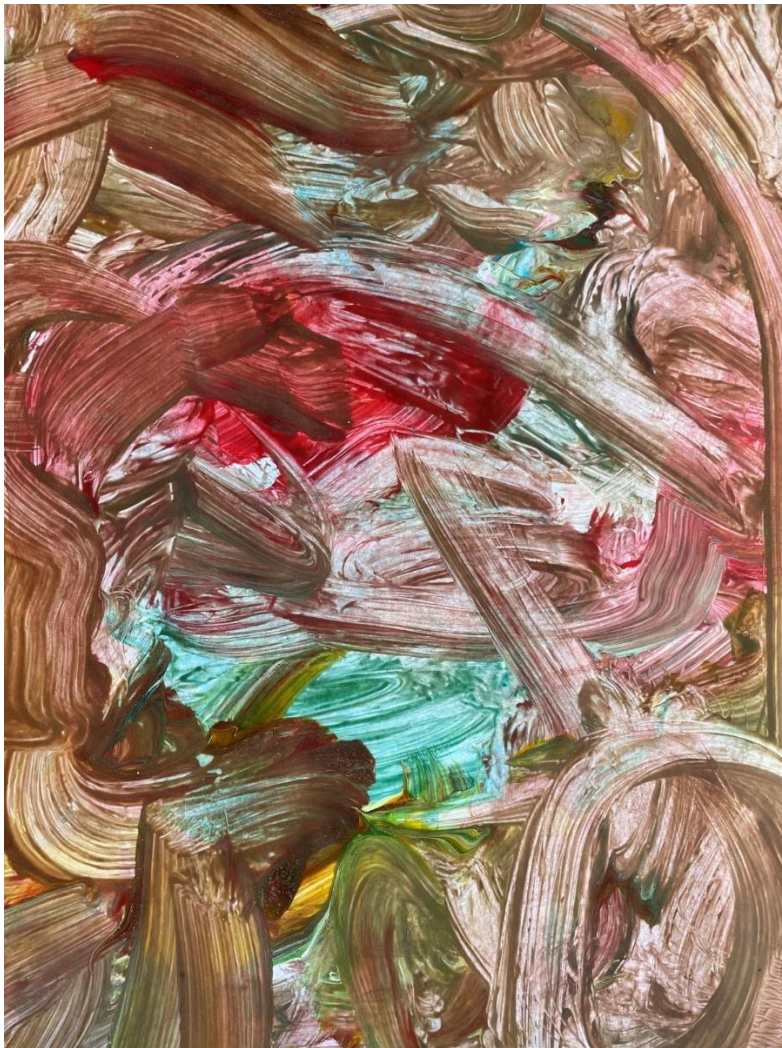


Understanding and taming anxiety: a relational task

“Our anxiety does not come from thinking about the future, but from wanting to control it.”

— Kahlil Gibran



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Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen, Odense, March 2025.

Abstract

This dissertation examines how to understand the experience of anxiety or anxiousness from a relational perspective.

Through eight interviews with adolescents and an Emotional Autoethnographic approach towards the researcher, the research closes in on how adolescents placed on a Danish Boarding school experience and tame anxiety when they feel it.

Via a Grounded Theory based analysis and the onto-epistemological stance of New Materialisms three core themes arose: Control and Uncontrollability, Alienation and Reconnection and Human and Non-human relations.

These core themes are discussed using especially the sociologist theories of Hartmut Rosa, the psychological theory of Ian Burkitt and the Double Bind theory of Gregory Bateson.

The research suggests that adolescents finding themselves experiencing anxiety are entangled in a society where they experience a strong dichotomy between being pathological and non-pathological. They experience strong desires towards belonging and succeeding in life, and at the same time they experience this getting harder and harder.

They try to control their surroundings and themselves, mentally and physically, in a world that possibly gets harder and harder to control. At the same time, they experience a world that connects with them either sick or well, and not as struggling with existential problems.

The outside world can be seen as relating to the adolescents from a point of aggression.

The dissertation points to professionals being aware of these processes and trying to mirror them in the professional work around the adolescents.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introductory Reflections

Anxiety is an emotion that in most prominent philosophical approaches is characterized as an existential term in human existence (Michelsen, K. et al., 2008). At the same time, anxiety is a medical disorder in Western countries and even one that is on the rise. Both these perspectives towards anxiety are, in a common sense understanding at least, profound individualistic toned. Anxiety lives in the individual. This dissertation wishes to convey a relational perspective instead. Perhaps anxiety is an existential term in human existence, but maybe it is so because of the connections the world establishes towards us.

In Denmark the number of children who addresses the health care system with feelings of anxiety has risen tenfold between the year 2000 (272 children) and the year 2018 (2941 children) (Frydenlund, S., 2020). Prominent Danish psychology researchers argue, that we in Denmark have a growing epidemic considering children and adolescents suffering from among others, anxiety (Frydenlund, S., 2020).

This points me in a direction, where I am curious about what could be found in a systemic perspective, if I decided to do research on what is helpful towards taming anxiety, by asking the people that experience anxiety in adolescence, the adolescents themselves. Not deductively using an already formulated theoretical framework, but an abductive approach instead, where abduction refers to a creative inferential process aiming at producing new hypotheses and maybe even theories based on empirically collected data (Charmaz, K., 2014). Thus, using the method of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, K., 2014), to collect knowledge that operationalizes into e.g. important elements, reflective methods or pointing out basic needs that the adolescents have, when suffering from anxiety. With a

strong focus on not solely the inner constructions of reality inside the adolescents' minds, but instead the impact of relations and connectedness on the degree of anxiety experienced. I am mainly curious about how the relations between a "multiple entity" understanding of the adolescents intertwine and either enhances or mutes the experiences or anxiety. This view on the adolescents that there are more to their experiences of anxiety than solely their own individual processes, I think can deliver the professionals trying to help them with a new perspective, hopefully with a less stigmatizing consequence.

Another framework that I seek to keep in mind throughout the dissertation is the New Materialistic perspective. New Materialisms are philosophical approaches that suggest that matter, meaning, and agency are deeply interconnected, emphasizing that humans and non-humans co-create reality through dynamic relationships. It challenges individualistic and dualistic thinking by focusing on how emotions, bodies, and environments are entangled in ongoing processes of becoming. (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; de Freitas, 2017; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018).

In this dissertation I use the term "experiencing anxiety" instead of "suffering from anxiety", because I cannot know if it solely is a suffering or if it, as I hear from a girl I am working with these days, also is a conveying and enlightening emotion. I also use the term "taming anxiety" more than I write "coping with the anxiety" or for example "mastering the anxiety", because a lot of the adolescents I have talked with after writing most of the dissertation does not want to get totally writ of the anxiety. They wish to control it, tame it like a wild animal. Because they see the anxiety as something nature-like that has entered their lives, and that is useful if it does not take full control of their lives. They wish to be able to have the anxiety present in their lives, because it makes them sharp, warns them about

dangerous situations and reminds them of things in their future that they want to avoid now.

The dissertation is structured as follows:

1. Introduction: Research questions, boundaries, and personal connections to anxiety.
2. Background: Emergence of research questions and empirical research context.
3. Literature Review: Important literature and systematic review on anxiety in systemic treatment and Danish context.
4. Methodology: Onto-epistemological stance and Grounded Theory research.
5. Findings: Presentation of findings.
6. Discussion: Helpful theory for adolescents experiencing anxiety.
7. Conclusion: Implications from the study.

1.2. Research Questions

The reflections mentioned above have led me to the following research questions:

What are the core relational elements of anxiety and/or anxiousness among adolescents on a Danish boarding school, and what is to be learned generally from their attempts to tame the anxiety?

Sub questions:

- How can we, from a systemic perspective, understand anxiety and/or anxiousness?
- What are some relational elements in the adolescents' own attempts to tame the anxiety?

These questions are grounded in the assumption that anxiety is not a fixed, internal condition, but a relational and material phenomenon that emerges through entangled intra-actions between adolescents and their environments. This includes their relationships with peers, professionals, societal expectations, and non-human entities such as objects, spaces, and technologies. The focus on “taming” anxiety further emphasizes the agency of adolescents as distributed across bodies, materials, and relational practices.

By asking what can be learned from adolescents’ own strategies, the research foregrounds embodied knowledge and lived experience, aligning with New Materialism’s emphasis on affect, materiality, and co-constitution (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; de Freitas, 2017; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). The sub-questions try to support this by inviting a systemic and relational understanding of anxiety, and by exploring how adolescents engage with their world to regulate and make sense of their emotional experiences.

I hope these questions invite an open-ended exploration of how anxiety is experienced and managed by adolescents in their everyday lives. Rather than starting with predefined categories or hypotheses, the questions focus on uncovering the core relational elements of anxiety and the adolescents’ own strategies for taming it. This aligns with Grounded Theory’s emphasis on theory emerging from data, allowing patterns, meanings, and concepts to be constructed inductively from the participants’ narratives and lived experiences (Charmaz, K., 2014). The focus on relational dynamics and context-specific practices hopefully supports a bottom-up understanding of anxiety that is grounded in the realities of the adolescents’ social and material worlds.

1.3. Research Boundaries

This dissertation is concentrated on the topic of anxiety and anxiousness and how adolescents themselves experience to tame the anxiety or anxiousness. Therefore, medical treatments are not a topic for this dissertation, although it might as well have been. It could be the topic for a whole other dissertation. Children with other comprehensive psychological or psychiatrically problems are not included in this dissertation, and then again, some of the adolescents interviewed have several diagnoses besides anxiety, but these diagnoses are not examined here, neither are their connections to the anxiety.

I would have loved to interview a lot more adolescents, both exposed and placed children, but also children living in so-called normal families, not exposed to placement and community treatments. But the time and the size of this dissertation has made some boundaries. Other than that, the complexity of working with exposed children with many different problems has made it difficult in some cases to make interview appointments, although the professionals have been very helpful.

I also do not occupy myself in this dissertation with the screening for anxiety and the diagnosing of children and adolescents. That too is a whole other dissertation. I have nevertheless done a lot of reading of the topic as background for this dissertation, but that knowledge will have to be used in other contexts.

1.4. Me, Myself, and Anxiety

I have no recollection of experiencing anxiety myself in my own adolescence. I did not at all use the word anxiety, I think. The first time I really was confronted with anxiety, as a word and an entity that existed in my reality (and not just in books), was when my close friend was trying to settle his past, having a father who had had a severe alcohol problem.

I think I was about twenty years old. One day my friend called me from his car, he had been in a conversation with his father and was driving home. Now he was having a panic attack and was afraid to be alone. We stayed together on the phone through his panic attack. Then we hung up and later talked about what had happened. For a period, my friend had these attacks, and we just adjusted our friendship accordingly.

My eighteen-year-old son has suffered from anxiety since he was about twelve years old. He is not diagnosed, but he has in various ways been affected by the emotion. He has had trouble going to school and involving himself in social contexts. We have talked about anxiety a lot at home, and how it has an important task in our lives, but it must not take over. In the process of writing this dissertation it has been a constantly balancing writing, interviewing and reflecting on the material without making it a dissertation about my son. Last week my wife asked me (she is not his mother), if I did not find it paradoxical that I was writing about anxiety and how to treat it, and at the same time I struggle to help my own child? I think I hesitated for a moment before I answered her, that it was the most paradoxical thing I could think of, and that it was both a heavy weight and an easy feeling to occupy myself with this particular topic.

I do not know if I have ever felt real anxiety, I think I felt it when my parents got divorced, when my parents could not at all gather the surplus to cooperate in their divorce and settle things, but in many ways, I think that the child, Jacob, was most anxious about the risk that his father would lose his mind or get stressed out. Or if his mother was sad, she did not see her son that much anymore. Either way, there was not much room for me feeling myself for a substantial number of years. So maybe there was anxiety, but no one discovered it.

1.5. What I risk not seeing, when I use New Materialism and Grounded Theory

While New Materialism offers a rich and innovative framework for understanding relationality, embodiment, and the agency of matter, it also presents several challenges for researchers. Its onto-epistemological stance, which sees knowledge and being inseparable and co-constituted, can make it difficult to establish clear methodological boundaries (Albertini et al., 2025a; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). The emphasis on entanglement and intra-action often resists traditional forms of categorization and analysis, which may complicate data interpretation and presentation (Albertini et al., 2025a; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). Moreover, New Materialism's rejection of human exceptionalism and its focus on distributed agency can risk diluting the lived experiences and voices of human participants, especially in sensitive fields like adolescent mental health. Researchers may also struggle with translating its abstract philosophical concepts into practical, actionable insights for pedagogy or therapy (Albertini et al., 2025a; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). Finally, because New Materialism challenges linear causality and stable meaning, it can be difficult to align with institutional expectations for clarity, generalizability, and evidence-based outcomes (Albertini et al., 2025a).

Grounded Theory offers a flexible and inductive framework for generating theory from data, it also presents several limitations. Its emphasis on emergent categories and constant comparison can lead to fragmented or overly descriptive findings, especially when dealing with complex, affective phenomena like anxiety (Paapa, C & Kambona, O.O., 2025). The method's focus on coding and categorization may risk reducing rich, embodied experiences to abstract labels, potentially overlooking the material, relational,

and affective dimensions emphasized in more posthumanist approaches (Posthumans, 2017). Additionally, Grounded Theory often assumes a level of neutrality or objectivity in the researcher's role, which can obscure the entangled and situated nature of knowledge production. In practice, researchers may struggle to balance openness to emergent theory with the need for theoretical depth and coherence, particularly when working in interdisciplinary or ethically sensitive contexts (Paapa, C & Kambona, O.O., 2025).

2. Background

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will describe the research background. How my research question came to be and how I have come to find my research persons.

2.2. Emergence of my Research Question

This paragraph is constructed out of memos, notes and thoughts written in different documents on my pc, my phone and papers written in earlier semesters at the M10 Professional Doctorate, where the urge to turn my interest towards anxiety and adolescents started.

I have in my professional life an ongoing interest in the dichotomy between what is understood as a healthy response to, sometimes naturally occurring phenomena in human lives, and what is conceived as being pathological responses. Why that interest has been with me as long as I remember I cannot explain. I have always been preoccupied with a more philosophical approach to the world than a “common sense”. Diagnoses in the social - and the psychotherapeutic context therefore have always been an interest of mine. The question is why is some people’s behavior characterized as deviant and others’ behavior as sound and healthy? And who defines which is which? And on what terms, in what contexts? Such questions about the borderlands between “normal” and “not-normal” I find incredibly important, perhaps because that this is where we as a species include or exclude each other, and I would love for the world to be for all of us. That is of course a more emotional and political reason. Where that comes from is a whole other story, maybe something from a father who was a worker at a shipyard and taught me that underlying value, that all people are created equal, and you cannot judge anyone before you have walked a substantial distance in their shoes. This aligns with New Materialism as an onto-

epistemology, which challenges fixed definitions of pathology and instead emphasizes the relational, embodied, and material conditions through which emotions like anxiety emerge (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). New Materialism allows me to explore anxiety not as a static symptom within the individual, but as a dynamic phenomenon co-constituted through intra-actions between adolescents, their environments, and the discourses that shape their lives. In this way, my personal motivation becomes a theoretical commitment to understanding emotional life as entangled, situated, and always in process.

The time came in my doctoral studies that I had to choose a path into doing research, and as I could not emerge myself into all diagnoses, I chose the pathological expression that is skyrocketing the most in Denmark, anxiety (Christiansen, J. C. V., 2022). Also, I have this hypothesis that anxiety or feelings of anxiousness, are playing a role in the background of many of the behavioral problems that we in Denmark interpret as other diagnoses. E.g. ADHD, Borderline personality disorder, some of the autistic expressions, PTSD and so on.

2.3. The Place of Research and the Adolescents – How I Found My Data

I have conducted my research at Ringe Kostskole in Ringe, Denmark. Ringe Kostskole is a boarding school. In Denmark there are two types of boarding schools. One type is a school that has a high price and are very esteemed as schools for the children of the higher society classes in Denmark. Children of e.g. royalty and noble heritage attend amongst others these boarding schools. The other type is borderline placement homes for children struggling with a variety of problems. Ringe Kostskole is the second type.

A lot of the children come from homes with various types of neglect; mental abuse, alcohol - or other substance abuse, violence and in some cases also sexual abuse. In addition to this, many of the children have experienced exclusions from earlier schools they attended and most of them have a lot of experience of being bullied and/or excluded from the social life in their classes. This means that all the children on Ringe Kostskole have in common that they have been away from the educational system for longer periods of time.

The main goal of Ringe Kostskole is to help the children to get a primary school degree, so that they can continue in the educational system and gain access to the educational resources they need, to get the future they hope for. Focus is therefore on education, and of course also to thrive socially. Ringe Kostskoles core value is, that going to school is a “normality” in western society, so attending class is crucial and thereby creating a feeling that you master your life and create a higher level of self-agency (Ringe kostskole, 2024).

I have known Ringe Kostskole and some of its professionals over the last twenty years. Planning my research it made good sense to contact the school about this, because I know that the topic of anxiety and anxiousness is vulnerable and Ringe Kostskole is a place I know well, I know that the professionals are taking good care of the children there, and I know that they know the children well enough to be ready to help them, if making an interview with me gets too hard and draws them down in the days after. Because of my knowledge of the school, it has also made recruiting easy and more caring. I had two long meetings with the leaders of the different departments to tell them about my reflections about doing the research and what I wanted to find out. At the same time the leaders had a lot of critical questions. Questions about what I would do to make sure the young people could maintain anonymity? How would I contact their departments if I felt worried about something an adolescent told me during an interview? How I could convey my findings for

the professionals in the organization later, so the knowledge they facilitated also would benefit themselves. These conversations were easy to have, because we already know each other and have worked together in other settings where critically questioning each other's pedagogy and reflections has been part of many meetings. After the second meeting the leaders gathered some names from their departments. Names of adolescents that either were diagnosed with anxiety or described as being anxious by the professionals. We then discussed who of the adolescents the leaders assessed were ready to be asked to participate in the research, so that we did not put pressure on children that at the time were in vulnerable positions. The young people who everybody found were in good development and where it also was realistic that their parents would consent to their participation in the research were asked by their closest professionals and they together read the presentation letter (see appendix number 2), I had written with information about the research. Then there were appointments for twenty to thirty-minute sessions where the adolescents could meet me and hear a little more about the research before, they decided if they wanted to participate. This process left me with eight research people, one of these regretted having said yes to participate so we did not get to do an interview.

I ended up with seven research people:

Bo, a girl 15 years old. She is 15 years old. *Bo* tells about many complex situations that has led to her placement at the boarding school. Before the boarding school she lived in two different foster families.

Caroline, a girl 14 years old. She is born and raised on a small island in the south of Denmark, that is well known for the number of social problems and vulnerability among the youth.

Delmira, a girl 16 years old. She tells about a home that felt "...mentally draining". This mentally draining situation leads to Delmira skipping school and eventually being placed outside her home.

Grethe, a girl 15 years old. She is diagnosed with social anxiety. When I ask her why she is placed at the boarding school she replies: "It was because I had a lot of anxiety, so I didn't dare to come to school. Fear of seeing people my age. Didn't even dare to go out of my house"

Neal, a boy 14 years old. Neal is not a person of many words. He is precise in his descriptions and reflections. Neal is also not diagnosed with anxiety but is described as anxious by his surrounding professionals.

Sara West, a girl 17 years old. She is 3 months away from her 18 years birthday. Sara West is a young woman with different diagnoses, among others an anxiety diagnosis.

Thyra, a girl 14 years old. She was placed at the boarding school after having been placed two years at a foster family where she experienced sexual abuse; "by my foster father and foster brother".

As is obvious, there is an overweight of girls compared to the number of boys participating in the research. Why is it so exactly I cannot say, but I have had some reflections about the reasons why. Some reflections that themselves could be the foundation of a whole other dissertation.

3.Literature review

3.1. Introduction

What I am interested in showing in this literature review is an overview of what are important contributions to understanding anxiety and the treatment of it in a relational perspective.

At first in this chapter, I will give an account of what reflections I have had regarding this review basing my use of articles and papers on an outlining by Siddaway et al. (2019), in the paper *How to Do a Systematic Review: A Best Practice Guide for Conducting and Reporting Narrative Reviews, Meta-Analyses, and Meta-Syntheses*.

Then I will present a short historical presentation of the concept of anxiety, based on the chapter *The History of the Concept of Anxiety and the Nosography of Generalized Anxiety Disorder* by Daniele Stavros Hatzigiakoumis, Marianna Quatrone and Maria Giubettini (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014). This presentation is not to be read as a systematic literature review but is a text that is important to help me understand the historical context in which the concept of anxiety unfolds.

Next, I will present a well-known and often cited paper by Paolo Bertrando and Teresa Arcelloni; *Emotions in the Practice of Systemic Therapy* (Bertrando & Arcelloni, 2014).

This presentation is also more a “state of the art” presentation of important literature written around the subject. Bertrando and Arcelloni does not write about anxiety itself, but they have done some essential writing on emotions in a systemic perspective. In the same perspective I will present an approach by Ian Burkitt, mainly based on his 2014 book *Emotions and Social Relations*.

Finally, I will present some papers, in a systematic literature review, that are concerned with 1) treatment of anxiety in a systemic perspective, and 2) some papers that focuses on anxiety treatment in a Danish context.

3.1.1. Reflections on Doing a Literature Review

One of the main reasons for conducting a literature review is because a literature review is demanded in a research process, mainly to establish what is already written on a research topic (Siddaway et al., 2019). This is also my stance towards this literature review. Doing a complete and total account of all that is written in anxiety and treatment of adolescents is not possible (Montuori, 2005).

Siddaway et al. (2019), suggest in headlines, that a systematic review is methodical, comprehensive, transparent and replicable. Then they outline these key stages in the review process:

Siddaway et al. (2019) outline that a systematic review should be methodical, comprehensive, transparent, and replicable. The key stages in the review process are:

- Scoping: Reflecting on the breadth and novelty of the review topic. For example, no previous reviews on systemic anxiety treatment in Denmark were found, only research on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).
- Planning: Formulating search terms related to anxiety disorders, Denmark, adolescents, children, intervention, and treatment. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were set, excluding material before 2014 due to evolving treatment methods and cultural changes.

- Identification: Using at least two search databases, Academic Search Premier and Google Scholar, to gather material. Google Scholar required prior knowledge for effective use.
- Screening: Reading abstracts to determine relevance. For books, attention was paid to the number of references and topic relevance.
- Eligibility: Fully reading papers and books to assess relevance, extracting key information like conceptualization, variables, research design, and epistemological stance.
- Study Quality: Evaluating the quality of studies based on their practical implications.

The last-mentioned perspective by Siddaway et al. (2019), is study quality, something that to me among other things can be measured in how practical the study or literature is for the clinical user. Something that I am going to read carefully for in my studying of the texts.

3.2. Anxiety in a Historical Perspective

3.2.1. Presentation

In the following I will present the text *The History of the Concept of Anxiety and the Nosography of Generalized Anxiety Disorder* by Daniele Stavros Hatzigiakoumis, Marianna Quatrone and Maria Giubettini (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014). The text is chapter one in the book *New Perspectives on Generalized Anxiety Disorder* from the editors Guglielmo, R. Janiri, L and Pozzi, G.

The chapter is, as the title says, a text concerning the history of the concept of anxiety and the nosography of generalized anxiety disorder. Nosography means classification of

diseases. Hatzigiakoumis, Quatrala and Giubettini are all affiliated with Institute of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology, the Catholic University Medical School of Rome, Italy.

3.2.2. How the Literature Was Found

This text found its way to me through many searches online, on the history of anxiety.

Definitive history books on the history of anxiety were hard to find, but one book that again and again was mentioned was Allan Horwitz's book *Anxiety: A Short History*, (Horwitz, A., 2013). I skimmed this book several times but found it too long and complex for my use in this dissertation. From reading in other books on the topic in Danish, and by reading their index list, again and again the chapter one written by Hatzigiakoumis et al. (2014), came up as a reference point. I could not get hold of the book from my library service, and I could not buy the book, but fortunately three chapters could be bought online. So, I bought the first three chapters and have used the first one to conceptualize anxiety and understand it in a historical context.

I held up the much shorter examination of the history of anxiety, against the longer as presented by Horwitz (2013), and decided to use it because of its readability, its thorough and also extensive historical review of the concept of anxiety and its approach to the history of anxiety, that was also concerned with the underlying perspectives in the different views on the concept.

3.2.3. Main Features

In the following I will shortly expound the main features of the text and how it understands the concept of anxiety and how it describes our understanding of the disorder has developed in the Western medical and psychological community over the last 800-1000 years.

As often in understanding a concept, it can help us to trace the designated word we have chosen to describe the concept with, back etymologically to its origin. The word “anxiety” derives from two words in Roman language. The word “anxietas” and the word “angor” (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014), which respectively meant a lasting state of fearfulness and a temporary state of acute and intense fear. The word “angor” further on derives from the Indo-European “eng” and “angr” which were used to indicate tightness, narrowness and oppression (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014).

In a historical perspective, the concept and use of the word anxiety is quite new. The first times anxiety-like conditions are described, is during the Middel age. In Western medicine it is conflated into the concept of melancholia. In an early Persian context anxiety is understood in connection to depression-like states by the physician Avicenna. In Chinese medicine there is also drawn a line between emotions of anxiety and depression, and even a physiological link to kidney disease (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014). Through the 18th and 19th centuries the concept of anxiety is mentioned in medical schoolbooks in various ways, but not always using the exact word anxiety, but by descriptions which describe what we today would call anxiety like states (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014). During the 18th century the understanding of these anxiety-like states was that they in different ways was connected to somatic disorders or at least had organic underpinnings. In the first half of the 19th century the focus shifted to a more psychological perspective orientated towards inner conflicts in the individual. Conflicts emerging between e.g. rational and moral parts of the individuals mind and irrational and instinctual elements (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014). The word *anxiety* or its German equivalent *angst*, is used in various ways through the 18th and 19th centuries, but in 1831 Charles Thackrah uses the expression *anxiety of mind* as one of the first researchers as a concept

(Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014). In the late 19th century Freud suggests that we should understand the anxiety neurosis as consisting of four clinical syndromes: general irritability, chronic apprehension/anxious expectations, anxiety attacks and phobic avoidance. Freud's understanding of anxiety changes from his early work, where anxiety is a condition that has a sexual mechanism and appears when the mind cannot counterbalance the sexual excitation produced endogenously, and later where he recognizes anxiety as either a signal of something real and dangerous in the here and now or as a product of earlier great trauma experiences, such as e.g. the trauma of birth (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014). In 1938 B.F. Skinner introduced another approach to anxiety that was based in behavioristic theory. According to Skinner, anxiety is a product of reinforcement of behavior, thus a manifestation of conditioned responses to feared situations (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014).

In modern western medicine the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) series has been defining our viewpoint towards mental disorders since the first edition was published in 1952. In the first two editions, DSM-I and DSM II, the influence from Freudian psychoanalysis was high and anxiety was understood as belonging to the area of neuroses. In the late 1970's psychiatric researchers proposed that diagnoses were based on symptom patterns, severity, age at onset and duration of illness. This led to the publication of the DSM-III in 1980, where the understanding of anxiety was split into two different diagnoses: panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder (Hatzigiakoumis, D. S. et al., 2014). The World Health Organizations (WHO's) equivalent to DSM (which is mainly used in US and Canadian context), International Classification of Diseases (ICD), offers another relevant classification system in psychiatry. In the ICD-11 anxiety disorders are categorized under Mental, behavioral or neurodevelopmental disorders, and divided

into 12 subcategories: Generalized anxiety disorder, Panic disorder, Agoraphobia, Specific phobia, Social anxiety disorder, Separation anxiety disorder, Selective mutism, Substance-induced anxiety disorders, Hypochondriasis, Secondary anxiety syndrome, Other specified anxiety or fear-related disorders, Unspecified anxiety or fear-related disorders (World Health Organization, 2019). This leaves us with a variety of anxiety disorders, all used to describe what we have categorized together, different disorders under the umbrella of anxiety.

3.2.4. Critical Positioning

The text is informative and gives me an overview of the history of anxiety. It says nothing about the more existential perspectives on anxiety. The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), wrote a world famous book on the concept of anxiety (Kierkegaard, S., 2021). The perspective of his book was an existential approach to the feeling of anxiety as something that we all live with as a normal term in a human life. Later on thinkers like Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Paul Sartre and other existentialist has drawn on Kierkegaard's thinking and developed a lot on the concept of anxiety, and these perspectives are totally absent in the text at hand (Sløk, J., 2019). This leaves out important contributions to our understanding of the concept of anxiety, that neglects more non-medical views on the emotion and their influence on our understanding of anxiety.

In relation to my research question, the core elements of the emotion anxiety are not explained or outlined. It has also nothing to say about how anxiety can be viewed from a relational perspective, or how to tame or live with anxiety, even less about how to treat and do therapy/pedagogy in relation to anxiety.

3.3. Emotions in General in Systemic Therapeutic Practice

3.3.1. Presentation

The paper I am introducing here is the paper *Emotions in the Practice of Systemic therapy* by Paolo Bertrando and Teresa Arcelloni. Paolo Bertrando is an Italian MD, PhD, and psychiatrist practicing systemic therapy. He was trained in the Milan Approach to systemic therapy by Luigi Boscolo and Gianfranco Cecchin in the 1980s. Currently he is the scientific director of the Systemic-Dialogical School in Bergamo. Teresa Arcelloni is an Italian systemic psychotherapist responsible for sexual therapies at the Milan Center for Family Therapy. Since 1988 she has worked in Mental Health Services and is currently Head of the Psychiatric Diagnosis and Treatment Service of Piacenza.

The paper *Emotions in the Practice of Systemic Therapy* (Bertrando & Arcelloni, 2014), was published in the *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy* in 2014 and was a paper that took up the question of emotions in systemic therapy. A question that not many had been occupied with and that has had a somewhat silent life. This lack of acknowledging emotions in systemic therapy, was mentioned and criticized in the paper *Family Therapy and Anthropology: a Case for Emotions* by Inga-Britt Krause (Krause, 1993).

3.3.2. How the Literature Was Found

The paper is a key paper in the systemic society concerning emotions. It was published just one year prior to Paolo Bertrando's book *Emotions and the Therapist* (2015), and it outlined the basic ideas from the book. The paper is often mentioned in systemic literature, as one of the first real struggles with the linguistic turn and a perspective that recognizes that emotions are also a relational entity, and not something that exists in the individual independently of the context and the close relationships (Greenberg & Pascual-Leone,

2006). So, my way to this paper are many, it has been mentioned several times through my educational process in the systemic society, I have seen multiple references to the paper, but before this dissertation I had never encountered it head front.

3.3.3. Main Features

The papers main claims are that the common sense approach to emotions are that they are located inside the individual, constituting us and our inner lives (Bertrando & Arcelloni, 2014). In Bertrando and Arcellonis' view, we should instead approach the question about emotions as one of the characteristics that is created in a relational system. The system consisting of two individuals, for example, has several characteristics such as e.g. positioning, context, language. According to Bertrando and Arcelloni, emotions are another characteristic of the system. The argument for this is, that all emotions come from "something" and is directed towards "something else". It is something that exists between us and the world around us (Bertrando & Arcelloni, 2014). Our emotions are shaped, affected and molded by our history and past and become actual in the encounter with others or inner dialogues with ourselves (Bertrando & Arcelloni, 2014).

Bertrando and Arcelloni do not consider expression of the emotion in question as a healing factor itself. Change in the therapeutic work is directed towards making relational room for different understandings of the individuals emotional positionings, which can lead to different emotional states, meaning different ways of experiencing bodily feelings as products of emotions. The therapeutic work then is to help the client become more aware of the relational process through which emotions happen, how they are felt and shared in the system. Emotions in this understanding, then become one of the key features in making change in a system of relationships (Bertrando & Arcelloni, 2014).

3.3.4. Critical Positioning

In relation to my research question, the paper is relevant because of its explicit approach towards emotions in systemic therapy. Unfortunately, it states very little concretely about what to do as a practitioner. My wish is, as I have also stated above, to create a somewhat approachable model of reflections or ideas to grab on to as an everyday practitioner, either as a psychotherapist or as a teacher or pedagogue, using a systemic approach. This paper is intended to be a scientific and therefore more abstract contribution to the debate on emotions in systemic practice.

This abstract approach also stands in the way of the paper giving a more precise and useful understanding of the concept of emotions in systemic therapy. I am conscious about the fact that the idea with this paper is to introduce and process emotions in systemic therapy, as important traits of relations between systems, and that as such it is a new approach. Nevertheless, in converting these ideas into practice, the paper does not succeed.

As a final critique of this paper, at least in relation to this dissertation, it does not process specifically anxiety as an emotion.

3.4. Social Relations and Emotions

3.4.1. Presentation

The question of emotions and how they are to be understood in a systemic perspective is processed by the American social psychologist Ian Burkitt who has written a book titled *Emotions and Social Relations* (2014). Ian Burkitt is currently Emeritus Professor of Social Identity in the Division of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Bradford. He is

especially concerned with the creation of human identity, within social relations

(<https://www.bradford.ac.uk/staff/iburkitt/>).

Burkitt's thoughts on emotions and social relations are relevant to this dissertation, because they explicitly speak about how to understand emotions as relational patterns, more than as internalized entities inside the self. This is directly transferable to my research question formulation: "What are the core relational elements of anxiety and/or anxiousness among adolescents?" This section will be based on his 2014 book, *Emotions and Social Relations* (Burkitt, I., 2014), but I will also substantiate from three different papers authored by Burkitt, on the same topic (Burkitt, 1998, 2002, 2021). Burkitt is interested in how we can understand emotions in social relationships, and that speaks directly to my research question. At the same time, Burkitt's understanding of emotions thus points us towards where the important work in emotional suffering should be done.

3.4.2. How the Literature Was Found

The book *Emotions and Social Relations* was introduced to me by a colleague of mine, who is preoccupied also with the systemic therapeutic approach, and who had read a post on social media on the book. This book then found its way to me in a very coincidence-based way. Just as when your partner is pregnant and you see couples with newborn babies everywhere, or when you are considering a specific car brand for your next car, and you start seeing this brand on the road all the time. I have had countless conversations with colleagues about this dissertation and its topic, and this specific colleague briefly presented her knowledge on the book.

3.4.3. Main Features

Ian Burkitt introduces in two of the text used in this dissertation, to Gregory Bateson's understanding of emotions as stated in *Steps to An ecology of Mind* (Bateson, G., 1972). Burkitt is interpreting Bateson to an understanding of emotions as something that we in the western modern world has misunderstood the core essence of (Burkitt, 2002; Burkitt, I., 2014). We have largely in the Anglo-Saxon world thought about emotion as something measurable and quantifiable, as an entity that in some ways exists inside of ourselves. This notion is both successful because it is the mainstream psychological perspective towards emotions, but also because it is in conformity with our language concerning emotions (Burkitt, 2002; Burkitt, I., 2014). This perspective, that emotions are something entity-like inside the individual, leads to the conclusion that emotions are something private, originating from our individual bodies and minds (Burkitt, I., 2014). If our emotions are something private and they originate from ourselves, then dealing with emotional problems becomes a very individual task. Ian Burkitt suggests, with inspiration from Gregory Bateson, that we should shift our perspective on emotions. From a perspective where emotions are entities, we should perceive emotions as patterns of relationships (Burkitt, I., 2014).

To Burkitt (2021), emotions are both cultural and historical creations and they are shaped into the lives of individuals via their personal perception, thoughts, values and needs. In their core, emotions in a relational perspective, are bodily active responses to a relational context (Burkitt, 2002). What Burkitt means by this is that emotions are in no way personal, they are indeed very relational and public, in the way, that they are always connected to something other than the self. Emotions are related to other bodies, both human bodies and nonhuman bodies. When we feel anger or love it is at someone or something (Burkitt,

2002). Even when we experience e.g. stress that we cannot at the time place the origin of, it often surfaces at some point of time in our lives, what the stress was a consequence of (Burkitt, 2002).

Emotions are then, Burkitt argues, to be understood as patterns of relationships. Patterns that connect in certain qualities. We can connect to different people and things with for example “love”. I can feel love towards my children, my wife, my friends, but also towards a song written by Sturgill Simpson or a flint stone processed by a person in the stone age, found by my great grandfather and now resting on a dresser in my living room (Burkitt, I., 2014). These are all examples of humans and non-humans where I have the same pattern of relationships towards. Not that I love them in the precisely same way, and if I was to choose between my children and the flint stone, I am not in doubt to whom my pattern of relationship of love is strongest.

Burkitt does not argue that there is nothing going on inside us, when we feel emotion. In Burkitt’s perspective, what goes on in the body when I feel, for example love, is that we register, experience and are conscious (to a certain amount), about how we are relating to the specific human or non-human. The emotion is the pattern of relationship, the feeling inside us is us registering this pattern (Burkitt, I., 2014). When we think that the emotion is something that only arises from the inside, it in Burkitt’s and according to Burkitt, Gregory Bateson’s perspective, is the product of an epistemological distortion, where we atomize and reduce the complexity of our inner lives (Burkitt, 2002; Burkitt, I., 2014).

As an important consequence for this dissertation, Burkitt argues that we cannot study emotions isolated and as entities in themselves. We must always look at the context in which a certain emotion arises (Burkitt, I., 2014). When I want to study an emotion like

anxiety, it is necessary to study in what context it arises and how the individual has had to step into a connection with the world in an anxiety-patterned way. How the pattern of relationship, with the anxiety as quality, towards something or someone has developed in the adolescent's experience.

As a last perspective that is important in Burkitt's thinking in relation to this dissertation; to Burkitt our bodies are entities that are productive in the relational world. We can produce the world with our bodies, manipulate the relationships we take part in through our bodily activities (Burkitt, 1998). This becomes important when we turn towards what professionals can learn from the adolescent's own attempts to tame the anxiety. Thus, relevant to this dissertation, when studying the core elements of anxiety, is not enough to look at what the adolescent feels inside, it is also important to consider how the outer world relates to the adolescent.

3.4.4. Critical Positioning

Ian Burkitt is not a practicing therapist or pedagogue. This is my main problem with his approach and how it can be useful to me. This means that it, becomes hard to derive real practice advice to the everyday practitioner. The approach points me in some directions on how to understand emotions in a relational perspective, but they do not give any direction towards what to reflect upon in the direct interaction with the client or exposed adolescent in the classroom. At the same time, Burkitt himself does not position himself towards personal experiences with emotions. Burkitt looks from the outside upon emotions and does not place his own experiences with feeling emotions in his texts. This makes me a little uncertain about how transparent the texts are in a reflective perspective. After all, the

texts are starting from Ian Burkitt (Foerster, 2011). As a final critique of Burkitt's approach, at least in relation to this dissertation, it does not process specifically anxiety as an emotion.

3.5. Anxiety and Systemic Treatment

3.5.1. Presentation

In the following I will process four papers on the topic of anxiety and systemic treatment. I have chosen to do a search for anxiety and systemic treatment internationally, because, in Danish context there was nothing to be found. When searching for concrete research on treatment strategies towards anxiety in Denmark, only Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), methods were presented.

The four papers presented here are:

1. *An Evaluation of Multisystemic Therapy with Australian Families*, written by Mark Porter and Leartluk Nuntavisit, who are both affiliated with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Western Australia and the University of Western Australia, Crawley (Porter & Nuntavisit, 2016).
2. *Anxiety-Based School Refusal: Helping Parents Cope*, written by C. Sloan Alday, an Assistant Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. She is also a psychologist on the Adolescent Inpatient Unit and in Outpatient Services at Bradley Hospital (Alday, Sloan, C., 2009).
3. *The Efficacy of Systemic Therapy for Internalizing and Other Disorders of Childhood and Adolescence: A Systematic Review of 38 Randomized Trials*, written by Retzlaff, Von

Südow, Beher, Haun and Schweitzer all German psychologists affiliated with different educational organizations in Germany (Retzlaff et al., 2013).

4. *Comparing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Systemic Therapy for Social Anxiety Disorder: Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial (SOPHO-CBT/ST)*, written by Hunger, Hilzinger, Klewinghaus, Deusser, Sander, Mander, Bents, Ditzen and Schweitzer, all German psychologists affiliated with different educational organizations in Germany (Hunger et al., 2020).

3.5.2. How the Literature Was Found

I conducted searches in the database Academic Search Premier and Google Scholar. For academic Search Premier, a search history was generated (see appendix 12), that consisted of four items. One of the items was an editorial presentation of the content of a volume and therefore was discarded. This left me with three papers. In Google Scholar a search history report was not generated, but I ended up with two relevant papers. One of the papers was already present in the Academic Search Premier search, so one paper was relevant from Google Scholar.

3.5.3. Main Features

1) *An Evaluation of Multisystemic Therapy with Australian Families*: The paper aims to present a study that evaluates the effectiveness of Multisystemic Therapy (MST), in an Australian context. The paper starts by defining the purpose of the study in question. The study is designed to evaluate whether treatment with MST can be useful in working with children and adolescents who have different behavioral and emotional problems. The problems vary from defiant and antisocial behavior to more introverted problems like

anxiety. The authors claim, that these types of behavior tend to be multisystemic in nature, and there for a Multisystemic treatment can be useful (Porter & Nuntavisit, 2016). Then the paper outlines the main characteristics of MST, and how it is implemented in Western Australia. MST is an American approach developed in the 1970s. The program is based on social ecological understanding and views human behavior as evolving from complex interaction between the individual and the systems they participate in. MST then consists of several evidence based interventions such as cognitive behavioral therapy, parental skills training, structural family therapy and social ecological theories stating, that if change occurs in one system, it will develop in other systems as well (Porter & Nuntavisit, 2016).

The study is aimed at children from the age of 12 to the age of 16, and the target group is suffering from severe problems like for instance externalizing long term mental health problems, risk of placement out-of-home, peer relationship problems and substance abuse (Porter & Nuntavisit, 2016). The study concludes that the use of MST can significantly improve emotional and behavioral problems in young Australian persons and substantially improve primary caregiver parenting skills and mental health functioning.

2) Anxiety-Based School Refusal: Helping Parents Cope: The papers start with outlining a case about a girl called Bridget who is 13 years old and suffers from “school refusal”. Bridget will not attend school, and her parents are getting increasingly worried that she will isolate totally from the world around her (Alday, Sloan, C., 2009). Then the paper draws lines between school refusal and anxiety disorders. The paper claims that in the USA anxiety based school refusal occurs in 2-5% of all school-age children, and that the school refusal is related to separation anxiety, academic worries, fear of strict teachers or bullies

(Alday, Sloan, C., 2009). The author then states that anxiety in most cases “run in the family”, either as a genetic disorder or as an environmental hand down, or most probably both. The paper then suggests that the best intervention to help the adolescents suffering from anxiety is to teach the parents about their own anxiety, for example concerning the adolescent’s educational future, when the adolescent as it is, does not attend school because of anxiety. The paper suggests the use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and teaching the parents CBT because they then know how to understand their own problems and hence their child’s problems (Alday, Sloan, C., 2009). The paper also suggests a type of psychoeducation, teaching the parents about anxiety. Family therapy as such is suggested to helping members feel secure in their relationships and accept negative feeling states, such as anxiety and anger, as tolerable parts of every family’s experience (Alday, Sloan, C., 2009).

3) The Efficacy of Systemic Therapy for Internalizing and Other Disorders of Childhood and Adolescence: A Systematic Review of 38 Randomized Trials: This paper is occupied with researching the efficacy of systemic therapy for a number of different disorders of children and adolescents. It collects data from 38 randomized trials that all are conducted towards showing how effectful systemic therapy has been towards different kinds of disorders diagnosed by DSM-IV or ICD-10 or suffering from other clinically relevant conditions (Retzlaff et al., 2013). The paper starts by defining systemic therapy as: 1) any form of psychotherapy which perceives human behavior and especially psychological symptoms and disorders within the context of the social systems patients live in; 2) focuses on interpersonal interactions and expectations, the social construction of realities, and recursive causality between symptoms and interactions; 3) includes family members

and other important people (e.g., teachers, friends, professional helpers) directly or indirectly through systemic questioning, hypothesizing, and specific interventions; and 4) appreciates and utilizes clients' perspectives on problems, resources, and preferred solutions. The paper distinguishes systemic therapy from family therapy in the way that systemic therapy does not require that the significant individuals are present in the therapy (Retzlaff et al., 2013). The paper reviews all randomized (or parallelized/matched) 2 controlled trials published in English, German, Korean, Mandarin, or Spanish by December 2011 on the efficacy of systemic therapies with DSM-IV or ICD-10 diagnosed child and adolescent index patients (or clinically relevant conditions such as suicide attempts, conduct disorders, bullying, selfharming behavior, child abuse and neglect). The paper finds, that In the treatment of adolescents with anxiety disorders, the combination of systemic family therapy with medication resulted in a larger reduction of symptoms and a larger improvement of quality of life and child rearing than medication alone (Retzlaff et al., 2013).

4) Comparing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Systemic Therapy for Social Anxiety

Disorder: Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial (SOPHO-CBT/ST): The paper presents a randomized controlled trial (RCT), piloting an at the time, newly developed manualized therapy based on systemic therapy targeted on social anxiety disorders (Hunger et al., 2020). The comparative study was conducted with 38 individuals in different ages, some were adolescents, but the median age was 36 years. The paper outlines in detail information on the therapists and the context around the therapy and the clients' prior experience with therapy. It also in short presents the systemic therapy concepts that the RCT is based on. It integrates concepts and practices from post-Milan circular interviewing and questioning to fluidize the presented symptoms, solution-focused language and

restoration of a dominant problem-saturated narrative, externalization of symptoms based on the narrative solutions approach and symbolic action methods like sculpting. Theoretically, it was grounded in communication theory as outlined by Watzlawick (Watzlawick, P. et al., 1967) and social systems theory, with strong ties to the autopoiesis concept as conveyed by Maturana (Maturana, 1988). The manualized method is divided into four phases, where in the first phase the patient and its significant others are invited to therapy. The first phase closes with a joint resource-oriented understanding of the function of the symptoms. The second phase integrates single and multi-personal therapy settings, where concrete interventions are planned together with the client and if possible, the significant others. Through this phase there is a constant evaluation of the usefulness of the interventions. The third phase focuses on relapse prevention and preparation for life without therapy. Finally, the fourth phase focuses on refreshing new knowledge and consolidating the system around the client. The therapy was mostly done individually, but the system participated when it was relevant (Hunger et al., 2020). The overall conclusion of the study was that there were positive findings in relation to symptom reduction and improvement of psychological, interpersonal, social system, and global functioning, when using manualized systemic therapy in relation to anxiety disorders, also a slightly better result than when using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Hunger et al., 2020).

3.5.4. Critical Positioning

1) An Evaluation of Multisystemic Therapy with Australian Families: The papers positioning as an evaluation of a certain treatment method immediately speaks to my research question, but with a closer reading some problems in incorporating it in my own study becomes clear. Of course, the overall perspective is systemic, but assessing the concrete

parts of the intervention, they have a very narrow relational approach. Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and teaching in parental skills are much more in a learning theory perspective and much more in an individual view towards the adolescents than I wish to unfold. At the same time, the way the paper in its introduction defines the behavior of the adolescents as a problem in itself. Instead, of for example seeing it as a rational and useful behavior in the contexts they have been a part of in their former lives, does not resonate well with this dissertation's perspectives, and neither does it align with the general systemic approach in my opinion. As for many other approaches, this perspective also favors the claim, that the problems have arisen in the family, and there for the family is in many ways the "problem", and where the solution is to be found. This, to me, is a reductionistic claim and leaves out the societal stress and peer-context that the adolescent is living in. Finally, the paper says very little about the specific problems arising from anxiety and is more interested in the general mis thriving of the adolescents.

2) Anxiety-Based School Refusal: Helping Parents Cope: This paper does not convey new research, either quantitative or qualitative. It is a practice story and some practice points from a professional and also an educator. This is to me quite fine, but it makes it hard to use the paper in a research context. The knowledge takes form as a more anecdotal story about what the author thinks is the right perspective to pursue in the work with anxiety struggling adolescents who do not attend school. What emerges as problematic to me is the sole perspective, that anxiety is created in the family, either biological or behavioral taught. And this is in spite of the text itself acknowledging that what the adolescents fear are not being good enough academically, being scolded by teachers or bullied by peers. All of which are very real and probable problems to encounter in the life of a school attendee. In relation to the research question of this dissertation, there is in this paper no

reference to how the adolescents themselves try to tame the anxiety. Like the former paper reviewed, this paper takes a somewhat learning theoretical position, where anxiety is something taught to the individual and most certainly not a healthy response or a reasonable behavior in an exposed and challenged environment. This is very much, as already stated, in opposition to a systemic perspective. So where this paper is very much on point in relation to the topic of anxiety, it is very much of point in the epistemological perspective that I could use in my dissertation.

3) *The Efficacy of Systemic Therapy for Internalizing and Other Disorders of Childhood and Adolescence: A Systematic Review of 38 Randomized Trials*: The paper is highly relevant to my research in the way that it conveys that the systemic approach has relevance when working with adolescents suffering from anxiety. In relation to this dissertation, it has the weakness of not showing what are the core changing elements of the systemic therapy. Of course, that is also not the aim of the paper, but for it to be useful to me, I would have needed at more practical connection to the day-to-day work with the adolescents. How the systemic approach acts and creates new directions for the adolescents in question. Finally, the paper does not deal with anxiety specifically, so the concept of anxiety does not at all unfold and therefore the use for me of this specific paper will be very superficial.

4) *Comparing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Systemic Therapy for Social Anxiety Disorder: Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial (SOPHO-CBT/ST)*: The paper is preoccupied with showing the relevance for systemic therapy as compared to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The paper is written in a positivistic epistemological perspective and that makes the results and reflections in the paper difficult to use in my dissertation. At the same time, randomized controlled trials on the use of systemic therapy in relation to anxiety disorders,

are helpful to me, especially because it looks like the systemic approach is helpful. What the paper does not mention is more concretely what is helpful in the taming of the anxiety. The target group is of varied ages and that makes it hard for me to use the results, in some of the clients lives partners are an important part of the system around them, at that is of course not relevant for the adolescents I have done research on. Most importantly, it is very hard to transform the results of this study into direct practical reflections or methodologies for the everyday psychotherapist or pedagogue.

3.6. Anxiety in a Danish Context

3.6.1. Presentation

In the following I will process four papers all of them focusing on anxiety in a Danish context. The four texts are:

- 1) *Body Dysmorphic Symptoms in Youth with Obsessive-compulsive Disorder: Prevalence, Clinical Correlates, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Outcome*, written by Þórhildur Ólafsdóttir, Bernhard Weidle, Tord Ivarsson, Davíð R. M. A. Højgaard, Karin Melin, Judith Becker Nissen, Nor Christian Torp, Per Hove Thomsen, Gudmundur Skarphedinsson. All these authors have of course different affiliations, but they are from the Nordic countries counting Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. All organizations that are working with education in psychology or psychiatry with a focus on adolescents and children (Ólafsdóttir et al., 2023).
- 2) *A randomized controlled trial examining the efficacy of an internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy program for adolescents with anxiety disorders*, written by Silke Stjerneklar, Esben Hougaard, Lauren F. McLellan and Mikael Thastum. Stjerneklar,

Hougaard and are Danish researchers affiliated with Department of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, School of Business and Social Sciences, Aarhus. McLellan is affiliated with the Centre for Emotional Health, Department of Psychology, Macquarie University, New South Wales, North Ryde, Australia (Stjerneklar et al., 2019).

- 3) *(Be)longing - Forståelse af mobning som længsel efter at høre til*, written by Hansen, H.R. H.R. Hansen is a Danish researcher in school environments and bullying in school contexts (Rabøl Hansen, 2011).

- 4) *Å løyse angst i samspel. Bruk av familierapi i behandling av angsttilstandar hos barn og unge*, written by Bergem, S. S. and Jevne, K.S. Bergem is teaching at OsloMet as a environmental therapist and a familytherapist. Jevne is also teaching at OsloMet as a socialworker.

3.6.2. How the Literature Was Found

The papers emerged from searching Academic Search Premier with the search criteria: anxiety disorders or anxiety or generalized anxiety disorder AND adolescents AND Denmark AND treatment or intervention or therapy (see appendix 13). I had made a search that should only show papers from 2014-2024, because I did not want research that was too old and out of the context that the adolescents I work with in my research. The articles were very diverse in the way, that one of the articles actually was from 2011, one of the articles explains work with anxiety in a Norwegian context and some of them

are collaborations between Danish and international researchers. Nevertheless, these were the texts that I hoped showed some relevance to me. One of the papers *Systematic identification and stratification of help-seeking school-aged youth with mental health problems: a novel approach to stage-based stepped-care*, I found to be so much of topic that I discarded it from the five papers that appears on my search rapport. The paper was about visitation to special schools.

I used Google Scholar to crosscheck whether the four articles also were mentioned in that search engine, at that was the case for 1), 2), and 3).

3.6.3. Main Features

Body Dysmorphic Symptoms in Youth with Obsessive-compulsive Disorder: Prevalence, Clinical Correlates, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Outcome – this study is focusing on children and adolescents and to estimate the prevalence for body dysmorphic symptoms (BDD), in a sample of individuals who all suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), (Ólafsdóttir et al., 2023). And at the same time, the study aimed to determine the outcome of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) on the target group. The target group was treated in 75 min. weekly sessions of exposure-based CBT, for 14 weeks. Depending on the child's age or preference, parents could join for the whole session. The study concluded that about 8% of children and adolescents with OCD included in the study had symptoms of BDD. Those with BDD symptoms were older, had higher frequency of comorbid anxiety disorders and a greater number of OC symptoms than those without BDD symptoms. The study suggests that OCD can be treated with CBT in the presence of BDD symptoms (Ólafsdóttir et al., 2023).

A randomized controlled trial examining the efficacy of an internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy program for adolescents with anxiety disorders – this article is occupied by evaluating a Danish study of Internet-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (ICBT). The randomized controlled trial was conducted with 70 adolescents (13–17 years) with anxiety disorders according to DSM-IV. Participants were randomly assigned to a 14- weeks therapist-guided ICBT or to a waitlist condition. Outcomes were evaluated post-treatment and at 3- and 12-month follow-up (Stjerneklar et al., 2019). The study compared children that received ICBT for 14 weeks to children on waiting list to treatment. The paper does not go into detail about how the ICBT treatment was conducted, but is very detailed when it comes to conveying recruitment, procedures and measurement of the research outcome. The study concludes that ICBT is efficacious and feasible in relieving symptoms of anxiety in adolescents. And as such, the study supports previous findings of similar guided ICBT interventions (Stjerneklar et al., 2019).

(Be)longing - Forståelse af mobning som længsel efter at høre til – this text is a paper crystallized from a PhD project. It starts with a critique of the perspective in the book *Lord of the Flies* from 1954 by William Golding. The perspective suggests that children, let alone on a deserted island will become bullies and violent towards each other (Rabøl Hansen, 2011). Rabøl Hansen uses this story to unfold the context in which children who behave violently, and bullying are living in. She is interested in the school environment that these children are attending. The concept of *longing for belonging* is presented. The concept originates from post-colonial research in Australia and has in Danish context been

used to understand “muslim-ness” in the Danish society (Rabøl Hansen, 2011). The concept of longing for belonging suggests that bullying is a product of this longing, which makes the culture of bullying both anti-social and social in nature. Bullying is in Rabøl Hansens perspective (2011), a kind of including exclusion, because bullying also is a way of establishing a community, a “them” and “us”.

Å løyse angst i samspel. Bruk av familierapi i behandling av angsttilstandar hos barn og unge - The paper is about family therapy as a method in the treatment of anxiety states in children and young people. In many cases, the paper states, the development of children's anxiety occurs in interaction between children and parents. The way the parents meet the needs of the child is particularly important, the authors claim. They have explored how family therapy can be used in the treatment of anxiety states in children and young people. The article is based on qualitative interviews with nine family therapists (Bergem & Jevne, 2024). The authors find that it was crucial in the family therapy setting to create security, to get to know the state of anxiety, to take a seat in the driver's seat, and populate the therapy room. They emphasize the therapists wish for tailored working methods (Bergem & Jevne, 2024).

3.6.4. Critical Positioning

Body Dysmorphic Symptoms in Youth with Obsessive-compulsive Disorder: Prevalence, Clinical Correlates, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Outcome – the paper turns out to have very little directly to do with my research question. It focuses on CBT and OCD, but at the same time it tells me, that therapeutic work is useful in working with anxiety adjacent

struggles. It also suggests connections between specifically OCD and BDD in at least some cases. In a general perspective, this is important to remember that there is comorbidity between different disorders and their adjacent disorders too.

A randomized controlled trial examining the efficacy of an internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy program for adolescents with anxiety disorders – this article is in many ways, all though on topic in terms of target group, very different in its positioning opposed to my own. The text is preoccupied with showing quantitatively that CBT is useable in an internet-based version. Both the CBT approach and the very quantitative perspective make the article not that compatible with my own research because of the big differences in epistemological view. Again, though, the research shows that it is probably possible to do therapy in an online setting. Something that also could prove relevant from a systemic perspective.

(Be)longing - Forståelse af mobning som længsel efter at høre til – the article has very little to do with anxiety, directly, and even less to do with therapy. The author is not therapist or practitioner, and she describes another practice than mine. Where I see some usefulness in the paper is that it shares some epistemological positioning with my own. The decolonial perspective is explicit, and also the diversity seeking appreciative view on individuals' behavior is present. What is useful in relation to my research on anxiety is that I have a hypothesis that some of my data will reveal that the adolescents I have talked to feared bullying. That some of their anxiety stems from these culture-bearing behaviors that the professionals unwillingly endorse.

Å løyse angst i samspel. Bruk av familierapi i behandling av angsttilstandar hos barn og

unge - the article is on point in relation to my research question because I share epistemological standpoint with the writers. At the same time, their more practical focus on what family therapy methods is useful in the treatment is useful to me. I am critical of their, to me, narrow perspective on the family's role in the development of anxiety around the child. To me that is a neglect of all the other contexts that the child/adolescent is a part of. I do also not agree with their understanding of where the anxiety is. In my reading of the paper, the anxiety is inside the child and is not so much explicitly placed in the relations as I would wish for in a family therapy perspective.

3.7. Consequences of literature review

In the following paragraph, I will unveil what consequences this literature review has had for me adopting the methodological approaches I have chosen.

The consequences have shown themselves in especially my choice towards implementing New Materialism, Grounded Theory, the concept of Big Tent: eight criterions for good qualitative research and Emotional Autoethnographic approach.

What my aim was in doing my literature review was to give an overview of important contributions to the understanding and treatment of anxiety from a relational perspective.

My condensed critique of the papers and books I have presented in my literature review is that 1) they, overall, very poorly address practical implications to what could be helpful for practitioners working with adolescents suffering from anxiety. 2) At the same time, all the texts position themselves in a somewhat objectifying perspective towards adolescents and

anxiety. The “looking over the shoulder” perspective, where the authors stand outside of the concepts in question, is very much represented in all the texts, and 3), in most of the literature presented, there is a reductionist approach to understanding the causality of why anxiety arises. In some descriptions as arising in the individual as unrealistic thoughts or merely in the family systems. These are to me, shortcomings that must be addressed in my own research, as they, in my perspective, are all dealbreakers in a professional doctoral research thesis that understands itself as positioned in a systemic.

My methodological approaches should support my intentions to write a thesis grounded on the opposites of my critique of the literature I have read on the topic in question, among other reasons, mainly to meet a criteria to qualitative research on being a significant contribution to the field (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017).

Lack of practical implications

To counter 1) the lack of practical implications in former research, I lean on Tracy and Hinrichs (2017), criteria for quality in qualitative research. According to them, some of the important criteria for quality in qualitative research is that the thesis is about a *worthy topic* stating that the topic of research must be relevant. At the same time, they underline the need for qualitative research to be a significant contribution both theoretically and practically. This focus on practicality and also on transferability from theory to practicality (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017) made me in the first place look at Tracy and Hinrichs paper.

Another implication for this thesis is my method of analysis. I have, as all doctoral students, I presume, looked to various methods of analyzing my empirical data, but the one method that stands out is Grounded Theory, that in its cores has a vision of being theory producing (Charmaz, K., 2014; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser, Barney, G. &

Strauss, Anselm, L., 1967). Of course, producing a theory is not the same, as producing a new practice approach, but often creating a theory is one of the first steps towards developing new practical actions. As Kurt Lewin states: "There is nothing so practical as a good theory", (Lewin, K., 1951). By conducting a Grounded Theory analysis, I hope that some basic steps towards a change in practice can be reached.

Finally, being introduced to New Materialism in my doctoral program has had an impact on me on different levels. One of the consequences has been, that I am not merely interested in the socialconstructionistic approach towards understanding and treating a concept as anxiety. The socialconstructionistic focus on language (Gergen, 2010), is important and has played a major role in the therapeutic and pedagogical development of practices for decades. But something is missing I now think. This is the focus on also the material components of the concept. If an approach towards anxiety as a concept should come a little closer to a truer production of valuable practice, we must also address the bodily, sensual experiences of the adolescents in question. We must look at more than only human relationships. This is all presented in a New Materialistic onto-epistemology (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018).

The objectifying positioning

In countering the 2) objectifying positioning of all the literature that I covered in my literature review, I turn to some basic literature on the systemic approach in arguing that the researcher, writer and therapist themselves must understand their own subjective submergence into every concept that is produced by their hands and thoughts. As Von Foerster states, the description of anything starts and ends with the describer (Foerster, H.V., 2014). We cannot stand outside the world, as researchers (or therapists or pedagogues), and think that we objectively can describe behavior, emotions and relations.

We are all embedded in it all, all the time we cannot detach us from them. At the same time, we cannot exist in our emotions alone all the time. We must balance ourselves through self-reflexivity so that it gets easier to treat our own truths about the concept in question with some degree of irreverence (Cecchin, G. et al., 2012; Palzzoli, M. S. et al., 1980). To do so I am again looking towards Tracy and Hinrichs Big Tent Criteria for Qualitative Quality (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Their quest for inducing higher degrees of quality in qualitative studies underlines exactly that the researchers potential biases must be explicitly present in the research production (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). New Materialism in the same way demands the researcher's movement from being the objective observer to being a conscious subjective producer of knowledge, from observing from the "shore", we must sometimes "step into the river" ourselves (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). In some ways, to me, this approach is the lived and practiced second order cybernetic researcher. Trying to understand my own biases and connecting to the data and material lived experiences from my research persons, on a "lived-experience-level". One way of doing this, that I discovered after searching in different anthropological literature, is the Emotional Autoethnographic approach. In an Emotional Autoethnographic methodology you are not interested in the for example, concept of anxiety, as much as you are interested in how it makes you feel (Bochner, A. & Ellis, C., 2022). My position of the lacks of the literature in my review has then pointed me towards a more subjective approach, through the use of New Materialism as an onto-epistemological stance and the further use of an Emotional Autoethnographic method. All because Tracy and Hinrichs (2017), perspectives on why we need higher quality in qualitative research.

Reductionistic approach

To answer the, to me quit, reductionistic approach in the literature reviewed, my hope is to “open up” the field around anxiety and not close it down, to try to honor its complexity (Bateson, G., 1972, 1991a). New Materialism is an onto-epistemology that exactly does this. New Materialism is interested in seeing the world as complex as it is. For example, the concept of anxiety as something produced and emerging from connections between physiological and psychological attributes in the individual, crossing laws, medical descriptions, cultural designated regulations of emotions, discourses, family cultures, school culture, relationships of for example power, love, fear and pressure. In a New Materialistic sense, anxiety and the treatment of it must in nature be complex and unmanageable (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). At the same time, the researchers own connecting to the concept changes it by the mere looking at it (Barad, 1996). This blends again into the researchers own self reflexivity as mentioned above, and becomes again an argument for using the Emotional Autoethnographic approach, (Bochner, A. & Ellis, C., 2022), and the Big Tent criteria’s for qualitative research (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017), because their aim is the same. We must embrace the complexity of the phenomena in question. At least as much as possible, and all the time conscious about the fact that we cannot ever fully illuminate it.

3.8. Summary of Literature Review

In this literature review I have both looked at literature that, in my field of research, could seem relevant for my study. I have reviewed a text about the history of the concept of anxiety. I have reviewed a paper on emotions in systemic therapy and on emotions in social relations. Finally, I have made systematic reviews of research papers on anxiety in systemic treatment and on anxiety treatment in Denmark.

What I have found is that there is a gap between how many children and adolescents suffer from and in this emotional state, and how little research has been done on the methodological approach towards the process of taming it. There are books and papers that can help me frame my research, but there is very little to imply precisely what ways to go in practically designing suggestions for professionals on how to help adolescents with their experiences of anxiety. At least in a systemic relational perspective.

I have discovered some shortcomings in the literature I have reviewed in terms of doing systemic research on my topic of choice. These shortcomings are 1) lack of practical implications, 2) an objectifying positioning and 3) a reductionistic approach. I will in my research try to counter these shortcomings by making use of certain methodologies such as an onto-epistemological stance informed by New Materialism and a perspective on quality in qualitative research as presented in a paper by Tracy and Hinrichs. To meet my own ambitions towards practical usefulness and transferring of academic produced work onto a clinical and pedagogical practice I will make use of the framework presented in Grounded Theory as method to analyze my data. Finally, how I am going to make use of Emotional Autoethnography to make sure that I try to connect to the complexity of the lived and sensed experience of adolescents experiencing anxiety.

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will present the methodology used in the dissertation. My first step will be to clarify my onto-epistemological stance as New Materialistic and how this influences the chosen qualitative methods used for sampling my findings. Then I will explain my methods for making my samplings, starting with accounting for the qualitative approach and then describing the method of Grounded Theory and an Emotional Autoethnographic approach. Next step will be to describe my process of data analysis, clarifying the steps done in the process and ending up in a section containing my thoughts and critics on the quality of my research. Finally, this chapter will have a paragraph focusing on my ethical reflections towards making this research.

One of the questions that I have asked myself all through this research process has been “when does my research process start and when does it stop?”. Inspired of, or even created out of Karen Barads understanding of Niels Bohrs deduced consequences of quantum mechanics (Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017), I have started to radically questioning the strict division into “before research process”-“research process”-“after research process”. I now understand these three different “times” pasts, present and future as fully connected. When I chose to write my dissertation on this topic, a couple of years ago now, I had thoughts and reflections that stretched into the future. I was thinking of course about if I had chosen a topic I could endure working with for a long period of time. I also had reflections on the actuality of the topic. Would it be relevant out there in the future, to the world of systemic psychotherapy, would anyone gain anything from me doing research on anxiety among adolescents? Could I make a living after finishing my dissertation? Would it be possible to write the dissertation into a book, a piece of bestseller

literature on anxiety? Now I am deeply embedded in the research process, and it is so obvious to me that my research process started long before I even got to be a psychotherapist. I can draw clear lines from some of my first pedagogical encounters with vulnerable adolescents to some of the thoughts and reflections I am having now. In some ways I am getting high on a big load of new knowledge about anxiety, self-harm/self-hurt, Grounded Theory, Hartmut Rosas concept of Resonance, New Materialism and so on. On the other hand, I first started feeling an interest in quantum physics at the age of perhaps 15 or 16. I was interested in writing poems and doing “arty” things from the same age and my first year into my social work studies I found the book “Social work as art” (England, H., 1986), and tried to understand myself into this profession as searching for aesthetic moments, Resonance, in the relationships with other people, mostly adolescents. In that sense, to me time has become “a flat circle”, with a reference to Nietzsches doctrine of eternal recurrence (Nietzsche, F., 1972). This means that we are deemed (or perhaps blessed) to keep repeating our life circles. Just as a last example I very clearly remember my first encounter with the systemic understanding of the meaning of relationships and ecology. I was attending a course together with a good friend, because we were employed in the same organization (actually the same organization in which I am doing my research right now). After the first day of instruction and education we went for a walk, and I remember feeling uplifted. We talked about the systemic perspective, and we both had this feeling of having found a home for our being in the world. We both had always felt that this is maybe how the world “is”, but we had never had a language to describe it before; now we had heard words that suggested it was called a systemic approach.

4.2. Ontological stance

The term "ontology" is derived from Greek and translates as "the doctrine of being" (Klausen, 2016). Ontology is an ancient philosophical discipline that deals with what exists in the world and how it exists. Typical philosophical questions that are sought to be answered in an ontological context are often, for example, whether the world consists of exclusively physical objects (materialism), whether the world consists of our psychic experience of the world (idealism), or whether the world around us is a combination of these two? (Klausen, 2016).

My ontological stance in this dissertation is influenced by a relatively new paradigm in systemic practice, the New Materialistic. Below I will unfold this ontological perspective, that also involves epistemological consequences.

4.2.1. *New Materialisms*

The New Materialisms are a relatively new set of thoughts in the psychological and sociological disciplines. How and when a new wave of thoughts and ideas arises is always difficult to determine. If we understand the world systemically, then a wave of ideas like the new materialist ones will have many different circular causes. Overall, we can talk about New Materialism as a wave within posthumanist directions (Posthumans, 2017). The posthumanist waves are an incipient showdown with the Western world's earlier fundamental ontological approach, where we have placed man, or man's experiences of the world around him, as determining and at the center of what reality actually consists of. The posthumanist thoughts are generally concerned with the fact that everything that lies outside the human is also part of reality and affects us (Posthumans, 2017).

The philosophy of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and the French philosopher and psychoanalyst Pierre-Felix Guattari is often cited as an origin of the new materialist thoughts (Albertini et al., 2025a; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018) . Deleuze and Guattari consider everything material (bodies, buildings, nature, paper, water, mobile phones, etc.), everything social (discourses, documents, legislation, communication, etc.), and everything abstract (ideas, dreams, feelings, and personal values, etc.), as existing only in "assemblages", of something also material, social and abstract. So, everything physical and everything non-physical only occurs in contexts between something else physical and non-physical (Albertini et al., 2025a; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). Such "collections" of the physical and the non-physical occur in unpredictable patterns around actions and events, often without an actual start or an actual end. Deleuze and Guattari themselves use an image from nature as a way of understanding how reality develops and constantly "emerges", the rhizome. A rhizome is a term taken from biology and denotes the root network of certain types of plants. In a rhizomatic root network, it is in principle not possible to determine what is the beginning of the root network and what is the end. The different shoots on the root network are interconnected by many different routes (Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). New connections are constantly being formed, and other connections are breaking down. The network is complex and which buddings and connections are the real prerequisite for a new budding to occur is practically impossible to say.

Concepts are therefore physical, and the physical are becoming concepts. There is no ontological dualism, the material and the immaterial exist on the same level (Albertini et al., 2025a; de Freitas, 2017). Everything in the world thus has an equally high ontological status. This contrasts with the constructivist approaches that will put the individual person's experience of the world first (Mosgaard, 2003) and the social constructionist approach

which considers language to be the constituent of the world and meaning (Gergen, 2010). The feminist philosopher Rosa Braidotti (b. 1954), together with the Mexican artist and philosopher Manuel Delanda (b. 1952), invented the term "New Materialism" in the latter half of the 1990s. Braidotti mentions the concept for the first time in a chapter on Deleuze's philosophy and feminist theory (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012), as a concept that must bring together a flow of research methods, a conceptual framework, and a political standpoint. The movement, in its essence, according to Braidotti, must be seen as a confrontation with the linguistic turn and instead an attempt to emphasize:

"...the concrete yet complex materiality of bodies immersed in social relations of power"(Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012. pp.21).

In this perspective, the dichotomous division into physical and non-physical elements of existence is dissolved. E.g. the fact that we should be able to conceptually separate body and mind from each other is an illusion from a new materialist perspective. These are connected in the same way as buds on a rhizome do. Likewise, the fact that we believe we can separate nature from culture, another Western distinction, also becomes a misunderstanding, because nature is a co-creator of human culture and human culture co-creates nature. In a feminist way of thinking, the approach becomes relevant because it dissolves the binary understanding of the sexes and because it also dissolves the distinction between biological sex and sexuality (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012).

Karen Barad (b. 1956), American physicist and feminist philosopher is another important figure in the development of New Materialist thought. With her chapter "Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism Without Contradiction" from the book "Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science" she helped shape some of the

first thoughts within the movement (Barad, 1996). Barad's overall project in the chapter is to point the reader in the direction that there is not a gap between meaning and matter. To Barad, there is correspondence between the physical and the non-physical on an ontological level (Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017). She investigates this based on Niels Bohr's (1885-1962), quantum mechanics and several different physical experiments that substantiate that there is an ontological connection between what is investigated and how it is investigated. This connection is often understood somewhat as "our measurement affects the results of our experiment", but for Barad the connection is much deeper and more fundamental. On a quantum mechanical level, it is the case that the experimental setup itself creates the type of being (ontological status) that the investigated has (Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012).

Bohr believed that what we observe when we investigate something is an entanglement, between what we investigate and what we investigate with. The investigation apparatus and the thing being investigated are constitutive of each other. Niels Bohr's understanding was later tested empirically, and it turned out that he was right (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012). Niels Bohr claims that a distinction between the "object" and the research situation is erroneous (Barad, 1996). Objects are in principle non-existent if we do not examine them. The research situation itself produces limitations of - and properties of the object we are researching. The electron particle thus has no form of existence before the moment we examine this very thing. This Niels Bohrian understanding has also later been proven empirically (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012). Indeterminism does not only apply in relation to space. In other words, there is spatially an entanglement between the examined and the examiner. It also applies to the period we measure on an object. It is in principle

impossible to establish completely objective criteria for when an incident takes place.

When it occurs and when it ends (de Freitas, 2017).

Karen Barad's basic theoretical concept Agential Realism brings together her philosophy.

The term must be understood as meaning that all physical objects are inseparable from the contexts in which they form. Physical objects arise (emerge) in the interactions they are part of. In Barad's thinking, physical and non-physical phenomena are not simply a synthesis of each other, but they constantly provide the possibility of how and with which properties they can each arise (Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012).

Agential realism combines realism with social constructivism. According to Barad (1996), there is no "pure" realism out there. Reality constantly arises anew, emerges, in the meeting with the living beings. The perspective of power is to a large extent present in agential realism, because the way we discursively and culturally choose to "look" at reality determines what we see and what can emerge (Barad, 1996).

Karen Barad writes:

"What I am proposing is not some holistic approach in which subject and object reunite into some apolitical relativized whole, but a theory which insists on the importance of constructed boundaries and also the necessity to interrogating and refiguring them"(Barad, 1996 pp.187).

Agential realism demands that we are critical of the knowledge we call objective. Barad does not want to blur the boundaries between subject and object, the investigator and the investigated, she wants us to be aware that the boundaries we set are not innocent. They have real, material consequences in the world. The knowledge we acquire about the world is thus always situated and local because knowledge always arises in contexts that are

also situated and local (Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017). Therefore, agential realism also comes to be an ethical theory with political connotations (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012).

An appeal to be made towards Karen Barad's agential realism is whether examples from the quantum level can be applied to the rest of reality. Quantum mechanics are often seen as behaving differently at small scales compared to the "human level." Barad disagrees with this distinction, viewing it as a dichotomy between the "small" and "big" universe. She argues there shouldn't be different ontological forms of being; the way the world exists is consistent across scales (de Freitas, 2017).

A consequence of this is that all knowledge is situated, or that we must understand science as "minor science". Karen Barad calls her actual perspective on research a "diffractive methodology" which draws on the concept of diffraction from the double-slit experiment. As a practical approach, diffraction presents a methodology for thinking into the phenomena in question, with complexity and through the entangled relationships between data, materials, values, knowledge, and performative processes of making. Through an appreciation of the entangled relationships between research and researcher, the diffractive structures of the 'research assemblages offer more imaginative ways to 'materialize' affective thought. The method of diffraction offers a different kind of critical consciousness that attends to the emerging "differences". Rather than merely reflecting and comparing, contrasting or using binary oppositions, diffractively engaging with materials allow us to think transversally across multiple, disciplinary fields of knowledge - to think out of the box and more creative around the phenomena we are researching (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; de Freitas, 2017; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018).

The onto-epistemological stance of New Materialism is chosen, because of its insisting on viewing phenomena as complex entities (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). A concept as anxiety, in a New Materialistic perspective, will arise in an existence from countless different paths. Intersections between an infinite number of rhizomatic buds. Buds of the social, buds of the abstract and buds of the material. To me this approach is as close to the thoughts of Gregory Bateson (Bateson, G., 1972, 1991a) as we can get in a academic description of how the world “is” and how we can gain knowledge about it. As described in the chapter on the literature review (3.7.), I want to widen out our understanding of anxiety and the treatment of it in a relational sense. The New Materialistic approach is all about relations and connections. But instead of focusing on language (as we would do in a socialconstructionistic analysis (Gergen, 2010), it in its flat ontology, equates the different aspects of “what is in the world” (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018).

4.2.2. Consequences of New Materialism for the methodology of the thesis

The onto-epistemological stance of a thesis should have methodological consequences for the shape and content of the thesis. In the following I will give an account of how the choice of doing a New Materialistic based thesis, points towards certain methods of analysis and data gathering. The three cornerstones in my empirical work are going to be a 1) qualitative approach, more precisely that of interviews analyzed in a 2) Grounded Theory perspective. To help saturate my findings and the material gathered in interviews with adolescents, I am also using 3) Emotional Autoethnography. These three positions chosen will be sought tied together in the following.

Qualitative research

In doing New Materialistic research, the golden standard could have been, as suggested by the core elements in the onto-epistemology, looking at both qualitative and quantitative perspectives on anxiety. This would encompass, as written above; social, abstract and material data. This could be for example: language and discourse gathered from the adolescents. But also, magical thinkings, ideas and values, and written procedures for diagnosing anxiety in various contexts. I could be watching and feeling the rooms in which the anxiety occurs, it could be experiencing anxiety as a researcher. It could be the gathering of poems, pictures, paintings and material stuff, that together with the above shows the complexity of experiencing anxiety and trying to tame it. Unfortunately, this is a far greater study than what I have a word count for in this thesis. In my groundwork for this thesis I have done a lot of reading of diagnostic tools and also analyzing them in a systemic perspective, critical to especially the role that an observer gets in diagnosing in descriptive diagnoses (Christiansen, J. C. V., 2022).

Nevertheless, I did not have the space to incorporate all of the otherwise interesting buds on the anxiety rhizome. So, in a moment of truth, I had to make a choice on what to focus on. This made me focus on the voices of the adolescents themselves. I elaborate on this in my paragraph on ethics, but an important view in the New Materialistic stance is that we have a big ethical and political responsibility as researchers. It is a responsibility to make the voices of people with perhaps, smaller voices heard (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012). A lot of educated and grown-up professionals have a lot to say about how to help and cure these adolescents, but in very few studies (if any, I did not find any), have the adolescents themselves been asked: what helps you when you experience anxiety? This made me want to cut out a frame in this thesis, all things taken into account,

that was based on qualitative interviews with the adolescents themselves, but with both a focus on their lived and experienced social, abstract and material realities.

Grounded Theory

In New Materialisms looking or researching something, studying it, also means that you produce it (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Barad, 1996; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). When I look at the way adolescents experience anxiety and how they try to tame the experience and learn to co-exist with it, I am also in the process of creating. I am creating both together with the adolescents, by the questions I ask and the questions I do not ask, what anxiety and taming it can exist as. I am also in the business of creating knowledge for practitioners and at least myself on how to support and understand the lived experiences of the adolescents. By inviting them to sit in a specific room and be interviewed, by using a microphone and by the time of day I am inviting them to, I am in the producing of reality. It is all production of reality and knowledge, knowledge that produces reality. Minor knowledge (Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018), in the meaning that it is local and not necessarily universal, but knowledge anyway. Grounded Theory in its core is interested in the same movement. Producing something new and useful from our gathering of data (Charmaz, K., 2014; Glaser, Barney, G. & Strauss, Anselm, L., 1967). At the same time Charmaz K. (2014), underlines that doing a Grounded Theory research process is not a linear process but consists of movements back and forth between different aspects of the research. This to me aligns with the New Materialistic view on how we connect different “buds” to each other. When I do an interview with an adolescent, I immediately start to reflect theoretically and clinically on how to understand and interpret their words and statements. This affects the questions and strategies I bring to the table in my next interview with another adolescent. It affects what I read and how I read it in the time after the interview, and this

again affects my next interview. Slowly I am, as a researcher and clinician, starting to produce a theory of how the world as an adolescent experiencing anxiety “is”. The theory I hope to construct through Grounded Theory, is produced on a backdrop of New Materialism. And this also means that I am fully aware that the producing of knowledge around adolescents experiencing and taming anxiety does not stop when I put my last words in this dissertation. It is just a moment in time, where I must hand in the thesis, but the Grounded Theory process keeps on going, just not as structured and systematic.

Emotional Autoethnography

Ethnography can come in big packages and small packages, a smaller package is autoethnography, where the researcher focuses and reflects on how their own lived experiences inform and affect their research (Svensson, C.F. & Brandt, L.I., 2023). An even smaller package or corner of the autoethnography is the Emotional Autoethnography (Svensson, C.F. & Brandt, L.I., 2023). The main goal of this approach is to help the researcher connect to phenomena from an emotional standpoint. In the New Materialistic perspective, connecting to phenomena in approximately similar ways to the research persons is an essential methodology. This is especially formulated as “stepping into the river” with the research person (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Barad, 1996; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). In practice, in this thesis, it can be used for me as a researcher to both saturate and thicken the data, and to get a more bodily connection to anxiety and different taming strategies. Doing so amid the process of interviewing adolescents helps the process of producing knowledge and adds on to the verbal data I collect in the interviews. Emotional Autoethnography lets me feel the anxiety. Finally it adds to the diffractive perspective (Barad, 1996), to create more lines of knowledge around my topics in question.

4.3. Sampling

In this section I will first describe qualitative research as a field and then, in short, the methodology of Grounded Theory. Next section I will give my account on ethnographic studies, and finally I will describe how my whole process of gathering data, inspired by these approaches, has been carried out in the lived life of me as a researcher. In each section there will be a short paragraph on argumentation for why I have chosen this specific perspective and methodology in doing this research.

4.3.1. Qualitative research

We can understand the qualitative method, as a reaction to the positivistic scientific tradition and the tendency to want to quantify the experiences linked to human life and the experiences it entails. Important to bear in mind in relation to the qualitative research tradition is the understanding of qualitative research as deeply founded in different epistemological traditions and thus closely linked to philosophical perspectives, especially expressed as opposition to the objectifying positivist research methodologies (Brinkmann, S. & Tanggaard, L., 2015).

The qualitative method is concerned with the “how” or the “wherefore” in the problem. Qualities surrounding the phenomena in question, can be examined both on an individual level and on a more collective level, and where the quantitative method will often try to quantify any findings, e.g. by converting these into numerical values, the qualitative method will aim to illuminate the human experience or the social life around whichever phenomena the research tries to uncover knowledge about (Brinkmann, S. & Tanggaard, L., 2015) .

The interviews are made as semi-structured interviews, Brinkmann & Tangaard (2015), the emphasis is on the interviewer being open to deviating from the interview guide in favor of following the interviewee's focus. If the interviewer has extensive knowledge of the relevant target group being interviewed and the theory to be worked with later in the process, there are good chances that the semi-structured interview can succeed in shedding light on the topic in question (Brinkmann & Tanggaard, 2020). In relation to the fact that the interviews were conducted with children, I also used the method "The improvised interview" (Kampmann, J. et al., 2017), where it is central that the method targets children in vulnerable positions and about sensitive subjects. The improvised interview allows the researcher to switch between different approaches (form) and questions (content) to follow the child. For example, it would be okay to conduct the interview while walking if that is what the child needs in the interview situation. It can also mean that part of the interview deals with completely different topics than what the researcher wants to elucidate, to let the child have a greater share in structuring the course of the interview. The argument is that by using more systematic methods than the improvised interview, we can limit children with less articulate communication patterns in formulating their attitudes and describing their life worlds. The research interview should therefore, both in terms of form and content, be adapted and accommodate the communicative competences and preferences of the individual child (Kampmann, J. et al., 2017). Regarding the New Materialistic onto-epistemology of the dissertation, my focus will be on discourses and verbal expressions of the lived experiences of the adolescents, but also with a great emphasis on what materialities are present in the situations where anxiety arises and when the adolescents apply their strategies to tame the experience of

anxiety. I will ask for bodily experiences and material entities that can inform me of different aspects of the adolescents way of connecting to the phenomena anxiety.

My approach to qualitative research will be inspired by Tracy and Hinrichs (2017), eight criteria for quality in qualitative research. This means that I bear in mind that my research is: a worthy topic, my research has rich rigor, is sincere, credible, can create relevant resonance, is a significant contribution to the field, is ethically founded and last but not least; is coherent (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). In the last section of this dissertation, I will try to reflect to what degree I think I address these demands throughout the dissertation.

4.3.2. *Grounded Theory*

The methodology chosen for the research in this dissertation is Grounded Theory (GT). The approach I will lay out here, I will begin by outlining my understanding of using a qualitative method such as GT. In qualitative research there are many different and varied approaches to data gathered from the empirical work of the researcher. My research method will be strongly inspired by GT but will also differ from it in different ways. In this section I will account for GT as it is intended by especially Kathy Charmaz, but also bearing in mind that an important statement in the different expositions of GT is, that the researcher must use the method flexibly and creatively (Charmaz, K., 2014; Glaser, Barney, G. & Strauss, Anselm, L., 1967).

Grounded Theory was an approach first coined by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser, Barney, G. & Strauss, Anselm, L., 1967). The goal of the method was to challenge the usual point in doing qualitative research, which, according to Glaser & Strauss (1967, pp. 1) was to test already existing theories against accurate collected empirically knowledge. Glaser &

Strauss (1967, pp. 1), instead wanted to introduce a method to create new sociological theories born out of data collected by the researcher.

Although the GT approach is described multiple times as a circular and iterative process (Charmaz, K., 2014; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser, Barney, G. & Strauss, Anselm, L., 1967), it is also described as a linear process, to make the steps it consists of understandable. There is a common understanding that a GT process exists of the following strategies:

- Simultaneously data-collecting and analyzing.
- Pursuing emerging themes early in the data analysis process.
- Discovery of elementary social processes in the data.
- Inductive construction of abstract categories that explain and synthesize the processes.
- Integration of categories into a theoretical framework that specifies causes, conditions and consequences of the processes researched (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001).

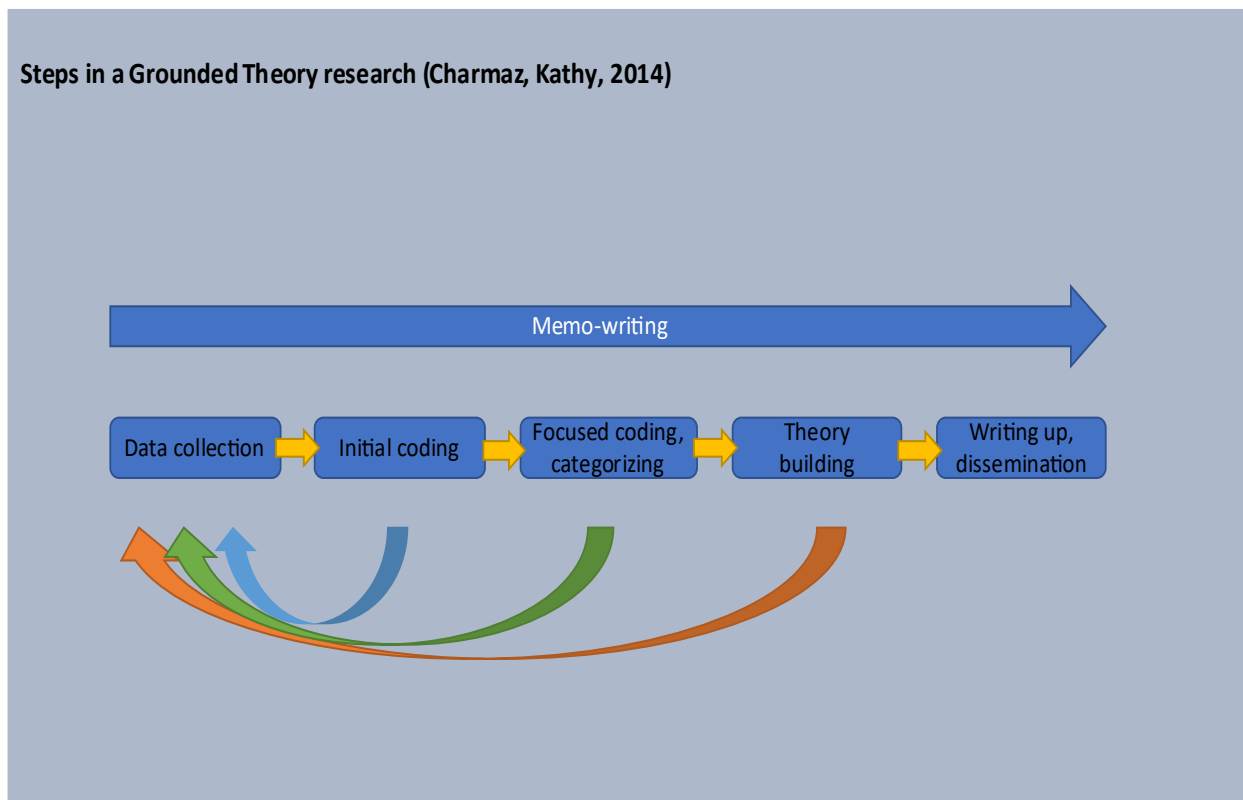
When we put this into certain steps, but conducted in a circular process, it can be described like this:

- Data collection
- Initial coding
- Focused coding and categorizing
- Theory building
- Writing up and dissemination (Charmaz, K., 2014).

Following these steps is also a constant focus on “memo writing”, to keep the researcher constantly reflecting and analyzing hers or his understanding of the data collected and its

connection to the research question (Charmaz, K., 2014; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). This process of constant comparison of gathered data, and the creation of categories to explain and understand the phenomenon in question, continues until the categories reach a state of saturation. This meaning a state, where no new knowledge or understanding emerges in spite of the continued gathering of data (Charmaz, K., 2014; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser, Barney, G. & Strauss, Anselm, L., 1967). When the results reached by the researcher towards understanding the phenomena becomes repetitive, the categories are saturated.

In graphical:



Charmaz (2014) divides Grounded Theory into the two main directions of Objective Grounded

Theory and Constructivist Grounded Theory. I will use Charmaz' (2014) version of Constructivist Grounded Theory. Constructivist grounded theorists prioritize the phenomenon. To study and view data and analysis as created from shared experiences and the relations between the participants and other sources of data (Charmaz, 2014). GT is a method of designing studies and a form of data analysis (Charmaz, 2014) that gives the researcher the opportunity to gather a greater amount of varied data, from varied contexts and participants, and then to analyze them by using different methods before combining the results for a larger and final grounded theory analysis. The consequence of this perspective is that any analysis is contextually situated in time, place, culture and situation (Charmaz, 2014). Applying Grounded Theory in this New Materialistic onto-epistemology hopefully will help me to saturate the data gathered a bit more in this relatively small-scale research project. Meaning should then be considered the result of a co-construction process among diverse interactions between the researcher, the participants, and the phenomenon in question (Charmaz, 2014).

4.3.3. Ethnographic and emotional autoethnographic approach

"Stepping into the river" (de Freitas, 2017; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018) together with the research persons as a part of the research is part of doing ethnological work in a research process, especially when your onto-epistemological viewpoint is New Materialistic. That means, having an intention of not disturbing the thoughts, feelings and behavior of the research persons, although I as an observer becomes a part of the situation observed (Rainbow, P., 2008) It has been clear to me that attending the daily lives of the adolescents, both in school and in their everyday life in the sections they live in on the

boarding school, has made it more clear to me, how their existence is shaped by both the relations to other adolescents, professionals and the houses and buildings they live in. At the same time I have tried to stay conscious about the fact, that the ethnographic approach also implies an ethnographic “gaze” (Madden, R., 2010), or you could say, way of seeing that both tries to stay neutral, but simultaneously is a performative action (Ahmed, 2016). This leads me to remember that observing is a practice learned and embedded in history, culture, preferred theories (by the observer), and the observers personal life (Madden, R., 2010).

I did this ethnographic study early in my research, but later I was forced to not use it in this dissertation, because I lacked the words in my word count. Instead, I needed to come closer to the concept of “anxiety” myself. This is because it seemed of greatest importance to the researcher to be conscious of his or her own interpretation of what is experienced in the observation process. The here and now’s that I am observing are beginning and ending with me, at least they are in the practice of being in my descriptions in this dissertation (Voerster, H.V., 2014). And “anxiety” was what I was really describing too. So another side of my ethnographic research is a piece of autoethnography. Diving deeper into the interview transcriptions from my conversations with the adolescents made me reflect on my topic for ethnographic studies. The context I had researched by being present in school with the adolescents is valuable knowledge, but it does not engage with the core focus of my research which has become the emerging of anxiety and anxiousness and how the adolescents cope with it. Therefore I have found it useful to connect myself to the experiences of the adolescents, to try to trigger some kind of anxiety or anxiousness feeling in myself.

My approach to the autoethnographic piece of research I have done, is inspired by a method called Emotional Autoethnography (Svensson, C.F. & Brandt, L.I., 2023). The goal of doing an autoethnographic study is not to achieve objective and positivistic knowledge about the phenomena in question. Instead the perspective pushes towards deeper reflections by the researcher towards the phenomena in question, and to try to let some kind of wider authenticity emerge in the handling of the findings (Svensson, C.F. & Brandt, L.I., 2023). The autoethnographic approach is less concerned with conveying information of the phenomena and more interested in evocation of the phenomena and what it feels like to be alive in the world as a human being living the phenomena in question (Bochner, A. & Ellis, C., 2022). The New Materialistic perspective in my approach to Emotional Autoethnography is the bodily experiences and the material implications that I discover in engaging with the lived experience of feeling anxiety myself.

This also means that in presenting the autoethnographic material I produce, I will move away from the standardized and legitimate forms of writing in the sciences. The normal third-person view, objectifying perspective and neutral language (Bochner, A. & Ellis, C., 2022), will be replaced by first-person language saturated with feelings and experiences, hopefully making it easier for myself and the reader to engage with the material collected among the adolescents. Making it more appealing to our hearts and senses, making the human journey into anxiety a little more accessible on a humanistic level, and not just on a strict academic cognitive (Bochner, A. & Ellis, C., 2022). And thus, making it more likely that I can connect with the feelings that the adolescents have shared with me verbally.

4.3.4. Interviews – How they were performed.

The interviews were planned as forty-five-minute sessions in an office the adolescents knew well at the boarding school. There were some juice and some candy. I recorded the conversations and underlined several times that they could step out of the research at any time of the process.

The room was about six meters long and four meters wide. It had a big meeting table in the middle of the room and six chairs around it. The room was white, and the furniture was black, a typical Nordic style. The room was tempered and none of the adolescents mentioned being either too warm or too cold. The adolescents chose the names themselves that would be used in the anonymized transcriptions, and in some of the cases this choice became a good beginning for the conversation.

When the interviews were finished, I again mentioned their possibility of stopping the process, thanked them for their participation. I asked all the participants what their plans were for the rest of the day and if they were “good to go” in terms of feeling alright with carrying on with their day after the interview. In a couple of the interviews, I had felt that the adolescents encountered some deeper emotional experiences, and as agreed with the adolescent I contacted their closest professional to keep an extra eye on them for the rest of the day. None of the adolescents reported that it had been transgressive to participate. A couple of the adolescents felt very tired after the interview, but all the research individuals conveyed pride and happiness to have contributed.

I had made an agreement with the leaders of the different departments in the boarding school that they would contact me afterwards if some of the adolescent’s showed signs of

being unhappy or feeling despair in the aftermath of the interviews. I have not been contacted about this, so I presume that none of the adolescents have shown signs of that.

4.3.5. Interviews – How they were analyzed.

As suggested in the Grounded Theory methodology, I started analyzing as soon as I finished my first interview, to simultaneously do analyzing and data collection (Charmaz, K., 2014; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser, Barney, G. & Strauss, Anselm, L., 1967). This made me both happy and it energized me, because I immediately felt that I was on to something. At the same time, it frustrated me, because I was afraid that I already was locked on to specific ways of understanding the material. I was afraid that I could be criticized for being able to do my analysis without much data, because I already knew a lot of things about what could be said to connect anxiety, adolescents' lives, systemic theory, and sociological approaches to being anxious in the world. Perhaps I was in danger of skipping being open when engaging with the data. I had a conversation with a colleague of mine, who is a teacher and who has done a PhD in primary schools. She reassured me. Telling me how she had twenty years of experience in primary schools before she started doing her PhD research on them. She told me that her research on her topic in question had begun many years before she started a PhD process. At that time, it was just not structured and as theorized as it became in the actual research process. "Just see to, that you are still open to be surprised and discover that you have been wrong, but you cannot hide away the knowledge you have gathered through twenty years of practice".

That I stopped struggling with my own preconceptions made it easier for me to let them go.

After doing my first three interviews I read them closely, and made a line by line coding or what is also called an initial or open coding (Charmaz, K., 2014). This opened the data a little for me, but I ended up with a countless number of categories, and categories I could hardly connect at all. I read the material two times more and then let it sit in my head for a week or so. After a week I read it all again and some models started to emerge in my thoughts. At the same time, I had two or three possibilities of ways to connect and make sense of my material, and I used that in my last three individual interviews.

Focusing my questions a little in the last three interviews helped me start a conceptualization and that led me on the way to do a change in my ethnographic studies towards Emotional Autoethnography (Bochner, A. & Ellis, C., 2022; Svensson, C.F. & Brandt, L.I., 2023). Conducting these actions helped me come in touch with some new layers surrounding anxiety and anxiousness, that suddenly made the process much more personal to me.

4.3.6. Ethnography and autoethnography – What I did.

The ethnographic studies I did at the boarding school were in short just being present. I had two days of following the children around all day. Especially focusing on their school days and attending school. I was present in recess and in the lunch break. Furthermore, I attended two afternoons on the day-to-day life in one of the departments, where about twenty adolescents live. I did handwritten notes from my ethnographic studies. I later used them mostly as context knowledge about the lives you live in a boarding school

As described earlier, I found that my ethnographic studies had a flaw. They revolved around the daily lives of the adolescents, and that was interesting and context saturating.

But my core interest increasingly grew into the experienced and lived feelings, emotions, and affections of feeling anxiety and/or anxiousness and the urges to cope with them. Therefor I made a shift towards an emotional autoethnographic focus, interested in diving into the feeling of anxiety. At first, I made a list of what I thought could trigger an anxiety feeling, or even an anxiety attack in myself. Just making the list and starting to reflect on how I could construct these situations made me lose sleep. Some of the ideas made me nausea and made my heartrate rise. One of the things I thought of was having a deep conversation with my wife about some economic dispositions I had made earlier in our relationship that still affects our economy and the trust between us. Talking about the subject is tainted with a lot of guilt and shame for me, so just starting to think about being verbal about these things affected me. I then had some reflections about the ethical prospects in conducting a conversation with my wife, about something that is very much an entity between us and found that it would not be ethically justifiable towards her. Having a “sidetrack” of using the subject for research, in this important conversation involving another human being seemed rowdy and to self-absorbed. Instead, the study was conducted in two different situations. One situation where I was to do a presentation for foster parents in Copenhagen and one where I felt really out of my comfort zone, where I was to do an hour of presentation on a conference day for at big municipality in Denmark. Both these situations became anxiety provoking for me and the notes from these are to be read in Appendix 7.

I understand that these exercises to stimulate a feeling of anxiety or anxiety in myself are not the same as what adolescents experience. They are borderline examples from my own context that make it a bit easier for me to connect to the data collected from the adolescents. I can, at any given moment, decide to withdraw from the anxiety provoking

situations. My chosen situations are not life threatening; they are not experienced in the context of me being in the power of a placement system or being forced to live a long way from my family. I am a white CIS gendered, middle-aged man, I have an education and are doing a doctorate. I have a good economy, and I have not experienced severe neglect in my childhood or formative years. I am conscious of all of this, and still, I appraise that the feeling of anxiety or anxiousness is in some ways the same. This based on both the thoughts of philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, stating that anxiety is a general and normal feeling in a human existence (Kierkegaard, S., 2021), and an American professor in Psychology Tracy Dennis-Tiwary, who states the same (Dennis-Tiwary, T., 2022). This notion allows me to try to draw lines between the lived experiences of the adolescents and myself. To try to connect with them on a “human to human” level and not just on a “researcher to research object” level. To “step into the river with them” (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; de Freitas, 2017; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018).

4.3.7. Findings – How they emerged.

The findings that emerged and lay ground to my initial formulating of some kind of theory to help adolescents to tame their anxiety were done in these steps:

- Data collection
- Initial coding
- Focused coding and categorizing (Charmaz, K., 2014).

I will now give a detailed account of what I have done and reflected upon in each of the steps.

4.3.7.1. Data Collection

I started by doing three interviews and of course, already after the first one, I could not help starting to think about how to understand what was said about the phenomena anxiety/ anxiousness. I conducted two more interviews and reflected on what was interesting to my research question. It quickly emerged as a reflection that thought about control was essential in understanding anxiety. I bore this in mind for the next four interviews and had a clear interest in how the adolescent created controllability in their lives in different settings, using different strategies. After the seven interviews I transcribed, read and reread the transcripts. I wished to have a second session with all the adolescents present, where I wanted to present to them my initial thoughts on how to understand anxiety from a relational perspective, and how I understood their taming strategies. Essentially to further saturate the material. Unfortunately, only one adolescent arrived at this second session. Two of the adolescents had stopped living in the school. Two of them were at the doctor for various reasons and one had simply forgotten the appointment and was fully embedded in eating pizza with her friends. Only Sara West showed up, but we had a conversation that was later transcribed and is referred to as SW2 in the findings chapter.

4.3.7.2. Initial Coding

The initial coding was conducted from a perspective, where I was interested in precisely what the data presented to me as findings. What was the data telling me about the phenomena of anxiety and anxiousness and what was it saying about the social situations in which anxiety arises?

Of course, the answers I got from the adolescents were facilitated by the questions I was interested in getting answers to (see Appendix 11 for the interview guide used for the

interviews). I started out, in all cases asking the adolescents why they were placed in the boarding school. This question had several reasons. One being just to start out the conversation with something that did not too deeply emerge into the theme of anxiety. My experience is, that the adolescents that are placed all feel that this is something that is relevant to talk about, when you meet new professionals on the boarding school, and it is a question they have answered many times before, so it is also a fairly “easy question” to start a conversation. Next thing I was interested in, was when the adolescents experienced anxiety the first time and how they themselves understood that the behavior, feeling and emotion kept emerging in their lives. Then I was occupied with their perception of the anxiety situation. What did they feel and how did their bodies live the anxiety. Finally, the important thing for me to examine was what they do in the situation to stop or mute the anxiety and in some ways how they prevent it from emerging again. What arose were so called in-vivo concepts (Charmaz, K., 2014). These three last themes were all comprised of questions that seek to establish connections to my preferred onto-epistemology of New Materialism. Meaning that they were heavily focused on relationships between adolescents and human and non-human entities. These similar patterns of my conversations with the adolescents led to these three elements, or this open coding: Anxiety Background, Expression of Anxiety, and Taming Anxiety. These were not the actual formulations of the adolescents, but what Charmaz (2014, p. 190) calls a substantive definition of what happened in the data. Anxiety Background, Expression of Anxiety and Taming Anxiety all have been constructed with several sub-findings, to further break down what is happening in the lives of the adolescents relating to anxiety or anxiousness. In short, what I tried to do in this process was to identify and name the indicators for social events surrounding experiences of anxiety and experiences of

manipulating anxiety (Charmaz, K., 2014). This coding is exemplified in the Appendix number 8 and 9

4.3.7.3. Focused Coding and Categorizing

After the first three interviews a pattern became rather present in my way of looking at the data. An underlying, implicit category that emerged out of my data collection was something about “Losing Control and Gaining Control”. Every situation that the adolescents talked about, involving anxiety, had an underlying theme of losing control and then trying to regain control to tame the anxiety. From the beginning of my research, I started to look for this “control-theme” and went back and forth several times in my transcripts to see how it was present. The theme of control axially connected all the stories and situations described by the adolescents and therefore became a focused code.

What is also present in focused coding is a theoretical perspective, and what also stood out to me was that there was a dilemma in what the anxiety was about, what the adolescent was at risk of, if they lost control. They all felt that they were at risk of being excluded from social situations and being delimited from their eminent social relationships. At the same time, their last line of defense always was to exclude themselves from social relationships. They eventually, in anxiety situations, isolated themselves in their rooms or alike, to secure not being excluded – leading to a kind of self-exclusion. Feeling Alienated from the world. Feeling alone and without connection to existence.

That became a second focused code.

Finally, something that was presented implicitly in all my questions, both given my research questions, but also my preferred knowledge as being systemic, was the adolescents relations to humans and non-humans. My research question being about

finding both relational understandings of anxiety and looking for relational taming strategies, made the third and last focused code “Human and Non-Human Relations”. This was of course also aligned with my New Materialistic onto-epistemology of focusing on what lies outside the living world (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018; Posthumans, 2017)

All the quotes I was looking at again and again were full of examples on, how the adolescents related to peers, family, professionals, to anxiety, but also to tokens, objects, time and space, music, musicians, pain and calmness.

These three focused codes have become the core elements of my understanding of anxiety and by that also the important elements to address when we want to help adolescents taming the anxiety. See also Appendix 10, a flowchart of the research process

4.3.8. Memowriting

As suggested by Charmaz (2014), the researcher should take memos during the whole research process. This is to ensure that the research process is reflective and developing.

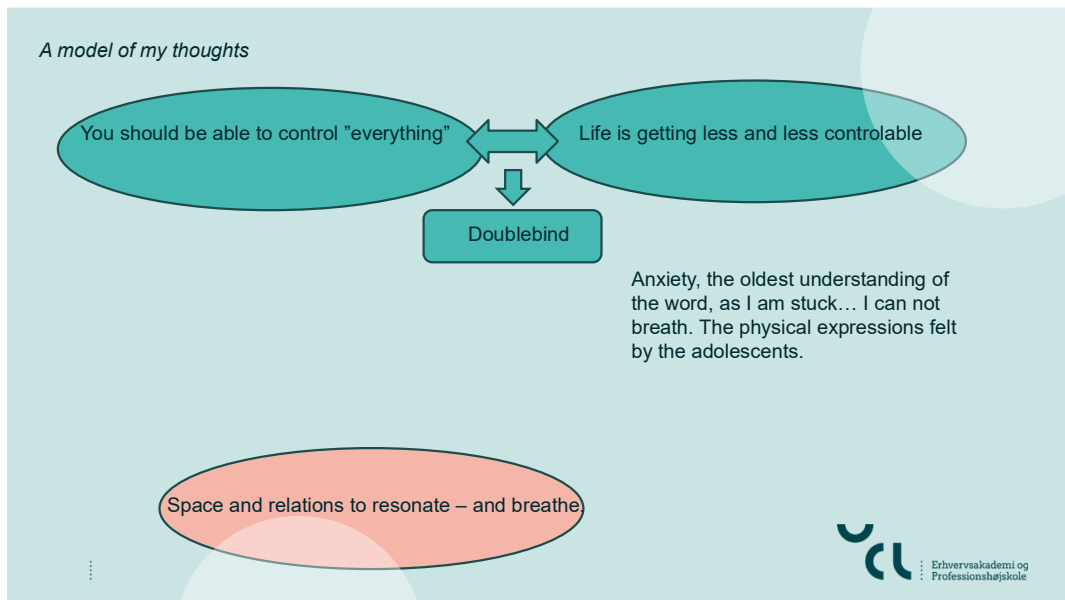
I did very little memowriting in a notebook, although I had ambitions of doing so. To me, the reflections and new ideas always came when I was not in reach of a notebook.

Therefore, many of my memos were written on my phone. An example could be:

The duality anxiety - non-anxiety - Paradoxically, in Western understanding, we linguistically call it 'getting lost' in something, when perhaps it is precisely in the getting lost that you are most present in the present. In the resonant moment, you are in direct contact with the world, but we understand it at the same time as if you are inaccessible there. As if being in the flow must also

mean you are without reflection and objectivity - which in many ways is perhaps the Western ideal state. Where we constantly relate to the world reflexively and analytically, rather than simply enjoying being present in it.

Another medium that I used a lot when I did my memos were PowerPoint. I for some reason think visually and need to see graphically what I am thinking, so often, in the writing process, I had thoughts and reflections about how to grasp the material. These were documented in PowerPoint. An example of this can be seen here:



I have multiple models like this on my PC. Many of them are useless now, because they have become obsolete in relation to how I think about the concept of anxiety and the processes connecting to anxiety now. Nevertheless. They have been important steps on my way to reflect upon the material.

4.4. Ethical Reflections

I had an abundance of ethical reflections and perspectives on talking to adolescents about this topic. One was, of course, if they were going to feel any sort of harm by being interviewed by me? Another one was, if by looking through my scope at the anxiety and anxiousness, I then trigger their own attention towards it, and maybe even enforce their feelings of anxiety and anxiousness? Nevertheless, I ended up thinking, that if we as researchers let reflections like that limit us in our research, then a lot of important and even lifesaving research would never be conducted. Therefore, I chose to keep with my topic but also keep reflecting on how ethically grounded my research was.

My dissertation and the methodology used in it was approved by the Trust Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 4), and I am sure that it has something to do with the amount of reflections and guidelines I made concerning how the professionals at the boarding school would help the adolescents after the interviews, should any harm occur as a direct result of the interviews and their participation in the research.

Norwegian child psychologist Haldor Øvreeide (2009), emphasizes the importance of the fact, that we as adults are always aware of thematic mastery. We as professionals must understand and know the themes that the children will come to talk about. In my interviews, themes around being a placed child, self-harming behavior and, for example, conflicts will be relevant to have knowledge about. In addition, the emotional mastery is an important element, so that I, as an adult, can "tolerate" hearing what the children are talking about, without condemning or sending signals that their approach/understanding of their situation is wrong or unpleasant to hear about. This can also be expressed by the fact that if the child uses words that I would not usually use myself (for example, bitch/idiot/dick etc.), then in the interview I will pay particular attention to using the child's

own words in summaries, in order to add value to the child's statements and not give the child a feeling of wrongness (Øvreeide, 2009).

I chose to stick to interviewing the adolescents themselves, mainly because I concluded that ethically I would find it inappropriate to investigate the adolescent's experiences without talking to them themselves. I also understood a criticism of me as “triggering the trauma” as an expression of a slightly psychodynamic approach, which understands children as vulnerable creatures who can be particularly harmed throughout their life course by small missteps in the adults' approach to them (Hutchinson, Gunn, Strand & Oltedal, Siv, 2019). My approach to the criticism was also, after reflection with other colleagues and good friends, that it was an expression of a slightly outdated view of children. I was supported in this by Kampmann et al. 2017, who demonstrates a movement over the last 30 years towards a greater understanding that if we are to work with and research children's everyday lives, then we must go to them yourself for the answers. They substantiate this further by relying on Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, where Denmark undertakes that children have the right to express their views in all matters (Kampmann, J. et al., 2017). Seen in a broad perspective, this article means that children must be involved, not only in personal relationships, but also in political decisions and public societal debates that influence their everyday lives. I largely believe that my problem requires the children's involvement from this perspective, since their frustration behavior in many ways, as previously described, comes to define the adults' way of understanding them.

The ethical aspect was present in the room I interviewed the adolescents in, in a whole other way too. A lot of the young people underlined that their consent to participate in my research was among other reasons because they wanted to learn more about their anxiety

or anxiousness. They wanted the research conversations about anxiety to also have a therapeutic effect on themselves. Furthermore, as a lot of them stated, they hoped that their participation could help others in similar situations. That their words and their voices could have an effect on the real lives of other children and adolescents who struggle with anxiety. Finally, I must emphasize the perspective of doing research in a New Materialistic approach, as also a political action (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). This means that I have had political reflections on how the research I have conducted empowers and hopefully gives an amount of agency back to the adolescent in question.

4.5. Quality of Research

Securing a high degree of quality in doing qualitative research is a necessity. Of course, because of the validity and usefulness of the research, but in a Danish context also because there is a constant pressure from politicians and the like, questioning the basic and core validity of a lot of qualitative research in Denmark. The argument mainly is that qualitative research is potential political material, and it is also used to an extent in societal discourse.

I have based my qualitative research on the criteria as outlined by Tracy, S.J. and Hinrichs, M.M. (2017). Their model suggests eight criteria that mark research as high quality. The eight criteria are:

Worthy topic: meaning that the topic in question must be timely and relevant. I have tried to meet this criterion and point towards it in my introduction to this dissertation. Stating that the topic of children and adolescents suffering from anxiety and anxiousness is relevant because of the sheer numbers. Both the numbers of children and adolescents receiving treatment, but also because of the massive rise in numbers of children and adolescents

being examined by the psychiatric system in Denmark. At the same time, and because of the above, there is a constant discussion in Denmark about diagnoses like anxiety.

Diagnoses in Denmark described as “descriptive diagnoses”, because they are not possible to determine positivistic, but most be suggested because of behavior described by family and professionals (Christiansen, J. C. V., 2022).

Rich Rigor: the study must have an abundant, coherent, and sufficient theoretical construct, use of data samples and a complex and again, coherent, analysis. I have tried meeting this criterion by adding as many interviews and follow-up meetings as possible in the time given to the research. Also, I have combined this with an autoethnographic approach to secure a more authentic connection for me as the researcher, to the phenomena of anxiety and anxiousness. At the same time, I have tried to give myself the “leg-brace”, that the collection of data and the analysis should mount out to a theory towards “what the day-to-day professionals working with these children and adolescents should reflect upon, to make helpful and useful measures”.

Sincerity: This criterion is about the self-reflexivity of the researcher and the transparency of the research. I try to meet this criterion by writing e.g. paragraphs like this on quality but also having paragraphs on my own experiences with anxiety and anxiousness, by outlining in detail how I have conducted my data gathering and trying to be honest about my struggles with analyzing and connecting to the material.

Credibility: This criterion demands the researcher to “show not tell”, doing thick descriptions and triangulating the data collected. I hope this stands out as one of the criterions I have tried very hard to meet in my analysis by adding both a group interview and a autoethnographic study to my grounded theory approach.

Resonance: This criterion aims towards the research being able to move and influence the readers and audiences of the dissertation. It is the researcher's responsibility to make the research resonance with the people engaging with it. I try to do that by adding an autoethnographic perspective to the research method, but mostly I think that the stories and connections made by the main characters of the dissertation, the young people who have participated, are moving enough by themselves, and I hope that I succeed in paying them my respects by conveying these stories in ways that makes it possible for readers to connect with them.

Significant contribution: The research, according to this criterion, must bring something new to the table. E.g. in terms of being practically possible to implement and being able to say something not yet said about the phenomenon in question. I would like to have this dissertation say something a little bit different about anxiety and anxiousness, and especially how we as professionals can connect with it, other than in a cognitive behavioral therapy approach.

Ethics: The research must of course be done in a ethically correct manner, that treats the research subjects and other participants with respect and honors their voices. I try to do this by, among staying true to the research subjects' terminology on the subject, constructing my understanding of anxiety and anxiousness and how you can cope with it, in corporation with the adolescents themselves. I have furthermore tried to be conscious about the positions we inherent as respectively adolescents placed far from home because of neglect and school refusal, and a professional therapist doing research (see paragraph 3.3.1.).

Meaningful coherence: Finally, this criterion suggests that the dissertation in all should be interconnected with itself. There should be an inner coherence between the research question, how I have conducted my research and what I have found out, to state anything useful about the topic I have chosen to examine (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017).

In another perspective I have tried to align myself with the notion of “plugging one text into another” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), which in Jackson and Mazzei’s understanding means 1) putting the philosophical concepts to work (in my dissertation that would be the concept of New Materialism). I do this by applying the emotional autoethnographic study (Svensson, C.F. & Brandt, L.I., 2023), but also by trying to disrupt the binary and reductionist notion, that anxiety is different from and not directly connected to the coping situation. That the anxiety is something that starts because the individual experiences something dangerous and then the individual tries to cope with that experience. My stance is instead, that the anxiety is interconnected with also the coping strategies and that it emerges in circular movements in everybody’s lives, and in some individuals lives, it becomes a meaningful adaptation (Priest, 2021). 2) Transparency and deliberate thinking towards how my chosen theoretical perspective opens up for specific illuminations and concepts. And 3) working repeatedly with the data to saturate it with meaning and usefulness on the phenomena in question. But also, to make it struggle within, so that the reductionistic approach, at least for a little bit, can be challenged by the diffraction and non-binary divisions into e.g. individual-anxiety, anxiety-coping, normal-pathological, diagnosis-non diagnosis, sick-well (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

As a last perspective to the quality of my research, I have found it useful to reflect on the nature of qualitative research. I have used biographical material gathered from research subjects. The core empirical data that I base my findings on are interviews and

conversations with adolescents who have experienced anxiety and/or anxiousness. I plant the seeds of their words in my onto-epistemological and theoretical contexts and out of it, some knowledge has grown. But who is to say that their memory of how coping and the anxiety is connected is correct? Or even how can they know it at all, that there is a connection between how they felt, how they acted and how the actions affected their feelings? None of us are fully self-transparent, none of us knows with certainty how our inner and outer lives are interconnected. We have hypothesized but we do not have certainty (Gardner, 2001). This is of course a term that embeds all our life and our intercommunication with each other. That all our social interaction is marked by this uncertainty of knowledge is something we all experience on a day-to-day basis. How I interpret my parents' divorce in relation to my marriage today, shifts and evolve over years. What thoughts I had in my primary school years when I was 22 years old, have shifted a lot, and probably would if you asked me about it 10 years from now. My knowledge of myself is provisional. But that, of course, should not make us reluctant to do research. It should make us humble and seeking diversity in our understanding of our own biographical knowledge (Gardner, 2001). After all, who is to say when I have the "correct" understanding of my parents' divorce or my own primary school years? Maybe all my understandings are a little, or very, correct. Gardner (2001) suggests that the postmodern researcher bears this in mind, that the encounter of the researcher and the data should show the multiplicity of social life and not try to reduce it.

5. Findings

5.1. Introduction

This section of the dissertation is a presentation of the findings done through interviews and my emotional autoethnographic studies. The quotes used to back up my findings are accounted for, with reference to which person and what interview the quote is taken from.

For example, D1 will mean that the quote is from the first interview with Delmira.

Furthermore, the lines from the transcript will be shown. In full the referral will for example look like this (D1, 366-368). Meaning first interview with Delmira, lines 366-368. When I quote from my autoethnographic emotional studies, I will refer to it as (AEES, 34-35), meaning autoethnographic emotional study, lines 34-35.

Sometimes the adolescents use terms that are esoteric and where you as a reader necessarily need some kind of explanation of the term. In these quotes there will be a parenthesis [...] and, in the parenthesis, explained what the adolescent is referring to, written in *italics*. In other cases, the adolescents are using words that are hard to translate directly into English. Here the word will be written in Danish in the quote and then in a following parenthesis in *italics*, will be described in English how to understand the term. Also, sometimes the adolescents refer to something that is implicit in the quote. In these cases, there are parenthesis [...] and what is implied is written in the parenthesis.

The findings presented in this section are structured, according to the Grounded Theory Method (Charmaz, K., 2014), around the initial coding's that have emerged from me reading and rereading the data I have collected, and at the same time producing new knowledge that informed the next interview. This being interviews with adolescents, combined with Emotional Autoethnographic studies to connect physically to the experiences of the adolescents. I have constructed the findings into three headlines or

findings: 5.2. Anxiety background, 5.3. Expression of anxiety and 5.4. Taming anxiety.

Each finding has their sub findings that elaborate on the main findings. The findings are a result of my analysis and my constructing of a comprehensible connection between my research question and the words of the adolescents. In various ways these findings draw on the New Materialistic onto-epistemology. For example, in the sections outlining 5.3. Expression of anxiety and 5.4. Taming anxiety, the bodily and material elements in the adolescents experiences are more present. This because my questions in those sections become more and more interested in unfolding as much as possible in the assemblage of the lived experience of feeling anxiety and in the assemblage concerning taming it.

In doing my interviews and Emotional Autoethnography, I have strived to implement Tracy and Hinrichs relevant criteria for quality in qualitative research (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). I have focused on *Rich Rigor* by rereading my data several times and working with different approaches to structuring my findings. The *Sincerity* imperative, I have especially addressed by comparing the material gathered from interviews with the adolescents to my own Emotional Autoethnographic process and thereby seeking to aim high on self-reflexivity. The demand for *Credibility* is sought addressed by sticking close to the quotas from the adolescents and triangulating their statements on each other's and on to my own Emotional Autoethnographic experiences. Multivocality is also sought, mostly by talking to as wide a variety of adolescent voices as possible. Finally, I will turn to the imperative on being conscious about the *Ethical* reflections on doing research like I have done. In doing the interviews I had a lot of inner conversations on the fact that I am both a researcher and a psychotherapist. Some of the statements from the adolescents demanded that I also used skills that I usually use as a clinician, more than as a researcher. But I was processing data from living humans. Even humans living in environments that often

position them as underprivileged. They are often used to not being heard. A lot of the adolescents on this boarding school have experiences of adults using them for various purposes. So, I found it unethical to not be helpful, in a therapeutic way, when my research questioning led them into reflections about, for example, their own feelings of guilt and shame. I did not think that I could leave them alone with that. Not if I took the imperatives of *procedural ethics* and *relational ethics* seriously (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017).

Every finding will be summarized consecutively, and as a summarizing section (5.5.).

Finally, I will describe the focused codes I have derived from axially coding the initial codings and name them for the further work in a generating of theory (5.6.), as according to Grounded Theory will be the proper way to do so (Charmaz, K., 2014).

5.2. Anxiety Background

This section is centered around what the adolescents themselves understand as the background upon which the anxiety plays out. What are the adolescents' own understanding of what initially (5.2.1.), and continuously (5.2.2.), triggered, and continuously trigger the anxiety? The sections are especially important in relation to the research question: How can we in a relational perspective understand anxiety and/or anxiousness? In the adolescent's world there is often no such thing as a "systemic perspective" so what I have been interested in, is asking them, quite openly, how the anxiety/anxiousness started, and what triggers it. In the Discussion chapter it will be my task to try to analyze their answers from a systemic perspective. It is not important in the perspective that this dissertation rests on, if we can know objectively, what initially ignited an anxiety. This means that there will possibly be a polyphony of explanations that we never can address, but what I can refer to is the words of the adolescents themselves.

5.2.1. Initial Ignition of Anxiety

This paragraph I have been forced to divide further into sub findings. These sub findings overlap of course but looking at them again and again makes it possible to do a division into different relationships and the adolescents' own perception of what was an initial ignition of the anxiety they experience. The three sub findings in this category are 1) School, 2) Family and 3) Peers.

5.2.1.1. School

Three of the adolescents are quite specific in their own interpretation of that school itself, or professionals related to schooling triggered their anxiety at first. To them, schooling and the way they experienced their schooling was a direct cause to the anxiety. Delmira thinks that the pressure she experienced at school, for doing homework and perform well, was essential:

So, homework, the other young people who put a lot of pressure on me, then my brain shut down, after that I think it was awkward to be at school and I was far behind, and I was afraid that the others would judge me, the whole thing ... It was there. (D1, 273-275).

She was not sure what would happen if she turned up without having done the homework.

...so I was afraid that the adults would yell at me if I hadn't done them, because they could well come up with that, that is how to scold someone for it, and I couldn't do that, then reporting sick was easier (D1, 345-347).

This uncertainty in relation to doing her homework, and the consequences of perhaps not doing the homework woke an anxiety feeling in her. Looking back Delmira also combines this with the fact that she now has found out that she is dyslexic; “But then there was also someone who should have told me I was dyslexic, that would clearly also have been practical”, (D1, 334-335). When Delmira in the end of this sentence states that “that would clearly also have been practical”, it shows that she has not lost her sense of humor and ironic, and maybe holds a little distancing stance towards her own situation.

Grethe, as we shall see in 4.2.1.3. left school because of some experiences with peers, and then went through some home schooling. In that process she met a teacher that Grethe felt really talked down to her. Grethe felt that the teacher did not behave curious at all towards her: “Yes. Like I was very different. Like I really was autistic and just a crappy kid who can't go to school. That was very much the way she looked at me.” (G1, 234-235).

This to Caroline would have sounded familiar. To Caroline a feeling of being alone and being put down by her teacher was further strengthened in the time of corona shutdown.

It's because before I came up here [to the boardingschool], I haven't been to school for two, two and a half years I think, I haven't been to school there, because there I started to feel bad, my teacher took me more and more psychologically down, also due to the shutdown. (C1, 52-54).

In all, the experience brought here out is, that the pressure of going to school and not experiencing that the professionals related to the school, was there to help and hold them up, triggered an anxiousness in them.

5.2.1.2 *Family*

Two of the adolescents that have participated in the study, states that they can directly related their anxiousness to their family. Neal finds that the situations around his mother, who he explains “collects things”, made it hard to bring peers home with him: “...my mother, she always made a lot of messes, was such a hoarder, so there hasn't been room for me to have anyone over, so if something where to happen, I was at home by them (N1, 311-313).

To Thyra it is a more biological connection; “Also because my mother has something like that too.” (T1, 241). Bo also has this understanding, that it is something she in some way has inherited from her mother; “Because she has had like the same seizures that I have.” (B1, 20).

5.2.1.3. *Peers*

The by far biggest finding in this category is, how much the adolescents themselves interpret that their relationships with their peers have to do with the ignition of anxiety or anxiousness feelings. This paragraph will show some of the most explicit of the statements, but it is clear that the perspective of how the peers affect the research persons anxiety is important.

Grethe was feeling anxiety towards the other children at school: “It was because I had a lot of anxiety, so I didn't dare to come to school. Fear of seeing people my age. Didn't even dare to go out of my house. (G1, 17-18). And she elaborates on this, how it has something to do with a fear of how the peers will look at her:

I was just afraid that something would happen. People would look askance at me. I was really afraid of how I dressed, for example. Because I wore boys' clothes a lot. So, I was very afraid that they would look at me strangely. (G1, 118-120).

In Delmiras case, the feeling of being in risk of being looked at as strange was already in effect:

I mean, I had it too, I had a hard time mentally. At that time, and as it had been there for a long time. And as I remember, there was one of the boys in the class who cracked a joke that went something like this, try to think of those who try to kill themselves, it's because they feel they are so worthless and can't figure anything out, and then try to think of those who fail to commit suicide like that, then they really can't figure anything out either, and that's where my brain kind of gave up (D1, 307-312).

Delmira knew that they in part were talking about her, and she felt of course hurt but also delimited by the popular children in her class. She was already "the odd one out".

Caroline already had a lot of absence from school, because of problems in her family. Problems with alcohol and drug abuse. This then also had the effect that she started thinking about, what the other children were thinking about her in that context.

...then people will probably say, ah, she is there with a lot of absences, ah, she is like her parents who are alcoholics or drug addicts or in the criminal environment, and she is a part of the criminal environment, and she smokes, and she uses this and that, because her father does it. (C1, 237-239).

Finally, Sara West sums it all up in a, to me, very condensed statement:

I felt bad I couldn't be myself and I was like oh no what if they actually know I'm here or exist, are they going to use it against me, what are they going to do are they going to be like everybody else [who does not care about me], um, so I stayed away from friendships too, I just kept to myself, but definitely I can recognize the thoughts about whether people would think I'm weird, that's how it was to begin with, until I just didn't want anyone to know me and I just had to be the quiet girl in the background (SW1, 175-180).

To Sara West and the others, the fear of being interpreted as “strange” or “awkward” and then consequently being excluded from the youth community is anxiety provoking and leads them to themselves excluding themselves from their peers. It almost looks like isolation and self-exclusion is preferable to feeling “wrong” and “awkward” or “strange”. The uncontrollability of the peers’ negative view on the self seems worse than isolation.

5.2.2. Continuously Ignition of Anxiety

I have also divided this paragraph into further sub findings. In this paragraph the focus is on what the adolescent in their day-to-day life now experiences triggering the anxiety. This paragraph is an examination of what instigates the anxiety today, what are the adolescent’s own idea of what sets it off. The three sub findings, or you can say, relational settings, where the anxiety sets of are 1) School, 2) Family and 3) Peers.

5.2.2.1. School

Bo is very direct about how thinking about school and education stresses her and triggers the anxiety:

Well, right now I'm stressing quite a lot about school and things like that because I don't have any energy level surplus because I have very bad sleeping and eating habits. So and, so just the thing with... I just have to struggle to like struggle in school and stuff like that, it can be really hard for me, and that's also why I think I also break easily, because I have no energy to be able to hold myself up and to be able to stand up just as much more, because when I stand up, it also uses up a lot of my energy, and it's the energy that I don't really have (B1, 346-351)

What Bo is afraid of is, that her possibility to take an education vanishes because of her lack of energy. In the long perspective she would like to become a police cadet or a prison guard so that she later in life can apply to be a police officer (B1, 368-369).

Grethe also addresses the uncertainty of her future and how the discourse about education is a constant pressure:

But there are a lot of them [professionals], especially when you get up to the 8th grade you now, it's a lot like; what do you do after the 9th, where you're at? like that, I don't know, so that's a lot then, because there are many of my friends who already know that they are going to high school, for example you know, and what they are going to do afterwards, and then I am like, I wouldn't be able to last high school, I can't even last 9. Grade right. Yes, it's a lot like that, a lot of that, what should I do, that is, am I even ready for an education, because I know pretty well what I want to be, but I have a lot of thoughts of; am I ready for it? (G1, 761-768).

Grethe has, as we shall see in a later finding, used a lot of strategies to tame the anxiety, but the pressure keeps emerging again and again: “that feeling in the stomach had finally gone away, but now it's coming back because of this school thing you know, and it's not nice, you know”, (G1, 815-817).

To Sara West it is more the culture of going to school, where grown ups have authority over you, that to her feels even a little retraumatizing. Sara West talks about sitting in school and having an anxiety attack because the professionals for example have scolded you for something and it reminds you about your parents. Then you react to the trauma, and everyone around you kind of thinks that you should be able to push the trauma aside in a school setting:

...you are sitting [in school], you are about to have an anxiety attack because someone has just grabbed you and shouted at you and it gives you such flashbacks to how you once felt with, for example, your father or your mother. And then people are like "No, you can't, you shouldn't overreact because of this, you can't, I mean you should be able to absorb it all, so you can get through it. But man, you know, I actually can't. (SW2, 79-84).

5.2.2.2. *Family*

To Caroline, something that also continues to push her towards the anxiety is her family situation. Most of the other research people in this dissertation have gotten their family relations under control. Either by permanently separating themselves from the family relations that trigger their anxiety, or because they have reached an understanding with them, where because of the placement of the adolescent has started to actually missing

each other. Carolines family relations are constantly a factor in her day-to-day life on the boarding school. When Caroline visits home in the vacations and holidays, the environment is still characterized by chaotic circumstances because of alcohol and drug abuse.

I had an experience that my father and his, what should you call him? Friend? Where fighting, and my father gets a beer can, or a glass, or a bottle in the head. And way out in the hallway, they also come and beat him up, and also in the yard. (C1, 169-171)

At the same time occasionally, she experiences to be thrown out of her home, when she visits: "It was at the same time when I was kicked out. From home. (C1, 341). These experiences of course trigger the feelings of uncontrollability that triggers anxiety and then sets of anxiety attacks.

5.2.2.3. *Peers*

The peers of the adolescents are again a substantial finding. How they are perceived and understood by them is essential it seems. "My anxiety starts when I'm with people", (SW1, 311). Sara West states and continues:

The thing about being with people...my thoughts are wandering and such, what do they think of me, do they think I'm embarrassing, then it's much better to be alone I think, so of course I can think about, now they probably think I am weird because I'm sitting alone, but I'm fine with that. (SW1, 314-318).

Bo describes what seems like the same experience:

Well, I still occasionally have anxiety if I'm out in centers or when I feel there are a lot of people, also here at school, if I feel there are a lot of people, I withdraw and then I either go down to my room or say: "now we're going out to smoke, now I have the urge to smoke". It's just about getting away from these people. It doesn't matter if it's smoking or it's the room or just you get away from it. Just somehow, just so you are not with the many people. (C1, 81-86).

Grethe tells us something about what thoughts are in her mind when she is with all these people, and she does not feel safe.

I just always felt it. The thing about people not having to think I'm annoying, people not having to look askance at me, people not having to look at me at all, no, people just have to have nothing against me, then everything is good. But it's a bit difficult when you have anxiety and have those thoughts. (G1, 560-562)

In fact, what Grethe says is her main thoughts are something like: "people must think I'm annoying", (G1, 503). Almost like it is a statement, something that is inescapable. To some extent this anxiety towards being perceived as strange, annoying and awkward gets circular in the sense, that the adolescents in some instances feel anxiety towards anxiety itself. Bo explains it like this:

I had anxiety about getting anxiety.... And I still have that because I hate breaking down in front of a whole lot of people, I get so scared of it, and then it happens... that I break down, and I just can't handle it. (B1, 556-561).

The adolescents are quite explicit about how their peer's opinion on them is reflected in themselves, and how it affects them, if they get uncertain about how the peers perceive them.

5.2.3. *Emotional Autoethnography*

I have no recollection of feeling anxiety as an adolescent. That is not to say that I did not feel it, but I am not sure I had a language to help me categorize it at the time. In hindsight I think I was in a lot of anxiety provoking situations, but none that I as precisely as my research persons can pinpoint as igniting the anxiety. What I on the other hand easily can connect to, are the notions of the uncertainty of how my peers perceive me. "Hell is the other...Sartre" (AES, 36) I have written, meaning that the other is out of my control, but their opinion affects me. Or rather, my imagination about the others opinion about me matters. The anxiety towards being deemed ridiculous, laughed at because of my professional shortcomings (AES, 60). I constantly compare myself to my peers; "People look good, modern and appear 'sophisticated' compared to me. I feel wrong, misplaced and peasantry." (AES, 78-79).

5.2.4. *Summary of Finding*

The findings in this chapter have focused on how the adolescents explain to themselves and their surroundings, how their anxiety ignited and how it is kept alive. What is saturated knowledge from these findings to me is that the relationships between the adolescents and their peers are of great importance. This is both in the initial states of anxiety and in the following experiences of day-to-day life. How others perceive us, and what they think

about us, is out of our own control. We have no direct access to it, and therefore it is something that we ponder about.

Another significant finding is that school itself and the pressure from the future back upon the here and now, is something that the adolescents bear in mind through their days. This pressure has the ability to drive itself into the daily life of the adolescents and make them doubt themselves and their ability to master the life they are almost already living in the future.

The families do not directly impact the anxiety the adolescents feel that much, not after their placement anyway. This is surprising to me, mostly because the professional discourse about the mis thriving amongst adolescents are often attributed to the parents in some ways. When children or young people have some kind of mental or psychological problems, we often think of it as a product of their familial upbringing. The adolescents themselves do not explicitly see the same connection in the same order of magnitude.

5.3. Expression of the Anxiety

This section focuses on how the anxiety is expressed by the adolescents. This is also a section that especially is connected to the research question: How can we in a systemic perspective understand anxiety and/or anxiousness? The adolescents themselves have tried to explain their own interpretation of how the anxiety entered their lives, but also how it continuously emerges. The adolescents' own interpretations are important, because they are "hands on" in the construction process of the story of the anxiety. But their description of the anxiety or anxiousness, and how it actually looks, how the anxiety itself emerges,

develops and performs in their bodies and minds can tell us something else about how to understand it.

This finding is divided into three sub findings. The division is of course fictional in the sense that the different emerging of expressions are deeply intertwined

5.3.1. *Psychological Expressions*

The adolescents themselves do not mention that many expressions that describe solely something that happens inside themselves. Delmira explains that she has a psychological mechanism that contains the anxiety inside herself for some time. “So, I sometimes do this, I often try to say “no” [to the anxiety], then I put it in a box, and then I continue to put it into this box until the box pops up”, (D1. 389-390). This is obviously borderline a strategi to manage the anxiety, but her it is interpreted as something that is part of the anxiety itself, because some of Delmira’s anxiety is about her not exposing her anxiety, “...people should believe that I have life under control”, (D1, 482). To Sara West, the anxiety is connected to a feeling of being overwhelmed. She experiences that being in unknown settings tires her down: “...also when we go somewhere with the class or something, I get so overwhelmed. That's how I get completely downed, and I can't come to school the next day”, (SW1, 77-79). This feeling of being overwhelmed sometimes leads her to suicide thoughts; “It was so fierce at one point that I said you know what, fuck life, I'm swallowing shards of glass, of course I didn't, but I was at the point where I didn't give a fuck”, (SW1, 357-358). Grethe narrows this experience down to a sentence like this: “And you try to overcome your own thoughts, but it's just so impossible, and you cry and just think it's all

bullshit, (G1, 423). It is like these two feels completely overwhelmed by thoughts and feelings, to an extent where they lose hope for everything.

Thyra instead describes an internal struggle that was connected to her experiences of having been exposed to sexual abusive situations and rape: “And I saw all sorts of shadows passing me, all sorts of men passing me. And had proper nightmares... So, I didn't sleep either...” (T1, 202-203). She hallucinates and has very stressful nightmares. When Thyra talks about the nightmares, she talks about them as very concrete and realistic:

Certainly. Those nightmares were like that, and the people I saw, it was a black man with a hat like that. He had a hat. ... Or if I was lying in my bed, it was just that shadow just passing by, and he was fast, fast. (T1, 230-234).

In the psychological expressions, the consequence of the anxiety is turned inward, as something that happens on the inside of the adolescents. They feel afraid of something, either something coming out (Delmira), life itself with all its pain (Sara West), or something violent from the past (Thyra). All of these instigate something physical also, as we shall see below.

5.3.2. *Physical Expressions*

The physical expressions of anxiety are important to the adolescents and that is expressed in the number of quotes that could have been used in this section. This can have something to do with how obvious and visible the physical expressions are in terms of showing to the world that anxiety is there in the adolescents. The physical expressions become something that the adolescents get very aware of, because they in some ways

reveal the anxiety to the outer world; something that is anxiety provoking itself, as we saw above. It can also be explained in the questions asked by the researcher of course. I have been explicit about my focus on the onto-epistemology of New Materialism, that focuses on the nonhuman and physicality of the world. Maybe that can also explain why this sub finding is so saturated. The physical expressions are here again divided into subcategories. 5.3.2.1. Bodily expressions that focus on, how the bodies react in the anxiety situation, and 5.3.2.2. Placement in space, that concentrate on how the anxiety has consequences in relation to how the adolescents place themselves in material space.

5.3.2.1. Bodily Expressions

Thyra, who is not currently suffering from anxiety talks in past tense about how her body reacted to the anxiety: "When I finally ate something, I threw it up again. I was so malnourished", (T1, 250-251). In the course of feeling the anxiety and expressing it one of her bodily expressions was also crying; "Usually when I cry, and I actually don't do that very often. Then you can't hear it just like that, but there you could hear it. There I sat like really...", (T1, 220-221). Also, she explains about her body; "it shakes", (T1, 212).

Sara West instead describes how her palms get sweaty and her respiration increases.

Yeah, and it was like that, then your palms start to sweat, then you start thinking a lot and then you start, then you start breathing faster, but you feel like you can't catch your breath and then you just feel frozen. (SW2, 165-167).

Caroline also notes that her breathing is heavily influenced by the anxiety at some times. In this quote she describes a situation where she did not get that anxious, but at other times she starts to; "pinch my throat and start to be unable to breathe", (C1, 101-102). Bo

has the same experience of having trouble breathing: “then I'm sitting talking on the phone with tears running down my cheeks and having trouble breathing and shaking completely”, (B1, 33-34). Grethe says: “I'm hyperventilating”, (G1, 420). Delmira tries to control her heavy breathing because she thinks it is awkward in front of other people: “I think if I can't breathe then you can't see it on me because I think it's awkward, so I'd rather hold my breath”, (D1, 446). This strategi of holding her breath then has the consequence of Delmira often fainting during her anxiety attacks: “according to the doctor, so that's the reason why I pass out when things are too hard, it's because of anxiety”, (D1, 403-404).

Bo, in some ways perhaps connect to the psychological expression mentioned above of Sara West and Grethe, who describe that they are overwhelmed by feelings and thoughts and impressions. To Bo this becomes a physical experience in the sense that she cannot have anyone touch her in the anxiety situation:

...then there's just no one who should touch me at all, because I've had it at school or in class, where no one should touch me. I can start completely freaking out and yelling and screaming and things like that...Yes, no one should touch me like that unless I give permission, and you can't see at me if I give permission or not, so they shouldn't touch me at all. (B1, 326-336).

5.3.2.2. *Placement in space*

The adolescents initially all place themselves in space where there are no other people. They do not explain why this becomes an expression of the anxiety, but maybe it is a taming strategy to bring down the number of human relations in their proximity. Delmira, if in class and feeling an anxiety attack coming relocates; “...most often out into the

bathroom”, (D1, 398). If she is in class, she is most comfortable down in the back, in a corner. The problem arises if she feels that she should move to the bathroom, because then she must move out in front of all her peers:

So I also have the problem that I feel safest at the back, right down in a corner, I squeeze myself into a corner, that's where I feel safest, but the problem is only if my anxiety flares up and I have to leave the class, then it flares up even more because I know I have to leave the class and have to walk past the others, (D1, 494-497).

Placing themselves in a corner or in the back of a room, is an expression of the anxiety that also seems like both an expression but also a taming strategy. Grethe “...kind of crawls into a corner”, (G1, 420). Sara West also places herself in the back of class: “I had to sit at the back of the classroom all the time”, (SW1, 70-71). When Thyra felt the anxiety attacks, she also crawled into a corner: “Much of the time there I was always curled up on that floor, over in the corner, like that

”, (T1, 214-216). Bo instead describes how when she is out in public and the anxiety starts, she; “sometimes I just sit over to the side and then I sit and talk on the phone with tears running down my cheeks”, (B1, 33-34).

5.3.3. Social Expressions

The social expressions of anxiety are expressions that in some ways have effect on the social lives of the adolescents. Again, in some of the examples here, it is hard to differentiate between what is actually “just” an expression of anxiety, and what is also a taming strategy. But as seen from an outer perspective on the adolescent’s lives, the examples mentioned below, are consequences derived from the anxiety.

What is the most mentioned social expression of anxiety is an “anti-social” approach. The adolescents isolate and draw themselves away from social situations with peers and professionals. “So, it was also just, I didn't leave my room and such, didn't care, yes I didn't dare go back to school”, (D1, 268-269). Says Delmira and Grethe elaborates; “I really had a lot of anxiety, so I didn't dare to come to school. Fear of seeing people my age. Didn't even dare to go out of my house”, (G1, 17-18). These two girls withdraw from social interaction when they feel the anxiety, Grethe explains that it is even worse, when someone new is introduced to the class. In the situation she uses to exemplify, the class has had visitors from a museum. Some grown ups that Grethe had not met before:

I'm also anxious if some new people come into the class, for example, those from the welfare museum, I have a hard time with that, even if it doesn't look like that, that when I can just see them taking a step forward to me, then I'm like let me be, (G1, 300-302).

She is quite explicit about what she needs then, she needs space between herself and the persons in her proximity. Bo has the same feelings; “Um, they're not nice to be in [the anxiety attacks] at the moment, like that, you just want to get away from the others and stuff like that, just shut everything and everyone out”, (B1, 26-27). Caroline also wants to be left alone when the anxiety is present in her life; “I wasn't going anywhere at all. I should lie in my bed and sleep”, (C1, 123-124). Neal, who has experiences with isolation too, because of his family situation also recognizes how pulling away from social interaction becomes a possible expression of the anxiety; “Yes, like being away from others, if I get annoyed or something like that, I withdraw.... Yes, that is just the standard”, (N1, 36-38). For a lot of the adolescents this isolation expression has consequences connected to their schooling. “All last year I was sitting outside a staircase or outside the

classroom and I couldn't join", (SW1, 69). And this gets worse, if there are too many new didactic tricks used by the professionals in class: "That's how I get completely down and I can't come to school the next day", (SW1, 78-79). Thyra also isolates, and she implicitly explains how the anxiety in some ways maximizes over time; "I was alone every time [the anxiety was present]", (T1, 222). Because; "they shouldn't see me like that. I thought like that a lot. Now I'm a bit more like, okay, fair enough. but there I was a lot like, there is no one who shall see me cry and everything", (T1, 408-409). Implicitly Thyra here says that the crying expression of anxiety, forces her to isolate. When she feels the anxiety she feels like crying, but crying makes you look "different" in the eyes of the others, so she must isolate. In the first interview with Sara West, she explains:

Yes. But I have... I hate being with people, but I need to be loved it's like there was a time I couldn't be without a boyfriend I had to have a boyfriend all the time because I needed to know I was loved, (SW1, 527-529).

And then in the second interview she elaborates how this develops for her:

I keep to myself. I don't really have any friends either, but that's by choice. I don't want to waste my time letting people in who take their stuff and leave anyway. For example, I just talked to this guy who I spent a really long time talking to. Then I get a message yesterday where he says, 'Well I want to be with you', and then I get a message later in the evening at shitty hours of the night [saying] actually 'I'm not ready, I'm not ready for this', (SW2, 355-361).

Sara West experiences that she cannot rely on the relations around her, to be honest and reliable. She then chooses to isolate instead.

5.3.4. Emotional Autoethnography

In the emotional autoethnographic study I experienced similar things as stated by the adolescents. My expressions of the anxiety were both of a physical nature, social and psychological kind.

5.3.4.1. Psychological Expressions

The most common psychological expression I experienced was problems concentrating and focusing on what I was doing in my everyday life, here I documented from the first situation I used in the autoethnography:

I find it difficult to concentrate on other things, I become a little short-sighted in everyday life, have difficulty handling strong emotional outbursts with my wife and my children.

I get thoughts of cancelling, a feeling of having taken too much of a chance.

Worrying if I'll be laughed at seems snobbish and know-it-all, (EAE, 28-31).

This experience is also present in relation to my second situation where I wrote: "I have problems concentrating and focusing on other tasks, also tasks in my family", (EAE, 61).

Some physical expressions (see below) make it hard for me to fall asleep, this again perhaps influences my ability to concentrate, focus and mentalize:

My trouble sleeping start a week before the presentation. I clearly feel that it is the vibration that makes it hard to sleep. It is a kind of tickling in my entire body, followed by thoughts about catastrophe. Making big mistakes, being laughed at, (EAE, 58-60).

When I fell asleep, my sleep was interrupted from waking up from a nightmare:

I had a nightmare tonight. I was in Ullerslev (the town I have grown up in, a place where I know everybody and everybody knows me), it was night. I was walking in the city and suddenly some people followed me. They swarmed around me, coming closer and closer. I got more and more scared - I didn't know 'who' they were or what they wanted. At one point I got to thinking about what the feeling of anxiety was like. I froze, all over my body, I couldn't control my gaze, it changed from one person to another. I couldn't see any of them clearly, so I couldn't decode them. In the dream I started thinking about my anxiety and the dissertation, my thoughts where, that my anxiety was rooted in the fact, that I could neither control these people, my own body nor my 'look' or my understanding of them, (EAE, 65-72).

Finally, I start thinking about myself as lesser worthy of being there: "People look good, modern and appear 'sophisticated' compared to me. I feel wrong, misplaced and peasanty", (EAE, 78-79). This is also the case in the first situation, where I start thinking: "I am from a province, coming to the capitol, Copenhagen, a hillbilly in town", (EAE 46).

5.3.4.2. Physical Expressions

Besides the psychological expressions I had some very bodily expressions too. In the first situation I felt what I characterized as: "...a spring in my stomach. It's as if something inside me is set in vibration and is constantly swaying", (EAE, 26). This "spring" feeling of movement and absence of sedation, sometimes also in Danish called "having butterflies in the stomach", was also present in the second situation; "I feel the vibration in my body, it gives me trouble sleeping", (EAE, 58). I feel "dizzy and nausea", (EAE, 63), and I feel a "cold sweat", (EAE, 27) and I feel like "I sweat more", (EAE, 27).

5.3.4.3. *Social Expressions*

Just like the adolescents, I experience an urge to isolate and withdraw from the situation. To me that gets apparent when I look at my notes. I do not anywhere explicitly wish to cancel the presentations, maybe because I know that it is not at all a possibility, but my “overthinking” about how the others perceive me: “People look good, modern and appear 'sophisticated' compared to me. I feel wrong, misplaced and peasantry”, (EAE, 78-79). And especially my sentence from the first situation: “Hell is the others, Satre”, (EAE, 53), tells me, that I feel a social pressure of being forced to be present in the same room as the others.

5.3.5. *Summary of Finding*

This finding is complex and requires divisions that do not align well with a systemic perspective, where physical, social, and psychological expressions are interconnected. However, differentiating these statements is useful. In the Discussion chapter, these aspects will be integrated.

To summarize, I'll describe typical anxiety expressions in a fictional adolescent. In an anxiety situation, adolescents feel bodily sensations like tickling, which intensify as the situation approaches. They experience nausea and sensory overload, making it hard to focus on anything but the impending situation and peer perceptions. Intense anxiety may lead to self-harm, like cutting, to control mental pain. Their breathing becomes heavy and superficial, increasing nausea and dizziness. They withdraw and isolate to avoid sensory

stimuli and being perceived as strange, questioning their normalcy and control. Eventually, they retreat to their room, lock the door, and cry.

These symptoms are interrelated, each enhancing the others, making the experience painful and something to avoid. The next section will explore how adolescents try to manage and cope with their anxiety.

5.4. Taming the Anxiety

This section is in some ways the most important one. The finding evolves around how the adolescents themselves tame the anxiety and, in some ways, try to live alongside the anxiety. The initial thought behind this dissertation was a curiosity towards how we in a relational perspective can help children and adolescents living with anxiety. To make some kinds of generalizable conclusions on, what professionals; therapist, teachers and pedagogues can do and reflect about to help, was the dream behind this project. And where should the ideas come from, other than what the adolescents themselves already experience makes a difference? The people living with this anxiety in their lives, how do they manage, how do they experience recovery and how do they carry out their agency in these complex situations they are living in? That is what this section is about. Again, a constructed diversion is helpful. Therefore the answers from the adolescents have been divided into three overall sub-findings. Of course, in the lived lives of the adolescents, these sub-findings are deeply connected to each other and not dividable.

5.4.1. *Psychological Taming of Anxiety*

Where the strategies mentioned in this paragraph originates from, is of course impossible to trace. It is not likely that they just have emerged on “clean slates” inside the adolescent I

have interviewed, so they most likely have relational components too. Nevertheless, to the adolescent, these are strategies that are present inside themselves and their thoughts and feelings. Grethe has some great examples of how she herself has taken up the challenge to tame the anxiety. She looks anxiety dead in the eye:

Yeah, and then just tried to get out more in general right. And tried to go - normally I don't dare to go out in the afternoon and go down and shop, for example, I know there are mostly young people, but I did it anyway, so it was very much like that, I wanted it, I wanted to do it better, so I also knew I had to fight for it, so I had to take the dangerous path, but the best path for me, (G1, 284-287).

This strategy of forcing yourself through the anxiety is also something that Sara West has used to some extent:

[I] Started involving myself a bit, etc. that is, do the little things, do the little things, even if it's so hard and you feel so bad afterwards, just do the little things and build up from there. And then all of a sudden, when you've started talking in class, then suddenly, start acknowledging yourself, start saying, I'm here, jump into it, don't hold back, (SW1, 191-195).

It has not started all by themselves. These two young women acknowledge that they have gotten some inspiration from the outside. Both of them listen to music a lot, and have many experiences of, how the music has changed their relationships towards themselves. Grethe says: "I often listen to a rapper called NF, who also has anxiety and OCD and all, where he has made many songs", (G1, 335). She has also listened to a Danish artist called Tobias Rahim, who also writes some songs about anxiety. "That song Flying

Faduma, I've heard it a lot.....It speaks to all of me, I feel. Also, the thing with him singing, just do your thing, just fly, you know", (G1, 380-385). Sara West listens to older music: "Ain't No Mountain High Enough. I heard it so much. Because it drowned out the other voices. Whether I had it on full volume or I had it on low, it drowned out other people's voices", (SW1, 225-226). To Sara West, the song inspired her and made her think that: "No matter when, it may well be that you can't write a whole essay [for school] now, but you can next year or tomorrow, but you will get through it, you will, it will work out", (SW1, 237-240).

Listening to other people who have struggled is something that Delmira relates to. She has a teacher that has told Delmira that she herself suffer from low self-esteem.

She's a grown up, so she's hot and all that and super cool, but she has low self-esteem and it's like, how can you run a half marathon like that and then come back and be like that, I'm not sure, did I run it fast enough? (D1, 893-895).

It makes Delmira reflect that someone she looks so much up to, and she holds so high, also can have problems with believing in themselves. It makes Delmira realize something about owning your problems and in that way facing them; "she is one of the adults who doesn't put a facade on", (D1, 907-908).

Sara West also finds inspiration in the nature around her. She is especially fond of frogs; "I also drew a lot of frogs, but that's because it's my favorite animal", (SW1, 262). When Sara West suffered from the anxiety the most, she went into the nature and looked at frogs and drew them back at her room.

They are just misunderstood. I think they are misunderstood. All the people think they're sticky and you shouldn't touch them because it gives bacteria and something bad comes out of it and, it's just a pest, but actually it's just such a cute little frog, (SW1, 265-268).

Sara West identifies with the little animal and its place in the world, and it gives her a calming feeling to be around them. Maybe because the presence of the animal made her realize something about herself. Later in this section we will see what Thyra used to master and tame the anxiety, but the psychological impact of her strategies was something that made her know herself better, and maybe better understand her own reactions; “Yes. Also, that I “kinda” found who I was as a person, and I didn't know that then [before she tamed the anxiety], right”, (T1, 570).

5.4.2. Physical Taming of Anxiety

The adolescents have mentioned many physical elements of their trying to and succeeding taming the anxiety in their lives. In this paragraph I have divided them into two groups that revolve around different aspects of the physical. One is the body of the adolescents.

(5.5.2.1.) That is a collection of findings that connects to how the adolescents, through their bodily manipulation, try to tame the anxiety. The other aspect is how physical things, objects and the like can help the adolescents taming the anxiety (5.5.2.2.)

This paragraph is about, what the adolescents “hear” when the physical “talks” to them.

5.4.2.1. *Taming with the body*

A strategy to tame anxiety that several of the adolescent mention, is having a consciousness towards their breathing. “I also had a strategy, I'm just not sure it's healthy, where I kind of held my breath, and breathed, and then held my breath, and then breathed”, (D1, 982-983). Delmira had read about this and how breathing the right way could lower the anxiety level. She also says that she: “...also use, for example, menthol candies and the like, because it makes the throat cold, which means that you think a little more about how you breathe”, (D1, 990-991). Grethe has some reflections about being talked to in the anxiety situation. She thinks it is helpful, because, when the professionals ask you something, you are compelled to answer, and her experience is; “when you talk while hyperventilating, it gets better and better I feel”, (G1, 621-622). What she means is that when you talk, your breathing automatically changes, or else you cannot get any words out of your mouth, and your body is forced to transform the breathing.

Sara West has the same experience of being aware of her breathing; “Deep breaths always help”, (SW1, 195). One of the ways she also tries to help herself calm down is putting a soft pressure on her palm. With the thumb and index finger putting a slight pressure on the palm with the thumb and from the opposite side of the hand with the index finger.

“...There are some nerve things here that you can put pressure on - it helps, then you get it so relaxed, so it doesn't tense up”, (SW1, 245-246).

As shown in the section above about the Expression of Anxiety (4.3.2.2.), a lot of the adolescents explain that they place themselves in the corner of a room and in the back of the room. The adolescents do not explain explicitly why this strategy is helpful, but they

say something about how moving out of this corner of the room is connected to feeling unsafe and exposed:

So I also have the problem that I feel safest at the back, right down in a corner, I squeeze myself into a corner, that's where I feel safest, but the problem is only if my anxiety flares up and I have to leave the class, then it flares up even more because I know I have to leave the class and have to walk past the others, (D1, 494-497).

In the situation of having an anxiety attack Thyra explains how she places herself on the floor in the back of the room: "Much of the time there I was always curled up on that floor", (T1, 214-215).

The last example of taming anxiety with the body is self-harm. Several of the adolescents has experimented with this and found some kind of comfort in it.

Bo has cut herself and also made burn marks on herself; "I've cut my whole arm open here, then I've had up here what's it called at the armpit like this inner arm, both my thighs have been completely cut open", (B1, 273-276). Caroline pinches herself under her chin, in anxiousness provoking situations, she gets this compulsion to pinch herself violently; "It gets very violent. I'm sitting, that is, I'm sitting like this and pinches myself several times", (C1, 362). Sara West also has experiences with self-harm, both on her arms and legs but also in her face:

I also cut myself in the face. Of course, it's fortunately healed, but I cut myself in the face and down the neck. I couldn't wear t-shirts or anything at all for almost two summers. And if I did, people were watching, (SW1, 409-413).

Bo tries to articulate how the self-harm is helpful when she is experiencing the anxiety; “When I feel the anxiety, then I have the pain inside me, and that is what I am thinking about, so when I hurt myself, it is like, then I have the anxiety on the outside”, (B1, 299-300). She makes a connection between the physical and the mental and continues; “because then I think more about the pain, I am causing myself [than of the anxiety]”, (B1, 301). Using self-harm as a strategy makes the anxiety secondary, and that trumps all other consequences of the self-harm.

5.4.2.2. Taming with things

The use of nonhuman things in taming the anxiety is something that most of the adolescents are conscious about. Many of them has incorporated the strategy into their daily lives. As shown already above in the Expression of Anxiety (5.3.2.2.), a lot of the adolescents explain that they place themselves in the corner of a room and in the back of the room. This strategy is on the one hand a way of using their bodies to place themselves desirable in the room. But it is also something about using the walls around themselves, the physical spaces they are living in, to create a sense of safeness. Manipulating their own bodies into safe spaces.

Another more entity-like approach is the use of “tokens” or “items” to tame the anxiety. Delmira has a weighted teddy bear.



“It is a weighted teddy bear, it is made to be hugged,” (D1, 591). And she elaborates; “you can put it around your shoulders, and then they are weighted, so it should feel like a hug, (D1, 609) ...It feels like you have someone who is there, even if you don't really have someone who is there (D1, 638-639)”. So, this is a very bodily experience Delmira is talking about, a feeling of being hugged.

A lot of the things used by the adolescents carry a kind of inspirational or strengthening power, that is transferred to them and gives them energy to keep on trying to live with the anxiety. Sara West has a necklace she has inherited from her grandmother:

Every time I felt anxiety I fiddled with it, and I just felt that she was still there with me, so it was a little bit of a relief. I was like, I must remember it, I have to wear it otherwise I won't function, (SW2, 186-189).

As written above (4.4.1.) on psychological taming of the anxiety, Grethe talks about how she finds inspiration in music, and Sara West tells how she uses same strategy. This use of music is on the one hand categorized as psychological, but we can also understand it as using the “thing” that music also is. The movement of airwaves in different frequencies to create some kind of comfort. Grethe even talks about it as a more entity-like perspective; “I use loud music. To drown out the thoughts (G1, 322) ...I can hear hard rock to death metal and rap and Tessa and everything (G1, 330)”. This thing about drowning the thoughts is something that Sara West also uses, both music and making drawings: “I have painted, drawn, listened to music, um, I had some gizmos or something like that, um, if I sat and drew, that's what I meant, I looked down at the table”, (SW1, 215-218”. Sara West also has made some tattoos that has meaning to her and is both kind of psychological and very physical.

I have a lotus flower, breathe, so it means just breathe, something new will come. Then I have a semicolon underneath which means you've been through really hard times, but you've gotten over it and the three dots they mean my crazy life or something like that”, (SW1, 322-325).



The last example is Delmira who besides her teddy bear also has a cloth pin. She uses the cloth pin to pinch her fingers when she feels anxiety. When asked what it does, she answers: “I can feel it” (D1, 803). “It distracts the brain”, (D1, 834). And it is instead of her biding her fingers. Delmira connects the cloth pin to some kind of power, because a person she looks up to, has had it in her mouth:

But there are memories in them. It sounds stupid too. I have a lot of random crap in my room that has memories in it. I have a flower that I dried out because an intern at my former school gave it to me. Now it is still there, (D1, 863-866).

5.4.3. Social Taming of Anxiety

This last category of taming strategies towards anxiety is based on the use of direct living relations in muting the anxiety.

Thyra has some close relationships with other girls on the boarding school. They have a “secret” code between them, when you need social presence from the other girls, and you do not want to elaborate what it is about, you just need them there, you say “blue button”.

Then we have such a thing that if you either call or write, with such “blue button”. But that's how you know if you need the other person to just be there. That is, without wanting to talk about it, but just wanting them to be there. Just a hug or something, right? So, for example, Julia sometimes comes downstairs and knocks on my door, then I open it and she says: blue button. Then I don't say anything to her, (T1, 412-418).

The reason why it is exactly these people that Thyra seeks comfort from is that; “They are my best friends. They know me best. They know the story, but you know, not in detail. I don't know it in detail myself” (T1, 504-506). Thyra also has felt help from the professionals; “So, the adults have helped and stuff like that. Probably myself mostly though. Now, I must take the credit here”, (T1, 264), The grownups have; “just took so much care of me, really”, (T1, 267-268). Sara West puts some words into the fact that she has experienced a lot of negative things like abuse and violence with men. In the interview she made it clear that she had felt some anxiety coming to an interview with someone she does not know beforehand. What is important to her is that if you are a man, you must create the safety around her:

...but I know that not all men are bad, and once they start showing like that, they are okay, like it is okay if I want to stop [the interview], we'll stop it, it's perfectly fine with me, then, and it gives you a sense of security, you know, (SW1, 120-126).

Grethe talks about how her favorite grown up; "just sits on the edge of my bed and then, she often holds a hand around me, at least on my leg, like you're completely safe", (G1, 632-634).

To Neal the social contact has also been very important in taming the anxiety; "Hmm, just that there have been more people I could talk to, others that I talk to", (N1, 389-391).

Caroline uses the phone to call her mother when she is out in the city and feels an anxiety attack coming on; "It just calms me down, then I know she's right by the phone, then she's free, then I feel she's right next to me", (C1, 634-637). The core presence of the other seems important, being together. Bo talks about the same thing, when asked why she wants to do these interviews with me:

Well, there are many young people who also have a hard time and things like that, and there are also many young people who feel they are alone in having a hard time and things like that, where I would like to say that, tell them that isn't it, like that, they're not the only ones, there are a lot of people besides them who are having a hard time, (B1, 623-628).

She knows how important it is to not feel alone when you experience anxiety, so she wants to be a part of the solution towards other adolescents with the same problems as her. Grethe has experimented with participating in parties with her peers, something that usually is connected to feelings of anxiety to her. But when she exposes herself to certain

parties where the culture is including, she feels good in the social presence of others; “It is at parties, for example. When I can see everyone enjoying themselves and everyone talking well with each other. Then you'll be okay, they don't have anything against me, you know”, (G1, 290-294).

Delmira, as stated above, has had experiences with a professional that she looks up to, and gives her a feeling of not being alone with having problems.

It's one of the employees down at the weekend house [a department at the boarding school]. So, someone thinks I'm like that, so obsessed with her, and that's not what happened, she just made me realize some things I hadn't realized, (D1, 886-890).

Grethe also talks about how the professionals can make a difference by their mere presence in her life:

It means a lot when there is someone who helps you. Like, now we have to go get up [out of bed], but you also have to be told that it's okay that you get some dives, because otherwise you're like that, then it's me, there's something wrong with you know. But for example, the psychologist she said, it's okay, you get some dives. Because sometimes you also have to take the dangerous scary path instead of the easy path which is to stay in the room. Even if it's fucking dangerous, uncomfortable for you, (G1, 443-447).

The professionals are important in their presence but also in their normalizing of the problems you feel as an adolescent. Empowering and inspiring to taking action. What Grethe needs is, that the professionals know that they cannot themselves panic or get uncomfortable when dealing with adolescents experiencing anxiety:

...you don't panic yourself, you just have to take it completely calm, and so, it helps me a lot when they ask me things like that, it can also be things like what's your name and stuff like that, just to think like that something completely different, or counting to 10, (G1, 605-610).

Sara West and Grethe both have experiences with having special relations with animals, that help them in the same ways, as described when it is revolving around humans. Sara West has a horse at the boarding school:

...every time I'm sad, every time I'm having a hard time, I go down and ride because she, well, it's very strange, but horses are therapy, and even if you're not a horse girl, just, just go down and now a horse, that is because it is just therapy", (SW1, 477-488).

The horse is; "...calming she gives me like *hey* because there are a lot of things I have to focus on when I sit on her so she's like *hey wake up*", (SW1, 499-501). Grethe has a dog at home that can sense when she is sad or anxious:

...one's dog, they can see that you are sad, right, and it also means a lot to someone that they can do that in a way, it also sounds strange, but that they can see there is something wrong, right, it means a lot for me, (G1, 723-726).

What both Sara West and Grethe here is saying is, the importance of feeling acknowledged in, that they do not feel good. That they feel seen. As Grethe states it, both regarding her dog and her favorite professional:

It's just that you're not alone, even if it's a dog, for example. There is still someone who cares about one. A lot of that with also with [the

professional], she cares about me, otherwise she wouldn't come to my room, would she, (G1, 729-732).

5.4.4. Emotional Autoethnographic Study, Taming Anxiety

In my own notes I have found different approaches to taming my anxiety, that connects to the strategies of the adolescents. There is here also examples that do not occur in my notes, simply because I did not recognize them before now. Now when I look back at the situations, a lot more happened than I was aware of, in my attempt to tame the anxiety I felt.

5.4.4.1. Psychological Taming of the Anxiety

I am in both situations trying to use my psychological capabilities to manage myself. I try to talk myself down, especially in the second situation, where I use transparency during my presentation: “I was transparent about my anxiety/nervousness – how I felt like a hillbilly just arrived with the train” (EAE, 86). This calmed me down because I in some ways owned my anxiety.

As in many other situations, I used music to calm myself down and also to disturb my worried thoughts; “I listened to music on the way, music that I feel familiar with, now the lyrics, and it was like singing the lyrics made my breath calmer” (EAE, 84-85). But I remember that the music also had an inspirational effect. I listened to a song by Zach Bryan, called Tourniquet, about how friends stop the (emotional) bleedings of each other, “in a world that you will never satisfy”, making me feel alright with the pressure, because it is always there.

5.4.4.2. Physical Taming of the Anxiety

In both cases I wore my bracelets:

I have three bracelets, one my wife has bought to me in Lebanon, one my now 18-year-old son made for me when he was seven or eight years old, and one bracelet one of my closest friends have made me, they together give me a feeling of being close to the people who means the most to me. My wife, my children and my friends, (EAE, 87-90).

This use of the bracelets is a way of, despite me standing alone on the scene, I do not feel alone. I feel I have them all with me and feel more comfortable.

Then of course there were physicality in the devices is used to listen to music with. A radio in my car, connected to my cell phone. Headphones connected to my cell phone. My cell phone containing a Spotify app, that gives me access to millions and millions of songs.

5.4.4.3. Social Taming of Anxiety

The most important thing is, that I talked about my nervousness with my wife. She was involved in my thoughts and fears and always was there beside me in the evenings before the presentations. With her presence and her always positioning herself on my side, she made me a lot more secure and comfortable.

Another important thing that happened in the second situation was, that the sound man on this big scene with 200-300 people came up to me before the presentation. His task was to rig me up with a microphone, but he also was so calm and pleasant. He asked curiously what I was going to talk about, said that it sounded interesting, and he was looking forward

to listening to me. He was a very beautiful man, and very kind, and it made me feel cared about, and that made me much less anxious.

5.4.5. Summary of Finding

To categorize the complex process of taming anxiety, strategies were divided into psychological, physical, and social. These interconnected strategies also relate to anxiety behavior.

Psychologically, adolescents confront anxiety, often inspired by others who have faced similar struggles. Inspiration can come from music or respected professionals.

Understanding their own psychology and behavior helps them manipulate and control their anxiety.

Physically, adolescents work on controlling their breathing and feelings of insecurity. They find safe spaces, like corners, or use self-harm to make mental pain more manageable.

Objects with personal significance, sometimes seen as having "magical" abilities, help comfort and support them in taming anxiety.

Maintaining connections with others is crucial despite anxiety's isolating effects.

Adolescents need important people or animals present during anxiety situations to avoid feeling disconnected. Helpful professionals make them feel understood and validated.

5.5. Summary of Findings

In this section the most important and most prominent findings are highlighted to make a base from where the following discussion and implications can be derived.

Relations play a big part in both the establishment of the basis for experiencing anxiety and for how adolescents work with taming it. Initially, to get a placement on the boarding-school, a lot of external and context-based problems must have interfered with their schooling. This has made it impossible for them to follow the curriculum, or to concentrate in school, and their educational development has in the eyes of the authorities been threatened in a way that it has been decided that they need to be placed outside of their homes. The social worker, who place the adolescent, has surely also reflected upon their social- and psychological wellbeing.

The relations with the peers of the adolescent seem of great importance, when it comes to what initiates the anxiety. This is both in the initial states of anxiety and in the following experiences of day-to-day life with anxiety on the side. How others perceive us, and what they think about us, is out of our own control. We have no direct access to it, and therefore it is something that we ponder about. Another significant finding is that school itself and the pressure from the future back upon the here and now, is something that the adolescents bear in mind through their days. This pressure has the ability to drive itself into the daily life of the adolescents and make them doubt themselves and their ability to master the life they are almost already living in the future.

In the anxiety situation the adolescents feel some kind of movement in their body, a tickling that is magnified the more intense and close the eminent situation becomes. They feel nausea and feel that their senses are overwhelmed to the degree that they cannot think about anything else than the situation ahead of them, and how they are interpreted

by their peers when handling it. If the situation feels intense enough, they might start to do some kind of heavy breathing. Some will perform self-harm, like cutting. They will begin to feel that their breathing gets heavier and maybe very superficial. This increases the nausea and dizziness. They withdraw and isolate from their peers and the professionals, to avoid both more stimulating their senses and to avoid being perceived as strange. Inside they will ask themselves questions like “why am I so strange?”, “...does it tell, is it obvious to the others that I am not in control?”. Eventually they withdraw to their room, locking the door and placing themselves in the corner of the room, crumbling up and crying.

When adolescents address anxiety, they physically work to control their breathing and feelings of insecurity. They find safe spaces, like corners, or use self-harm to make mental pain more manageable. They often use meaningful objects, attributed with "magical" abilities, to comfort and support them. These objects, like bracelets or music, contain "information" from others who have struggled.

Adolescents need trusted individuals present during anxiety situations to avoid feeling disconnected. Helpful professionals make them feel understood and validated.

In short, adolescents experience anxiety in uncontrollable relationships, risking exclusion if they don't "perform" correctly. This leads to isolation. They use various strategies, involving both living things and material objects, to reconnect with the world.

5.6. Axial and Focused coding

This section is an abstraction of what the adolescents have actually said in the interviews and what I have experienced in the Emotional Autoethnographic study. The codes emerging here are not words of the adolescents, they are mine. They are the product of what my attention has been drawn to. Grounded in my theoretical and epistemological orientation, as well as my specific research interests within this field, I approach axial coding in Grounded Theory as a process of identifying and organizing patterns that emerge from the data. Axial coding, in this context, is not merely a technical step but a reflective and interpretive act that allows me to explore the underlying relationships between categories and concepts. It serves as a bridge between open coding and the development of a more integrated theoretical framework. In the following, I present a detailed account of my analytical reflections, focusing on how the various findings from my data collection interrelate. This involves constructing a hypothetical model that illustrates the dynamic connections and potential causalities among the themes, thereby offering a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation. (Charmaz, K., 2014; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001).

An underlying, implicit category that emerged out of my data collection and my interpretation of it was something about this pair of concepts; “Losing Control and Gaining Control”. Every situation had an underlying theme of losing control and then trying to regain control to tame the anxiety.

Related to this, another polarizing double-concepts have arisen. Reading and rereading the material has made me focus on the adolescents’ experience connected to the anxiety, of being alienated from the world. Feeling alone and struggling to find meaning in their

lives. On the other end of this has been the adolescents attempt to reconnect with the world through their multiple strategies. This has led me to categorize this into the focused coding; “Alienation and Reconnection”.

Finally, something that was presented implicitly in all questions and all the time was at my attention, both given my research questions, but also me being a systemic therapist, was the adolescents relations to humans and non-humans. New Materialisms offers a valuable lens through which to understand the adolescents’ relationships not only with other people but also with non-human entities—such as objects, technologies, environments, and even abstract systems (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; de Freitas, 2017; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018) This was implicitly present throughout all stages of the the interviews. This theoretical perspective challenges anthropocentric assumptions by emphasizing the agency and affective capacities of non-human actors, aligning well with my dual position as a researcher and systemic therapist. From this standpoint, the adolescents’ experiences are not solely shaped by interpersonal dynamics but also by their entanglements with material surroundings, digital devices, institutional structures, and other non-human forces. These relations are not secondary or symbolic but are constitutive of their lived realities (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; de Freitas, 2017; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). Thus, New Materialism allows me to explore how meaning, identity, and agency emerge through these complex human–non-human assemblages, which were continuously at the forefront of my attention during the research process.

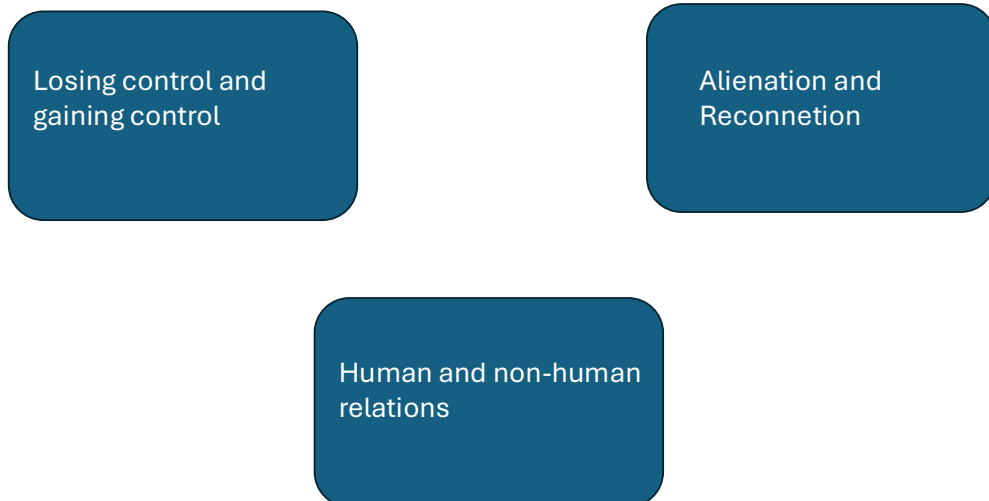
My research question being about finding both relational understandings of anxiety and looking for relational taming strategies, made the third and last focused code “Human and Non-Human Relations”. All the quotes I was looking at again and again were full of

examples on how the adolescents related to peers, family, professionals, to anxiety, but also to tokens, objects, time and space, music, musicians, pain and calmness.

Trying to stay true to the general approach in New Materialisms, I have formed this three focused coding's as polarized or opposites, in which the adolescents experience of anxiety is unfolding. In a New Materialisms approach we should not think in dichotomies, because the world is ever flowing and emerging (Albertini et al., 2025a; Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). So, the experience is lived on a continuum, sometimes for example with an experienced high degree of alienation and other times with a lower degree of alienation and then a higher degree of reconnecting to the outer world. This also connects to the Emotional Autoethnographic studies I have done. Applying Emotional Autoethnography blends the experience of the adolescents together with mine, in some form transcends the difference between them as humans I do research upon and me as a researcher. The positions are in a flux, and that made it especially in my second interview with Sara West, easier to connect to her and also, in relation to the Big Tent criteria of quality in qualitative studies (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017), it made another quality in my relational ethical positioning together with her. We became closer as I unfolded my own experiences with anxiety as something I exposed myself to, to get closer to her experience.

The three elements, Losing and control and gaining control, Alienation and reconnection and Human and non-human relations, have become the core elements of my understanding of anxiety and by that also the important elements to address when we want to help adolescents taming the anxiety. In the following chapter: Discussion (6.) I will look at these elements through the lens of, among other theories, theories presented in my

Literature Review (3.) and seek to create a useful model for practitioners working with adolescents experiencing anxiety.



6. Discussion

6.1. Introduction

In this section I will discuss and process my findings and axial coding. My main goal is to create some kind of model of what reflects a professional working with adolescents experiencing anxiety, which could be found useful from a relational perspective. In Danish we have a word called “fiduser”. The word is hard to translate into English. It means (among other things actually), something between tool/trick/ploy. Something that you can apply to a problem and then make the problem a little less massive. Something that can help you master something problematic but in a subtle and implicit way. When I first started my journey into this field, I wanted to start with just making “fiduser”, because I was not sure how applicable my model would be. Now I am a little more confident that what I have found out is useful and helpful.

Through the processes of axial and focused coding, I have identified three central focal points in my research on adolescents experiencing anxiety: Losing Control and Gaining Control, Alienation and Reconnection, and Human- and Non-Human Relations. These categories emerged not as isolated themes, but as interrelated dimensions that reflect deeper patterns within the data. In line with Grounded Theory methodology, axial coding allowed me to explore the conditions, interactions, and consequences that link these categories, revealing how experiences of anxiety are structured around tensions between controllability and uncontrollability, and between disconnection and the desire for reconnection. Focused coding then helped refine these categories into more abstract, yet grounded, conceptual focal points that can inform systemic practice. Drawing on my research questions, I use these focal points to construct a visual model that aims to make these complex dynamics more accessible to practitioners, whether therapists or

pedagogues. In this model, the adolescents' experiences of anxiety are not seen as static or internalized states, but as dynamic processes unfolding within a relational and material landscape, where human and non-human elements co-constitute the stage on which these movements of control, alienation, and reconnection take place.

6.2. How Can We, in a Systemic Perspective, Understand Anxiety and/or Anxiousness?

The quote "Our anxiety does not come from thinking about the future, but from wanting to control it." (Gibran, K., 2020) that I have put on the front page of this dissertation speaks a lot to the voices of the adolescents I have talked with in gathering my empirical data. The thing I could have a problem with within the quote is that it can be understood as if it is an individual wish we each and one of us have, and that we individually must face that wish. I think the wish is cultural. And as among many other the Danish psychiatrist Søren Hertz states, we do not think our own thoughts, we think our cultures thoughts (Hertz, S., 2008). Hartmut Rosa (1965), the German sociologist and political scientist, also argues, that the Western societies are obsessing with controlling and having the world "in reach", drawing it closer to us, so that we can manipulate it (Rosa, H., 2020). This is not in conflict with the quote from my front page. The quote might as well be pointed towards our cultural perspectives in the western world. The adolescents I have talked to talk about (in more implicit frasses), the uncontrollability of the thoughts about them given by their peers, the society, the uncontrollability of their future educational paths and possibilities and consequently their inability to control the anxiety.

6.2.1. The World as an Aggression Point

To Rosa (2020), what is very much at question in modern society, is our relationship with what we can control and what is out of our control. Because we are submerged in a world where there is an increasing focus on humans controlling everything in our lives, to feel that we are living desirable lives, we experience the world as an *aggression point*. Rosa exemplifies this with our relationships with our own bodies. We (seem to always), have to lose weight, get rid of impurities on our skin, getting our blood pressure down, exercising some more, improve our bodies in every other way, eating healthier and more and more sustainable (Rosa, H., 2020). At the same time as all this, we experience imperatives towards taking good care of our families, and be excellent parents and partners, who are spacious and understanding of our closest relationships. We are expected to individually develop mentally, never “stand still” educationally, challenge ourselves to perform even better and constantly progress. Take exams with good results, climb to the highest possible levels of our careers, have close friendships and be social at our workplaces and so on and so forth. Rosa (2020) argues that the modern world has developed into what he terms an ‘aggression point’—a space where individuals feel under constant pressure to exert control. This pressure has intensified over the last three centuries, coinciding with the rise of capitalism and industrialization. Central to Rosa’s theory is the concept of ‘dynamic stabilization,’ where economic and social systems demand continuous growth merely to maintain stability. For adolescents, this translates into relentless expectations to perform—academically, socially, and emotionally—without clear endpoints or relief. These perspectives brought forward of Rosa aligns very much with the New Materialisms and their approach towards entities as something emerging in assemblages (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; de Freitas, 2017; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018), of the social, the abstract and

the material. Through the use of Grounded Theory and Emotional Autoethnography (Charmaz, K., 2014), my analysis of the findings have shown me, that what the adolescents experience in relation to anxiety and their strategies towards taming it, corresponds well with Rosa sociologicistic analysis of the Western societies (Rosa, H., 2020). The materialistic development in production capabilities and modern advertising together with a social media boom has in many ways been coproducing the pressure onto the younger generations. The decades of focusing on solely the individual as both responsible for its own success and failure has perhaps come to a tipping point. The aggression felt of the adolescents is now taking them down, and maybe the epidemic of anxiety is an answer to that development.

The idea of dynamic stabilization explains what Rosa understands as the underlying structure of western societies. The structural design is that to obtain economic and material status quo in our societies, we need to always create growth. Instead of growth being something we hope for, the lack of growth becomes a fear, because the capitalist structure is built around the notion that to secure what we already have, we need to increase growth. Our development of society (and our own lives) is not based on a desire for more, but anxiety to lose what is already in our possession (Rosa, H., 2020). In my connecting to the material of the adolescents I have talked to, and also my own emotional autoethnographic studies, this is something that stands out. This dynamic of growth-driven anxiety, as described by Rosa, resonates strongly with New Materialist thought, which challenges traditional human-centered narratives and instead emphasizes the entanglement of human and non-human forces in shaping lived experience. From a New Materialist perspective, the adolescents' experiences—and my own autoethnographic reflections—are not merely psychological or social phenomena but are deeply embedded

in material-discursive structures such as economic systems, technologies, and institutional expectations (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). The fear of losing what one has, rather than the desire for more, becomes a material affect that circulates through bodies, environments, and discourses, shaping how young people relate to the world around them. This illustrates how agency and emotion are not solely internal or individual, but emerge through complex assemblages of human and non-human actors

One adolescent I interviewed described their anxiety as ‘a feeling like every decision I make could ruin everything later.’ This resonates with Rosa’s (2020) notion of dynamic stabilization, where societal pressure demands constant progress just to maintain a sense of stability. The adolescent’s fear of making the wrong choice reflects how societal expectations around academic achievement and future career prospects magnify feelings of uncontrollability. The axial coding “losing and gaining control”, where the first part of this positioning “losing control” is very much in question. This way of being connected to, as an individual, by the outside world, as someone who is potentially without control and therefore also potentially degrading can be understood as the world as an aggression point, connects to the adolescent. The world is a dangerous place with the constant potential of you failing. A Danish group of researchers have coined a concept they call New Vulnerability to describe how the vulnerability amongst the youth in Denmark has changed through the last decades. One of their conclusions are, that when you are vulnerable today, in the Danish society, it is also implicit that you are vulnerable for the rest of your life (Görlich, A. et al., 2019). If you are not successful in school today, you are likely to not get an education, not be able to have close friendships (because your peers will choose not to spend time with you), not being part of romantic relations (because as an

unsuccessful individual you are not romantic potential), and so on. In short, if you are having problems in the present, your future is determined to be doomed. You will end your life alone and poor. This is of course just a discourse, but if the researchers are right, our adolescents are growing up in a world that is constantly frightening, both in the present and in the future (Görlich, A. et al., 2019). What is of outmost necessity in the life of an adolescent (Rabøl Hansen, 2011) , and surely also for the rest of us is the feeling of belonging to a group or having close attachments to other people. Mostly our peers. This is what the adolescent risk, they risk losing the feeling of belonging.

The cultural imperative of this, according to Rosa, means that we constantly need to extend our range into the world, an attempt to create an *infinite enlargement of range*. We seem to engage with the world from a position where we think that our lives become better the more of the world is in reach (Rosa, H., 2020).

At the same time, according to Rosa (2020), as we try to attain control over our world, something happens with our connection to it. When we manipulate the world into being controllable it loses its magic. The world around us becomes mute. With references to Max Weber, Rosa states that when we seek to make the world comprehensible, calculable, controllable and predictable, it becomes silent. Suddenly the world does not speak to us anymore. We become alienated (Rosa, H., 2020). This is because what is the essence of life is that it consists of uncontrollable attributes. As Rosa writes, why do we go to watch a football match? Because we want to know who wins it – if we were able to calculate who would win, and with how many goals, nobody would attend the match. The uncontrollable things in life are what makes life worth living, and in modern society, these uncontrollable things are losing ground (Rosa, H., 2020).

What is also important to remember, especially about the adolescents interviewed for this dissertation, some of them on top of the societal aggression point, have experienced real and life-threatening aggression from their family members or other significant people. This interacts, intersects and probably enlarges their experience of the world as being a dangerous place.

6.2.2. *Patterns of Relationships*

If the world around us becomes alienated, from a relational perspective, it is of course not because there is something wrong with the individual, it is because the pattern of the connection between the adolescent and the world is affected. In Bertrando and Arcelloni's (2014), understanding an emotion comes from something and is directed towards something else. In this dissertation, the anxiety is then one of the characteristics constituting the relationship between an individual adolescent and their outer world. Sometimes exemplified as their school, their peers, their parents or all of these. Ian Burkitt (2014) is saying something similar, stating that the relational perspective can interpret the anxiety as a pattern of the relationship between the adolescent and the outside world. What the adolescents' feel are the bodily responses to a relational context (Burkitt, 2002). Anxiety is then to be understood of, as the, for the adolescent, felt bodily consequences of a pattern of relationship that is between the adolescent and the outer world, or more specifically, the school, the peers and so on. Combined with Rosas theory aggression is the pattern of relationship the adolescents are having with the outer world, the feeling of anxiety inside is the adolescent registering this pattern (Burkitt, I., 2014). In other words, we can say that the basic systemic assumption that systems have two core ways of connecting to other systems, are by adaptation and autonomy (Priest, 2021). The

adolescents are adapting to the fact that the outer world connects to them from an aggression point, by withdrawing and isolating. They are safeguarding their autonomy by isolating. In short, the outer world connects to the adolescents as an aggression point, a place of unsafety and uncertainty. This establishes a pattern of relationship that in the adolescents are bodily felt as anxiety meaning the corporeal consequences of the pattern. Each adolescent connect differently to this aggression point, hence the onto-epistemology of New Materialisms (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b). All the intersections of the individual's life and life story, all the material and non-material entities of all the complex relations that make up a life, are constantly nurturing the behavior and emotions that the adolescent is living, and in the cases shown in this dissertation, the consequences are among other things a bodily felt experience of anxiety (Albertini et al., 2025a).

That there are patterns that connect us as humans with all other living things, is one of the core notions of British anthropologist social scientist, cyberneticist and a lot more Gregory Bateson's (1904-1980), thinking. Bateson was interested in form, structure and patterns, and as such how these were connected to each other (Bateson, G., 1972, 1991b; Ølgaard, 2004). We can understand patterns that connect in a systemic therapy context, as the notion that the pattern of how I relate to my children can be recognized in the pattern in which my father related to me. But we can also find patterns that connect between how I relate to my children in how I relate to my wife, and how I relate to my friends. There are also patterns that connect between how I relate to my children and how I relate to the moon or my car. They are not quite as evident, but there are similarities (Ølgaard, 2004). The idea of patterns that connect is deeply related to Bateson's thoughts on the meaning of context and that nothing is meaningful without seeing it in its context (Ølgaard, 2004). Bateson also calls these emergences of patterns redundancy. If we, for example have a

piece of paper that is divided and we draw a slash mark over the division of the paper. A person who only being handed the one paper has a good probability of establishing proximity towards how the other piece of paper looks. There will with good probability be a slash mark in extension of the one on the first piece of paper. Bateson states, that the one piece of paper contains information of what is on the other piece of paper (Bateson, G., 1972, p. 131). The way redundancy or patterns are created is through communication (Bateson, G., 1972, p. 412). Communication is here to be understood in a very broad sense. To Bateson communication consists of information, and the smallest amount of information is defined as a *bit*. A *bit* is defined as a difference that makes a difference (Bateson, G., 1972, p. 315). So, communication can both be something I say, but it can also be something I do not say. As Watzlawick, Bavelas and Jackson, inspired by Bateson, says it: "The Impossibility of Not Communicating" (Watzlawick, P. et al., 1967).

When we experience patterns that connect different contexts, this experience exists through information. We cannot not-communicate these patterns. When adolescents experience a world communicating to them, that they are lost, in a hurry and that they should keep up the pace or else they are going to lose both present and future, they can indeed have an opinion on what happens on the other side of the paper in other contexts. The adolescents connect the dots of the patterns and draw the cultural and societal imperatives into their schooling, their friendships and their romantic relations. At the same time, we all have different bodies and minds and therefore connect differently to the patterns of connections from the outer world. The adolescents are living in a specific time and age, where the anxiety diagnosis is available, and in some cases even a necessity to get needed help and recognition of difficulties, because of both legislation, laws and orders and municipality regulations (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b). At the same time they are

existing in a time where social media among others, are perhaps carrying the message through to the adolescents of anxiety as being a way of performing their struggles in everyday life and in crisis (Ahmed, 2016). The patterns of relationships that the adolescents encounter, that can lead them to experience anxiety, are many and powerful.

These notions resonate deeply with the principles of New Materialism by emphasizing the entangled, dynamic relationships between adolescents and their environments—both material and immaterial. Anxiety is not an isolated psychological phenomenon but a corporeal consequence of relational patterns, shaped by the adolescent's interactions with peers, school, and broader societal structures. This aligns with New Materialism's onto-epistemological stance, which sees bodies, emotions, and environments as co-constitutive and always in flux (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b). Simultaneously, this approach reflects the methodological openness of Grounded Theory, where theory emerges inductively from lived experiences and observed patterns. The systemic and relational framing—drawing on Bateson's notion of "patterns that connect"—supports a Grounded Theory logic, as it allows for theoretical insights to emerge from the data, rather than imposing predefined categories. The adolescents' bodily experiences of anxiety become data points that reveal how relational aggression from the outer world is internalized, and how autonomy is safeguarded through withdrawal. This dual lens; New Materialism's focus on relational entanglements and Grounded Theory's inductive methodology, to me has provided a framework for understanding the complexity of adolescent anxiety as both socially situated and materially felt.

6.2.3. *The Others and the Doublebinds*

Something that is explicitly stated by the adolescents is that the way they imagine being perceived by their peers is affecting their anxiety a lot. In some ways, it almost seems like

they are living life as described by French philosopher and writer, Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980), in the play *No Exit* (Sartre, J. P., 1989). Here Sartre writes that “hell is the others”. He shows what happens when the individual becomes aware that it is an object for the gaze of others; that it is seen by others and cannot avoid it. In other words, the awareness that you are at the mercy of other people's gaze and judgment (Sartre, J. P., 1989).

Sartre's play is of course a dramatization, but it aligns with the notion of American Professor in English Lauren Berlant (1957-2021), who states that an important part of human connecting to the world is done through what she calls “inconvenience” in the presence of others (Berlant, L., 2022). To Berlant, the inconvenience of other people is an important motor in our existence. The friction created between individuals is something that we cannot transcend, because that friction is what exceeds our sovereignty. A sovereignty that is an illusion for the world is a place, as stated above, where we are forced to adapt (Berlant, L., 2022; Priest, 2021). The peer in the adolescent's lives are important, maybe even crucial, and as we shall see below, they can be the solution as they are the hell. It is just that in the western societies today, the risk of being out of control of their thoughts and perception of oneself, is life threatening (Görlich, A. et al., 2019; Rosa, H., 2014, 2020).

One of Gregory Bateson's other big contributions to systemic practice is his theory of Doublebind. To Bateson, as explained above, behavior is communication. In his work surrounding schizophrenia he developed a theory on how to understand schizophrenia as a way of communicating. Communications again understood very broadly as all behavior, gestures, mimic and all other interaction between the person suffering from schizophrenia and their surroundings (Ølgaard, 2004). Bateson, according to what is written above, looked for patterns that connected between how the person suffering from schizophrenia

communicated their diagnosis, and how the communication in their families were similar. Understanding schizophrenia as a communication pattern learned to the individual from their environment (Ølgaard, 2004). In the following I will not talk about schizophrenia of course but will in short show how the Doublebind theory is applicable when trying to understand anxiety from a relational perspective. The theory is not used that much anymore to explain schizophrenia, since the science about that diagnosis has developed in other more medical directions. The theory, never the less, is very much used to understand human relationships and the struggles we all encounter, on other subjects then merely pathological (Metalog, 2023; Ølgaard, 2004). Below I will try to show how the theory can be applied to adolescents experiencing anxiety.

To Bateson a system always adapts to its environment in appropriate modes. The person suffering from, for example, anxiety, can have been involved in communication that is characterized by these following six steps:

- 1) Two or more people have inflicted a certain communication form on the individual.
(in the original writings of Bateson this perspective is connected almost solely to the family members, but in my dissertation, I want to broaden the perspective to include others than family members, for example a school class, a group of peers or society as a whole).
- 2) The adolescents experiencing anxiety have experienced the communication pattern repeatedly. The behavior of anxiety does not originate from one single traumatic experience alone.
- 3) Adolescents have been exposed to a *primary negative injunction*. The injunction can be either, “do not do so and so, or you will be punished” or “if you do not do so and so, you will be punished”. Bateson assumes that the primary punishment meant

in the threat is perhaps withdrawal of love, expression of hate or anger. In Rosa's perspective (2020), the adolescents are told that they need to gain control of their presence and their future. They need to get the world into their reach or else they will end up unsuccessful, unloved and poor.

- 4) The adolescent is then also exposed to a secondary injunction, but this time on a more abstract level. These injunctions, that also promise punishment that threatens the existence of the person in question, are often presented nonverbally. The message is always in opposition to the first injunction and thus contradicts it, but as written above, on another level. This could in the example of control mean that (a) the adolescent's sense, that their attempt to gain control of their presence and future, prevents them from sensing the world. The world goes mute. It is alienated (Rosa, H., 2020). The world you should control is now totally out of reach. What is beautiful and life-affirming and binding to life, slips away. And (b), the world is developing at an incomprehensible speed, even accelerating (Rosa, H., 2014), which makes it harder and harder to gain control. The "now" the adolescents are living in is shrinking, what was the right thing to do (educationally, health wise, romantically, relationship wise), last year is potentially wrong this year (Rosa, H., 2014).
- 5) The victim of this Doublebind is prohibited from escaping the situation. For example, because there, despite the Doublebind, also is an eminent promise of love and affection. The adolescents can see and hear all around them (through media and social media), people who made it, who get all the love and attention and reach into the world, that we are socialized into needing. They cannot-not participate in the race for success.

6) When the person, has learned to live in this universe of Doublebind patterns, any part of the double bind relationship can trigger this experience of panic or rage (Bateson, G., 1972, p. 206-207; Ølgaard, 2004, p. 108-109). When the adolescents have been socialized into these patterns, their anxiety can be awoken in multiple contexts where their inadequacy might show, or where they could be afraid that their inadequacy might show.

One Doublebind then, as shown above, is the Doublebind of the imperative of gaining control in a society getting more and more uncontrollable, where the entropy is growing faster and faster. Another Doublebind that the adolescents are exposed to is the imperative of gaining control over life and at the same time, according to Rosa (2020), what is the life-defining in reality is what is out of our control. This puts the adolescents in a position where no matter what they do, seldom are able to connect to the world in authentic ways.

New Materialism and Grounded Theory here work together to help me again understand adolescent anxiety as a relational and embodied phenomenon. Drawing on Sartre's existential gaze and Berlant's notion of "inconvenience," they show how adolescents' anxiety emerges from their entanglement with the perceptions and expectations of others—particularly peers. This aligns with New Materialism's emphasis on affective and material intra-actions, where emotions like anxiety are not internal states but corporeal responses to relational and environmental forces (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025b; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018) . This also as stated by Burkitt (Burkitt, I., 2014). The adolescents' bodies become sites where cultural imperatives, social media narratives, and peer dynamics converge, producing anxiety as a felt consequence of these entangled patterns. Bateson's Double-bind

theory further supports this by offering a systemic lens through which these contradictory societal messages—control versus uncontrollability—can be understood as communication patterns that shape behavior and emotional responses. From a Grounded Theory perspective, this is sought analyzed inductively (Charmaz, K., 2014), by building theory from the lived experiences and narratives of adolescents, allowing patterns to emerge organically rather than imposing predefined categories. The adolescents' descriptions of anxiety, shaped by repeated exposure to conflicting injunctions, become data that reveal how social structures, cultural narratives, and relational dynamics co-produce emotional distress. This dual theoretical lens has allowed for me a nuanced understanding of anxiety as both a material-discursive phenomenon and a socially patterned experience, deeply embedded in the adolescents' relational worlds.

6.2.4. Summary of a Relational Perspective on Anxiety

A systemic/relational perspective on anxiety among the adolescents interviewed for this dissertation can suggest that the adolescents experience the bodily effects of living in a world where your core relation to the world is that of being an individual whom the outer world sees as a potentially failed existence. A being that, in order to persist in a livable life, is expected to constantly grow (economically, health wise, relationship wise and so on). This pattern of relationship to the outer world is flowing into other relationships in the adolescent's life and for some of them this anxiety of being "not good enough", becomes potentially triggered in most aspects of their existence. Importantly some of these specific adolescents have life-threatening experiences with them as well. These experiences are carried into other contexts as well, and serve as a magnifier for themselves, on how the world perhaps perceives them as potential wrongdoers that do not have a place in this

world, and who do not deserve love and respect. The adolescents are socialized into living in an existence where they are to gain more and more control of a world that becomes less and less controllable, and if they gain some kind of control through their behavior, the world becomes more and more mute and alienated. The relation to the outer world becomes that of a Doublebind, where whatever you do, you are doing something wrong. Whether you gain control or you do not gain control, you lose community, love, respect and also resonance (Rosa, H., 2021) with the world. The world becomes a dangerous place where the adolescents, no matter what they do, are in danger of being excluded and deprived of necessities of the human life such as belonging and attachment. The adolescents need the others to feel that they belong and at the same time, the others are the greatest risk because of their ability to exclude them. This mechanism and pattern run through their relationships to the outer world and a relationship of danger and unsafety. At the same time the adolescents live in a time and age where anxiety is an expected and sometimes even necessary performativity position, because it enables that the adolescents become helpworthy. Perhaps these are some of the relational reasons why adolescents experience a bodily consequence that we in Western countries call anxiety or anxiousness. When there is an experience of having less control than desired (control with human and non-human entities), this creates a behavior in the adolescent to increase the level of control, this then again alienates the adolescent from the outer world, and they struggle to reconnect with it. When the reconnection is successful the adolescent feels at ease but also begins to feel anxious about when they are going to lose control again.

In conclusion, the integration of Grounded Theory and New Materialism provides a nuanced understanding of adolescent anxiety as both a relational and material phenomenon. Grounded Theory has enabled the emergence of core categories—such as

control, alienation, and reconnection—through a systematic engagement with the data, allowing these concepts to be grounded in the lived experiences of the adolescents themselves. These categories are not static but dynamically interrelated, forming a conceptual framework that reflects the recursive patterns of anxiety, control-seeking, and disconnection. New Materialism deepens this analysis by shifting the focus from purely psychological or social explanations to the entangled relations between human and non-human actors—technologies, institutions, discourses, and bodily affects—that co-produce the adolescents’ realities. The adolescents are not simply reacting to a hostile world; they are embedded in assemblages where agency is distributed, and where the pressure to grow, perform, and control is materially inscribed in their environments. Their anxiety, then, is not just a symptom but a bodily expression of being caught in a double bind—where every attempt to gain control risks further alienation. This perspective invites systemic practitioners to consider not only interpersonal dynamics but also the broader material-discursive conditions that shape how adolescents come to feel, act, and relate in a world that often renders them both hyper-visible and profoundly disconnected.

6.3. What are some relational elements in the adolescents’ own attempts to tame the anxiety?

This next paragraph is really my core interest in writing a dissertation with this specific angle on anxiety. I am essentially interested in, how I and other professionals, be that therapists, pedagogues, teachers, priests, social workers and so on, from a relational perspective can help the adolescents who experience anxiety. Therefore I am also approaching the field with a little caution, mostly because I from my systemic philosophical standpoint am afraid to formulate statements that are to reducing and not honoring the complexity (Bateson, G., 1972; Ølgaard, 2004) of the lives of the adolescents, the reality of the professionals and the multiple entanglements that are present in the emergence of

anxiety. On the other hand, complexity must never become the excuse for us as professionals and researchers not to do anything about a problem. Therefore, I am facing the anxiety and trying to get some kind of control of this uncontrollable subject, anxiety. This is also to honor the adolescents who actually act against the anxiety. They are not held back by academic reflections or onto-epistemological doubts. They are living with the anxiety and trying to control the uncontrollable. To tame the natural emotion of being anxious towards something. My hope is that I myself and others can find a little inspiration in the taming strategies of the adolescents.

6.3.1. *Taming the Anxiety through Resonance*

The adolescent's approach to living with anxiety I have given the word "taming". This is because through my process of interpreting the approach towards anxiety, implemented by the adolescents themselves, I have found that they are not exactly trying to get rid of the anxiety, destroy it and deport it from their lives. They are trying to live with it, knowing that it in some ways is helping them to stay alert and on their toes in a world that is potentially dangerous to them. What they are trying to do, metaphorically looks to me like they are trying to tame the anxiety. They try to live alongside the anxiety and let it have its place, and at the same time not letting it affect aspects of their lives where they feel it grows too big or has no place at all. In the notion of my focused coding, the two concepts of Reconnection and Controllability become important in the following. The adolescents are using a strategy to tame the anxiety, that is about reconnecting with the world, when the connection seems lost in the anxiety attack. And sometimes to prevent the anxiety attack from starting at all. The adolescents use several Human and Non-human implements to do this. They listen to music, which of course means meaning transported

from human to human, but it is also in a materialistic sense a soundwave that makes certain impressions on their eardrum. This in some cases affects their heartbeat rhythm and their breathing. But the words from the artist, that often process the struggle with anxiety also have an inspiring effect on the individual. In other examples they use artifacts like a clothes pin or specially designed teddy bears they can wear. They connect to the world through sometimes pain and self-harm or the mere relaxing touch of a professional or a friend. Sometimes the sound of a voice talking soothing and comforting and bringing the connection back.

I have in my section on how to understand anxiety in a relational perspective made use of Hartmut Rosas approach and I will do so too, in this section on taming the anxiety. When we have lost this connection to the world, then what do we do? Rosa's (2021) answer is Resonance. His understanding and exposition of the concept of Resonance is complex and multifaceted. I will try to explain the concept of Resonance in very short terms below.

The word Resonance is used as a description for the quality of the relationship between the subject and the world (Rosa, H., 2021, p.194-196). Being in this Resonance relational mode Rosa defines by four characteristics:

- 1) *The point where you are affected* – When you are in resonance with another person, a landscape, a piece of music, an idea or an animal, you experience being “in reach” of the other (thing). Being moved and touched. It can be described as the point where you listen to “the calling” of the other. You experience that you are invited into some kind of interaction with the other, being it a person, a thing, music and so on. This is in contrast to the experience of being alienated as described

above. In a resonance mode there is a simultaneous and mutual movement between subject and the world outside (Rosa, H., 2020, 2021).

- 2) *The point of selfactivity* – What Rosa states is important in the resonance modus of relation is, that it is not enough just feeling moved and touched. An important aspect of resonance is the answering of the movement. This can be, for example goosebumps rising on the arms, a tear in the corner of an eye. Our respond to the thing happening outside of us is essential to being in connection with it. The concept of “emotions” is exactly this, the body answering to something outside of us. When the adolescent is in physical contact with music, materiality, another human being, a horse or the like, they get emotionally affected.

This is being in a resonance modus (Rosa, H., 2020, 2021).

- 3) *The point of transformation* – When we are in the resonance modus with another person, a book, a piece of music, an idea, a landscape we are transformed. Not necessarily essentially, but we will have an experience of being “moved” somewhere new by the interaction with the other (thing). It can be conversations that ring out through many years of our lives because they “did something to us”. It can be concert experiences, where we experience being a little different after the experience. People sometime describe how this movie or this book have changed them. This experience of being “moved” somewhere new by the world outside, is what Rosa understands as enlivening. We feel fully alive and connected to the world (Rosa, H., 2020, 2021).

- 4) *The point of the uncontrollable* – Being in a resonating relationship with the world is not something that we can instrumentalize. Resonance is constitutively uncontrollable, the more we fight to reach resonance the more we will experience

that we cannot reach it. We cannot force it. Resonance relationships are per definition something that you cannot enforce with necessity, on the other hand you cannot prevent it either. If it happens, it happens (Rosa, H., 2020, 2021).

Because of these attributes, resonance is open in relation to the potential outcome, it is in contrast to the capitalist understanding of the world as a place for constant growth and optimization. And as follows, in opposition to notion of the world as an aggression point. When we experience resonance, the world outside is not an aggression point, it is something that we feel calling us to it (Rosa, H., 2020, 2021).

6.3.2. *Taming Anxiety Through Safe Relational Patterns*

As with the relational patterns characterized by anxiety, Ian Burkitt would suggest that we as professionals co-create non-anxiety provoking relational patterns with the young people (Burkitt, 2021; Burkitt, I., 2014). The adolescents themselves institute these kinds of environments by isolating and decreasing the number of variables that can “go wrong” and harm them. One of the ways they do this is by withdrawing to their room and sitting down on the floor in a corner; thus, protected from at least two sides. They describe how they in some cases crumble up, put their heads down between their legs and protect the head with their arms above it. This material way of creating safe spaces is combined with the attempt to, by themselves, create close-knit and secure relationships with their peers and the professionals. A safe space is not a space of confinement but is a space of safe relations, a space where the adolescent feels understood and validated, also for its anxiety. Some of the adolescents describe contacting friends to come sit with them through anxiety attacks. These experiences of having been helped by friends or

professionals through anxiety attacks strengthen attachment and then create a safe space. These patterns of relationships are carried into other context, creating new patterns of relations that connect in safe ways (Bateson, G., 1972; Burkitt, I., 2014). The adolescents reconnect to the world and in the safe spaces experience a world that is not necessarily controllable but more predictable.

Another important aspect of the creation of safe relational patterns is how to work therapeutically and pedagogically with people in Double Bind situations. This draws on the work of several thinkers. All seem to agree that the first step will be to recognize and verbalize the Double Bind (Bateson, G., 1972; Butler, J., 2010; Watzlawick, P. et al., 1967), which in some ways aligns with Bateson's notion of metacommunication (Bateson, G., 1972). That metacommunication about the DoubleBind creates new understandings. This means that the professional is sensible to understanding and verbally examining together with the adolescent, how to understand the meaning of the anxiety in the life of the adolescent. This notion also draws heavily on the Sense of Coherence (SOC) theory made by Israeli American sociologist Aaron Antonovsky (1923-1994). This theory suggests that in mastering stressors in our lives, a combination of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness towards the stressor is heavily reducing its effect on us. In relation to anxiety this means that if we can metatalk with the adolescent about how to manage the anxiety, how we can comprehend it (cognitively) and what specific meaning it has in our lives (Why did it happen to me? How does it make sense?), we can help adolescents reduce the impact of the anxiety. The adolescents themselves describe how they have searched the internet, talked to psychiatrists and read books to understand their struggle. They themselves have created meaning by for example thinking that this is a struggle they have to go through because it makes them stronger and more resilient. Or as one of the

girls said, God only puts the heaviest burdens on the strongest shoulders. In other words, the feeling of anxiety is a statement to be reckoned with, because it shows us a characteristic with this connection to the outer world. The help from a professional can then be, to help the adolescent become more aware of the relational process through which the anxiety exists, how it is felt and how it is shared in the adolescents system of relationships (Bertrando & Arcelloni, 2014).

All of the above demands of the professional to leave behind the notion of the existence of “tools” or fixing imperatives towards the individual adolescent. The emergence of anxiety and the following emergence of safe spaces that tame the anxiety is created in complex contexts, where many elements are present. Norwegian psychologist and child specialist Haldor Øvreeide describes the interaction between child and professional as a dance, where you try to lean into each other (Øvreeide, 2009, 2022). You try to find out what dances the other one knows, how they move in a conversation, how you try to avoid stepping on toes and nevertheless you end up doing it, taking some steps backwards, apologizing and repairing the relationship and trying again (Øvreeide, 2009, 2022).

6.3.3. Summary of What are some Relational Elements in the Adolescents' Own Attempts to Tame the Anxiety?

The adolescents try to create controllability and connection to the world through both material- and human relations. The professionals should reflect on this by adopting these strategies. As suggested above, we should aspire to create environments where the adolescents have the potential to experience resonance with the world. This is through artwork, nature, communities with animals, peers and grownups. Per definition, resonance

cannot be forced through, but it is possible to establish the assemblages of entities where it can emerge. Another important reflection is being willing to establish safe environments where the adolescents do not feel judged and wrong for them experiencing anxiety. They need to feel acknowledged and understood, rightfully feeling anxiety because of the context that they specifically are living in. Environments where the adolescent's emotions are taken seriously and addressed. From that safe position it is possible for the adolescents to develop and relate otherwise to their anxiety.

My exploration of how adolescents' "tame" anxiety through resonance offers an intersection between New Materialist thought and Grounded Theory methodology. From a New Materialist perspective, the adolescents' strategies—whether through music, tactile objects, human touch, or voice—highlight the agentic role of both human and non-human matter in shaping emotional experience (Albertini et al., 2025a, 2025a; Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Fox, N. & Alldred P., 2018). Anxiety is not merely a psychological state but a material-affective phenomenon, co-produced through interactions with soundwaves, textures, rhythms, and relational energies. These practices of reconnection illustrate how bodies and environments are entangled in ongoing intra-actions, where meaning and emotion emerge through dynamic relational flows. Grounded Theory supports this interpretation by providing a methodological framework that allows these patterns to surface inductively from the adolescents lived experiences (Charmaz, K., 2014). My focused coding around Reconnection and Controllability reflects this, as tries to capture the nuanced ways adolescents negotiate their relationship with anxiety—not by eradicating it, but by reconfiguring their relational stance toward it. Rosa's concept of Resonance further deepens this perspective, offering a vocabulary for understanding how adolescents re-establish meaningful contact with the world. The four dimensions of resonance—being

affected, responding, transforming, and embracing the uncontrollable (Rosa, H., 2021) — mirror the adolescents' embodied strategies for living with anxiety. In this way, showing how anxiety is not just endured but relationally and materially navigated, with each adolescent crafting unique pathways toward resonance and emotional sustainability.

My analysis of the adolescents creating safe relational patterns to manage anxiety reflects key principles of New Materialism and Grounded Theory. The adolescents' embodied strategies—such as curling up in corners or seeking comfort from peers—demonstrate how material environments and human relationships co-produce emotional safety. These practices show agency distributed across bodies, objects, and interactions, aligning with New Materialism's view of affect as emerging from entangled relations. Grounded Theory supports this by allowing such patterns to emerge inductively from lived experience.

Therapeutic approaches that emphasize metacommunication and meaning-making, inspired by Bateson (Bateson, G., 1972) and Antonovsky (Antonovsky, A., 2000), further highlight how professionals and adolescents co-create understanding. Rather than applying fixed tools, the relational “dance” between professional and adolescent foster safe spaces where anxiety is acknowledged, shared, and transformed through mutual responsiveness (Øvreeide, 2009, 2022).

6.4. Summary or: What are the core relational elements of anxiety and/or anxiousness among adolescents, and what is to be learned from their attempts to tame the anxiety?

The adolescents experience the physical and emotional effects of living in a world where they are perceived as potentially failing. They are socialized to seek control over an increasingly uncontrollable world, yet when they gain control through their behavior, the world becomes more alienating. This creates a double-bind dynamic: no matter what they

do, they lose community, love, respect, and connection. Their relationship with the outer world is marked by danger and insecurity. Simultaneously, anxiety is expected and often required in their age. When they feel a lack of control, they strive to regain it, which further alienates them. Though they may reconnect with the world, this only brings temporary relief, followed by anxiety over losing control again.

Adolescents seek control and connection through material and human relationships. Professionals should adopt these strategies to create environments where adolescents can experience resonance with the world, through art, nature, and communities with animals, peers, and adults. Resonance cannot be forced but can emerge in the right settings. It's crucial to create safe environments where adolescents feel acknowledged and understood, especially regarding their anxiety. This allows them to develop and manage their emotions better.

Drawing on the insights developed through Grounded Theory, this study has identified key conceptual categories—such as control, alienation, reconnection, and relational danger—that emerged from the adolescents' narratives of anxiety. These categories were not imposed but surfaced through a rigorous process of open, axial, and focused coding, allowing the theory to remain grounded in the lived experiences of the participants. What became evident is that the adolescents are not merely experiencing anxiety as an internal psychological state, but as a deeply relational and embodied response to the socio-material conditions in which they are embedded. Their anxiety is shaped by a world that positions them as potentially failing individuals—expected to constantly grow, improve, and self-regulate in the face of increasing uncertainty and complexity.

From a New Materialist perspective, this anxiety is not simply a product of discourse or social expectation, but is co-produced through entanglements with non-human actors: school systems, digital technologies, diagnostic categories, institutional norms, and even the spatial and temporal rhythms of everyday life. These non-human elements are not passive backdrops but active participants in shaping how adolescents feel, act, and relate. The adolescents' attempts to gain control—whether through perfectionism, withdrawal, or hyper-vigilance—are responses to a world that is materially and affectively structured to be increasingly uncontrollable. Yet paradoxically, these very strategies often deepen their sense of alienation, creating a double-bind: if they seek control, they risk disconnection; if they let go of control, they risk failure and exclusion.

6.5. A Critical Positioning

I have had numeral critical approaches to my own work through this process of writing a dissertation. Some of them have been of a more personal nature. For example, I (as many others), suffer from the well-known syndrome of being a secret imposter. I will not tire the readers with this or other personal notions, but they are of course present in a writing process.

Some more academic and clinical reflections have been, amongst others, that a danger could be, that if I, as a professional, start to talked to the adolescents about the impact of culture and society, the difference between what they think anxiety is and what I am saying it can also be, is to big - and I end up with them not listening. What we in “systemic” would formulate as I risk creating too much disturbance. That the discrepancy between how the adolescents I work with clinically understand anxiety and how I understand anxiety leaves them feeling not helped, by an abstract thinking, politically interested academic.

Another even more obvious critique is that my account on understanding anxiety is not at all exhaustive. I started out this dissertation with an ambition of writing up as much as I could find about anxiety in different approaches, especially the cognitive and the existential perspectives. The cognitive, because I find it criticizable in its individual focus, but also at the same time an approach that has succeeded in being relevant in clinical treatment. The existential (as for example formulated by Søren Kierkegaard (Kierkegaard, S., 2021) because I find it especially rewarding as combined with the systemic. There could be many nuances about anxiety that I could have unfolded, but as it is in a conversation with a client; for each question I ask, there are 3000 I did not. And in the words of a Danish folksinger, when asked why his live performances sound so different from the album versions of his songs; “The sound on the record is how the songs were when I reached the record labels deadline, the songs live on inside of me, so they are not the same. The songs you hear on the record are the state they were in, when I had to end the record process”.

A more theoretical and epistemological critique that I will try to get ahead of is, that the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa, that I have based a lot of my discussion on, defines himself as a critical theorist, and not a New Materialist as I position myself. Luckily I stumbled upon a book that Rosa coedited in 2021 where he actually tries to draw some line between critical theory and New Materialism and acknowledges that there are big similarities and intersections between the two (Rosa, H. et al., 2021).

7. Concluding Reflections and Implications

In my concluding reflections and my ideas on implication for systemic psychotherapy or relational practice I am especially preoccupied with pointing us towards having a less stigmatizing view towards the experiences of anxiety. The experiences are multifaceted and complex in nature because of their emergence in a multifaceted and complex world.

As I wrote earlier in this dissertation, the onto-epistemological stance of New Materialism as formulated by Barad (1996), introduces the concept of agential realism. Agential realism states that I as a researcher am entangled with the material I am researching. This means that the knowledge I am presenting here is situated and local. I cannot emphasize enough, that the research conducted by me in this dissertation, is very much “minor science” (Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017). I can say something about how I understand the connections between the research persons and anxiety, all of us submerged in a material and non-material world. I have not reached any objective knowledge. My research is diffractive, it has emerged in my meetings with the data, materials, values, knowledge, and performative processes of making research in a systemic context. The concept of Agential realism (Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017), tells us that knowledge is not produced by detached observers but emerges through intra-actions—mutual entanglements between researcher, participants, tools, and context. I have tried to commit myself to sincerity, ethics, and meaningful coherence (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017), by acknowledging my own position, the voices of adolescents, and the material-discursive conditions shaping the research. The worthy topic and resonance criteria (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017) align with agential realism’s emphasis on situated relevance—my research matter because it emerges from and responds to real-world entanglements. Similarly, I have strived to use autoethnography as a means to gain richer rigor, by showing how knowledge is co-

constructed through embodied, affective, and material engagements. My approach doesn't treat anxiety as a static object of study but as a phenomenon emerging through relational and material practices, which is what agential realism calls for (Barad, 1996; de Freitas, 2017).

I have furthermore tried to meet the criteria from Big Tent Criteria for Qualitative Quality (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). By applying rich rigor by aspiring to keep a straight line between my onto-epistemology, my research methods and my conclusions. Sincerity by keeping a close eye all the time to the words of the adolescents I have interviewed. Credibility by referring to relevant theorists and the data collected by myself. Relevant resonance I have tried to conduct by all the time being in communication with clients and professionals about my findings and reflections, staying ready to change my stance should they add new perspectives. If my research can be said to be a significant contribution it is not really up to me. I have learned a lot that I did not know about anxiety, and as I will convey below also something that I myself at least will implement in my practice. I believe my research has been ethically grounded and also has a political reach in the meaning; it is not just about me and the client. The way we view anxiety as a society has real and sometimes devastating consequences for an adolescent. Finally, stating my research has been coherent is again not up to me. I have strived to make it coherent, but I am at this point so entangled and embedded in every word that to me the only hope that persists is that others find this as interesting to read as I have found it to write it.

On a more concrete note, a few guidelines suggested that I myself will try to implement in my own practice and that I will also convey to coming students of the family therapy education I administer, I will emphasize:

Adolescent anxiety should be understood as a relational and context-dependent experience, emerging in a circular dynamic between the individual and the world. Emotions like anxiety are not isolated symptoms but bodily expressions of the quality of one's relationships—carried across multiple contexts and shaped by both human and non-human interactions. In today's performance-driven society, adolescents face immense pressure to succeed, often feeling that their worth depends on productivity and control. This creates a fragile existence where failure threatens their sense of belonging. To navigate this, adolescents need safe environments where they are accepted regardless of success, and where they can find comfort and validation through peers, professionals, and meaningful objects. These entities, whether music, nature, or everyday items, help them regulate anxiety by carrying personal or shared meaning. For professionals, it is crucial to recognize that what may appear as symptoms are often adaptive strategies, and to engage with adolescents in ways that affirm their experiences and foster relational safety. Finally, there is an entanglement taking place, between what we as professionals interpret as symptoms of the condition, and what to the adolescents are ways of trying to regulate their emotions.

In much shorter and precise terms, I would say that:

- Anxiety in adolescents should be understood relationally and contextually, not as an isolated symptom within the individual. It emerges from and is shaped by the circular interactions between the adolescent and their world—including peers, professionals, societal expectations, and even non-human entities. This means:
- Emotions like anxiety are relational signals—bodily responses to the quality of connections with others and the environment.
- Patterns of anxiety travel across contexts, so interventions must consider the adolescent’s broader relational ecosystem.
- Adolescents live under intense pressure to perform and self-manage, which can make failure feel existential.
- Safe, validating relationships—with peers, professionals, and through meaningful objects—are essential for emotional regulation.
- Professionals must recognize that what may appear as symptoms are often adaptive strategies adolescents use to cope with overwhelming relational demands.

My research supports a New Materialist understanding of adolescent anxiety as a relational and material phenomenon, rather than an isolated psychological symptom.

Anxiety emerges through entangled intra-actions between adolescents and their environments, including peers, professionals, societal expectations, and non-human entities. Emotions such as anxiety are understood as bodily responses to the quality of these relationships, shaped by the material-discursive conditions in which the adolescents live.

The patterns of anxiety are not confined to one context but travel across relational ecosystems, reflecting the distributed nature of agency and affect. Adolescents today face intense pressure to perform and self-manage, often internalizing societal demands that position them as both the product and the manager of their own success. This creates a precarious existence where failure threatens their sense of worth and belonging.

In response, the adolescents seek safe, validating relationships, not only with peers and professionals but also through meaningful engagement with objects and environments. These entities, whether music, nature, or everyday items, participate in the regulation of affect and offer comfort through shared or transferred meaning. What professionals may interpret as symptoms are often adaptive strategies, developed by adolescents to navigate overwhelming relational demands.

This perspective calls for a shift in therapeutic and pedagogical practice: from individualizing and pathologizing anxiety to recognizing it as a relational task, co-constructed through complex material and emotional entanglements. It emphasizes the need for responsive, embodied, and ethically attuned engagements that honor the lived realities of adolescents.

So, to answer the question that really set this whole dissertation of: Yes, anxiety can be understood as a relational task, both in its creation and in taming it. Individualizing and medicating us through this anxiety epidemic is alienating adolescents on a whole new level.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 Search history: Literature Review, Anxiety in a Danish Context and Systemic Treatment.

Literature review

02.05.2023 11:16

Print Search History: EBSCOhost



Tuesday, May 02, 2023 9:15:54 AM

#	Query	Limiters/Expanders	Last Run Via	Results
56	anxiety disorders AND (denmark or danish or danmark) AND (children or adolescents or youth or child or teenager) AND (treatment or intervention or therapy)	Limiters - Full Text: Published Date: 20130101-20231231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Narrow by Journal: - social psychiatry & psychiatric epidemiology Narrow by Journal: - scandinavian journal of psychology Narrow by Journal: - journal of psychopathology & behavioral assessment Narrow by Journal: - journal of child & family studies Narrow by Journal: - cognitive neuropsychiatry Narrow by Journal: - clinical psychology & psychotherapy Narrow by Journal: - child & youth care forum Narrow by Journal: - british journal of clinical psychology Narrow by Journal: - bmc psychiatry Narrow by Journal: - attachment & human development Narrow by Journal: - clinical child & family psychology review Narrow by Journal: - journal of child psychology & psychiatry Narrow by Journal: -	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	39

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02/05/2023 11:16

Print Search History: EBSCOhost

		depression & anxiety (1091-4269) Narrow by Journal: - cognitive therapy & research Narrow by Journal: - acta psychiatrica scandinavica Narrow by Journal: - european child & adolescent psychiatry Narrow by Journal: - child psychiatry & human development Narrow by Journal: - nordic journal of psychiatry Search modes - Boolean/Phrase		
S5	anxiety disorders AND (denmark or danish or danmark) AND (children or adolescents or youth or child or teenager) AND (treatment or intervention or therapy)	Limiters - Full Text; Published Date: 20130101-20231231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Narrow by Journal: - nordic journal of psychiatry Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	7
S4	anxiety disorders AND (denmark or danish or danmark) AND (children or adolescents or youth or child or teenager) AND (treatment or intervention or therapy)	Limiters - Full Text; Published Date: 20130101-20231231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	49
S3	anxiety disorders AND (denmark or danish or danmark) AND (children or adolescents or youth or child or teenager) AND (treatment or intervention or therapy)	Limiters - Published Date: 20130101- 20231231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	115
S2	anxiety disorders AND (denmark or danish or	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases	130

02.05.2023 11:18

Print Search History: EBSCOhost

	denmark) AND (children or adolescents or youth or child or teenager) AND (treatment or intervention or therapy)	Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	
S1	anxiety disorders AND (denmark or danish or denmark) AND (children or adolescents or youth or child or teenager)	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Boolean/Phrase	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	218

Anxiety in a Danish Context

29.10.2024, 13.05

Print Search History: EBSCOhost



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#	Query	Limiters/Expanders	Last Run Via	Results
S7	(anxiety disorders or anxiety or generalized anxiety disorder) AND adolescents AND denmark AND (treatment or intervention or therapy)	Limiters - Full Text; Publication Date: 20140101-20241231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Narrow by SubjectGeographic: - denmark Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	5
S6	(anxiety disorders or anxiety or generalized anxiety disorder) AND adolescents AND denmark AND (treatment or intervention or therapy)	Limiters - Full Text; Publication Date: 20140101-20241231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	76
S5	anxiety AND adolescents AND denmark AND (treatment or intervention or therapy)	Limiters - Full Text; Publication Date: 20140101-20241231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	76
S4	anxiety AND adolescents AND denmark	Limiters - Full Text; Publication Date: 20140101-20241231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	130
S3	anxiety AND adolescents AND denmark	Limiters - Publication Date: 20140101-20241231 Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	303
S2	anxiety AND adolescents AND denmark	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced	357

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29.10.2024, 13.05

Print Search History: EBSCOhost

			Search Database - Academic Search Premier	
S1	anxiety AND adolescents	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	23,637

Systemic Treatment

29.10.2024, 10.20

Print Search History: EBSCOhost



#	Query	Limiters/Expanders	Last Run Via	Results
S2	anxiety AND systemic therapy AND treatment AND adolescents	Limiters - Full Text Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	4
S1	anxiety AND systemic therapy AND treatment AND adolescents	Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects Search modes - Proximity	Interface - EBSCOhost Research Databases Search Screen - Advanced Search Database - Academic Search Premier	9

Appendix 2 – Presentation letter and letter of consent adolescents (in English)

Request for consent to interview in connection with Doctoral thesis in systemic psychotherapy.

Project: *Mastering anxiety – a relational task.*

Responsible: Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

Supervisors: Julia Jude and Britt Krause

Study location: Tavistock Centre, London <https://tavistockandportman.ac.uk/courses/advanced-practice-and-research-systemic-psychotherapy-m10/>

Field of study: Professional doctorate in systemic psychotherapy

Presentation

My name is Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen, I am employed at UCL Professionshøjskole and Business Academy as head of study and teach on the Diploma in Family Therapy and Relational Practice. For the past 20 years, I have worked with young people who have had various problems in their lives. In the last two years, I have become very interested in how we can understand and help children and young people who suffer from anxiety.

I wish that either one of your parents or another adult whom you trust will help you read through this little letter. I will also read it with you if you choose to participate in my research. Just to make sure you know what you're getting into and so you can withdraw from my project if you don't want to join anyway.

My project

I am in the process of writing a doctoral thesis, where I want to investigate how as an adult you can help young people living with anxiety.

In my project, I have chosen to interview 2-3 young people at your school, to try to understand how they think about my subject. I would also like to try to sit in and see how maybe a class at school is or how your breaks look like or, if that's okay with you, watch when you do what you are doing now when you have time off. The important thing for me is to hear your thoughts, and see and experience the places and environments where anxiety is most often present.

What help I need from you

I will make audio recordings of the interviews which I will transcribe later, that is, I will listen to the recording and write down everything we have talked about.

I would also ask you to maybe send me video recordings or audio recordings of when you experience the anxiety, if you feel like it. You can also write poems, paint pictures, draw drawings or do something completely different that tells us both something about the anxiety.

Your anonymity and safety

I will save the material for six to ten years after I have written the assignment, and then I will delete it.

I will not name the material I write down and in my assignment I will not use the real names of those I have interviewed

All the information I collect will be treated discreetly and it will not be possible to identify individuals in the finished thesis.

Finally

I hope you find this interesting and that you will return this consent form to me, signing that it is okay for you to talk to me.

I would like to complete the interview and collection of other material during 2023. You are welcome to contact me at any time in the process and ask about the project, both before, during and after.

You are always welcome to contact me at any time in the process and ask about the project, both before, during and after.

It is also important for me to say that you can withdraw from my project at any time. I know that it can be a big thing to get involved in, so you can cancel at any time. I won't be mad or disappointed by that. If you withdraw from the project, I will delete all the recordings and transcripts of the conversation that I have. The same applies to pictures and video clips if you have sent them.

An interview will last approx. 45-60 minutes, and if you want a copy of what I write down from the interview or a version of the entire project, I will be happy to send it to you when I am done.

I hope that the entire thesis will be finished in June 2024.

Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

Phone 28491175

Email jchu@ucl.dk

Signature on consent _____

Appendix 3 – Presentation letter and letter of consent parents (in English)

Request for consent to interview og your child in connection with research for a doctoral thesis in systemic psychotherapy.

Project: *Mastering anxiety – a relational task.*

Responsible: Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

Supervisors: Julia Jude and Britt Krause

Study location: Tavistock Centre, London <https://tavistockandportman.ac.uk/courses/advanced-practice-and-research-systemic-psychotherapy-m10/>

Field of study: Professional doctorate in systemic psychotherapy

Presentation

My name is Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen, I am employed at UCL Professionshøjskole and Business Academy as head of study and teach on the Diploma in Family Therapy and Relational Practice. For the past 20 years, I have worked with young people who have had various problems in their lives. In the last two years, I have become very interested in how we can understand and help children and young people who suffer from anxiety.

Now I am in the process of writing a doctoral thesis, where I want to investigate how as an adult you can help young people living with anxiety.

My project

I am in the process of writing a doctoral thesis, where I want to investigate how as an adult you can help young people living with anxiety.

In my project, I have chosen to interview 2-3 young people at the school, to try to understand how they think about my subject. I would also like to try to sit in and see how maybe a class at school is or how your childs breaks look like or, if it is okay with you and your child, watch when the child does what it does when it has time off. The important thing for me is to hear your child's thoughts, and see and experience the places and environments where the anxiety is most often present.

What help I need from your child

I will make audio recordings of the interviews which I will transcribe later, that is, I will listen to the recording and write down everything we have talked about.

I would also ask your child to maybe send me video recordings or audio recordings of when your child experience the anxiety, if your child feels like it. Your child can also write poems, paint pictures, draw drawings or do something completely different that tells us both something about the anxiety.

Your child's anonymity and safety

I will save the material for six to ten years after I have written the assignment, and then I will delete it.

I will not name the material I write down and in my assignment I will not use the real names of those I have interviewed

All the information I collect will be treated discreetly and it will not be possible to identify individuals in the finished thesis.

Finally

I hope you find this interesting and that you will return this consent form to me, signing that it is okay for your child to talk to me.

I would like to complete the interview and collection of other material during 2023. You are welcome to contact me at any time in the process and ask about the project, both before, during and after.

You are always welcome to contact me at any time in the process and ask about the project, both before, during and after.

It is also important for me to say that your child can withdraw from my project at any time. I know that it can be a big thing to get involved in, so your child can cancel at any time. I won't be mad or disappointed by that. If your child withdraws from the project, I will delete all the recordings and transcripts of the conversation that I have. The same applies to pictures and video clips if your child have sent any.

An interview will last approx. 45-60 minutes, and if your child want a copy of what I write down from the interview or a version of the entire project, I will be happy to send it to your child when I am done.

I hope that the entire thesis will be finished in June 2024.

Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

Phone 28491175

Email jchu@ucl.dk

Parent 1 signature _____

Parent 2 signature _____

Appendix 4. Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee Application and Approval

Application

The Tavistock and Portman 
NHS Foundation Trust

Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC) APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS

This application should be submitted alongside copies of any supporting documentation which will be handed to participants, including a participant information sheet, consent form, self-completion survey or questionnaire.

Where a form is submitted and sections are incomplete, the form will not be considered by TREC and will be returned to the applicant for completion.

For further guidance please contact Paru Jeram (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

FOR ALL APPLICANTS

If you already have ethical approval from another body (including HRA/IRAS) please submit the application form and outcome letters. You need only complete sections of the TREC form which are NOT covered in your existing approval

Is your project considered as 'research' according to the HRA tool? (http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/index.html)	Yes
Will your project involve participants who are under 18 or who are classed as vulnerable? (see section 7)	Yes
Will your project include data collection outside of the UK?	Yes

SECTION A: PROJECT DETAILS

Project title	Mastering anxiety: a relational task		
Proposed project start date	June 2023	Anticipated project end date	September 2024
Principle Investigator (normally your Research Supervisor): Dr Julia Jude			
Please note: TREC approval will only be given for the length of the project as stated above up to a maximum of 6 years. Projects exceeding these timeframes will need additional ethical approval			
Has NHS or other approval been sought for this research including through submission via Research Application System (IRAS) or to the Health Research Authority (HRA)?	YES (NRES approval)	☐	
	YES (HRA approval)	☐	
	Other	☐	
	NO	☒	
If you already have ethical approval from another body (including HRA/IRAS) please submit the application form and outcome letters.			

SECTION B: APPLICANT DETAILS

Name of Researcher	Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen
Programme of Study and Target Award	SYDOTP001 (M10) Professional Doctorate in Advanced Practice and Research (Systemic Psychotherapy)
Email address	jchu@ucl.dk

Contact telephone number	+45 28491175
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SECTION C: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above their normal salary package or the costs of undertaking the research?

YES ☐ NO ☒

If YES, please detail below:

Is there any further possibility for conflict of interest? YES ☐ NO ☒

Are you proposing to conduct this work in a location where you work or have a placement?

YES ☒ NO ☐

If YES, please detail below outline how you will avoid issues arising around colleagues being involved in this project:

I have an affiliation with the school, Ringe Kostskole, in which I am proposing to conduct my research. The affiliation is limited to having therapeutic conversations with some of the adolescents pupils for two-three hours a week. I am mainly talking to adolescents who have been raised in families with alcohol addiction problems, and I cooperate with one colleague in the organisation about who of the young persons I should be meeting with when I arrive for work at the school. I will use a similar procedure for the recruitment of participants for this research. I will be asking the leader of the organisation to point me in the direction of adolescents in the organisation, who suffer from anxiety according to the ICD 10, I will then contact the "contact teacher" of the young persons for them to have a conversation with the young person themselves. About their thoughts about taking part in a research project. If the young person agree to participate I will contact their parents to ask for their consent as well. I will provide information sheets and consent forms for the leader of the school, for the young persons themselves and for their parents.

I carried out some of my master research in the same organisation. Generally the adolescents have said that they felt safe in asking their contact teacher questions about being in a research project, although some of them also declined participating..

Is your project being commissioned by and/or carried out on behalf of a body external to the Trust? (for example; commissioned by a local authority, school, care home, other NHS Trust or other organisation).

*Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation which is external to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (Trust)

If YES, please add details here:

YES ☐ NO ☒

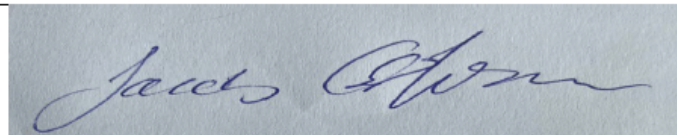
Will you be required to get further ethical approval after receiving TREC approval?

If YES, please supply details of the ethical approval bodies below AND include any letters of approval from the ethical approval bodies (letters

YES ☐ NO ☒

received after receiving TREC approval should be submitted to complete your record):	
If your project is being undertaken with one or more clinical services or organisations external to the Trust, please provide details of these:	
I intend carry out my research in a boarding school in Denmark called Ringe Kostskole. This particular type of boarding school is a placement home for adolescents between the age of 11 and 18. The focus in this kind of boarding school is on helping the adolescents to do to school and support them in getting their schoolwork done, and the professionals at the school do a lot of relational work and care to scaffold the adolescents academic development. The backgrounds of children differ, but they are all described as being vulnerable children having been exposed to child neglect, physical and/or psychological abuse. A high number of the children have received psychiatric diagnoses. Here is a link to the boarding school., The webpage is in Danish, but I hope it gives an impression of the institution: https://ringekostskole.dk/	
If you still need to agree these arrangements or if you can only approach organisations after you have ethical approval, please identify the types of organisations (eg. schools or clinical services) you wish to approach:	
Do you have approval from the organisations detailed above? (this includes R&D approval where relevant) Please attach approval letters to this application. Any approval letters received after TREC approval has been granted MUST be submitted to be appended to your record	YES ☐ NO ☒ NA ☐

SECTION D: SIGNATURES AND DECLARATIONS

APPLICANT DECLARATION	
I confirm that: • The information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and up to date. • I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research. • I acknowledge my obligations and commitment to upholding ethical principles and to keep my supervisor updated with the progress of my research • I am aware that for cases of proven misconduct, it may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and/or the cancellation of the proposed research. • I understand that if my project design, methodology or method of data collection changes I must seek an amendment to my ethical approvals as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.	
Applicant (print name)	Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen
Signed	
Date	07.12.2022

FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY

Name of Supervisor/Principal Investigator	Dr Julia Jude Dr. Britt Krause
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Supervisor –	
- Does the student have the necessary skills to carry out the research? YES ☐ NO ☐ - Is the participant information sheet, consent form and any other documentation appropriate? YES ☐ NO ☐ - Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent suitable and sufficient? YES ☐ NO ☐ - Where required, does the researcher have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance? YES ☐ NO ☐	
Signed	
Date	

COURSE LEAD/RESEARCH LEAD	
Does the proposed research as detailed herein have your support to proceed? YES ☐ NO ☐	
Signed	
Date	

SECTION E: DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

1. Provide a brief description of the proposed research, including the requirements of participants. This must be in lay terms and free from technical or discipline specific terminology or jargon. If such terms are required, please ensure they are adequately explained (Do not exceed 500 words)
My research interest in this project is to focus on how we as systemic practitioners in a therapeutic field can get some grasp on, what to be concerned about when helping young people, who according to ICD 10 , suffer from anxiety in everyday life,. What is a systemic perspective in this field? I am not preoccupied with creating a manual, but more interested in, via a collaboration with adolescents, in exploring important aspects including reflective practices that are adaptable and "user friendly" for practitioners and therapists in their every-day working lives. This brings me to the formulated research question : <i>How can a systemic perspective and practice help young persons to develop mastery of anxiety?</i> <i>Subquestions:</i> - <i>How can I understand anxiety from a systemic perspective?</i> - <i>What does "mastery" mean, and why is it important?</i> - <i>What are the implications of defining a method for working with adolescents suffering from anxiety?</i>

To carry out this research I will use Grounded Theory. Grounded Theory methodology will help me to create a coherent theory on the topic, and require me to ongoingly share that theory with the young persons. As a further clarification of the specific age of the young persons, their age will range between 15 and 17 years old...

The data will be based, on interviews with 4-8 adolescents diagnosed with, and experiencing anxiety according to the ICD 10, on observations of the participants observations of the participants, on video diaries provided by the adolescents participating and on artifacts (poems, photographs, artwork) produced by the adolescents themselves and chosen by them to explain their experiences. The data will be data concerning as many informations as possible about the context in which an anxiety situation happened, and what made the adolescent either master the anxiety, or what they experience as lacking in their attempt to master it. I am using the term "mastering" and I am still curious to find out, what the young persons' mean and understand by that, and how the young persons' find resources in themselves or in the context to contain, reduce or even overcome the anxiety.

The participants will not be young persons with whom I have worked with therapeutically previously or anyone known to me previously. They may have seen me on the premises of the boarding school before, but they will not have met me in person before.

2. Provide a statement on the aims and significance of the proposed research, including potential impact to knowledge and understanding in the field (where appropriate, indicate the associated hypothesis which will be tested). This should be a clear justification of the proposed research, why it should proceed and a statement on any anticipated benefits to the community. (Do not exceed 700 words)

In Denmark the numbers of children who receives a diagnoses on mental illnesses, are skyrocketing. A recent study shows, that among children born in Denmark between 1995 and 2016, 15% will have been diagnosed, with a mental illness before the age of 18, which corresponds to about every seventh child in Denmark. The number of children and young people examined, diagnosed and some of them treated in the Danish mental health departments has doubled in the years 2009-2019. The number of children who seek help from the health care system with feelings of anxiety has also risen tenfold between the year 2000 (272 children) and the year 2018 (2941 children). Looking at somatic diagnoses for children the number in general has been the same for the last decade, even falling a little, the last couple of years. This suggests that the rise in mental illnesses has nothing to do with a focus on the general health of Danish children. All in all, prominent Danish psychology researchers argue, that we in Denmark have a growing epidemic considering children and adolescents suffering from anxiety. (Social- og Indenrigsministeriets Benchmarkingenhed, 2020. Social- og domesticministrys benchmarking unit).

I have not been able to find papers or recent research to be found, concerning working with children or young people who suffer from anxiety, using systemic practice in a Danish context. In addition the method of choice in this area of

research seems to be was cognitive and thus, manualized. Therefore, in my research I aim I am to conduct my own research around, is to formulate a method, framework or theory on how we can use systemic practice in a more practical way when helping these young people. I am, as are a number of other systemic practitioners, concerned with the risk of individualizing and not honoring the complexity of the lives of people, when we solely look at behavior as an expression of thoughts and habits, as it can be undertaken in a cognitive approach. The approach I choose is the systemic approach with a relational and not so individualized focus.

I am curious about, what will emerge if we instead asking the very same people who need the treatment, namely the adolescents themselves, about what they feel they need. Not deductively using an already formulated theoretical framework like the cognitive understanding of the individual, but an abductive approach instead, abduction referring to an inferential process aimed at producing new hypotheses and maybe even theories on the basis of empirically collected data (Charmaz, Kathy, 2014). I will do this by using the method of Grounded Theory which are both iterative and involve the research participants as co-researchers (Charmaz, Kathy, 2014). In my enquiry there will be a focus on the relations the young persons have with others and on their feelings of connectedness and the impact of this on the anxiety they experience. I am curious about how the relations between a "multiple entity" understanding of the young persons' intertwine and either enhances or mutes their experiences or anxiety. I have chosen the age (15-17) of the young persons in question because of developmental reasons. The young people will be almost adults, and therefore presumably have a more nuanced language for their anxiety. At the same time they will, probably, be a little less vulnerable in the research process.

3. Provide an outline of the methodology for the proposed research, including proposed method of data collection, tasks assigned to participants of the research and the proposed method and duration of data analysis. If the proposed research makes use of pre-established and generally accepted techniques, please make this clear. (Do not exceed 500 words)

My research method is qualitative . It is a method which details oriented readings and interpretations of different qualitative material such as observations, texts and transcribed interviews. When you are a qualitative researcher you are specifically interested in understanding processes instead of quantifying an entity or establishing linear causal relationships between entities. The qualitative researcher is interested in understanding processes that concerns the specific research question and the experiences of the participants.

The research design will be inspired by Grounded Theory. I will approach this from an ontological stance of the New Materialism. The New Materialism stating that ie. culture and nature can not be understood as separate, binary realms, but are all together creating material effects in a world of constant flux. I will collect my data from the young people by first interviewing them on the topic of them feeling anxiety and experiencing mastering it. Then I will do an

ethnographic study on the materialistic subjects they reveal during the interviews. For example, observations in their classrooms, deep listen to the music that helps them, read the poems they write to engage the anxiety, observe the path they walk, if they go for a walk during the anxiety attack. I will then revisit the young people about my findings in the ethnographic study. Following the methodology of Grounded Theory, I will collect the data derived from the research individuals, analyze the data and then derive a theory. The process is iterative, meaning that the data collection process and the process of analyzing runs in a cyclic movement. This method is especially useful, when there is no existing theory that explains the phenomenon I am researching. Plan for research:

May - June 2023: Begin gathering of data; participant observations/interviews.

June - September 2023: Continue gathering data.

October - November 2023: Analyse my data

November 2023 - May 2024: Write dissertation

May 2024 – June 2024: Present results for participant and do final reflections

August – October 2024: Present results

SECTION F: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

4. Provide an explanation detailing how you will identify, approach and recruit the participants for the proposed research, including clarification on sample size and location. Please provide justification for the exclusion/inclusion criteria for this study (i.e. who will be allowed to / not allowed to participate) and explain briefly, in lay terms, why these criteria are in place. (Do not exceed 500 words)

The participants will be approached via the professionals working with the adolescents in the school which will be the research site. Information sheets/leaflets and consent forms will be provided explaining the research project and related ethical processes and procedures (informed consent). Those who do not want to take part, have the choice of opting out.

School participant observations:

The head teacher of the school is keen for the research to take place at the school, and have talked about the information sheets being added to the schools website online 'newsletter' for parents.

I will, through conversation with the professionals working everyday with the adolescents, ask 4-6 adolescents to participate in the study. My initial conversation with the professionals is to ensure that they do not approach any adolescents who are not ready or sufficiently well grounded, to participate in the research.

Consent will be gained from all children participating as well as their parents.

In cooperation with the adolescents' I will carry out my observations where ever they will find it relevant for example in the school settings, in the dinner hall or the school yard. My observations will be focusing on contexts in which the young persons' sometimes experience anxiety, but not to try to see the anxiety attack itself, The other adolescents will be informed of my research, and so will the staff.

The boarding school has about 80 adolescents attending.

School participant observation Inclusion criteria:

1. Ringe Kostskole, Ringe, Danmark
2. During lunch breaks, classes, breaks during the day, if necessary lessiure activities.
3. Participant observation of staff and young people attending and present at the two schools in question.
4. All genders, ethnicities, sexualities and abilities

School interview inclusion criteria:

1. Aged 15-17
2. Diagnosed with anxiety disorder ICD 10, F41.9.
3. Ringe Kostskole school attendees
4. 4-6 participants
5. All genders, ethnicity and sexuality.

Exclusion criteria for schools' observations:

1. Anyone not referred to me by the professionals at the school.

Exclusion criteria for school interview:

1. Anyone not referred to me by the professionals at the school.

5. Please state the location(s) of the proposed research including the location of any interviews. Please provide a Risk Assessment if required. Consideration should be given to lone working, visiting private residences, conducting research outside working hours or any other non-standard arrangements. If any data collection is to be done online, please identify the platforms to be used. As I will be conducting my proposed research onsite and during working prescribed hours with professionals and staff present, risk will be mitigated as all policy and procedures relevant to the specific service will be adhered to. Therefore, a separate risk assessment is not required. Of course, this relates to observations in school and schoolyards, but also to leisure activities on the boarding school, which are all supervised but staff. In the interview situations there will be professionals in nearby rooms, and the subjects relevant for my research does not, normally, trigger aggression.
6. Will the participants be from any of the following groups?(Tick as appropriate) ☐ Students or Staff of the Trust or Partner delivering your programme. Adults (over the age of 18 years with mental capacity to give consent to participate in the research). ☒ Children or legal minors (anyone under the age of 16 years)¹ ☐ Adults who are unconscious, severely ill or have a terminal illness. ☐ Adults who may lose mental capacity to consent during the course of the research. ☐ Adults in emergency situations. ☐ Adults² with mental illness - particularly those detained under the Mental Health Act (1983 & 2007). ☐ Participants who may lack capacity to consent to participate in the research under the research requirements of the Mental Capacity Act (2005). ☐ Prisoners, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). ☐ Young Offenders, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). ☐ Healthy volunteers (in high risk intervention studies). ☐ Participants who may be considered to have a pre-existing and potentially dependent³ relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, colleagues, service-users, patients). ☐ Other vulnerable groups (see Question 6). ☐ Adults who are in custody, custodial care, or for whom a court has assumed responsibility. ☐ Participants who are members of the Armed Forces. ¹If the proposed research involves children or adults who meet the Police Act (1997) definition of vulnerability³, any researchers who will have contact with participants must have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance. ² 'Adults with a learning or physical disability, a physical or mental illness, or a reduction in physical or mental capacity, and living in a care home or home for people with learning difficulties or receiving care in their own home, or receiving hospital or social care services.' (Police Act, 1997) ³ Proposed research involving participants with whom the investigator or researcher(s) shares a dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, clinical therapist/service-user) may compromise the ability to give informed consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this relationship. TREC recommends that, wherever practicable, investigators choose participants with whom they have no dependent relationship. Following due scrutiny, if the investigator is confident that the research involving participants in dependent relationships is vital and defensible, TREC will require additional information setting out the case and detailing how risks inherent in the dependent relationship will be managed. TREC will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty.

7. Will the study involve participants who are vulnerable? YES ☒ NO ☐

For the purposes of research, 'vulnerable' participants may be adults whose ability to protect their own interests are impaired or reduced in comparison to that of the broader population. Vulnerability may arise from:

- the participant's personal characteristics (e.g., mental or physical impairment)
- their social environment, context and/or disadvantage (e.g., socio-economic mobility, educational attainment, resources, substance dependence, displacement or homelessness).
- where prospective participants are at high risk of consenting under duress, or as a result of manipulation or coercion, they must also be considered as vulnerable
- children are automatically presumed to be vulnerable.

7.1. If YES, what special arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable participants' interests?

Participant observation with children aged 15-17

Although I do not anticipate there being any overt or explicit risk as a result of my research, this does not negate ethical dilemmas or the potential for risk to occur/arise. As the context is an alternative school provision for children who present with challenging behaviours, they are a risk of physical altercations or challenging behaviours. This risk is mitigated by me being in the presence of staff and a high staff to child ratio, who also are trained appropriately for such situations if they were to arise. I will make sure that the staff at the school and the parents are informed about the potential outcome for the adolescents, such as e.g. them feeling different and marginalized through the research period.

I know the school and I am confident that their professional level is very high, and the school is known for a high degree of professional reflection as well as an systemic approach.

I will also make arrangements, that should the participants need to speak with a professional therapist, I will have knowledge of who to refer to.

If YES, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check within the last three years is required. Please provide details of the "clear disclosure": <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Date of disclosure: The organisation is placed in Denmark, so it has not been checked within the last three years. The Boarding school, as a placement home, is subject to governmental oversight, securing that the adolescents are living in a healthy, developing and pedagogical sound environment.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Type of disclosure:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Organisation that requested disclosure:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DBS certificate number:</td> </tr> </table> (NOTE: information concerning activities which require DBS checks can be found via https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance). Please do not include a copy of your DBS certificate with your application	Date of disclosure: The organisation is placed in Denmark, so it has not been checked within the last three years. The Boarding school, as a placement home, is subject to governmental oversight, securing that the adolescents are living in a healthy, developing and pedagogical sound environment.	Type of disclosure:	Organisation that requested disclosure:	DBS certificate number:
Date of disclosure: The organisation is placed in Denmark, so it has not been checked within the last three years. The Boarding school, as a placement home, is subject to governmental oversight, securing that the adolescents are living in a healthy, developing and pedagogical sound environment.				
Type of disclosure:				
Organisation that requested disclosure:				
DBS certificate number:				
8. Do you propose to make any form of payment or incentive available to participants of the research? YES ☐ NO ☒ If YES, please provide details taking into account that any payment or incentive should be representative of reasonable remuneration for participation and may not be of a value that could be coercive or exerting undue influence on potential participants' decision to take part in the research. Wherever possible, remuneration in a monetary form should be avoided and substituted with vouchers, coupons or equivalent. Any payment made to research participants may have benefit or HMRC implications and participants should be alerted to this in the participant information sheet as they may wish to choose to decline payment.				
9. What special arrangements are in place for eliciting informed consent from participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information provided in English; where participants have special communication needs; where participants have limited literacy; or where children are involved in the research? (Do not exceed 200 words) At the boarding school, where the vulnerable participants will be found, there are contact teachers associated with each child. I will inform these teachers about the research and ask them to explain to the adolescents what the research is about. The same goes for the adolescents from the public school. Where I will ask their class teacher to do the same.				

SECTION F: RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

10. Does the proposed research involve any of the following? (Tick as appropriate)

- ☐ use of a questionnaire, self-completion survey or data-collection instrument (attach copy)
☐ use of emails or the internet as a means of data collection
☐ use of written or computerised tests
☒ interviews (attach interview questions – **question to be determined off the back of the CE**)
☒ diaries (attach diary record form)
☒ participant observation
☐ participant observation (in a non-public place) without their knowledge / covert research
☒ audio-recording interviewees or events
☐ video-recording interviewees or events
☐ access to personal and/or sensitive data (i.e. student, patient, client or service-user data) without the participant's informed consent for use of these data for research purposes
☐ administration of any questions, tasks, investigations, procedures or stimuli which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process
☐ performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience discomfort, regret or any other adverse emotional or psychological reaction
☐ Themes around extremism or radicalisation
☐ investigation of participants involved in illegal or illicit activities (e.g. use of illegal drugs)
☐ procedures that involve the deception of participants
☐ administration of any substance or agent
☐ use of non-treatment of placebo control conditions
☐ participation in a clinical trial
☐ research undertaken at an off-campus location (risk assessment attached)
☒ research overseas (please ensure Section G is complete)

11. Does the proposed research involve any specific or anticipated risks (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic) to participants that are greater than those encountered in everyday life?

YES ☒ NO ☐

If YES, please describe below including details of precautionary measures.

The theme Anxiety potentially can evoke strong emotions for some participants. but I do not anticipate or envisage any major ethical dilemmas from the proposed work, as the subject matter does not specifically attend to a specific presentation or sensitive topic such as complex trauma.

The following factors will be attended to in the context of emotional distress, potential harm and/or suspected abuse or disclosures made by participants.

- Taking time to listen to participants carefully, sensitively and respectfully
- Not rushing participants
- Explaining it isn't their fault, taking them seriously
- Informing safeguarding lead, work in partnership to inform child protection services or the relevant service/authorities in relation to adult participants.

• Communicating that they have done the right thing, and transparently explaining all aspects of what will happen next • Reminding participants that participation is voluntary (specifically in the context of emotional distress) • Offering to pause or terminate the interview/session As a trained psychotherapist, often having conversations with adolescents about themes like anxiety, these factors are always a part of the tools of my conversations. I will also make sure to have contact information provided about the specific participant, so that I can inform parents, contact teachers and the like, if I and/or the adolescent find that it is needed, after interviewing.
12. Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress for participants, please state what previous experience the investigator or researcher(s) have had in conducting this type of research. I do not anticipate any adverse effects from the research project apart from the potential for unexpected disclosures and/or upset from the discussions which have already been addressed. Although I do not have experience in this form of research inquiry (having done a IPA for my masters), I believe that my professional context enables me to work with participants who may present with distress or discomfort. I am a highly specialised systemic and narrative family psychotherapist and social worker working with adolescents in Denmark with complex problems ranging from anxiety, suicidal tendencies, parents with alcohol problems, substance abuse, adolescents themselves having violent behavior, adolescent traumatised by violent, sexual and psychological abuse. I have worked in this field in the last 22 years.
13. Provide an explanation of any potential benefits to participants. Please ensure this is framed within the overall contribution of the proposed research to knowledge or practice. (Do not exceed 400 words) NOTE: Where the proposed research involves students, they should be assured that accepting the offer to participate or choosing to decline will have no impact on their assessments or learning experience. Similarly, it should be made clear to participants who are patients, service-users and/or receiving any form of treatment or medication that they are not invited to participate in the belief that participation in the research will result in some relief or improvement in their condition. I have several ethical reflections about this research. Young people are in the most critical part of their lives, they have to be willing to let me ask them and research something in their lives they may be embarrassed or very confused about. Maybe even something they feel stigmatized by and therefore they may be worried about, how I will use the data they provide me. In the worst case, they can be

triggered to feel higher levels of anxiety as a consequence of participating in this research. This is perhaps the biggest paradox of the research I am pursuing.

During the last 30 years there has been a turn in this kind of research to involve the children and adolescents themselves. This turn was supported by the UN child convention article 12, stating that children should be involved, not only in their own personal lives, but also in political affairs and public debates and research, that has an impact on their daily life. This means, that we as researchers have to talk to the participants themselves, and not only to practitioners or parents. To me this is an ethical stance. The Norwegian Family Therapist Rolf Sundet once said that being a therapist means to make a political statement. A statement to help the oppressed finding their own voices and to help them make their own voices heard in the world (Sundet, personal communication). This statement accords with the approach of Paulo Freires and the early empowerment movements. To me the statement also applies to a research context, research as being a way of being an ally with the exposed and vulnerable adolescents, to help them find their voice and make it heard. This is what I especially hope that the young persons will take away from this study: Some kind of agency over their anxiety.

14. Provide an outline of any measures you have in place in the event of adverse or unexpected outcomes and the potential impact this may have on participants involved in the proposed research. (Do not exceed 300 words)

As stated above, I do not anticipate any adverse effects from the research project apart from the potential for unexpected disclosures and/or upset from the discussions which have already been addressed. All organizational protocols, guideline will be followed in addition to informed consent, sensitivity, respect and honoring of participant situations. relevant signposting and support with this will be facilitated - such as therapeutic services

15. Provide an outline of your debriefing, support and feedback protocol for participants involved in the proposed research. This should include, for example, where participants may feel the need to discuss thoughts or feelings brought about following their participation in the research. This may involve referral to an external support or counseling service, where participation in the research has caused specific issues for participants.

I will ensure that the research findings are relayed to those that took part, including the organisations.

As stated above, I will ensure, that the professionals surrounding the adolescent are informed about the research and its potential risk to evoke specific feelings in the adolescent.

I will provide the participants with my contact information so that they can reach me with whatever questions can arise during and after the research.

If I feel a participant is becoming distressed during the interview process, I will offer the opportunity to take a break, end the interview and debrief. Participants will be signposted to external sources of support. At the end of

interviews, whether or not the participant has shown signs of distress I will remind them of the sources of support available to them which they can access at any time. Participants who find the research process distressing will be reminded that they can withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason.
16. Please provide the names and nature of any external support or counselling organisations that will be suggested to participants if participation in the research has potential to raise specific issues for participants.
The boarding school: The boarding school has two associated psychologists that are ready to help the adolescents, and otherwise the adolescents have contact teachers, specified pedagogues for each child to help them with both practical and emotional issues. The adolescents who are taking part of my research will also be part of the child psychiatry system, because of their anxiety diagnoses. I will inform the children and their significant adults about the possibility of contacting the already existing health care system or the child psychiatry department.
17. Where medical aftercare may be necessary, this should include details of the treatment available to participants. Debriefing may involve the disclosure of further information on the aims of the research, the participant's performance and/or the results of the research. (Do not exceed 500 words)
Medical aftercare will not be necessary.

FOR RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN OUTSIDE THE UK

18. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK? X YES NO If YES, please confirm: ☐ I have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/ ☐ I have completed a RISK Assessment covering all aspects of the project including consideration of the location of the data collection and risks to participants. All overseas project data collection will need approval from the Deputy Director of Education and Training or their nominee. Normally this will be done based on the information provided in this form. All projects approved through the TREC process will be indemnified by the Trust against claims made by third parties. If you have any queries regarding research outside the UK, please contact academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk:
Students are required to arrange their own travel and medical insurance to cover project work outside of the UK. Please indicate what insurance cover you have or will have in place.
19. Please evidence how compliance with all local research ethics and research governance requirements have been assessed for the country(ies) in which the research is taking place. Please also clarify how the requirements will be met: The research will take place in Denmark, where I myself am living and practicing. My employment in Denmark is partly at a University College, where I am provided with the necessary support to meet the requirements of Danish research ethics. On my University College our research support team, has provided me with knowledge about ethical approval departments (of which there are none), and I have been provided with a safe storing drive in the organisation for storing data.

SECTION G: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL

20. Have you attached a copy of your participant information sheet (this should be in <i>plain English</i>)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials. YES ☒ NO ☐ If NO, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:
21. Have you attached a copy of your participant consent form (this should be in <i>plain English</i>)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials. YES ☒ NO ☐ If NO, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

22. The following is a participant information sheet checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

- ☒ Clear identification of the Trust as the sponsor for the research, the project title, the Researcher and Principal Investigator (your Research Supervisor) and other researchers along with relevant contact details.
- ☒ Details of what involvement in the proposed research will require (e.g., participation in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-recording of events), estimated time commitment and any risks involved.
- ☒ A statement confirming that the research has received formal approval from TREC or other ethics body.
- ☒ If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for confidentiality / anonymity.
- ☐ A clear statement that where participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that participation in the research will have no impact on assessment / treatment / service-use or support.
- ☒ Assurance that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
- ☒ Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.
- ☒ A statement that the data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the [Trusts' s Data Protection and handling Policies](https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/policies-and-procedures/): <https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/about-us/governance/policies-and-procedures/>
- ☒ Advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)
- ☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

23. The following is a consent form checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

- ☒ Trust letterhead or logo.
- ☒ Title of the project (with research degree projects this need not necessarily be the title of the thesis) and names of investigators.
- ☒ Confirmation that the research project is part of a degree
- ☒ Confirmation that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
- ☒ Confirmation of particular requirements of participants, including for example whether interviews are to be audio-/video-recorded, whether anonymised quotes will be used in publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality.
- ☐ If the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity any other relevant information.
- ☒ The proposed method of publication or dissemination of the research findings.
- ☒ Details of any external contractors or partner institutions involved in the research.
- ☐ Details of any funding bodies or research councils supporting the research.
- ☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

SECTION H: CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

24. Below is a checklist covering key points relating to the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Please indicate where relevant to the proposed research.

- ☐ Participants will be completely anonymised and their identity will not be known by the investigator or researcher(s) (i.e. the participants are part of an anonymous randomised sample and return responses with no form of personal identification)?
- ☐ The responses are anonymised or are an anonymised sample (i.e. a permanent process of coding has been carried out whereby direct and indirect identifiers have been removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers).
- ☐ The samples and data are de-identified (i.e. direct and indirect identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code. The investigator or researchers are able to link the code to the original identifiers and isolate the participant to whom the sample or data relates).
- ☐ Participants have the option of being identified in a publication that will arise from the research.
- ☒ Participants will be pseudo-anonymised in a publication that will arise from the research. (i.e. the researcher will endeavour to remove or alter details that would identify the participant.)
- ☐ The proposed research will make use of personal sensitive data.
- ☐ Participants consent to be identified in the study and subsequent dissemination of research findings and/or publication.

25. Participants must be made aware that the confidentiality of the information they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena, a freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions). This only applies to named or de-identified data. If your participants are named or de-identified, please confirm that you will specifically state these limitations.

YES ☒ NO ☐

If NO, please indicate why this is the case below:

NOTE: WHERE THE PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVES A SMALL SAMPLE OR FOCUS GROUP, PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT THERE WILL BE DISTINCT LIMITATIONS IN THE LEVEL OF ANONYMITY THEY CAN BE AFFORDED.

SECTION I: DATA ACCESS, SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT

26. Will the Researcher/Principal Investigator be responsible for the security of all data collected in connection with the proposed research? YES ☒ NO ☐

If NO, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

27. In line with the 5th principle of the Data Protection Act (1998), which states that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes for which it was collected; please state how long data will be retained for.

☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-5 years ☒ 6-10 years ☐ 10+ years

NOTE: In line with Research Councils UK (RCUK) guidance, doctoral project data should normally be stored for 10 years and Masters level data for up to 2 years

28. Below is a checklist which relates to the management, storage and secure destruction of data for the purposes of the proposed research. Please indicate where relevant to your proposed arrangements.

X Research data, codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.
Research data will only be stored in the University of Essex OneDrive system and no other cloud storage location.

- ☒ Access to computer files to be available to research team by password only.
☐ Access to computer files to be available to individuals outside the research team by password only (See 23.1).
☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically within the UK.
☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically outside of the UK.

NOTE: Transfer of research data via third party commercial file sharing services, such as Google Docs and YouSendIt are not necessarily secure or permanent. These systems may also be located overseas and not covered by UK law. If the system is located outside the European Economic Area (EEA) or territories deemed to have sufficient standards of data protection, transfer may also breach the Data Protection Act (1998).

Essex students also have access the 'Box' service for file transfer: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/it-services/box>

- ☐ Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers.
☒ Collection and storage of personal sensitive data (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political or religious beliefs or physical or mental health or condition).
☒ Use of personal data in the form of audio or video recordings.
☒ Primary data gathered on encrypted mobile devices (i.e. laptops).

NOTE: This should be transferred to secure University of Essex OneDrive at the first opportunity.

- ☒ All electronic data will undergo secure disposal.

NOTE: For hard drives and magnetic storage devices (HDD or SSD), deleting files does not permanently erase the data on most systems, but only deletes the reference to the file. Files can be restored when deleted in this way. Research files must be overwritten to ensure they are completely irretrievable. Software is available for the secure erasing of files from hard drives which meet recognised standards to securely scramble sensitive data. Examples of this software are BC Wipe, Wipe File, DeleteOnClick and Eraser for Windows platforms. Mac users can use the standard 'secure empty trash' option; an alternative is Permanent eraser software.

- ☒ All hardcopy data will undergo secure disposal.

NOTE: For shredding research data stored in hardcopy (i.e. paper), adopting DIN 3 ensures files are cut into 2mm strips or confetti like cross-cut particles of 4x40mm. The UK government requires a minimum standard of DIN 4 for its material, which ensures cross cut particles of at least 2x15mm.

29. Please provide details of individuals outside the research team who will be given password protected access to encrypted data for the proposed research.

N/A

30. Please provide details on the regions and territories where research data will be electronically transferred that are external to the UK:

In my function as assistant professor at a University College I have access to a specially designed hard drive, specifically made for storage of research material. This will be securely encrypted and kept safe for the duration of the research period.

SECTION J: PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

30. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? (Select all that apply)

- ☒ Peer reviewed journal
- ☐ Non-peer reviewed journal
- ☒ Peer reviewed books
- ☒ Publication in media, social media or website (including Podcasts and online videos)
- ☒ Conference presentation
- ☒ Internal report
- ☐ Promotional report and materials
- ☐ Reports compiled for or on behalf of external organisations
- ☒ Dissertation/Thesis
- ☐ Other publication
- ☒ Written feedback to research participants
- ☒ Presentation to participants or relevant community groups
- ☐ Other (Please specify below)

SECTION K: OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES**31. Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of Tavistock Research Ethics Committee (TREC)?**

No

SECTION L: CHECKLIST FOR ATTACHED DOCUMENTS**32. Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.**

- ☐ Letters of approval from any external ethical approval bodies (where relevant)
- ☐ Recruitment advertisement
- ☒ Participant information sheets (including easy-read where relevant)
- ☒ Consent forms (including easy-read where relevant)
- ☐ Assent form for children (where relevant)
- ☐ Letters of approval from locations for data collection
- ☐ Questionnaire
- ☐ Interview Schedule or topic guide
- ☐ Risk Assessment (where applicable)
- ☐ Overseas travel approval (where applicable)

Please add letters of approval from the two Schools this will help with the TREC

34. Where it is not possible to attach the above materials, please provide an explanation below.

Referenes

Charmaz, Kathy. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2nd udg.). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Social- og Indenrigsministeriets Benchmarkingenhed (2020). *Udviklingstendenser I forhold til børn og unge med psykiatriske diagnoser*. <https://bedrepsykiatri.dk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-BENCH-b%C3%B8rn-og-unge-med-psykiatriske-diagnoser.pdf>

Approval

The Tavistock and Portman 
NHS Foundation Trust

Quality Assurance & Enhancement
Directorate of Education & Training
Tavistock Centre
120 Belsize Lane
London
NW3 5BA

Tel: 020 8938 2699

<https://tavistockandportman.nhs.uk/>

Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

By Email

15 June 2023

Dear Jacob,

Re: Trust Research Ethics Application

Title: 'Mastering anxiety: a relational task'

Thank you for submitting your updated Research Ethics documentation. I am pleased to inform you that subject to formal ratification by the Trust Research Ethics Committee your application has been approved. This means you can proceed with your research.

Please be advised that any changes to the project design including changes to methodology/data collection etc. must be referred to TREC as failure to do so, may result in a report of academic and/or research misconduct.

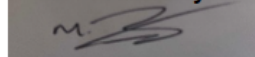
If you have any further questions or require any clarification do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this communication to your supervisor.

May I take this opportunity of wishing you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Franklyn



Academic Governance and Quality Officer

T: 020 938 2699

E: academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk

cc. Course Lead, Supervisor, Research Lead

Appendix 5 Acceptance signature from Ringe Kostskole

In Danish and English

Forespørgsel om tilladelse til at forske på Ringe Kostskole i forbindelse med Doktorafhandling i systemisk psykoterapi.

Projekt: *At mestre angsten – en relationel opgave.*

Ansvarlig: Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

Vejledere: Julia Jude jude@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk og Britt Krause BKrause@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Stuedsted: Tavistock Centre, London <https://tavistockandportman.ac.uk/courses/advanced-practice-and-research-systemic-psychotherapy-m10/>

Studieretning: Professionel doktorgrad i systemisk psykoterapi

Jeg hedder Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen, er ansat ved UCL Professionshøjskole og Erhvervsakademi som studieleder og underviser på Diplomuddannelse i Familierapi og relationel praksis. Jeg har i de sidste lidt over 20 år arbejdet med unge som har haft forskellige problemer inde på livet. De sidste to år er jeg blevet meget interesseret i, hvordan vi kan forstå og hjælpe børn og unge med angst.

Jeg er i gang med at skrive en doktorafhandling, hvor jeg ønsker at undersøge, hvordan man som voksen kan være med til at hjælpe unge der lever med angst.

I mit projekt har jeg et ønske om at interviewe 4-6 unge på skolen, for at prøve at forstå hvordan de tænker om mit emne. Jeg vil også gerne prøve at sidde med og se hvordan måske en undervisningstime foregår eller hvordan et frikvarter ser ud eller, hvis det er okay med det enkelte barnet, se med når barnet laver det det nu laver når det har fri. Det vigtige for mig er at høre barnets perspektiv og tanker, og se og opleve de steder og miljøer hvor angsten oftest er tilstede.

Jeg vil lave en lydoptagelse af mine interviews som jeg vil transkribere senere, det vil sige, at jeg vil lytte til optagelsen og skrive alt hvad vi har talt om ned.

Det materiale jeg skriver ned vil jeg ikke skrive navn på og i min opgave vil jeg ikke bruge de rigtige navne på dem jeg har interviewet.

Jeg vil også bede barnet om eventuelt at sende mig videooptagelser eller lydoptagelser af, når det oplever angsten, hvis det har lyst til det. Barnet må også gerne skrive digte, male malerier, tegne tegninger eller på anden måde udtrykke sig om angsten.

Jeg vil gemme materialet i seks-ti år efter jeg har skrevet opgaven, og derefter vil jeg slette det.

Alle de oplysninger jeg indsamler vil blive behandlet diskret og det vil ikke være muligt at identificere enkeltpersoner i den færdige afhandling.

Jeg håber at Ringe Kostskole finder dette interessant og at I vil returnere dette brev til mig med underskrift, som en skriftelig tilladelse til at udføre min forskning.

Jeg vil gerne gennemføre interviewet og indsamling af andet materiale i løbet af 2023. I er velkomne til at kontakte mig når som helst i processen og spørge til projektet, både før, under og efter.

Selve interviewsituationerne vil vare i ca. 45 minutter, og hvis barnet ønsker en kopi af det jeg skriver ned fra interviewet eller en udgave af hele projektet vil jeg meget gerne sende det til barnet når jeg er færdig. Barnet og forældrene kan på alle tider i processen, vælge at trække jeres samtykke til at barnet har deltaget. I sådanne tilfælde vil jeg slette alle de optagelser og udskrifter af samtalen som jeg har.

Alle børn vil få en grundig indføring i deres rettigheder i forbindelse med de interviews jeg udfører og deres forældre vil også skulle underskrive en samtykkeerklæring. Jeg vedlægger både samtykkeerklæring til forældre og børn.

Skulle Ringe Kostskole ønske det, holder jeg gerne oplæg om de fund der træder frem i forbindelse med min forskning, når afhandlingen er færdigskrevet.

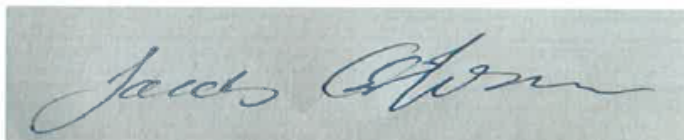
Jeg håber at hele opgaven er færdig i juni 2024.

Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

Tlf 28491175

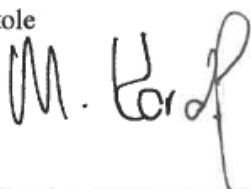
Mail jchu@ucl.dk

Underskrift



For Ringe Kostskole

Underskrift



Request for consent to interview in connection with Doctoral thesis in systemic psychotherapy.

Project: *Mastering anxiety – a relational task.*

Responsible: Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

Supervisors: Julia Jude jude@Tavi-Port.nhs.uk og Britt Krause BKrause@tavi-port.nhs.uk

Study location: Tavistock Centre, London <https://tavistockandportman.ac.uk/courses/advanced-practice-and-research-systemic-psychotherapy-m10/>

Field of study: Professional doctorate in systemic psychotherapy

Presentation

My name is Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen, I am employed at UCL Professionshøjskole and Business Academy as head of study and teach on the Diploma in Family Therapy and Relational Practice. For the past 20 years, I have worked with young people who have had various problems in their lives. In the last two years, I have become very interested in how we can understand and help children and young people with anxiety.

I am in the process of writing a doctoral thesis; where I want to investigate how as an adult you can help young people living with anxiety.

In my project, I want to interview 4-6 young people at the school, to try to understand how they think about my subject. I would also like to try to sit in and see how perhaps a teaching lesson goes or what a recess looks like or, if it is okay with the individual child, watch when the child does what he is doing now when he has time off. The important thing for me is to hear the child's perspective and thoughts, and to see and experience the places and environments where anxiety is most often present.

I will make an audio recording of my interviews which I will transcribe later, that is, I will listen to the recording and write down everything we have talked about.

I will not name the material I write down and in my assignment I will not use the real names of those I have interviewed.

I will also ask the child to possibly send me video recordings or audio recordings of when they experience the anxiety, if they feel like it. The child is also welcome to write poems, paint pictures, draw drawings or express himself in some other way about the anxiety.

I will save the material for six to ten years after I have written the assignment, and then I will delete it.

All the information I collect will be treated discreetly and it will not be possible to identify individuals in the finished thesis.

I hope Ringe Kostskole finds this interesting and that you will return this letter to me with a signature, as a written permission to carry out my research.

I would like to complete the interview and collection of other material during 2023. You are welcome to contact me at any time in the process and ask about the project, both before, during and after.

The interview situations themselves will last approx. 45 minutes, and if the child wants a copy of what I write down from the interview or a version of the entire project, I would very much like to send it to the child when I have finished. The child and the parents can at any time during the process choose to withdraw your consent for the child to have participated. In such cases, I will delete all the recordings and transcripts of the conversation that I have.

All children will receive a thorough introduction to their rights in connection with the interviews I conduct and their parents will also have to sign a consent form. I am attaching both consent forms for parents and children.

Should Ringe Kostskole wish it, I would be happy to give a presentation on the findings that emerge in connection with my research, once the thesis has been written.

I hope that the entire task will be finished in June 2024.

Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen

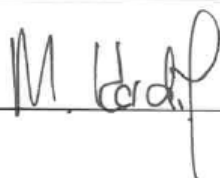
Phone 28491175

Email jchu@ucl.dk

Signature

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read 'Jacob Cilius Vinsten Christiansen'.

Signature on behalf of Ringe Kostskole

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'M. Ward', written over a horizontal line.

Appendix 6 Example of Interview Transcript Delmira, in Danish and English

Danish

270
 271 J: Nej hvad var du, hvad var du bekymret for på skolen? Hvad startede det tror du?
 272
 273 D: Altså lektier, de andre unge, der kom meget på pres på, så lukkede min hjerne sammen,
 274 derefter synes jeg det var akavet at være på skolen og jeg var langt bagud, og jeg var bange for de
 275 andre ville dømme mig, det hele det... Det var der.
 276
 277 J: Så noget med, jeg prøver bare lige for at forstå det, så noget med at du følte dig presset der da i,
 278 begynder omkring 7. klasse eller hvad, hvad er det for et pres som rammer dig synes du? Hvad er
 279 det du bliver presset over?
 280
 281 D: Jamen jeg tror altså sådan, lektier, og de ansatte de var også nogle idioter nogle af dem helt
 282 klart, men sådan, og så sådan, så var der også primært drenge i min klasse, og det er sådan, det
 283 lyder dumt at sige, at jeg har altid været sådan ret bange for mænd generelt, når man sidder over
 284 for en mand, men sådan det har jeg altså virkelig altid
 285
 286 J: Det kender jeg mange piger som har det sådan. Har du haft nogle oplevelser med mænd, hvor
 287 du har oplevet at de gik over nogle grænser, som får dig til at have den skepsis, eller har hørt om
 288 det eller?
 289
 290 D: Altså jeg kan jo ikke regne ud hvorfor jeg ville være bange for mænd, fordi at i teorien, jeg har
 291 ikke gået igennem noget der sådan, jeg har virkelig tænkt den igennem, men sådan, ja
 292
 293 J: Ja, nogen vil sige at det er en meget sund skepsis at have ikke også, ja. Så havde du det på
 294 samme måde med drengene i klassen?
 295
 296 D: Nogle af dem.
 297
 298 J: Ja
 299
 300 (11:26)
 301
 302 D: Altså de var generelt idioter, men det er drenge i den alder.
 303
 304 J: Ja, nogle af os holder aldrig op med at være det, men det er rigtigt, ja, hvad, hvad var det de
 305 gjorde, som gjorde at du tænker de var idioter?
 306
 307 D: Ej altså det var de ting de talte om. Altså jeg havde det jo også, jeg havde det svært mentalt. På
 308 daværende tidspunkt, og sådan den havde været der længe. Og sådan jeg kan huske, der var en af
 309 drengene i klassen der sådan fyrede en joke af, der lød på sådan, prøv at tænke på dem der begår
 310 selvmord, det er fordi de føler de sådan er værdiløse og ikke kan finde ud af noget, og så prøv at
 311 tænke på dem der sådan mislykkes i selvmord, så kan de da virkelig heller ikke finde ud af noget, og
 312 det var der min hjerne den sådan gav lidt op
 313

314 J: Ja, så tænkte du
315
316 D: Det var da sådan lidt en voldsom joke, fordi den havde jeg været igennem, jeg er da sådan lidt
317 værdiløs, det var lidt komisk
318
319 J: Havde du på det tidspunkt overvejet selvmord?
320
321 D: Ej jeg havde forsøgt, jeg var bare ret dårlig til det
322
323 J: Ja, så det var ikke gået? Og så siger han sådan noget, og så kommer du til at tænke, ja okay?
324
325 D: Ja.
326
327 J: Det var en lidt dårlig joke, der sidder lige en her der har været det igennem faktisk.
328
329 D: Ja, jeg jeg svarede ikke på den. Jeg tror ikke engang min lærer eller noget havde opfanget jeg
330 havde det hårdt.
331
332 J: Så følte du dig slet ikke, du følte dig ikke tilpas i den klasse?
333
334 D: Nej. Men altså der var også en eller anden der skulle have sagt til mig jeg var ordblind, det
335 havde helt klart også været praktisk, men
336
337 J: Ja, så du fandt først senere ud af at du var ordblind også?
338
339 D: Ja. Nu prøver vi skole igen.
340
341 J: Så der var noget pres ift de andre børn og de dumme jokes de kommer med, der var et pres
342 fordi du faktisk var ordblind, og ikke vidste det, og så snakkede du lidt om der var også nogle
343 lektier
344
345 D: Ja, der var sådan konstant lektier for sådan, altså jeg var jo bange for de voksne ville råbe af mig
346 hvis jeg ikke havde lavet dem, for det kunne de godt finde på, altså sådan skælde en ud for det, og
347 det magtede jeg ikke, så var sygemelding nemmere
348
349 J: Ja, det giver meget god mening. Og så sygemelder du dig, og så bliver det svært at komme
350 tilbage, fordi det bliver sådan lidt, du kaldte det lidt akavet eller hvad?
351
352 D: Ja, jeg bruger akavet meget
353
354 J: Ja, det er sådan et godt ord
355
356 D: Ja. Og så var man bare sådan langt bag ud i alting og man vidste ikke sådan rigtig lige hvad man
357 skulle gøre
358

359 J: Nej. Nogen som jeg har snakket med har beskrevet at det kan føles lidt som om, altså det her
 360 med at man gå egentlig og er bange for at føle sig udenfor, og så trækker man sig, og så kommer
 361 man til at føle sig lidt udenfor, og så bliver det sådan en ond cirkel
 362
 363 D: Ja
 364
 365 J: Så det var sådan det startede for dig. Hvordan så da du gik på Østerskov?
 366
 367 D: Jamen der var det sådan lidt upraktisk at sådan, den løgn jeg holdt kørende i sådan to år, det
 368 var sådan i 7. og 8. og lidt af 9. og så stoppede jeg den i starten af 9. klasse, som var sådan på
 369 efterskole, men ellers så var min go to sådan at når min angst den sådan hævdede sig for meget i
 370 undervisningen, så i folkeskolen der ville jeg gå ned og bede om en panodil, fordi at det gav mig en
 371 kort pause altså sådan lige kunne bevæge mig og lige trække vejret og sådan, gå tilbage igen,
 372
 373 J: Og det passede med historien om at have ondt i maven
 374
 375 D: Ja, altså jeg tror ikke jeg havde klaret mig igennem folkeskolen uden den løgn, så det er sådan
 376 lidt komisk men sådan
 377
 378 J: Du var simpelthen nødt til at lyve dig igennem folkeskolen, ja.
 379
 380 D: Altså jeg sådan lyver sjældent, altså nu kan jeg slet ikke med at lyve
 381
 382 J: Men du var nødt til det
 383
 384 D: Ja, efter den løgn løj jeg ikke mere. Andet end sarkasme, jeg bruger stadig sarkasme
 385
 386 J: Men det, hvis bare jeg regner det ud, så er det jo ikke løgn. Hvad med henede på kostskolen,
 387 hvordan kommer angsten til udtryk her?
 388
 389 D: Altså jeg har nogle gange sådan, jeg prøver ofte sådan at sige nej, så ryger den ned i en kasse,
 390 og så fortsætter jeg med at putte den ned i den her kasse indtil kassen den springer op
 391
 392 J: Ja, hvor er kassen henne?
 393
 394 D: I klassen nogle gange eller sådan oftest i klassen tror jeg
 395
 396 J: Ja, der kan du få angsten
 397
 398 D: Ja. Og så går jeg inden det bliver alt for slemt. For det meste
 399
 400 J: Ja, hvor går du hen?
 401
 402 D: Oftest ud på badeværelset, fordi sådan, ofte når man sådan gemmer den væk og bliver ved med
 403 at gemme den væk, så ifølge lægen, så sådan grundene til jeg besvimer når tingene bliver presset,

English

J: No, what were you, what were you worried about at school? What started it, do you think?

D: Well, homework, the other kids, there was a lot of pressure, so my brain shut down, then I thought it was awkward to be at school and I was far behind, and I was afraid the others would judge me, all of it... It was there.

J: So something like, I'm just trying to understand it, so something like you felt pressured around 7th grade or what, what kind of pressure hit you, do you think? What is it that you felt pressured about?

D: Well, I think, homework, and the staff were also idiots, some of them definitely, but also, there were mostly boys in my class, and it's like, it sounds stupid to say, but I've always been quite afraid of men in general, when sitting across from a man, but really, I've always been like that.

J: I know many girls who feel that way. Have you had any experiences with men where you felt they crossed some boundaries, which makes you have that skepticism, or have you heard about it or?

D: Well, I can't figure out why I would be afraid of men, because in theory, I haven't gone through anything like that, I've really thought it through, but yeah.

J: Yes, some would say it's a very healthy skepticism to have, right? Did you feel the same way about the boys in the class?

D: Some of them.

J: Yes.

D: Well, they were generally idiots, but that's boys at that age.

J: Yes, some of us never stop being that, but it's true, yes, what, what did they do that made you think they were idiots?

D: Oh, it was the things they talked about. I also had, I had mental difficulties. At that time, and it had been there for a long time. And I remember, there was one of the boys in the class who made a joke, saying something like, think about those who commit suicide, it's because they feel worthless and can't do

anything, and then think about those who fail at suicide, they really can't do anything, and that's when my brain kind of gave up.

J: Yes, so you thought

D: It was kind of a harsh joke, because I had been through it, I am kind of worthless, it was a bit comical.

J: Had you considered suicide at that time?

D: No, I had tried, I was just pretty bad at it.

J: Yes, so it hadn't worked? And then he says something like that, and you think, yeah okay?

D: Yes.

J: It was a bit of a bad joke, there's someone here who has actually been through it.

D: Yes, I didn't respond to it. I don't think even my teacher or anyone had noticed I was having a hard time.

J: So you didn't feel comfortable in that class at all?

D: No. But there was also someone who should have told me I was dyslexic, that would definitely have been practical, but

J: Yes, so you only found out later that you were dyslexic too?

D: Yes. Now we're trying school again.

J: So there was some pressure from the other kids and the stupid jokes they made, there was pressure because you were actually dyslexic and didn't know it, and then you talked a bit about there were also some homework.

D: Yes, there was constant homework, I was afraid the adults would yell at me if I hadn't done it, because they could do that, like scold you for it, and I couldn't handle that, so calling in sick was easier.

J: Yes, that makes a lot of sense. And then you call in sick, and then it becomes difficult to come back, because it becomes kind of, you called it awkward or what?

D: Yes, I use awkward a lot.

J: Yes, it's a good word.

D: Yes. And then you were just far behind in everything and didn't really know what to do.

J: No. Some people I've talked to have described that it can feel like, well, you're afraid of feeling left out, and then you withdraw, and then you end up feeling a bit left out, and it becomes a vicious cycle.

D: Yes.

J: So that's how it started for you. How was it when you went to Østerskov?

D: Well, it was kind of impractical that, the lie I kept going for two years, it was in 7th and 8th and a bit of 9th grade, and then I stopped it at the beginning of 9th grade, which was at boarding school, but otherwise my go-to was that when my anxiety rose too much in class, in public school I would go down and ask for a Panodil, because it gave me a short break, like I could move and breathe for a bit and then go back again.

J: And it fit with the story of having a stomach ache.

D: Yes, I don't think I would have made it through public school without that lie, so it's kind of comical but...

J: You simply had to lie your way through public school, yes.

D: Well, I rarely lie now, I can't handle lying at all.

J: But you had to.

D: Yes, after that lie I didn't lie anymore. Except for sarcasm, I still use sarcasm.

J: But that, if I just figure it out, it's not a lie. What about here at boarding school, how does the anxiety manifest here?

D: Well, sometimes I try to say no, then it goes into a box, and then I keep putting it into this box until the box bursts open.

J: Yes, where is the box?

D: In class sometimes or most often in class, I think.

J: Yes, you can get anxiety there.

D: Yes. And then I leave before it gets too bad. Mostly.

J: Yes, where do you go?

D: Often to the bathroom, because often when you hide it away and keep hiding it away, according to the doctor, the reasons I faint when things get pressured...

Appendix 7 Emotional Autoethnographic study

1 Emotional Autoethnographic study:

2

3 I have conducted two autoemotional studies. Both centered around workbased problems.

4

5 The first of the situations is a presentation I do in Copenhagen. The participants where fostercare parents,
6 who are entitled to receive education related to their practice, from the municipality they are employed by.
7 In this example er det the municipality of Copenhagen. I have been asked about a presentation through my
8 very good friend who, on the other hand, is employed in Copenhagen Municipality's department for foster
9 parents. The negotiation about what should be discussed with the foster parents has been lengthy and
10 marked by many different demands about what should be achieved and how different the foster parents'
11 needs really are. We ended up on a program that was about children's and young people's stories and how
12 these have an impact on their identity.

13 The second situation is a presentation in Helsingør. A municipality a little north of Copenhagen. A wealthier
14 part of the country than I come from. The presentation is planned through my workplace, where Helsingør
15 municipality has requested a one-hour presentation on interdisciplinary collaboration around vulnerable
16 children and families. The planning of this presentation has also been lengthy. Helsingør municipality had
17 many wishes for the presentation to be both academic but also a bit of fun and entertainment as it set the
18 stage for an educational day for the participants. There would be about 200-300 listeners. Helsingør
19 municipality emphasized at the last minute, the day before the presentation, that their managerial
20 perspective on support for vulnerable families is help for self-help. A perspective that, to my ears, often
21 means that you try to get vulnerable families to fend for themselves, so that the municipality saves money.

22 First situation

23 My notes are made in the days leading up to the presentation, when I start to feel a sense of anxiety. Other
24 notes were made on the train on the way to the presentation, where I particularly feel feelings of anxiety:

25 What I feel in my body, which makes me think that it is a form of anxiety I am experiencing, is, among other
26 things, a spring in my stomach. It's as if something inside me is set in vibration and is constantly swaying.

27 I sweat more and it feels like a cold sweat.

28 I find it difficult to concentrate on other things, I become a little short-sighted in everyday life, have difficulty
29 handling strong emotional outbursts with my wife and my children.

- 30 I get thoughts of cancelling, a feeling of having taken too much of a chance. Worrying if I'll be laughed at
 31 seems snobbish and know-it-all.
- 32 My notes are as follows:
- 33 *I get paid for it*
- 34 *I was recommended by a dear friend*
- 35 *I can potentially become a little more known outside the treatment environment*
- 36 *Hell is the other... Sartre*
- 37 *Uncertainty if I can't control what the audience brings from the background*
- 38 *Am I going to sound too professional, too little professional. Do they already know everything I'm coming up*
 39 *with? Am I overshooting the target?*
- 40 *I don't know the place.*
- 41 *I don't know the person who booked me.*
- 42 *I don't know the way there.*
- 43 *Can I do anything of value at all?*
- 44 *Am I now being revealed or exposed? Like a fake?*
- 45 *I'm out of my zone.*
- 46 *I am from a province, coming to the capitol, Copenhagen, a hillbilly in town.*
- 47 *I try to create control where I can.*
- 48 *Clothing choices become a thing. Appearance versus comfort, ironing versus working class look. Going*
 49 *through the slides one more time. Have printed them out. Trying to prepare and at the same time hold on to*
 50 *a sliver of the fact that I should be able to do this. In other words, forget everything about the presentation*
 51 *and just be present.*
- 52 *Am I overthinking now? Is that thought 'am I overthinking now?' just another overthinking teasing me?*
- 53 *Hell is the others, Satre*
- 54
- 55

56 Second situation

57 My notes are written in the days leading up to the presentation and on the day of the presentation.

58 I feel the vibration in my body, it gives me trouble sleeping. My trouble sleeping start a week before the
59 presentation. I clearly feel that it is the vibration that makes it hard to sleep. It is a kind of tickling in my
60 entire body, followed by thoughts about catastrophe. Making big mistakes, being laughed at.

61 I have problems concentrating and focusing on other tasks, also tasks in my family.

62 When I try to imagine the situation (which is hard because I have no idea how the environment, I have to do
63 the presentation in, looks like), I feel dizzy and nausea.

64 The day before the presentation I wake up from a nightmare:

65 I had a nightmare tonight. I was in Ullerslev (the town I have grown up in, a place where I now everybody
66 and everybody knows me), it was night. I was walking in the city and suddenly some people followed me.
67 They swarmed around me, coming closer and closer. I got more and more scared - I didn't know 'who' they
68 were or what they wanted. At one point I got to thinking about what the feeling of anxiety was like. I froze,
69 all over my body, I couldn't control my gaze, it changed from one person to another. I couldn't see any of
70 them clearly, so I couldn't decode them. In the dream I started thinking about my anxiety and the
71 dissertation, my thoughts where, that my anxiety was rooted in the fact, that I could neither control these
72 people, my own body nor my 'look' or my understanding of them.

73

74 200-300 people, never been there before, never met Jan (the man who has invited me and is in charge of the
75 event I am presenting in) in 'reality', only online.

76 Start from home at 5.00 because it is in Copenhagen and did not sleep until 3 o'clock in the morning.

77 When I arrive at the parking lot I see people start to arrive.

78 People look good, modern and appear 'sophisticated' compared to me. I feel wrong, misplaced and
79 peasantry.

80 I am afraid my accent show that I am from "the country". On Funen, where I come from, we kind of sing the
81 words a little more than they do in Helsingør and Copenhagen.

82

83 After the presentation I tried to go back and list, what I had done to tame my anxiety:

84 I listened to music on the way, music that I feel familiar with, now the lyrics, and it was like singing the lyrics
85 made my breath calmer.

86 I was transparent about my anxiety/nervousness – how I felt like a hillbilly just arrived with the train.

87 I also put on my bracelets (I have three bracelets, one my wife has bought to me in Lebanon, one my now 18
88 year old son made for me when he was seven or eight years old, and one bracelet one of my closest friends
89 have made me), they together give me a feeling of being close to the people who means the most to me. My
90 wife, my children and my friends.

Appendix 8 Example Initial Coding Finding Expression of Anxiety

(In Danish)

Expression of the anxiety

Psychological

Physical

Social

Delmira

Lines	Transcript	Focused
252-269	D: Altså min mor havde jo sådan tænkt det i længere tid, den kom jo ikke videre, den sådan, så kom der et punkt sådan, jeg tror det var i 7. klasse, hvor sådan, jeg meldte mig syg, og jeg er en god rollespiller jo, det var jeg også inden jeg sådan lærte hvad rollespil var, sådan, så jeg sagde jo jeg havde ondt i maven, og den opfangede mine forældre ikke, og jeg sådan løj, og sådan lægen opfangede det heller ikke, og sygehuset opfangede det heller ikke, så jeg fuckede den løgn helt op J: Så du blev bare ved med at have ondt i maven i lang tid? D: Ja. Men det var en løgn jeg kørte på i to år. J: Og holdte du dig væk fra skole i to år? D: Nej dog ikke. J: Men i et stykke tid slap du? D: Altså det var også bare, jeg forlod ikke mit værelse og sådan, gad ikke noget, ja jeg turde ikke tage tilbage til skolen	

389-390	D: Altså jeg har nogle gange sådan, jeg prøver ofte sådan at sige nej, så ryger den ned i en kasse, og så fortsætter jeg med at putte den ned i den her kasse indtil kassen den springer op	
394-405	D: I klassen nogle gange eller sådan oftest i klassen tror jeg J: Ja, der kan du få angsten D: Ja. Og så går jeg inden det bliver alt for slemt. For det meste J: Ja, hvor går du hen? D: Oftest ud på badeværelset, fordi sådan, ofte når man sådan gemmer den væk og bliver ved med at gemme den væk, så ifølge lægen, så sådan grundene til jeg besvimer når tingene bliver presset, det er på grund af angst, så sådan, jeg vil hellere besvime ude på badeværelset, end jeg vil besvime i klassen	
445-458	J: Så der var du faldet om? Hvad sker der ellers i det der angstanfald der, udover du besvimer, får du sådan rysteture og vejrtrækning eller? D: Altså det er nemlig også sket, men oftest så bliver jeg bare, jeg tror hvis jeg ikke kan trække vejret, så kan man ikke se det på mig, fordi jeg synes det er akavet, så vil jeg heller holde vejret J: Nårh på den måde, ja det kan jo forklare måske besvimelsen ik også D: Ja det kunne det nemlig ja J: At du sådan forsøger at holde	

	vejret for ikke at hyperventilere og så får du ikke noget ilt til hjernen og så sortner det og så falder man om D: Ja, den er lidt upraktisk, jeg spænder lidt ben for mig selv	
462-485	D: Men mit ben ved jeg, altså det ryster ret tit, men det begynder især at ryste når min angst den sådan blusser op. Den havde navn1 fanget, det havde jeg lidt krise over at hun opdagede den J: Hvorfor det? (17:37) D: Jamen det er fordi åbenbart så, altså navn1 kan se på mig, når den blusser op inde i klassen, det skal hun ikke kunne J: Og når du siger det skal hun ikke kunne, hvad betyder det? Er det sådan lidt sarkastisk? D: Nej jeg skal jeg skal sådan have bygget min facade lidt stærkere, hvis man kan se det. J: Okay, man må ikke kunne se det synes du? D: Nej. J: Hvorfor? D: Fordi det er sådan akavet, folk de skal jo sådan tro at jeg har livet under kontrol J: Okay, ja, men det er da fucked up, jeg kommer bare til at tænke sådan så, så der begynder også at være sådan en angst for at få angst? Kan du følge mig i det? Fordi ej de må ikke opdage det D: Ja. Ja.	

494-497	D: Altså jeg har også det problem at jeg føler mig tryggest nede bagerst, helt nede i et hjørne, klemmer jeg mig ned i et hjørne, det er der jeg føler mig tryggest, men problemet er bare hvis min angst så blusser op, og jeg skal forlade klassen, så blusser den endnu mere op over at jeg ved jeg skal forlade klassen og skal gå forbi de andre.	
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Grethe

Lines	Transcript	Focused
15-18	J: Først, inden vi går i gang med det, så bare lige lidt om, hvorfor er det du er her på kostskolen? G: Det var fordi at jeg havde virkelig meget angst, så jeg turde ikke at komme i skole. Angst for at se folk på min alder. Turde slet ikke gå ud af mit hus.	
300-302	G: Nej. Jeg har også angst for hvis der kommer nogle nye fx op i klassen, dem der fra det der forsorgsmuseum, det har jeg det stramt med, selv hvis det ikke ser sådan ud ik, det der når jeg bare kan se de træder et skridt hen til mig, så er jeg sådan lad mig være	
310-318	G: Jeg lukker meget – jeg lukker fuldstændig ned. Og jeg tager ofte mine airpods helt i. Jeg plejer altid at have airpods for at dæmpe lyden ik. Men jeg plejer at have begge i, når jeg har det dårligt ik. J: Hvorfor bruger du airpods, har det noget med angsten at gøre, at dæmpe lyden? G: Det er fordi jeg har ADD ik, så jeg har virkelig svært ved lyde og sådan noget, jeg har rimelig mange autisttræk til gengæld ik, så det har jeg virkelig svært ved. Men så med angst, når man hører musik, så tænker man på	

	musikken og ikke på folk kigger på mig. Så det er meget sådan, jeg bruger meget musik.	
420-423	G: Jeg hyperventilerer og kryber mig sådan på en måde ind i et hjørne men alligevel sådan, gør et eller andet, bruger meget plads, selv hvis man er i et lille hjørne, ik. Og egentlig ikke tør at gå ud af døren. Og man prøver at overvinde ens egne tanker ik, men det er bare sådan umuligt, og man græder, og bare tænker det hele er noget lort.	

Appendix 9 Example Initial Coding Finding Taming Anxiety

Taming anxiety

Psychological

Physical

Social

Delmira

Lines	Transcript	Focused
591	D: Det er jo en vægtet bamse, den er jo lavet til at kunne blive krammet og	Thing
608-609	D: Nej altså jo, men men det var kun på grund af armene er sådan man kan tage den om skuldrene, og så er de jo vægtet, så det skulle føles som et kram	
638-644	D: Jamen det ved jeg ikke. Det føles som om man har nogen, der er der, selvom man sådan ikke lige har nogen der er der, men sådan. J: Ja. D: Jeg tror også vægten, altså det der med sådan at få lidt vægt på, det får også en sådan til at slappe af. Eller også er det bare min hjerne	Thing
792-803	J: Navn2 den anden. Og den tredje. Hvad hvis du kommer lidt længere ud af angst øh linjen der og det når at blive værre end det du kan klare med navn2, hvad gør du så? D: Jeg har min klemme, den er vigtig.	Thing

	J: Ja, tøjklekke som du sidder med der? D: Ja. J: Ja, hvad gør den? D: Jeg kan mærke den.	
834-839	D: Det distraherer hjernen. J: Ja, så kommer den til at tænke på noget andet? D: Ja. Ellers så ender jeg med at sidde og bide i mine fingre, og det er sådan, det efterlader ofte mærker. Magter det ikke rigtig lige.	
863-873	D: Nej. Men der ligger minder i dem. Det lyder dumt også. Jeg har en masse random lort på mit værelse som der er minder i. Jeg har en blomst, jeg har udtørret, fordi den var der en praktikant på min tidligere skole, der gav mig. Nu står den der stadig. Altså sådan. J: Selvom den er tørret ud. D: Ja. J: Hvad får nogle minder ligger der i sådan en klemme som du sidder med der? D: Der er en sej person, der har haft den i munden.	Thing
886-895	D: Det er en af de ansatte sådan nede i weekendhuset. Altså sådan nogen tror at jeg er sådan er sådan obsessed med hende, og det er ikke der skete, hun fik mig bare til at indse nogle ting jeg ikke havde indset.	

	J: Ja, hvad fik hun dig til at indse? D: At sådan, altså hun er et voksent menneske, altså hun er pisse køn og alt sådan noget og super sej, men hun har lavt selvværd, og det er sådan, hvordan muligt kan man sådan løbe et halvmaraton og så komme tilbage og være sådan, jeg er ikke sikker på jeg løb det hurtigt nok? Altså sådan, løb 16 km og bare var sådan, jeg var bagerst i gruppen. Og sådan.	
982-991	D: Altså sådan, jeg havde også en strategi, den er jeg bare ikke sikker på er sund, hvor jeg sådan holdt vejret, og trak vejret, og så holdt vejret, og så trak vejret. J: Ja. D: Men det er fordi, altså sådan, jeg har også selv lavet meget research om angst sådan efter det begyndte at gå ned af bakke, og det er sådan, altså det viser sig jo ofte, altså når man hyperventilerer, så er det jo ikke fordi man ikke får nok luft, så er det jo fordi man får for meget, ja. Jeg bruger også fx mentolbolsjer og sådan noget, fordi at det gør halsen kold, så det vil sige at man sådan tænker lidt mere over hvordan man trækker vejret.	Body
1094-1096	D: Nej altså det her, det hedder en moonpal, og den er lavet til at kunne give krammere og sådan noget, jeg ved det ikke, altså jeg kender, det er kun, jeg kender kun, det er kun det ene sted jeg sådan kender der laver dem med sådan lange arme der gør det sådan føles som et kram	Thing

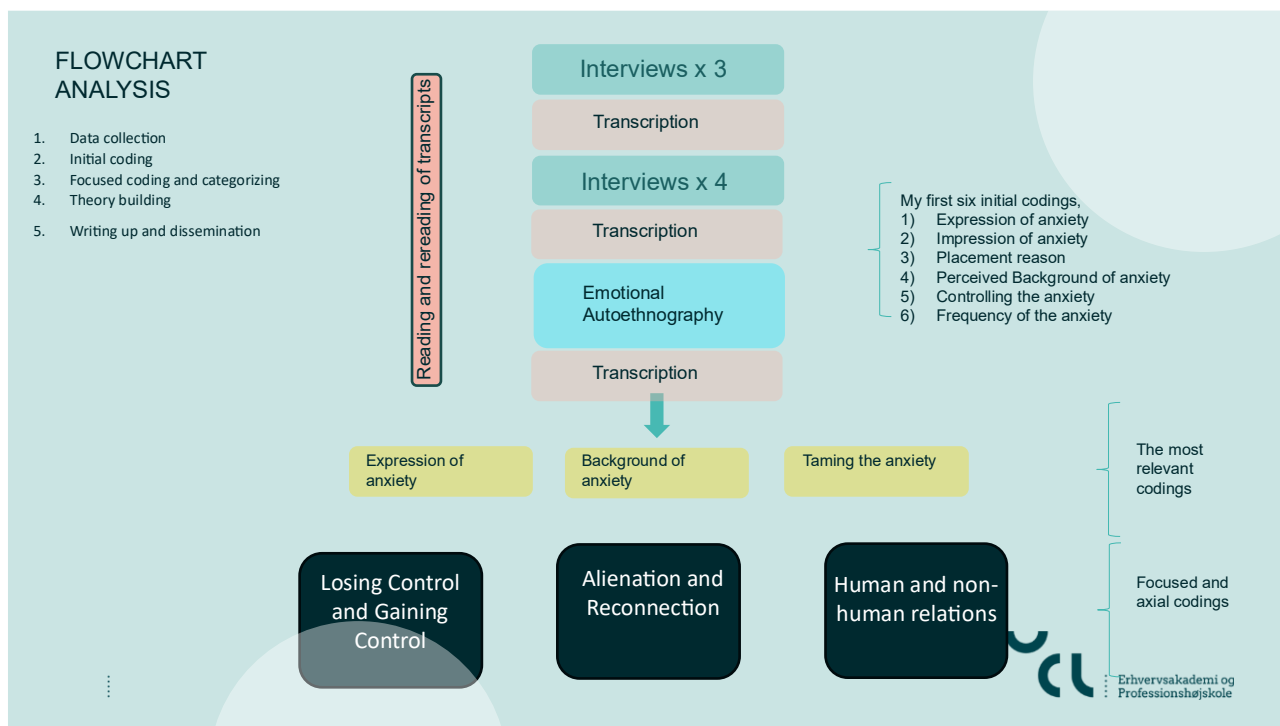
Grethe

Lines	Transcript	Focused
250-269	G: Jeg tog til fester som jeg ikke turde, fordi jeg lukkede mig jo bare inde, så snart jeg kom hjem ik J: Hvordan fandt du fester at tage til? G: Øh jeg har en veninde, der begyndte at tage til fester, så gik jeg med hende, hvor det først var sådan noget hyggedruk-agtig ikke, og det hjalp også med jeg ikke drak, fordi jeg tror, ellers havde jeg ikke kommet af med min angst J: Så du drak ikke til de fester? G: Nej, jeg tog bare med til dem og sådan, jeg var bare meget for mig selv, men jeg var der stadig, og det var sådan, så gik det sådan bedre og bedre i løbet af sommerferien, så jeg trænede mig selv op til - J: Du trænede dig selv op. Hvordan var det at gå til de der fester, når du nu vidste, jeg har angst, og hvis folk kigger på mig på min egen alder, så tænker de nok jeg er mærkelig eller sådan noget G: Jeg havde det virkelig stramt med det. Og det har jeg stadigvæk den dag i dag, jeg skal til fester ikke, men nu prøver jeg sådan at lade ansgten ikke styre det, fordi sådan jeg vil også have det hyggeligt	
284-287	G: Ja og så bare prøvede at komme mere ud i det hele taget ik. Og prøvede at gå – normalt tør jeg ikke gå ud om eftermiddagen og gå ned og handle fx, der ved jeg der er flest	

	unge, men alligevel gjorde det, så det var meget sådan, jeg ville det gerne, jeg ville gøre det bedre, så jeg vidste også jeg blev nødt til at kæmpe for det, så jeg måtte tage den farlige vej, men den bedste vej for mig	
289-296	J: Ja. Var der så nogle øjeblikke i de der festøjeblikke der eller nu her når du går ud og stiller dig, selvom du egentlig synes at det er lidt ubehageligt, er der så nogle øjeblikke, hvor angsten forsvinder helt? G: Det er for eksempel til fester. Det er når jeg kan se alle hygger sig og alle snakker godt med hinanden. Så bliver man sådan okay, de har ikke noget imod mig ik. Men jeg har også været til sådan nogle fester, hvor de kigger lidt skævt på folk ik. Så sådan kigger de også skævt på mig. Dem har jeg stadig.	
322	G: Jeg bruger høj musik. Til at overdøve tankerne.	Thing
330	G: Ja. Jeg kan høre hård rock til dødsmetal og rap og Tessa og det hele	Thing
335-345	G: Jeg hører ofte en rapper, der hedder NF, som der også har angst og OCD og det hele, hvor han har lavet mange sange som sådan ja, det giver mening hvad han siger. Det hører jeg meget. Fordi sådan okay jeg er ikke den eneste. Fordi den får mange med angst jo, at sådan man føler man er helt alene i verden ik. Det er man jo ikke, langt fra. J: Hvad gør det ved dig at vide at NF fx også har angst? G: Det er det der med at man kan se han er blevet til noget. Selv hvis han har haft de der tanker med, at folk kigger skævt på ham. Øh, så er han stadig	

	kommet igennem det. Og det er meget sådan, jeg ved at jeg har de tanker, jeg kan ikke bare komme af med dem, men det skal ikke stoppe mig fra at blive til noget fx ik.	
360	G: Ja, og så er der jo også sådan sangeren, dansk sanger, Gobs	
369-385	G: Han har også lavet nogen, hvor man er sådan, det er også meget med kærlighed ikke, men han har også lavet nogen, hvis man lytter meget til teksten, så kan man også høre, han har sgu ikke haft det let, men han er blevet stor nu, kan man sige, i blandt de unge i hvert fald J: Og det kan godt være jeg lyder lidt gammel så stadigvæk selvom jeg synes han er ret ung, men jeg har lyttet en del til Tobias Rahim, og han har jo også noget om social angst, ikke også G: Ham har jeg også hørt meget. Den der flyvende faduma, den har jeg hørt meget J: Ja, hvorfor kan du lide den? G: Fordi den er bare sådan, også beroligende at høre på på en eller anden måde ik. Jeg kan bare godt lide den. Der er et eller andet ved den. J: Jeg kan godt følge dig. Taler den også til angsten i dig eller taler den til noget andet? G: Den taler til hele mig føler jeg. Også det der med, han siger jo, bare gør din ting, bare flyv, ik.	Dette er jo både psykologisk og socialt også, fordi hun kommer til at følge sig som en del af et fællesskab

Appendix 10 Flowchart Analysis



Appendix 11 Interviewguide in Danish and Translated into English

Danish

Interviewguide – Dissertation

Briefing		
Præsentation af interviewer og formål med interview.	- Hvem er interviewer?	- Jeg hedder Jacob og er ved at skrive en opgave. Opgaven skal handle om, hvordan vi voksne kan blive bedre til at hjælpe unge der føler angst eller føler sig ængstelige. Jeg har også skrevet om det i det brev du fik inden i dag. Jeg vil gerne lige gennemgå det sammen med dig, så jeg er helt sikker på at jeg har fået fortalt dig alt hvad du skal vide. Det kan også være at du har set mig før, fordi jeg af og til arbejder her på skolen.
	- Formål med interview	- Formålet med at interviewe dig er, at jeg gerne vil vide noget om, hvad du ved om, hvordan man som ung selv kan stoppe eller formindske sin angst.
	- Tidsramme	- Vi skal højest tale sammen i 45 minutter.
Rammer for interviewet	- Optagelse af samtalen	- Jeg optager vores samtale, for ellers kan jeg slet ikke huske alle de ting vi kommer til at tale om.
	- Anonymisering	- Jeg vil gemme optagelsen af vores samtale i fem år, men sletter derefter samtalen. I min opgave vil du være anonymiseret, så dit navn ikke står nogen steder, og man vil heller ikke kunne læse hvad skolen hedder som du går på.
	- Yderligere informationer	- Du må gerne afbryde mig, hvis jeg siger noget du ikke synes giver mening. Eller spørge. - Du må til enhver tid lade være med at svare, og du må altid gerne trække dit samtykke tilbage.

Præsentation af informant		- Vil du præsentere dig selv, herunder sige lidt om, hvorfor du bor her på skolen og hvad du tænker om at bo her, og hvad du interesserer dig for?
Forskningsspørgsmål	Interviewspørgsmål	
Hvordan forklarer unge der oplever angst eller ængstelse deres mestring?	<u>Kan du huske sidste gang du var oplevede at være angst eller ængstelig?</u> <i>Kan du fortælle om den situation, hvad skete der?</i> -Hvor skete det? - Hvad gik forud? - Hvordan følte du i situationen? <i>Hvem eller hvad var en del af det der skete?</i> - Hvorfor var lige de personer en del af situationen? - Var der nogen som ikke var der, men som du ønsker skulle have været der? - Hvad tror du at du ønskede dig, i situationen, at de voksne skulle gøre/sige? <i>Hvem eller hvad hjalp dig ud af angsten eller ængstelsen?</i> - Hvordan blev du hjulpet? -Hvad var til stede? - Hvad blev sagt? - Hvad kunne være sagt i stedet for? - af den voksne, af dig selv? - Hvad blev gjort? - Hvad følte du efter det der skete, da du var blevet mere i ro igen? - Hvad føler du ift. situationen nu?	

English

My name is Jacob and I am writing a paper. The paper is about how we adults can become better at helping young people who feel anxious or experience anxiety.

I have also written about it in the letter you received earlier today. I would like to go through it with you to make sure I have told you everything you need to know.

You might have seen me before, as I occasionally work here at the school.

The purpose of interviewing you is to learn about what you know regarding how young people can stop or reduce their anxiety.

We will talk for a maximum of 45 minutes.

I am recording our conversation, otherwise I won't be able to remember all the things we talk about.

I will keep the recording of our conversation for five years, but will delete it afterwards. In my paper, you will be anonymized, so your name will not appear anywhere, and the name of the school you attend will not be mentioned either.

You are welcome to interrupt me if I say something that doesn't make sense to you. Or ask questions.

You can choose not to answer at any time, and you can always withdraw your consent.

Would you introduce yourself, including saying a bit about why you live here at the school and what you think about living here, and what you are interested in?

Can you remember the last time you experienced anxiety or felt anxious?

Can you describe that situation, what happened?

Where did it happen?

What preceded it?

How did you feel in the situation?

Who or what was part of what happened?

Why were those people part of the situation?

Was there anyone who wasn't there but you wish had been there?

What do you think you wanted the adults to do/say in the situation?

Who or what helped you out of the anxiety or anxiousness?

How were you helped?

What was present?

What was said?

What could have been said instead? - by the adult, by yourself?

What was done?

How did you feel after what happened, when you had calmed down again?

How do you feel about the situation now?

Now we are almost finished with the interview, is there anything I have missed asking you about?

How do you feel now about experiencing anxiety or feeling anxious? Do you think the same as before or do you think something different?

How has it been to talk about this topic?

Is it okay if I invite you to another meeting if I feel like asking you more questions?

You are welcome to call or write to me at phone number 28 49 11 75 if you have any questions or similar after today.

What are you going to do when we finish this interview today?

Thank you for your help.