used them takes the stand that growth and development as a result of experiences over time leads to developments in a person's biographical narrative. Meaning that learning viewed through Peter Alheits concepts of biographical learning is the reflection (meta-cognition) upon individual developments trough experiences which transform the individual, as Jack Mezirow sees the process, and combines to create a situation where the individual no longer recognizes themselves as they once were and can distinguish between who they were and who they are and in the description identify the experiences which has for them been formative in creating their new narrative understanding of themselves. Simply, living life, having experiences, and reflecting upon oneself as a basis for understanding the processes conditioning adults self-understood learning. Being a dialectically continuous process of experiencing life, reflecting upon those experiences and as a result develop as a being and moving forward to new experiences guided by the understanding of themselves, their needs, and their desires

In this thesis the goal was to explore how biographical learning develops through an individual's self-understood processing of experiences and their own understanding of their place in the world, their situatedness. Transformational learning was used as a catalyst for understanding the process through which individuals gather new life stories to incorporate in their biographicities. With a greater understanding of how experience shape learning on a shorter time scale transformational learning was used to inform the overarching understanding of human development, learning, that biographical learning theory embodies.

To explore the merits of this approach to a holistic approach to advanced adult self-comprehension through experiential learning a deep biographical narrative interview looking at a specific period of the interviewee's life story was adopted. The focus on a short time period of the interviewee's life allowed for a more thorough exploration of the events that the person brought with them into the time frame and how they relate to those experiences of having been in a state of recovery from previous life experiences and being thrown into a new situatedness that they were not prepared for or able to handle. Focusing on this brief period of life and asking them to introduce themselves it became possible to see how they relate relevant experiences informing about who they are to how they describe themselves experiencing life.

Looking at a process through which an adult understands and incorporate experiences in their narrative stories through biographical learning. The thesis explored how the Covid-19 pandemic as an experience was incorporated and affected how the individual thinks about themselves in regard to who they are and how they view their surroundings, with the goal of observing meta-cognitive processes of self-aware evaluation of experience as a biographical narrative method. Of particular interest in this thesis is the combination of professional settings and private ones, providing a holistic understanding for the interaction of the separate roles an individual occupies throughout their existence. Incorporating experiences from separate areas of their lives into a holistic understanding of who they are.

A problem here with biographical learning research is that there exists an inherent unknowability about the subjects' responses. Are they telling all they know? What have they forgotten? Do I understand and correctly document their experiences? This cast doubt on the attempt made in this thesis to understand how individuals process experiences as instances of learning and developing through self-understanding. There is value in such attempts, but they should be carefully regarded and treated as imperfect. It is not possible to completely account for all that it means to be human in a single thesis. Going forward an operationalisation of the theory is recommended where the research look at specific aspects of the theory. What could be done is to try and generalise the attempted understanding of learning as a product of experiences in transformational learning as the base for an overarching biographical learning experience in order to observe such processes on a broader spectrum of individuals.

The next section will discuss the methodology used in this thesis. There will also be suggestions of how a generalized attempt at gathering data exploring this subject could be made in the future.

Method

The methodology of this thesis is admittedly questionable. The theoretical aspiration of combining two separate learning theories in order to understand learning as a holistic human endeavour might be admirable but the execution of method and approach should be understood as a first attempt by a student to comprehend and create his own understanding of what it means to be human and learn throughout life. There is a little explored existential undertone going throughout this thesis. The aim was never to explore learning as an existential experiment but using a perspective on what it means to be human, how one understands one's place in life, it very much brought with it an existential aspect to how I've approach learning. It is in my opinion not possible to understand adult lifelong and lifewide learning without considering how the individual themselves regard their existence. It is through an understanding of the self that an individual can progress through learning without becoming a wanton.

Using these two different learning theories in combination with each other makes it possible to regard learning as a more complex phenomenon at the same time as it makes the process of development tangible. Biographical learning becomes the main basis for how individuals understand themselves through their lives, it accounts for the meta-cognitive perspective of self-awareness and development. Experiences are the ground upon which we develop and become aware of ourselves in contrast to our surroundings as we are continually aware of ourselves through our interactions with our surroundings. Transformative learning is the process accounting for the changes, the learning, developing through experiences and combining those into a coherent idea of the persons combined biographical narrative.

For this thesis, a phenomenological approach to experience and meaning making was assumed. This allowed for treating the data as a true accounting of reality as seen by the subjects without calling into question the truthfulness of that experience. A true reality absent from interpretations is not of interest in this thesis. It only concerns itself with the experience of the individual living their life, with all of the interpretations that comes with that.

Once a willing a participant had been located a time and place for the interview was arranged. The interview was conducted at her place of work and during her workhours. This made participating as convenient as possible for her. She was in a comfortable place and allowed to talk as much or little as she wanted to. One compromising aspect is that what I believed myself to have communicated regarding the subject and intention of the interview/thesis was not what she had envisioned when we talk about her participating. This became clear almost immediately during the interview and we took a few minutes to discuss the confusion. Once we were both on the same page the interview began anew. This is important to remember as she had thought about aspects of her experience in anticipation for the interview other than what I ended up asking for. Had the communication previous to the interview been better she could perhaps have expounded on her experiences and her thought processes regarding those even further. She, however, did an admirable job on reflecting on her experiences and what they have meant for here in the moment of the interview.

The interview was recorded and then transcribed by hand. No automatic software was used. This allowed me to form a deeper familiarisation the data, aiding in the analysis of the material. After the transcription, the audio was deleted. Once the data was transcribed an initial analysis was made. This was a process of looking for and identifying aspects of biographical narratives, transformational learning experiences and how she accounted for her experiences. After that, a selection of excerpts from the data which accounted for the intentions of the thesis inquiry was chosen to be included in the results presentation. All the excerpts had to be translated into English from Swedish. This presented a big problem. As the analysis focuses on the intentions of the participants story and her understanding of her own experiences, a strict translation could not be made which would retain all the subtle nuances of her speech. As such I had to make decisions regarding all of the translations of when to translate strictly to convey facts she spoke of, when to translate subtle ideas and notions to be represented in English as they were understood by me in Swedish, and when to completely change her words to fit with the right idiomatic translation from one language into another. This process is one of the weaker aspects of this work as it relies on my understanding of her words and intentions, as well as it is very much dependent on my abilities and knowledge of two separate languages. Someone else doing the translations might very well end up with a different representation of the participants speech. Being aware of this shortcoming of the methodology I chose to perform the initial and secondary analysis, which dove deeper into the selected excerpts, on the untranslated material. Containing the translation issues to a mainly representation of data issue.

During the analysis there were questions that arose which would have been interesting to peruse in a follow-up interview. Sadly, the participant declined a second interview. She was also asked to comment on my analysis on the material in order to ensure my interpretations in order to engage with subject participation and strengthening the conclusion made. However, she declined this as well. So even though attempts were made to increase validity and reliability such attempts were not possible to make. A positive aspect of the participant looking at the analysed data would have been that she could have commented on the analysis and aided the understanding of what she intended to convey when expressing herself. It would also have increased the validity of the analysis. A positive of her not commenting on the analysis is that it remains free from additional input beyond my own. Making it clearer who made the analysis and strengthening its coherence.

Some of the questions that arose during the analysis where; did the experiences of her burnout increase or create a larger need for control over her life/work situation, has she always, had it those inclinations of control, how does she cope with stress, and what steps did she take to combat/manage her increased experience of stress.

In one instance during the interview, we came to a point where she did know how to proceed. And so, I provided an example. This should be regarded with scepticism as I then insert myself in her narrative story, I provide guidance for how she engages with the overarching question regarding her experiences. Following here I provide the excerpt and my thought regarding the use of the example:

Perhaps a bit to leading of a question. It was made to steer the interview in on the effects for her of the emerging pandemic. This was made by including my own experiences.

14 *“How was it for you there... in the beginning when everything started, it was, for me at least it was a worry when I started to realise that this was not good. Aah. That they wouldn't get this under control.”*

In another section of the interview, I inserted myself yet again into her narrative when I provided a suggestion for how to word an experience, she accounted for but seemed to have trouble finding words to describe. I hope that I with practise and experience can reduce my presence in interviews, these two examples show, if anything, that performing an interview is a developed skill. This particular example is from excerpt 10.

The mechanical wording is potentially due to my input during the interview, but she was in that general area of descriptors as my suggestion of the word “mechanical” would indicate.

10. *“It's the same for nurses, they see a certain number of patients every day, the different treatments take different amounts of time, and the day is structured after that. It is very... organised. Could one almost say that it is somewhat mechanical? It can be that at times I would... yeah it can absolutely feel like that at times, that it's a conveyor belt... one can feel that. Because the next one is waiting, the next patient, regardless of what happened earlier the next patient... um... arrive at their appointment.”*

Developing a better understanding of the relationship between experiences and their cumulative effect on the individuals transformative and biographical learning would promote a better comprehension of how and why individuals attach differing degrees of value and importance to their experiences. It could allow for further understandings of existential aspects of learning and development as individual beings.

I would caution against making generalisations of these subject matters. Attempts at broad generalisations would exclude the individual context of the persons own interpretations. However, there could be merit in observing general patterns among individuals in what sorts of events and experiences they remember and attach value to and how they describe those. It would also be of interest to see whether or not there are commonalities between how individuals describe their processes of integrating experiences into their biographical narratives.

Small scale questionnaires could be made that focus on specific events which several individuals experienced which look at who those individuals are and how they experienced those events. Structured and semi-structured interviews would also be of interest.

Future endeavours

Further explorations on this subject should aim at structuring and operationalising the proposed theoretical proposal in order to systematically explore its viability. Care should however be taken when performing such a task. It would be easy to construct a theoretical framework and look for particular sets of data which supports the approach. While this would work to support the theory it is an approach that easily misses the point of the perspective. That to explore the individual experience of living and changing as a result of cumulative experiences. As such my suggestion is that slow progress and attention to narratives and the lived context of which it describes is taken.

It is far too often that researchers disregard the individual experience of those who are being research, even as the focus is on the individual. Abstraction lies closely at hand when designing research. The theoretical approach to learning and development used and put forward in this thesis aims at both retaining the individuals experience and abstracting from the provided narrative indications of the cognitive processes behind the self-awareness.

For future endeavours attempting this process a suggestion that I will put forwards is that of isolating a group of individuals that share a common experience with each other and in their narratives look for similarities in how they process and describe that experience. Analyse those similarities through a lens of the proposed combination of learning theories.

Ethical considerations

The Swedish national guidelines for research ethics are provided by Vetenskapsrådet and are published online on www.vr.se.

It is important to follow the ethical guidelines provided by the governing bodies in the countries where one intends to conduct research. Silverman (2013, p. 313-317) accounts for the British guidelines for ethical research. I use them here for ease as they rather well translate from the Swedish ones provided by Vetenskapsrådet.

“1. Research staff and subjects must be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved [...] 2. The confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and the anonymity of respondents must be respected [...] 3. Research participants must participate in a voluntary way, free from any coercion [...] 4. Harm to research participants must be avoided [...] 5. The independence and impartiality of researchers must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit”

Anonymity has been provided for, no mentions of the individual or any identifying markers are provided in the texts. However, there remains some concerns that the participant could potentially be identified if she were to tell anyone of her involvement in the study.

Confidentiality proved to be of little issue. The recordings were located on an external hard drive, and all personal information was removed from the transcriptions.

Working with individuals and inquiring into areas that are potentially difficult to talk about, re-live, care was taken to ensure that the subject was comfortable and willing to continue participating throughout the interview. It was made clear to the participant that they could whenever they wished to, stop the interview, or recall a statement that they had made. As well as removing their participation all together.

Keeping in mind that the act of telling a story, life narrative, is in and of itself a learning process as one goes over one's own experiences, Hallqvist (2014) makes an ethical implication. We as researchers must understand that when participating in an interview the participants learn about themselves and experiences new events. The interview is an occasion of learning, not simply one of telling. Depending on the subject matter this can have deep ethical implications and effects.

Max van Manen (1997) describes worthwhile thoughts on the effects of performing research. Both on the subjects and the researcher. First, the effects of participating in a study is an aspect that needs to be reflected upon. Who, will participating in a particular research project, entice? What do they hope to gain by participating? Will the experience be positive or negative depending on the research objective? These are question that are well worth to consider when studying phenomenological aspects of human beings. For this particular study, I did consider that the subject might be negatively affected by the retelling her experiences, but I decided that it would ultimately be up to her to decide whether or not she would be willing to participate. All I could really do was to inform of the subject and ask if she would be willing to share. Second, the methods used may have different outcomes for the participant. Some methodologies are more invasive than others. This choice has implications for the subject. For this study, the choice was made to perform an open narrative interview where an initial overarching question was asked in order to promote a narrative telling of the subject's biographical story. Thirdly,

phenomenological research is often an instance of learning and development in and of itself. And as such it is important to be mindful of participants, to listen to them and not to push too strongly when they might not want to share particular thoughts, even if the drive to gather those thoughts as data is strong.

Sustainability

Concerning sustainability this thesis is primarily linked with three of the sustainable development goals as they are described by the UN (<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>)

Firstly:

SDG – 3 Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training, and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States (from [undp.org/sustainable-development-goals](https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals) 271021).

This SDG is relevant in that it focuses on retention of workforce through manageable and sustainable work conditions. This thesis could be used to better understand how individuals' processes changing and challenging work environments, aiding in organisational transitions and accommodation for individuals learning/growth in the workplace.

Secondly:

SDG – 4 - By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development (from [undp.org/sustainable-development-goals](https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals) 271021)

This thesis works toward this particular SDG in that it explores resilience and adaptation abilities among individuals. With a focus on how an individual perceives their place in reality and act according to their beliefs of what will have the best outcome for them or those they care about; this thesis furthers the knowledge on how individuals live their lives and why. This contributes to the understanding of what makes people able to handle changing demands from the environments that they inhabit.

Thirdly:

SDG – 8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment (from [undp.org/sustainable-development-goals](https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals) 271021)

This goal is included in this paper on the grounds that it aims for safe and sustainable work environments. Something that a better understanding of how individuals learn through experiences might very well aid. Particularly at workplaces where there are dangers involved and it is demonstrably a challenging environment where people prone to leaving the workplace because of the labour conditions.

Concluding thoughts

Studying and writing about how self-awareness influences the incorporation of experiences into a self-aware personal narrative story to account for individual growth and learning has shown itself to be a challenging task. It is at best an elusive subject where any claim of knowledge is subject to reinterpretations and multitudes of alternative explanations. It all hinges on the perspective that is assumed by the researcher. In this thesis the aim has been to explore how one such perspective can

enlighten the process through which the individual understands and experiences their own journey of living and developing. Learning has here been understood as instances of development. Not limiting learning to a directed effort for acquisition of new knowledge allows for a holistic perspective on what it means to be human and to develop through living life. It also provides an expanding comprehension of how and where people learn. By limiting learning to instances of education it would have been impossible to explore the learning and individual growth that was made by the interviewee during the pandemic. The pandemic being an experience that forced changed behaviour, re-evaluations of how life is being lived, a constant adaptation to new circumstances and expectation from society.

This thesis has attempted to explore the idea of what learning is and can be. Learning has explicitly not been limited to education or set goals for development. The notion of what learning is has been left unsaid as to not limit the possibilities of other interpretations of the theories and methods used in the thesis.

A question to ask that furthers the idea of what knowledge is, especially as it is observed in another is; can we really know another person. This question is difficult to approach. Perhaps easy at a first glance but the more it is considered the harder it becomes to answer. First, consider what knowledge is and how you know that. Second, ask if whether that interpretation is correct and what other aspects and perspectives there are that answers the same question. Third, consider how humans perceive their life worlds, those perceptions are individual and deeply contextualised, then consider the role of communication and how that is dictated by the interaction of two or more individuals' different interpretations of the situation and how communication is conditioned on the basis of social structures. A question must then be asked, is it possible to observe another person's meta-cognitive process and claim knowledge of observed learning instances? That line of inquiry might be aided when also considering questions such as, are all attempts at understanding learning and personal growth doomed to be introspective endeavours as it is impossible to know that someone else is able to convey their ideas and thoughts of experience and learning without contexts interrupting and changing/conditioning that very same communication. Nothing in the human realm exists in a vacuum. What does this mean for the attempt at reaching knowledge?

I claim no profound answer to such question. I have however put forward a conceptualisation of how an individual learns from and grows as a result of understanding themselves as individuals living in contexts and reflecting upon their own experiences. And I have attempted to make justice to the interviewee's narrative understanding of themselves. Theoretically abstracting mainly my own observations.

By using the BNIM the study attempted to reduce any input into the data that was gathered. The thesis could have been written using other methods such as written correspondence, questionnaires or a multitude of more strictly guided data gathering methods but that would also have removed the possibility for the interviewee to freely discuss their own experiences and how they reflected upon these. The use of a single subject also made it possible to extensively consider the underlying connections between her biographical story and the theories chosen to explore learning. A single subject meant that it was possible to in-depth explore learning. With that comes that the paper is not generalisable. Future attempts to explore the holistic approach to learning assumed in this thesis will have to be strict in scope and clearly define what aspects of learning is being studied. One method that could be used in exploring the combination of biographical learning and transformative learnings combined effect on the individual would be to choose individuals who have experienced similar or even the same instances of events and explore their interpretations of those events. Cohorts of students, individuals who have gone through training together etc.

Translating the data from the interview proved to be very difficult. There were a multitude of questions that arose during that process. Some examples of questions include: how do I do the material justice? do I straight up translate it, or do I attempt to make the material justice and adjust for language

usage, meanings? how much do I clarify for the purpose of analysis? It has been a real headscratcher. In the end the choice was made to attempt to retain the intentions of the communicated narrative and to the best of my ability translate idiomatic differences. The initial analysis was made on the untranslated material in order to maintain as much of the intentions as possible. The untranslated material has also been provided as an appendix to allow for any interested reader to for themselves read the original material without my limited ability of translation.

The process of writing this thesis has in and of itself been an instance of the subject matter of how experiences cumulate into a transformative experience that makes itself known in my own biographical narrative. Going forward in life, this work will always be a part of my biographical narrative when I am thinking of my progress through my academic aspirations. It will always be a part of who I am going forward, that which I have learnt and reflected upon stays with me. Much as the thesis subject suggest. This entire thesis could be seen as a documentation of my narrative story. All the choices I have made, all that I have chosen to include in this final telling of the story of this section of my life. As much as has been included in this thesis there is as much that has been rejected when deciding what is worth to include in order to make this narrative coherent.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Missive letter

Hej!

Är du intresserad av att dela med dig av dina erfarenheter av Covid-19 pandemin och bidra till fördjupade insikter om hur ansträngande situationer och erfarenheter påverkar den egna självförståelsen och leder till förändringar och lärande hos människor?

Jag heter Oscar Funeskog och studerar på IMER-programmet vid Göteborgs universitet (International Master in Educational Research). Under våren skriver jag min D-uppsats och letar efter deltagare till intervjuer om erfarenheter från Covid-19 pandemin bland professionella inom vården. Jag söker vårdpersonal som arbetat med Covid-19 patienter under pandemin.

Jag studerar så kallat biografiskt lärande bland vuxna i informella lärande situationer. Med biografiskt lärandet avses lärande som sker genom reflektion över erfarenheter från arbetslivet och det vardagliga livet i den egna självförståelsen (biografen). För att samla data till arbetet söker jag individer som vill vara med och dela med sig av sina erfarenheter.

Mitt intresse är att förstå vilka erfarenheter Covid-19 pandemin inneburit för enskilda individer och hur dessa påverkat den personliga livshistorien. Studien syftar till att undersöka hur individer tar till sig påfrestande livserfarenheter där de har begränsad möjlighet att påverka sin situation. Vilka förändringar och lärande leder sådana erfarenheter till.

Med några av deltagarna genomförs intervjuer där de får tala fritt om sig själva och sina upplevelser obehindrat. Uppskattningsvis handlar det om två intervjutillfällen om vardera en till två timmar där det första tillfällena är helt öppet att tala fritt. Under det andra tillfället kommer jag att bidra med frågor.

Med de andra deltagarna handlar det om tydligare strukturerade intervjuer med stort utrymme för att utveckla sina erfarenheter och tankar. Med dessa är det ett intervjutillfälle, det uppskattas ta en till två timmar även det.

Samtalen spelas in för att sedan transkriberas. Inspelningarna raderas omedelbart efter transkriberingen. Deltagande i undersökningen är helt anonymt. Möjlighet kommer att finnas för deltagare att ta del av mina analyser för att kommentera och säkerställa att jag tolkat korrekt.

Om du skulle vilja delta i studien så vore jag mycket tacksam. Du når du mig på nedanstående e-mailadress.

gusfuneos@student.gu.se

Hälsningar

Oscar Funeskog

Appendix 2

These are all of the excerpts in their original transcription.

2. mm, nä för jag har, när [borttaget] pratat om det, när jag läste, så har jag tänkt liksom... utifrån ett sjuksköterskeperspektiv, om man säger så,, mm. utifrån hur det har påverkat äh om men hur det har sett ut... det lilla jag har varit inblandad, hur det har påverkat jobbet här liksom *mm*. äh men privat har jag inte funderat så mycket nu innan. *nä men*. men det har påverkat, men du ställer lite frågor så jag kommer på något att säga hoppas jag?

6. Nej, jag blev utbränd hösten 2015. *2015*. Precis, när jag jobbade på onkologmottagningen på [borttaget] sjukhus... eh och eh.. det tog väldigt lång tid att komma tillbaka. *Mm*. Av olika anledningar,, men jag hade ju gått väldigt länge innan ja väl blev utbränd. Och sen så var det svårt att komma tillbaka till samma ställe... ehmm. Så det var mycket stressorer som triggades i gång och eh... först hade jag ingen chef och sen hade en chef som inte kanske var jätteförstående så och pressade... Mycket hårdare. *Mm* Att jag skulle vara kvar även efter att jag hade slutat och... så där,, så det blev aldrig riktigt bra. Och det var svårt äh... ja, det är ett ställe som det är svårt att jobba på och ta det lite lugnt. Utan det är ju,, är man där så är det ju fullt ös på något vis. *Det finns inte att.. kan du ta det här åt mig en kvart medan jag sitter och vilar lite*. Aah, ja precis. Eller så tillkommer det nånting.. det var ju väldigt svårt att äh även då när jag bara skulle jobba 25%... så är det ju ofta det tillstöter det någonting så är det svårt kanske att sluta då vid klockan 12... ehmm.. och sen jobbade jag administrativt en period.. med olika kvalitetsregister genom [borttaget] för det är samma klinik. Ehh och när jag skulle gå upp till 75% procent det var då som.. chefen jag har nu hade frågat HR om det fanns någon sjuksköterska som kunde komma *Mm*. till [borttaget] på 25%. *Mm*. Så på den vägen halkade jag in här

7. Mmm jaaa... ja men det hade ju varit en väldigt lång rehab period och... ehhh... väldigt lite information egentligen skulle jag tycka. För jag jobbade ju med [borttaget]... äh sen skulle man sluta med dem... det hade kommit ett stort spar, måste ha varit höst 2017, kom ett stort spar på [borttaget]... och då skulle man sluta med ehh när som gjorde dem här [borttaget]... även fast det egentligen måste göras... man då hade man inga pengar för det längre så att då skulle det ju... sluta. Och det fick ju jag väldigt sent information om och så att... det är klart det har mycket... stress... i även det. Även om den chefen jag hade då var fanatiskt bra ähh så... så att ehh... Nä men jag halkade väl in lite på bananskal... i psykiatrin. Och jag har alltid sagt att jag inte ska jobba med [borttaget] äh jag ska inte jobba med psykiatrin... men jag har trivts jättebra

8. Med det också. Det vart väldigt, det är väldigt annorlunda mot det jag har arbetat med innan... Bara hela psykiatribytet, hur man tänker och hur man jobbar. Ej ju väldigt annorlunda

9. asså du kommer till exempel som jag som jobbade med cytostatikabehandling det sista då. Då har du... en diagnos... eller... så då så kommer du till cytostatika mottagningen och har ett läkarbesök, man bestämmer vilken behandling regim du ska ha. Och så kör man på det schemat. Sen kan det ju alltid ändra sig lite, utifrån biverkningar och annat. Men det är ju ganska så tydligt. Korta beslut äh... saker händer liksom fort. Ehhh... äh väldigt tydliga... ramar och rutiner om hur saker och ting ska ske utifrån diagnos eller... annat akut tillstånd som uppstår... Ehmm... [borttaget]psykiatrin som jag har upplevt den e ju mycket mera... långsam asså det är mycket... och det ska det ju va asså, det är ju stor skillnad. Men det är ju mycket mera... vad ska man säga varje besök tar ju... mental väldigt mycket... för personal på ett sätt äh behöver liksom kanske reflekteras kring innan man dokumenterar och mera... olika saker, eller vad ska man säga... andra faktorer att ta hänsyn till som också kan påverka behandling eller... nästa steg om man säger så.

10. Det ska jag nog väl säga. Och även att ehm. Att man har ex antal behandlingar på en dag. Sen är det inte alltid bra heller. För de är olika... ehh besök kan ju ta olika tid ändå. Men det är ändå väldigt såhär att... doktor träffar så här många varav en är remisstid, dem andra är behandlingstid. Samma, sjuksköterskorna träffar så här många på en dag, den här behandlingen tar så lång tid, och så dut dut dut. Och så du är ju väldigt... organiserat. *Kan man nästan säga att det är lite mekaniskt?* Det kan det ju va ibland det skulle jag... jo men det kan det ju absolut kännas som ibland att det är lite löpande band... det kan man ju känna. För nästa kommer ju, nästa patient, oavsett vad som har hänt innan så kommer ju nästa patient... ehhm... den tiden den kommer. Men det var nästan ännu mera, jag jobbade på strålbehandling i [borttaget] tidigare.

11b Nä och så är det jättesvårt att förstå det själv. Skulle jag vilja säga. Man ser ju på någon annan åh kan säga till - herregud, lugna ner dig lite, ska du verkligen ta på dig det där också? Men eh själv kör man ju ändå på. *Eh jag orkar en dag till... det går lite till.* Ja man på nått vis man kan inget annat eller... ja jag vet inte

11c Jag tänker... ehh. *Där innan 2015, barnen var ju ganska små.* Ja. *Det tar ju också tid och energi.* Absolut, det är ju inte bara en orsak till att man blir utbränd det tror jag inte. För hade jag haft stressigt jobb men kunnat tokvila hemma så hade det kunnat kompenseras. *Aa.* Men det är klart att det påverkar att man inte sover så bra, att man.. ska lämna trött och ledsna barn på förskola. Det är klart att de eeh att det gör någonting med en också. *Aah jag tänker att det är mycket känslor man ska gås igenom på en dag.* Så är det ju.

11d Och ständigt känslan av att man inte riktigt hinner i tid till jobbet.. och asså det är mycket och när man väl kommer till jobbet så är det Bam! Och så är det. Kör man på Och så går man där hela dan och sen är det ju hem och hämta... så det är klart. *Ah och nånstars ska man vara människa där emellan.* Ah men precis.

11e *Och känna att jag orkar inte mer.. men... vad ska man göra åt det.* Det är ju också att förstå nån gång att hur kul det än är på lördag att träffa den där personen eller tacka ja till den här festen... så... orkar jag det inte egentligen, asså, det blir för mycket även av trevliga saker liksom... åh det är ju svårt att förstå. När allting är.. när även.. även trevliga saker att göra tar ju energi, fast man kanske inte riktig förstå det. Då. *Jag tänker att ofta finns det kanske en aspekt att man vill inte att det ska ta energi.* Nä men för det ger ju också energi... men eh, man måste kanske inte klämma in tre saker på en dag på en lördag. Ehhm men det är...

11f Ja. *Så då hade du en tre års period... med först återhämtning vila och sen rehab och återgång.* Ja men så måste det ha vart. För jag blev sjuk hösten 2015 och sen började jag jobba igen september 2016.. ja.. då måste det vart 2018 när jag började här, i mars. *Då började du på 25% sa du.* Ja, då jobbade jag 50% och hade gjort det i ett halvår på... eller längre... på administrativt. På [borttaget] med [borttaget].

11g *Jag tänker att.. en sån erfarenhet påverkar en i grunden som människa.* Ehh.. man konfronteras ju med sina begränsningar ganska hårt. *Jag tänker att det är något man för med sig under väldigt lång tid.* Absolut. *Är det din erfarenhet, att du har det med dig.* Ja men det påverkar ju egentligen hela mitt liv idag. För jag kan ju på riktigt känna hur... men dels har jag ju varit jätteljudkänslig. Framför allt har vart väldigt jobbigt. Och det har ju... påverkar ju jättemycket asså. Det var ju jättelång period som jag asså jag kunde ju inte åka något ärende på hemvägen. Utan åka raka vägen hem bara och vila... och sen kunde jag åka och hämta barnen. Det fick jag ju göra asså ett år minst... ehhm... och sånt där som man annars tycker är så lätt bara åh svänga in på... a men bara svänga in på systemet och köpa en flaska vin kändes ju liksom övermäktigt. Det var ju liksom åh klara av arbetsdagen och sen ...vila, för att sen... kunna orka liksom eftermiddag kvällen. Ehhm det var ju väldigt lång period... och jag, det kan ju nästan komma över mig ibland också när jag är på jobbet och bara sätter mig och varvar ner när

jag kommer hem för att det är så lätt att bara åh fortsätta med nästa grej liksom. Att slänga in en tvättmaskin, laga mat och så, ja du vet. *Aa*. Så,, ehh. Så att det är... det får jag ju fortfarande... även om jag liksom på nått vis vant mig själv vid det så får jag ju ändå stundtals så kommer man ju in i det där gamla. *Mm*. Och även då att min man ibland också glömmer bort att... att ehhh, jag inte funkar som förr liksom. *Mm*. Han... det är påtagligt hur hjärnan har blivit påverkad ska jag säga. även minnet, alltså förut så hade jag sällan någon kalender, jag kom ihåg liksom jag visste, vilka helger jag skulle göra vad,, jag hade det liksom. Om någon hade sagt något kom jag ihåg det. Men nu kan det va som att... det är inte riktig samma sak längre... (går ner i rösten, låter ledsen över det nya tillståndet, min reflektion) helt enkelt, jag får skriva ner saker och jag får ju... det har ju på något vis vart en sorg, när man blir medveten om hur det har påverkat än. För då känner man ju att det hade jag ju inte... även om jag har lärt mig mycket av det så hade jag ju helst varit utan den erfarenheten och fattat tidigare... att ehh, inte köra på så hårt liksom...

11h Men samtidigt så... funkar det ju bra nu också... så, när man väl har landat i det på något viss. Lite annat sätt att tänka på bara. *Ja, man får ha en annan ... vad skulle jag säga... man får tänka lite annorlunda. Det är inte samma men det kan vara bara ändå.* Ja men precis. *Man får liksom acceptera att... nä... får vila lite.* Ja men absolut.

11i Jag har en kompis som haft svår post-covid, och hon har... ju haft precis samma symptom som jag hade liksom i utmattningen. Det här med att inte orka med för mycket och inte komma ihåg saker och ljudkänslig och så där åh.. det är ju lite deppigt. *Mm*. När man liksom inser det samtidigt som... det.. det är bara, man får liksom ha ett annat mindset in i det på något vis. *Aah, och omvärlden tar inte hänsyn till det.* Nä.

11j *Det är klart att det blir en jätteomställning tänker jag.* Ja men det blir det. Men det blir en själv som byter strategier kring att säg att.. för att få andra att förstå att nej... jag kan inte göra det då, eller jag orkar inte idag, eller jag måste ställa in det hära... det är ju inte alla som har jätteförståelse för det i sin omgivning...

12. *Men då kom du hit 2018.* *Mm. När började.... [borttaget] eller? Nä Covid tänkte jag.* Haha ja. Det var ju... *Våren 2020 drog det i gång på riktigt va? Ja... precis... i mars. Mmm,, då hade du börjar här på va sa du 25%. Året innan... nä två år innan. Två år innan och börjat på 25%. Hade du gått upp i tid? Ja men jag började på 75% då... förste januari... frågan är ju vilket år, om det var 19 då... Aa.* Eller 18... 18 måste det ja ha vart. *Du sa 18 förut så jag har skrivit 18.* *Aa.. vi säger 18 då.* Men var det inte i mars 18 jag började här och sen i januari 19 gick jag upp till 75%

13. ... *återhämtningen gick ju bra.* *Jaa,,* och så sätt har det ju vart skitbra åh börja på, inom [borttaget]psykiatrin, för det var ju ett helt annat tempo liksom. Och det var något nytt på något vis. Men det var inte det här att, eftersom att jag då hade jobbat administrativ bara i början... öhh så... har det vart jättebra, och mycket friare också. Det har inte vart hela världen om jag varit en kvart sen på morgonen. Man har kunnat använda sin flex. Det har man inte kunnat göra när man haft bokade patienter. *Nää det blir väldigt stor skillnad, blir annan frihet.* Och det har varit jätte läkande för mig. åh att inte ha... den här pressen liksom.

14. *Hur var det för dig där i... början när allt började komma, de är ju, för mig var det ett orosmoment när man började fatta att det här är inte bra.* *Aah. De får inte stopp på det här*

15a Jag tänkte att herregud visst liksom att vi kan hålla avstånd och sånt hära,, men det blev så himla mycket, oro, nästan hysteriskt tycke jag.

15b För att, jag vet inte men jobbar man i vården så är man ganska van vid vissa virusinfektioner och hur asså, och medveten om hur man ska tvätta händerna och allting och hålla avstånd och allt så....

15c Plötsligt blev det så himla sjåpigt liksom. Så över.. men det var väl många människor så klart som var oroliga... ehh som... inte hade vissa grundläggande... kunskaper om det. Asså, Det skrevs ju så mycket om det, det blev ju så hypat i media så där är klart att de....

16. Himla uppblåste tänkte jag att det är bara att sitta lugnt i båten här. Men ehh sen blev det ju inte så sen i mars så blev det ju... jag kommer inte ihåg dem exakta restriktionerna då.. men det var väl att man skulle undvika... *Stor folksamlingar*. Man skulle ja.. helst inte, ja man skulle inte träffa för mycket folk. *Ja, det var väl då man också började prata om att stänga skolor och sånt*. Ja... ehh precis. Jag skulle inte säga att jag var orolig då.. men.. det är klart att det påverkade.. en jättemycket.. man förstod ju att det var allvarligt. Men.. men... ja trodde ju inte.. det trodde väl ingen att det skulle hålla på så här länge. *Gud nej*

16b Ehh... så att.. eh.. nä.. men sen.. har ju alla tolkat det så himla olika. Jag har ju alltid känt att man kan ses utomhus och man kan... men alla har ju inte ens velat göra det... jag tyckte nog mer att det vart jobbigt att andra människor vart oroliga för saker som är helt orimliga..

17. skulle stänga skolorna, jag vet inte här då när man jobbar inom [borttaget]psykiatrin så så sa man ju alltid att det ska mycket till att man ska göra det här i Sverige liksom för att... det finns ju så många andra riskfaktorer med det... sen gjorde man ju det till slut lite ändå men... men tack och lov inte som i... många andra länder. *Nä, de yngre åldrarna har ändå fått gå*. Precis. *Och det är väl,, barnens utveckling som är väldigt viktigt*. *Men det, det var mycket prat där i börjar och mycket spekulationer*. Ja..., det var det. Men... emm som jag mins det, så tog jag det mest med ro. asså Det är inte såna saker som oroar mig. Utifrån min erfarenhet från utmatningen och så där. Det är inte såna saker som triggas mera

18a Sååå att det är, det är... men sen vet jag inte hur det var sen... det var ju mycket det här, att man inte skulle... att man inte fick resa någonstans... alla gränser stängde och så dära. Det var ju väldigt ovanlig situation. För det har ju aldrig någonsin hänt. Men då blev man ju också oerhört medveten om hur oerhört fritt vi lever annars... vi kan ju boka resa i princip vart som helst när som helst. Det blev man ju väldigt medveten om. Tyckte jag. Och så plötsligt så... skulle man ju helst inte åka utanför sin egen lilla region liksom och utifrån sitt... ehhm så det är klart att det påverkade... hur man levde. Och tänkte. *Tror aldrig riktigt jag tänkt på att man kände sig begränsad på att resa. Men det är klart det blev man ju*

18b Ja, men det var väl också för att jag hade en ide om att vi skulle åkt, vi skulle vart 2020 och åkt och träffat vänner i Spanien som vi var tvungna att ställa in. Och in i det sista så kände jag att, nä det är klart att vi kan åka. ... och jag hade ju... liksom i mitt huvud ändå planerat lite resor som vi skulle göra.. och så plötsligt, kunde man inte göra det.

18c *dem planerna försvann*. ja, det fick skjutas på framtiden helt enkelt. *jag hade inga såna planer, jag hade precis vart i, på kanarieöarna*. Aa du var mättad på resebehovet. *Aa, jag var ju där veckan innan de stängde alltihop*. Jaha. *Så det var ju precis i sista svängen där, så jag hade ju inga planerade reser*. Nä. *Så på det sättet tänkte ju inte jag på det sättet*. Nä. *Men det är ju väldigt spännande*. *Liksom, Just det här,, man har en idé om vad man ska göra under de närmaste åren*. Mm. *Och helt plötsligt bara dem försvinner*. Ja.. oh jag kanske, det kanske blev lite extra mycket så tänker jag för att, jag har ju tänkte att... nu fyller ju barnen 10 och så den stora fyller 14, asså hur många år vill hon åka med oss till här nu. Så att jag har ju känt lite också att man vill passa på så länge vi kan åka hela familjen. Och sen kanske det är år då man inte vill åka bort och lämna en tonåring själv hemma också. Så att jag har ju känt att jag vill få gjort, eller jag liksom, resa med barnen.

19a Åh det kan jag själv känna också att man har vant sig vid ett annat lunk på något vis. *Mm* Plötsligt känns det som att, jaha men ska vi åka bort den här helgen också, vi vart ju borta förra helga. Orkar inte. *Livet blev lite mer... koncentrerat, det blev lite lugnare.* Ja men precis.

19b Det har ju passat mig då. Med min historia med utmattning väldigt bra. För att det har ju också varit mycket lättare att lite spontant träffa vänner och även folk man kanske inte känner så där, eller... föräldrar till barnens kompisar, eller, man har kunnat, alla har inte vart så himla uppbokade som de har varit tidigare. Det har inte vart matcher och kupper åh, bam bam bam. Och så där. På gott och ont. För det har ju heller inte vart liksom luciafiranden och köruppvisningar. Och asså, man har ju också missat mycket sånt. Men... det har ju också gjort att man själv har haft lugnare.

20. Så det påverkade ju inte mig så eftersom att vi jobbar med utredning då, av [borttaget] med [borttaget] så var det inte... det var jättelång kö, åh så det var ju aldrig något tal om att ställa in nånting å så där, utan verksamheten pågick ju ändå som vanligt. Det som påverkades var väl att [borttaget] då inte kunde göra [borttaget] till exempel. Men för, för läkarna var det ju detsamma, även sen när vi flyttade hit (lokal byte). Åh men för psykologerna har det vart samma så, annat än att de har fått använda skyddsutrustning då. Det som var... för då min del var ju ganska tidigt att man blev någon slaggs, eller ja chefen då skulle ju meddela till högre instans hur många sjuksköterskor eller hur mycket vårdutbildad personal man hade, eller om det var någon som jobbade som något men också hade vårdutbildning. Åh liksom kring det. Å i samband med det så blev det ju tal på att man skulle behöva gå in på [borttaget] och göra, om typ det blev kris och personal därifrån skulle behöva gå någon annan stans. Att vi från [borttaget] skulle gå till [borttaget]. Och arbeta. Och då kände jag som inte alls jobbat med psykiatri innan. Även om jag då var på [borttaget] då så jobbade jag inte med barnen. *Nä.* Ehh så att det kändes jättelångt borta för mig. Jag kan ju inte psykiatri alls, så att då, då blev jag ju väldigt stressad. Då var vi även på någon sån hära 2h introduktion. Hastigt och lustigt. Det fick jag reda på samma dag.

21a Att, ah men, 'halv två, det har jag glömt säga till dig', asså sånt blir jag ju väldigt stressad av, 'halv två ska ni va på [borttaget] åh få en introduktion ifall du ska jobba där' Det blev ju så där Bam!. *Det blev ju en väldigt snabb omställning där då* Ja. Plus då att vi var på den introduktionen på [borttaget], för mig är de ju som att jag skulle jobba ute i rymden, på något vis. Jag är ju så himla somatiskt skolad och har jobbat bara inom somantiken som sjuksköterska

21b Så jag kände ju att men det.. jag kommer ju inte gör någon nytta där. Å sen du vet, jättesnabbt, allting bara, gick igenom allt allting, och där är [borttaget]. Och jag bara kände att '[borttaget]' (uttalas med uttryck) nä ä. det här klarar jag inte av.. så jag blev jättestressad utav av det. Och sen jag vet inte. Då så pratade jag väl med min chef någonting om att att det är ju bättre att jag i så fall går till, jag gör ju mycket mer nytta somantiken, det är ju bättre att jag i så fall går tillbaka. Asså när man vet att det är under en kort period, då kan jag lätt gå till exempel onkologmottagningen. Där jag jobbat innan. och Asså jag kan ändå göra de flesta behandlingarna där.

22a Då drog det i gång ingen där under hösten och innan jul kom det nya restriktioner. Då hade vi flyttat hit (ny lokal), då var det på tal igen. Och då skulle man ju skriva upp sig på pass [borttaget]. Kommer inte ihåg exakt hur det gick till men hur som helst... åh då var jag, tyckte att jag hade sagt att jobba inom somantiken att det skulle kunna va att jag gick till mottagning eller onkologmottagning och att nån möjligtvis där som har en erfarenhet av vårdavdelning skulle kunna gå till en vårdavdelning. Blev det att plötsligt att jag skulle in på en vårdavdelning. Jag jobbade senast på vårdavdelning... jag slutade februari 2007 på vårdavdelning. Det var ju liksom 15 år sen typ

22b Så jag kan ju heller dem här systemen. Asså jag har ju inte ens vårdnära lager, till exempel vi hade inte... det började komma när jobbade på onkologmottagningen, men vi behövde ju aldrig, vi hade alla våra läkemedel hos oss. Ehh... Och SAMSA, och nått mer sånt här system som det finns som man

ska hålla på med... ehmm.. dem kan inte jag. Men då blev det i alla fall tal om att jag skulle göra några pass på... vad den nyöppnade nu hette... det var ju gamla [borttaget] eller [borttaget] i alla fall. En kirurgavdelning tror jag som man gjorde om

23 Den startade då eller 1e januari 2021. Att jag skulle gå dit några pass säger då [borttaget] till mig här. Alltså våran chef. Och så skulle jag ringa hon då som var tillförordnad chef på den avdelningen. Och... ehmm... det var nog redan den 23 december i för sig [borttaget] sa till mig... åh då kunde jag ha blivit beordrar över jul. Så var det ja. Eller ja. Jag kanske kunde fått göra... men jag hörde aldrig nånting. Jag jobbade här den 23 december och då var det prat om att de skulle kunna ringa mig samma dag och säga att jag tvungen att komma.

24a Nu hörde jag ju ingenting och sen minns jag inte om det var i mellandagarna eller början på januari där som det... måste väl vart i början på januari, att jag skulle ringa den hära andra chefen och fråga henne vad jag skulle komma och göra. Åh det kändes ju så där, dels med min erfarenhet från utmattningen plus att jag kände att jag har inte jobbar på vårdavdelning på 15 år. Det är, det blir inte bra. Asså, dels så superstressad kring det men också att jag inte riktigt kan, asså inte bara att jag är stressad, utan också att jag känner att jag inte kan det heller.

24b Ehmm.. åh sen då när jag pratade med den här andra chefen så visade det säg att jag skulle komma dit från och med typ, om vi pratade på torsdagen så skulle jag börja på måndagen, på heltid... på obestämd tid. Åh det var ju också så hära att tills den.. avdelning stängde och det visste ju ingen hur länge det skulle va. Och det var ju också... väldigt dålig information till mig kände jag. Och väldigt.. aa.. min chef hade ju också sagt att det var olämpligt att ta mig, utifrån att jag inte jobbat på vårdavdelning på länge och min utbrändhetshistoria.

24c Men, men ändå var det ju så här att det e ju lite så ibland att en sjuksköterska är liksom som en fia pjäs. Nu flyttar vi ut/in dig här. Sådära. *Du löser den uppgiften.* Ja, och så tänker man att en sjuksköterska är en sjuksköterska, och så är det ju sällan. För det är ju oerhört specialiserat mycket på vart man jobbar eller har jobbat. Det är ju väldigt olika jobb. Även om grunden är densamma. Ehmm.. så hon (chefen) försökte verkligen också tala till min fördel genom att säga... men, men det spelade ju ingen roll utan då skulle jag komma dit. Och jag tänkte väl att nä men jag får väl ta och rulla upp armarna och köra.

25. Ehmm och det ställde om ganska mycket i livet. För plötsligt då så skulle, min man jobbar kväll var fjärde vecka, och den vecka som jag skulle börjar... jobba på vårdavdelningen då så jobbade han kväll. Då betydde det ju att, det ställde ju om ganska mycket. För ena dottern då skulle få börja vara själv hemma på morgonen... det kan hon ju inte ha vart för han var ju hemma och sov... ja nått var det i alla fall. *Hmhmhm.* som blev väldigt mycket. Plötsligt skulle liksom vardagen ändras ganska mycket för hela familjen på väldigt kort tid också. Ehmm och jag har då, kan man tänka att efter dem här dagarna på ett helt nytt jobb, också ha... fullt ansvar hemma så att... min man inte kom hem förens 12-01 på natten då på hela den veckan. Så var det ju lite mycket stresspåslag där då. Kan man säga. Men när jag satt här försökte jag ändå att avvärja det på något vis. Men det gick ju inte, så att jag tänkte att då får jag får väl bara kavla upp armarna och gå dit liksom

26a Men emm redan första dan eller redan första... det kändes ju som att gå in i en centrifug på något vis... *mm.* för att det var ju så mycket ljud. Som det är på en vårdavdelning. Hela tiden maskiner som ringer. Det var ganska... jag kommer inte ihåg hur många platser det var, men det var ju liksom. Det var telefoner ringer, och folk... alltså, här kan jag ju gå undan, jag har eget rum så att jag kan stänga till så att jag inte hör några andra... det är jättelyxigt... *mm.* ehmm å så bara, alla ljud, plus då att man känner att man inte kan det. Men känner heller ingen kollega, och helt nya arbetsuppgifter som man förväntas ha koll på. Åtta patienter som du ska ronda på och hålla koll på så att dem överlever. *och på något sätt styra arbetet också.* ja men styra arbetet och dessutom då anmäla vad man gör i de olika

systemen och beställa mediciner från rätt vårdnära lager så att man inte råkar beställa från [borttaget] för där kan man ju inte riktigt gå och hämta från. Samma dag

26b Så himla mycket grejer så kan man känna att.. åh jag kände ganska snabbt att det här kommer inte att funka. Jag kommer ju, det är inte värt min egen hälsa. Så pass klok har jag ändå blivit. För några år sedan hade jag kanske kört på ändå. Men det har jag ju ändå.. det har jag ändå lärt mig. Att det inte är värt... det finns ju ingen som blir lyckligare av att jag går in i väggen en gång till. Så att jag började flagga redan dag två till den chefen där att, jag känner inte... 'näna men du får fortsätta då'. Tänkte att jaja jag får ge det en vecka. Men så blev jag livrädd för att hon huxflux skulle sätta mig på ett schema för man känner ju också så sjukt dåligt samvete för att man vet ju hur alla sliter liksom.

27. Och man är ju van att vara med och hjälpa till då... men, samtidigt känner jag att jag inte kan göra någon nytta knappt. Det var ju jätte... å så är det ju ofta i vården, att även om det är sagt att man ska gå bredvid. Ett visst antal dagar, så huxflux är ens handledare sjuk och då är det ju bara och... asså... då kan man ju glömma den där bredvidgången. Så ser det ju ut. Åh folk var sjuka och folk jobbade extra pass. Bara liksom att höra att folka hade, första dagen jag kom vet jag att hon som gick av natten, hon hade ju även jobbat kvällen. Så skulle hon gå på igen på kvällen. Asså du vet bara dom hära... kastas lite tillbaka i det här. För så var det ju, så gör man i vårdavdelningar förr också. *Mm*. Men dem flest är ju så oerhört plikttrogna så man liksom ställer upp för varandra... i absurdum och gör liksom sånna arbetspass. Och jag kände att det hade jag inte klarat. Jag skulle inte klarat om kvällspersonalen inte kommer och jag måste stanna till klockan 22. Det hade jag inte fixat liksom.. emm så jag kände ganska snart, åh sen så sa jag, så var jag också livrädd för att få ett schema för nästa vecka. För när dem liksom skulle räkna med mig. Att jag inte bara gick bredvid. För då blir det ju så himla. *Mm*. För då blir jag det här gamla, jag kan inte vara sjuk en endaste dag, jag kan inte (djup inandning) ... just att det känns som att så mycket hänger på en

28a Och är jag sjuk så sätter jag den andre i skiten. *Mm*. Den känslan är jobbig... så att jag var bara där fyra dagar under den första veckan... ehm. Och då var det helt... då var det verkligen, bokstavligt talat, som att ha blivit runt körd i sen centrifug. Ehh. Så sen var jag hemma och var sjukskriven en vecka efter det.

28b Och då var det också väldigt otydlig kring vad jag skulle få göra. För min chef här, hon var så här 'nä men vad har den andra chefen sagt' åh men bara hon har sagt att det är ingen som vill att jag ska bli sjuk så jag ska inte va där. Men här var det inte heller som 'då kommer du tillbaka hit'. Asså det var väldigt otydligt, mycket var väldigt otydligt i.. så jag, jag upplevde det som väldigt otydligt i alla fall om vart jag skulle ta vägen och så känner man sig egentligen bara dum och, misslyckad lite på nåt vis när man in har, åh, klarat av det på nåt vis. Ehm men men så till slut så började jag här igen. Men jag hade ju faktiskt under hela förra våren, hade jag ju märkbart stressymptom kvar liksom utifrån den dem dagarna jag var där. Med ökad ljudkänslighet igen och stresskänsla

29. *Så du fick tillbaka en del symptom?* Ah. Åh det (djup utandning), känns ju så himla onödigt, för det hade dom ju faktiskt, ja eftersom...hm hm. Till och med jag då hade vett innan åh säga att det här är ingen bra idé, och min chef. Då hade man ju kunnat, jag hade kunnat göra nytta kanske. Om man bara hade gjort lite mer research kring vad jag kunde. *Hade man tänkt tre steg längre*. Ja, inte bara man är en spelpjäs. *Ja lite mera som en schackpjäs kanske*. Kanske. *Ah men här passar den här bra, så kan man flytta på nästa*. Ja. Emm så det kan jag väl känna. Att arbetsgivare hade kunnat planera bättre. Åh andra sidan, det var ju som totalt kaos, asså jag kan förstå att det inte är jätteenkelt att styra upp det heller

30. Ja, och det, kan det ju va, man blir ju bra på det där man är på något vis. Emm. Men det känns, min erfarenhet är ofta är ju så att man är... man inte riktigt... ser det som att... det känns inte som att arbetsgivaren ser det så, utan att man ser det mer... jag har ju haft andra arbetsplatser tidigare där det

vart väldigt mycket äldre erfarna personal som slutat. Och då tycker man att 'jaja då anställer man en ny sjuksköterska' och det. *Och så tror man att det ska funka på samma sätt.* Ja, för då har man fyllt en lucka på nått vis med en sjuksköterska. Men det blir inte samma vård så klart. *Nä.* För att det, en ny färdig sjuksköterska kan aldrig... har inte den kunskapen som en erfaren har. *Nej, det är klart att de inte har det, de har ju inte jobbat 40år än.* Nej, åh då, känns, fast det är en helt annan fråga. *Nej men.* Det tycker jag känns så himla tråkigt ibland att arbetsgivaren inte... kan förstå, att man inte lyssnar på sin personal, och sin erfarna personal. För att all... jag skulle säga att all vårdpersonal är ju det från början, att man vill hjälpa en patient på något vis. Det är ju ens liksom intention. Jag tycker att man som arbetsgivare ska lyssna på... på det. För nån stans säger man ju ändå att man vill ge en bra vård. Å då så, får man ju ge förutsättningar för det.

31. Jo men det var jättejobbigt då. För att det påverkar ju så mycket. När jag plötsligt ska byta schema för då skulle jag ju börja jobba varannan helg. Så var det ju ja, min man jobbar ju helg också. Så vi skulle ju inte ha.. någon ledig helg tillsammans. Barnen var jätteledsna, för att, dem förstod ju inte alls då varför vi inte skulle liksom å börja planera. Min stora dotter vad var hon då, hon var 12, hon gick i 6an då. Hon började göra ett schema, för mamma och pappa skulle jobba, så att hon ändå fick någon slaggs struktur i det hela och kunde förstå det. Emm och det påverkade... åh men vi hade ju tänkt att åka skidor till exempel. Men nu fick man ju inte ledig för något ändå mer än tre dagar så det hade väl skitit sig i vilket fall, men emmh, jag var så glad för att jag fyllde år på en lördag förra året. Tänkte att vad kul, då kan vi fira det ordentligt. Nähä ska jag jobba då. Min ena, hon som fyllde 9 då förra året, hon fyllde också år på en helg, som jag också tänkte, för det är ju så lyxigt då när man jobbar mån-fre, när jag jobbade på vårdavdelning gjorde man ju inte det, och jag tycker ju fortfarande det är helt underbart att alltid vara ledig på helgen. Ehmm... så att jaha så ska jag kanske inte få va ledig när hon fyller år. Asså typ mycket så här tankat kring det privata. Det påverkar mig ju så klart att jag plötsligt skulle börja jobba både kvällar och helger. Emm... när man är van vid att inte göra det. Och jag har aldrig gillat å jobba kväll och helg för jag sover så dåligt och så där. Men också missa saker med ah men när barnen är ledig framför allt. Så det påverkar ju och skapar mycket stress där. Men så försökte jag ändå tänka att 'jaja, det är en kort period liksom det här' om, tio år kommer man bara att knappt minnas det här som en lite paus. Asså så försöker man ju ändå åh intala sig själv.

32. Men ändå så blev jag också ganska arg vill jag minnas. Att 'Fasiken liksom det här, vill inte'. Jag... åh.. ah. *Du har valt att inte jobba så.* Ja men lite, jag har valt att inte jobba så, jag har vart sjukskriven. Jag har ändå var tydligt med... ändå blivit bra på åh va tydlig med vad jag klarar av och inte, vilket jag inte var innan jag var utmattad, utan då var det mer ajaj jag fixar det och jag kan göra det och jag kan göra det. Men jag ju har blivit mycket... då blir jag provocerad av att ingen lyssnar på det, på något vis. när man väl säger, för det är så mycket snack om att man ska säga ifrån och hej och hå. Och att då inte bli lyssnad på när man gör det. *Mm.* Det kan jag, känner jag mig provocerad av på något vis

33a. Men också även folk i närheten som man känner väl men som inte kanske är van att man säger nej, så att de inte ens hör när man säger nej. Nej men sen så påverkar det mig också jättemycket när man kommer till den här avdelningen på den här covidavdelningen. Ehmm, all personal är ju liksom, det var ju inte mer synd om mig en någon annan egentligen, mer än att en del hade en annan erfarenhet såklart. Men så många liksom med, ah men, nån plötsligt som inte kunde... a men resor som var bokade, eller skidresor kanske det var då som man fick ställa in eller dem kunde inte... nån hade jobbat jättemycket i covidvården våren där 2020.

33b Och hade blivit då lovad att inte bli indragen igen för att hon jobbade mån-fre och var ensamstående med sitt barn. Hux flux ändå blir inkastad i det här med att jobba varannan helg... alltså allt mår ju lite dåligt i det, även om alla försöker hålla andan uppe också. Men men såna saker påverkar ju även mig att jag kan bli såhåra att, nää asså det är inte värt det. Det är inte, det är bara ens

jobb ändå... ehm... ja. *Mm, ja det är.* Så att de var... men det tog lång tid efter det faktiskt, innan jag, var liksom tillbaka från så som jag var innan jag blev indragen i det rent mentalt just.

33c Jo men sen gick jag, sen till slut fick ju jag dragit ur min chef att det var. Att jag fick, jag var välkommen hit. För hon bollade det över till min, den där nya chefen, och hon sa 'men herregud, det är ju [borttaget] som är din chef du får prata med henne och så.. ja och hon sa bara vad säger hon. Jag bara kände att ni får prata med varann. Asså.. det var ju också himla klantigt i förhållande till att jag hade varit utmattad precis och var hemma för det. De hade nog bara behövt ringa och säga till mig att då gör vi så här. Bam. Ehh än åh behöva hålla i det själv. *Mm.* Så var det

34. jo men till slut, jo med då kände jag mig ju kanske inte helt hundra men jag kände också att jag orkade liksom inte... det tar ju också energi det här å liksom åh styra upp någon slaggs förlängd sjukskrivning, börja med Försäkringskassan igen åh, jag kände bara nå.. så att jag ändå visste att jag hade det så pass... lugnt som jag ändå hade det här. *Mm.* Så, så gick jag tillbaka efter den där veckan för jag orkade inte med nå mer. *Det var lättare att gå tillbaka till det du visste funka än åh.* Ja, ja visste hur det funka och så orkade jag inte heller med Försäkringskassan, och det ska massa möten och det ska va rehab och de ringer och jagar en och kollar ditten och datten. Jag bara kände att jag .. då orkade jag inte mer... *Du hade varit med om mycket sådant under utbrändheten?* Ja. Men precis, åh det är ju ganska stressande. För dem här, får man läkarintyg och så ska dem godkänna det eller inte godkännas och så det ringa någon handläggare och kolla så man rehabiliterar sig korrekt och... (inandning) ja. Nä

35. Men jag hade ju rester då av den lilla väggen länge... nej men vad hände sen, eeh, nu känns det liksom att jag inte har något minne av typ sen i maj och till och med höstas där, sommarlovet, nå men, då har jag ju jobbat på som vanligt här. Här har jag ju ändå haft lite, asså jag har ju lyxigt att jag kan ha eget rum då så att jag är... inte så störd. Eller jag blir ju lätt störd av ljud, men då kan jag ju stänga när jag ska tänka...e

36a När man sitter och pratar nu så här, hur tänker, slås du av någon tanke om de här åren?... hur ska jag ställa den här frågan på ett bra sätt... Om man har lärt sig något menar du? *Njaa liksom om du har, fått någon insikt asså nånting du tänker göra annorlunda eller.* Nemen nått som jag kan tänka på ibland, som jag har nån slags insikt, för tidigare har jag varit, och det vet jag inte om det har just med covid att göra utan det har nog egentligen utifrån min.. lite med covid, jo men det har nog mer med covid å göra kanske.. men det här att... ibland om man ska boka saker, det ska vara kalas eller det ska vara saker man ska göra med någon annan. Tidigare så har det ju varit, då har vi bestämt det, vi ska ses då, klockan 13. Och då gör man det på något vis och så är det så inrutat. Efter covid känns det som att, ja a, om vi är friska så ses vi då på lördag. *Mm.*

36b Ehmm och lite, jag kan känna att det det är något jag tar med mig. Det tycker jag är lite skönare för jag är också så här, har jag sagt att jag ska va klockan 13 någonstans på lördag då är jag det nästan hur jag än mår eller liksom även om... jag råkar krocka med bilen på vägen dit liksom, har jag sagt att jag ska gör nånting då gör jag det. ... ehm, nu kan jag känna att, jag vet inte vad jag ska ge för exempel. Men ibland så är det så hära, om men ska vi bestämma den dagen och ska vi bestämma den dan om nån är så där jätte på, åh så känner jag att jaa det gör vi. Och så vet jag ändå någonstans att... det kan ju också bli så att de får ställa in för att är sjuka eller att jag får ställa in för att jag är sjuk. Jag känner ju att det är ganska så, de flest har ju mer förståelse för det, sen har det väl alltid varit lite så sen man fick småbarn, om de huxflux kräks innan man ska åka nån stans. Men för mig har det blivit avslappnande på nått vis.

37. Måste tänka lite bara då. ... jag vet inte. Men jag har väl också reflekterat kring det mycket med... nå men, det här med att man också vill... passa på och göra saker. Det tycker jag ändå också ändå att jag har lärt mig. Innan. Att man vet inte, om man, när det man är med nästa gång (oklart vad som

sågs). Eller om man är sjuk, asså både i det stor och i det lilla på något vis. *Mm.* Att lite, att man får passa på när man kan. Man behöver inte skjuta upp. *Behöver inte åka och bada om en vecka, kan åka och bada i dag.* Ja, om man nu väldigt gärna vill göra det. *Aa.* Ehhm... likväl som man kan känna att, jag skiter fullständigt i. varför ska jag lägga tid på det där. Det spelar väl ingen roll om jag ska.. om det, kommer trilla ner en en en bomb nästa vecka eller vad som helst så, så kanske, då är det inte det här jag vill lägga min tid på. Utan då vill jag ju göra det här som är roligare. Så kanske mer medvetenhet kring vad som är viktigt. Det kan jag nog ändå ha, fått med mig. Och vilka personer som är viktiga att träffa och så.

38. Ja men verkligen. Å min lilla var ju skolans lucia i... julas. Och vi skulle få komma och kolla på det, på fredagen men på onsdagen skickade de ut, nya restriktionerna. Jag bara kände att, nä jag går dit ändå. Jag ska fan se det. Vi fick kolla på en inspelad. Åh, Eva, en psykolog här sa, att, men det kan väl ändå ditt sjuksköterske jag förstå att ni inte kan gå dit på fredag. Jag bara, nej, nu är jag så trött på det här! *Sjuksköterskerollen får stå till sidan för mammarollen.* Ja, jag är i först hand mamma. Ja, nej vi fick se på det digitalt, det blir ju inte samma sak men... *Klart att det inte är samma sak.* Nej, det och hon var så glad att vi skulle komma och du vet. *Ja.* Och jag kände bara att... *Och så, få reda på det två dagar innan.* Ja det var taskigt.