NHH

Know Thyself

An Explorative Study on Moral Identity in Decision Making

Kamilla Korsnes

Supervisor: Professor Knut J. Ims

Master Thesis in Strategy and Management

NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

ACNOWLEDGEMENTS

Being a person that keeps a gratitude journal for myself every day, it is my pleasure that for once I can share this gratitude with a broader audience. This thesis is not only the result of five months of research and writing – it is a result of my journey. And I have not gone through this journey alone; this journey contains a lot of gratitude and love for others.

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Knut Ims for sharing his pearls of wisdom, both when it comes to this research project and life in general. Thank you for showing me a different road to business studies and for introducing me to the everyday practice of gratitude and the value of authentic meetings. Thanks for the continuous encouragement and support throughout the process of writing this thesis.

Thank you to my family and close friends for showing so much love and support. Thanks to my parents for giving me unconditional love and the feeling of safety wherever I am in this world, preparing me for all the true meetings and the magic that happens when your mind is open and your heart is trusting. A special thanks to my dear friend Derek Musial for being an infinite source of positive emotions and happiness. Never underestimate the power of smiles and giggles, and the value of keeping the playful child within you. I hope you will never grow up.

Thank you to my interviewees for being open, honest, giving and brave. I hope that I have treated your vulnerability and trust with the respect and care you deserve.

Thank you to NHH for adding both troughs and peaks to my journey, from the life lessons of competition and comparison to the self exploration for a meaningful life. Thanks for challenging me – through challenges comes change and learning. And thank you to Middlebury Institute of International Studies for showing me different perspectives on business and for teaching me that I have the whole world at my feet and there are countless possibilities to both do good *and* do well.

I am grateful that I could spend three months in Monterey, California, doing research and writing this thesis. I am grateful for the opportunity to go back to Monterey, for my supervisor Knut being supportive of this decision, and for all the inspiring and loving people that came into my life in Monterey.

ABSTRACT

Title:	Know Thyself – An Exploratory Study of Moral Identity in Decision Making
Date of submission:	June 1, 2015
Course:	STRTHE, Master of Science Level Thesis, Strategy and Management, 30 University Credit Points (ECTS-cr).
Author:	Kamilla Korsnes
Advisor:	Professor Knut Johannessen Ims
Key words:	Moral Identity, Positive Psychology, Happiness, Well-being, Moral Behavior, Decision Making.
Purpose:	To get a better understanding of the moral decision making process, how moral identity works in this process, and how moral decision making affects people's happiness.
Methodology:	Eleven semi-structured interviews with decision makers in organizational contexts.
Theoretical perspectives:	Positive Psychology in particular theory of Flourishing; Theory on Moral Identity; Philosophy including Eudaimonia, Hedonism, Virtues, and Ethics of Care; and Moral Decision Models such as Rest's Four Component Model and Mitroff's framework for holistic problem solving.
Conclusions:	The centrality of moral identity influences whether a person makes moral decisions, and moral behavior might strengthen the centrality of moral identity. A central moral identity is related to knowing yourself. Moral behavior contributes to both short term and long term happiness for the decision maker.

List of Figures

my "existential crisis" I was introduced for Business Ethics through the classes of Professor Knut J. Ims – and that is the main reason why I am where I am today.

1.1.2 Business Ethics

When I tell people that the focus of my Master's Thesis is Business Ethics, a response I often get is "Business *and* ethics? Is there really such a thing?" or "Business ethics? We definitely need more of that!". To me it seems like the general view in our society is that business is the greed monster that does not take responsibility for its impact on society.

On the other hand, the topic of business ethics has become increasingly popular in the corporate world and academic world, and is often discussed in media. Concepts such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have become a "mandatory" part of the marketing, branding and strategy of businesses, and most big corporations today have an ethics or sustainability department. This increased focus on business ethics through CSR is a step in the right direction, but I also see several problems related to the CSR concept. The first problem is: Do the companies that practice CSR really have a *green heart*, or is it just a *green mind*? Do they practice CSR because it pays off in terms of reputation to show people that you take responsibility, or because they deeply care about their own footprint on society? There is a big difference between pretending to care and actually caring – and I think there are companies in both categories. The second problem is that CSR does not say anything about how to make moral decisions and how individuals think and act in relation to ethical issues with conflicting values. CSR makes businesses more aware of some of the issues they are facing, but does not explain *how to deal with the issues* of conflicting values. The implication of this is that businesses know more about the issues they are facing, but when it comes to dealing with the problems, economical values are often prioritized over intrinsic values. Because of this, I find the concept of CSR insufficient and incomplete. We need to know more about the processes from recognizing the moral issue to the actual moral behavior.

I believe that for the business world to become green, sustainable and ethical, we need to know more about how individuals make moral decisions and how we can facilitate moral decision making in organizations. The first step towards a more ethical business world, as I see it, is to look closer at how individuals, and especially leaders, make moral decisions in real life. If we can understand the processes of moral decision making we can facilitate and help individuals in organizations to make more ethical decisions. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to *gain a deeper understanding of the moral decision making process*.

Further, as data was gathered and analyzed these two questions also emerged:

- How does moral identity affect decision making?
- How does moral behavior affect the moral identity of a person?

Due to choice of research method, which does not involve observations, the first research question will be operationalized through looking at <u>how people think about</u> their own decision making and what <u>their beliefs and experiences</u> related to their decisions are.

A concept useful related to the research questions is *life-world*. Life-world is an important concept used by Ims (2006) to develop his model of personal responsibility. It may be defined as *the person's inner subjective world where a person is perceiving, interpreting and judging what is going on in the objective world around him or her. In an ethical dilemma there is typically a personal struggle between our inner subjective world and the external objective world* (Ims, 2006, ss. 240-246). This is a supplementing way of saying "How do people think and feel of their own decisions? What is going on in their life-worlds?". The term life world related to the existential dimension of a person. (Ims, Take it Personally, 2006)

The aim and objectives of this thesis will be further discussed in Chapter 3: Research Model. I chose to present the research model including hypotheses after the Literature Review because it makes it easier for the reader to follow the logic behind the model. Additionally it makes sense because that is how the model evolved in the first place, following the method of Grounded Theory (which you can read more about this in Chapter 4: Methodology).

Chapter 2: Literature Study

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say and what you do are in harmony"

— Mahatma Gandhi

2.1 Happiness and Positive Psychology

2.1.1 Positive Psychology

According to Seligman et al. (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004), psychology initially had three main objectives: 1) to cure mental illness, 2) to make relatively untroubled people happier, and 3) to study genius and high talent. After World War II psychology research was largely devoted to repairing weaknesses and understanding suffering (called pathology), resulting in neglecting the two last objectives (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). The pathology focus has made us able to make troubled people less miserable, but absence of mental illnesses and suffering is not necessarily enough to make people individuals flourish – happiness is more than the absence of unhappiness (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004). This one-sided focus on what is wrong with people, rather than what is right, started the movement of positive psychology.

Positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future) and flow and happiness (in the present) (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). At the individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level, it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that lead individuals towards better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000).

Psychology is not just the study of pathology, weakness, and damage; it is also the study of strength and virtue – and nurturing what is best (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000).

"The ultimate goal of positive psychology is to make people happier by understanding and building positive emotions, gratification and meaning"

- (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004, s. 1379) –

most congruent with deeply held values and they are fully engaged in the activity, and under such circumstances people would feel intensely alive and authentic (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Eudaimonic theories emphasize that not all desires or outcomes that a person might value would yield well-being when achieved (Ryan & Deci, 2001). A desire can be pleasure producing but still not good for people and will not produce wellness. Additionally, the eudaimonic philosophers argue that there are there are some desires, goals and actions which will not produce pleasure but still contribute to one's well-being. Thus, the pleasure focused hedonistic view is not sufficient for explaining long term happiness and well-being.

Authentic Happiness Theory – The Full Life

Current research indicates that happiness is best conceived as a multidimensional phenomenon which includes aspects of both the hedonic and eudaimonic conceptions of happiness and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Seligman et al. (2004) propose a more holistic approach, and identify three constituents of happiness: 1) pleasure (or positive emotion), 2) engagement, and 3) meaning.

The first route to greater happiness is hedonic, increasing *positive emotions*. Within limits, we can increase our positive emotions about the past (e.g. by cultivating gratitude and forgiveness), our positive emotions about the present (e.g. by savoring and mindfulness) and our positive emotions about the future (e.g. by building hope and optimism) (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004). Seligman et al. (2004) argues that it is possible (and worthwhile) to increase the amount of positive emotion in our lives, but relying on positive emotions has limits because we can boost our hedonics only so high. This underlines the importance of a broader approach to happiness.

A second route to happiness, according to Seligman et al. (2004) is the pursuit of 'gratification' or *engagement*. The key characteristic of a gratification is that it *engages* us fully – it absorbs us (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004). There are shortcuts to pleasures (e.g. eating ice cream, masturbating, or using drugs), but there are no shortcuts to gratification. The pursuit of gratifications require us to must involve ourselves fully and to draw on character strengths such as creativity, social intelligence, sense of humor, perseverance, and an appreciation of beauty and excellence (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2004). Examples of activities that may bring gratification is engaging in a good conversation, reading a book, playing the guitar or accomplishing a difficult task at work. Although gratifications are

2.1.3 Goals and Happiness

Research has found that personal goals are related to long-term levels of happiness and life satisfaction (Emmons, 2003). For many people the primary goal *is* to be happy. Yet, research indicates that happiness is most often a by-product of participating in worthwhile projects and activities that do not have as their primary focus the attainment of happiness (Emmons, 2003). Some argue that the construct of "meaning" has no meaning outside of a person's goals and purposes. Goals are signals that orient a person to what is valuable, meaningful, and purposeful (Emmons, 2003).

The findings on goal content and well being indicate that when it comes to the positive life, not all goals are of the same importance. Certain categories of goals tend to generate higher levels of well-being than other types of goals. Intimacy, generativity, and spirituality are intrinsically rewarding domains of goal activity that makes lives meaningful and purposeful, particularly compared to power strivings or strivings for self-sufficiency (Emmons, 2003).

2.1.4 Virtue Theory

The topic of virtues was fist discussed by the first Greek philosophers when they were trying to answer the question of "what is the good of a person?". In Platonic tradition, virtue is to be the best version of one self (Petreson & Seligman, 2004). The Platonic virtues are *courage*, *temperance*, and *wisdom*. When these are in harmony, the fourth virtue of *justice* arises. Aristotle connects virtues to happiness (eudaimonia) and stated that happiness is "activity in accordance with virtues". The four virtues from Plato are called the cardinal virtues. In addition to the cardinal virtues, Judaism and Christianity brought forward the virtues of faith, hope and charity – which are referred to as the theological virtues (Petreson & Seligman, 2004).

The research on positive psychology has resulted in yet another set of virtues. Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified six categories of virtues that were surprisingly consistent across cultures; courage, justice, humanity, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom. I will use this latest contribution to virtue theory when analyzing virtues later in this thesis.

Virtues and Goal Striving

Virtues are essential person characteristics that can differentiate successful from unsuccessful goal strivers (Emmons, 2003). When it comes to goal striving, three virtues are considered especially important: 1) prudence, 2) patience, and 3) perseverance (Emmons, 2003).

2.2.1 Personality and Identity

Personality: The big five

McAdams (2009) explains that through natural selection human beings have been designed to detect differences in others with respect to such qualities as how sociable and dominant a person is (extraversion), the extent to which a person is caring and cooperative (agreeableness), a person's characteristic level of dependability and industriousness (conscientiousness), levels of emotional stability and dysfunction in other people (neuroticism), and the extent to which a person may be cognitively flexible or rigid in facing a range of adaptive problems (openness to experience). The Big Five implicitly encodes those broad and pervasive individual differences in personality that have tended to make a big difference in adaptation to group life over the course of human evolution, as they continue to make difference today (McAdams, 2009).

The five basic traits identified by personality psychologists carry considerable moral meaning. Out of these five traits, especially conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience are closely associated with moral reasoning and thought (McAdams, 2009). *Agreeableness* speaks to caring and altruistic tendencies, and often implies being more sensitive to the suffering of others, and more positively disposed toward fairness, reciprocity and loyalty. *Conscientiousness* encompasses qualities such as honesty and dependability in interpersonal relationships. People with high *openness to experience* tend to be highly imaginative, reflective, intellectual, and broadminded. Most generally, conscientiousness and agreeableness tend to predict pro-social behavior whereas openness to experience tends to predict principled moral reasoning (McAdams, 2009).

Another Five Point Framework: Five Levels of Personality

McAdams (2009) developed a five-point framework for an integrative science of personality. They described personality as 1) an individual's unique variation on the general evolutionary design for human nature, expressed as a developing pattern of 2) *dispositional traits*, 3) *characteristic adaptations*, and 4) *self-defining life narratives*, complexly and differentially situated in 5) culture and social context (McAdams, 2009).

Characteristic adaptations have typically been the constructs of choice for classic motivational, social-cognitive, and developmental theories of personality. Among these characteristic adaptations that are most instrumental in shaping morality are *personal goals and projects*. Goals and projects are always about the future – the imagined ends of tomorrow

Instead, they relate to the motivational underpinnings of moral identity. Willpower is defined as the capacity for self-control, and such it is necessary to avoid temptation and consistently guide the individual according to moral aims. Integrity is defined as an individual's concern for the unity of his or her sense of self, and as such it directs the individual toward behaviors that are consistent with the possession of a moral identity. The last component, moral desire, relates to the essence of moral character. According to Blasi (2004), moral desire reflects the intensity with which one yearns for first-order moral goals and ideals like kindness, honesty, fairness, truthfulness, and compassion. In other words, the strength of one's moral desires determines their level of conviction in pursuing moral outcomes vis-à-vis other possible goals (e.g. power, politeness, pleasure, and creativity). Importantly, Blasi (2004) conceives moral desire as a product of volition; that is, a conscious reflection on the desire to act in accordance with the moral self.

The character perspective has some limitations. First, it appears to be germane to a narrow set of moral behaviors that are undertaken after thoughtful consideration – limiting the study of moral behavior to acts that result from deliberate and conscious processes excludes the possibility that most of what constitutes the practice of "everyday morality" may be tacit, automatic and driven by moral heuristics rather than calculative reasoning (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Second, the character perspective ignores the dynamic and multi-faceted nature of personal identities. It narrowly applies to individuals for whom moral identity occupies the most central location within the self and does not say much about *when* and under *what situations* moral identity will be (or not be) experienced as part of the sense of self relative to other identities (Aquino & Reed, 2002).

The Social-Cognitive Perspective

The social-cognitive perspective conceptualizes moral identity as an organized cognitive representation, or schema, of moral values, goals, traits, and behavioral scripts. Aquino and Reed (2002) argues that moral identity should act as a powerful regulator of moral action when moral identity is not readily accessible and/or its activation potential is constrained, then moral identity should be less potent regulator of behavior. Building from this basic social-cognitive model of moral functioning, Aquino and Reed (2002) defined moral identity as a self-schema organized around a set of moral *trait associations*. They argue that moral identity has a private as well as public aspect, meaning that the cognitive representation of the moral self that resides in memory is often projected symbolically to others through the person's

Brendl, 1995). Aquino et al.'s (2009) findings support that the accessibility of moral identity within the working self-concept should determine the extent to which it influences moral outcomes.

Reed and Levy (2007) found that moral identity is more likely to regulate judgments when it is relatively more top of mind (i.e., temporarily salient) and/or when it is relatively more important to a person's self-concept (i.e., self-important). Aquino et al. (2009) support this, suggesting that moral intentions and behaviors are a joint function of (a) the centrality of moral identity to an individual's self-conception and (b) the extent to which situational cues temporarily affect the current accessibility of the moral self-schema within the working self. Furthermore, they (Reed & Levy, 2007) argue that by specifying the set of circumstances under which a person's moral identity is most likely to be accessible, as well as the set of circumstances under which aspects of identity with inherently oppositional values and goals will be accessible, we can apply the social-cognitive framework to derive specific predictions about the interplay between situational factors and the centrality of moral identity.

2.2.3 Male and female morality

Gilligan (Gilligan, 1982) criticizes Kohlberg's six stages of moral development for not considering gender differences, and thus explaining the moral development of males rather than females. According to Kohlberg's six stages one can "measure" a person's moral maturation to one of the six stages by looking at their moral orientation. However, Gilligan's finding (1982) is that females' moral orientation is different from males' moral orientation, which makes Kohlberg's model incomplete and insufficient for evaluating moral maturation. According to Gilligan (Gilligan, 1982) women interpret the questions and moral dilemmas differently because of their orientation towards themselves and the world.

Gilligan (1982) argues that women see themselves and the world differently than men do: they see a world comprised of relationships rather than of people standing alone, a world that coheres through human connection rather than through systems of rules. From this Gilligan proposed the theory of Ethics of Care, where she argues that women's morality is focused on care, love and relationships which differs from men's morality that is more focused on logic of justice and fairness (Gilligan, 1982).

Moral sensitivity is the ability to interpret the situation as moral, the recognition that an ethical problem exists (Johnson, 2012). This includes interpreting how an act will affect the welfare of self or others and having empathy for those involved (Moores & Chang, 2006), as well as identifying possible courses of action and determining the consequences of each potential strategy (Johnson, 2012). Moral sensitivity is a key to transformational ethics, since we cannot solve a problem without knowing that one is present (Johnson, 2012). Empathy and perspective skills are essential to identifying and exploring moral issues, and the lack of thereof can result in failure to understand the causal links of the issue (Moores & Chang, 2006).

Moral judgment is judging which possible course of action, identified through moral sensitivity, is most justified (Moores & Chang, 2006). This means deciding what is right or wrong in the specific situation, based on some moral ideal (Johnson, 2012). Kohlberg (1976, 1984) views moral judgment as a maturation process, where a person's ability to process and reason moral issues will develop with age through six stages. The classic Kohlbergian view has met some criticism related to gender differences (Gilligan, 1982), and role differences (Haviv & Leman, 2002), and there is little evidence to support the existence of higher-level moral reasoning (Moores & Chang, 2006).

The third component, *moral motivation*, is the ability to prioritize moral concerns over competing issues and deciding what one intends to do (Moores & Chang, 2006). Moral values often conflict with other important values like job security, career advancement, social acceptance, and wealth – and moral behavior will only occur if moral considerations are seen as more important than other issues (Johnson, 2012).

The fourth and final stage of moral action – executing the plan – requires character. *Moral character* is the ability to transform intention into actual behavior (Moores & Chang, 2006). Moral agents must be persistent to overcome obstacles such as active opposition, coping with fatigue, resisting distractions, and developing strategies for reaching their goals (Johnson, 2012). At this stage, traits as ego-strength, self-regulation, and self-efficacy may play an important role (Moores & Chang, 2006), in addition to persistence and competence (Johnson, 2012).

The six capacities:

1) *Moral complexity*: Moral complexity is critical because the distinctive dimensions individuals use to organize and make meaning of the world strongly influence how they make decisions and behave within a specific domain. More cognitive complex individuals process information more thoroughly because they have more categories to discriminate among information received in their environment and are more able to see commonalities and connections among those categories. Greater moral complexity provides a larger and more developed set of prototypes with which to process more information, which includes greater ability to understand the various dimensions of moral dilemmas and greater ability to create imaginative solutions. (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011)

2) *Metacognitive ability*: A high moral complexity is of no use if the individual is not able to process the complex information. This is where the metacognitive ability is important – it is the capacity to deeply process complex moral knowledge. Metacognitive ability is composed of monitoring and regulation of cognitive processes, thus serving both self-referential and executive control functions. Metacognitive ability differs from cognitive ability (intelligence) in the way that cognitive ability is the general capacity to reason and solve problems, whereas metacognitive ability is the ability to regulate and control cognition as these reasoning processes unfold. Complex moral dilemmas require the capacity to select from, access, and modify moral knowledge and to apply elaborative reasoning to the specific moral dilemma being confronted in order for an individual to achieve a sense of logical coherence.

3) *Moral identity*: Moral identity is individuals' knowledge about themselves as moral actors. This is critical for moral decision making, because self-identity consists of the most accessible and elaborate knowledge structures individuals hold, and thus imposes a strong influence on how individuals regulate thought and control behavior. The self-regulatory functions provided by moral identity are critical to understanding the moral decision making process. A person can have a high moral complexity and meta-cognitive ability, but might come up with ways to justify moral disengagement if such rich processing is not guided by self-standards. (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011)

4) *Moral ownership*: Hannah et al. (2011) define moral ownership as "the extent to which members feel a sense of psychological responsibility over the ethical nature of

considers it preferable to find an approximate solution to the right problem rather than clever solution to the wrong problem (J. Ims & Zsolnai). The aim of the framework is to help problem solvers to gain a deeper understanding of the problem and to avoid this problem of solving the wrong problems. In the framework Mitroff distinguishes between four perspectives on a problem; 1) technical, 2) social, 3) existential, and 4) systematic.

Scientific/technical

Existential

Systemic

Interpersonal/social
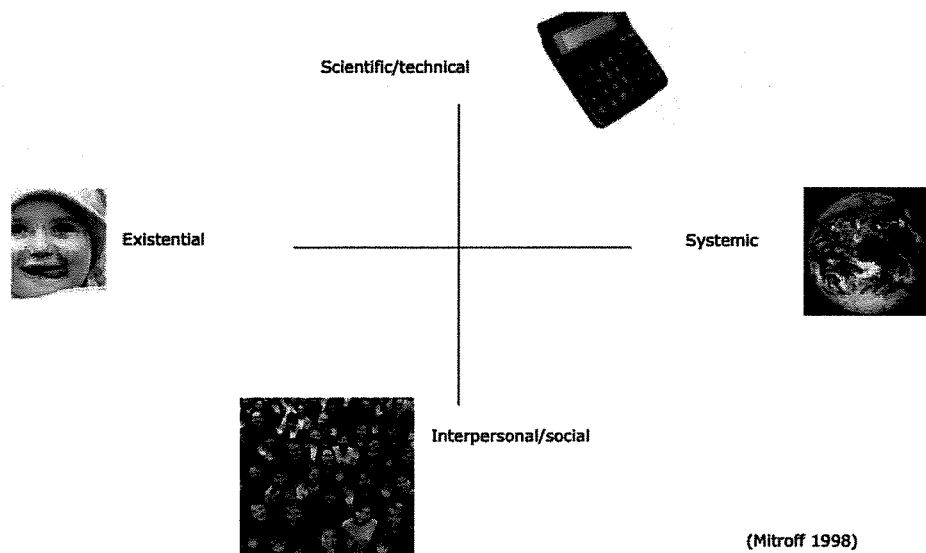
(Mitroff 1998)

Figure 2: Mitroff's Framework for Holistic Problem Solving (Mitroff, 1998)

The *technical or scientific dimension* is seeing the problem from the perspective of tools that are developed within the field of technology, science and business. This often includes theories, models, frameworks, formulas, hypotheses and calculations. Mitroff argues that humans today are more inclined to use the technical approach to problem solving rather than the other dimensions, and thus often ignoring important social, existential and systemic dimensions of a problem.

The *social dimension* involves seeing the problem in the light of social contexts. Problems are usually part of a larger context and social issues are often related to the problem. A way to use this approach to a problem is by asking questions like: How will this influence families? How will this affect the social environment in the organization? What would others think of this decision? And what would happen if everyone made the same decision as me?

Many problems have an *existential dimension* as well. When there are people involved it is important to consider implications related to meaning, values and human dignity. To enlighten this dimension one may ask questions like: How will this decision affect other

Chapter 3: Research Model

3.1 Introduction

A research model with hypotheses is more common for a quantitative study than for a qualitative and explorative study like this one. However, I find it beneficial to present a research model for several reasons. First, this study does not follow a specific research approach and strategy in its "pure" form – it has components from different strategies and approaches, which also means that following the typical norm does not apply to this study. As I will discuss further in the methodology chapter, research approaches and strategies should not be seen as strict systems, but rather an iterative process that shifts focus back and forth between the different components of the design. Also, this is supported by the use of Grounded Theory Method, where developing hypotheses is a part of the explorative research design. Second, this field of moral decision making can be overwhelming with theories and findings from different areas of research and the decision making processes are complex. A research model makes it easier to present what this study is about. Third, and most important, I think the model adds structure both for the researcher and the reader of this study. A visual model is easier to grasp than pages of words trying to explain the same thing.

It must be noted that despite these hypotheses, my aim is not to measure the relationship between the variables in a quantitative way. This means that there will be no clear measuring at all, since a qualitative study cannot provide sufficient data which makes it possible to generalize the findings. My aim is to *explore the relationship between the variables* to see what might explain parts of the moral decision making processes. Also, I think that some of the most clever and interesting findings are not necessarily found through measuring variables in numbers, but rather through explorative authentic meetings.

3.3 Definitions

3.3.1 Moral Identity

A moral identity is a specific kind of identity that revolves around the moral aspects of one's self (Bergman, 2002). A moral identity acts as a *self-regulatory* mechanism that sets parameters for individual behavior and motivates specific action that is moral (e.g. Blasi 1983). The *motivating force* of a moral identity is explained by the consistency principle, which states that an identity creates a need for the individual to be true to himself or herself and, therefore, the need to act consistently with his or her identity (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007). Moral identity is more likely to *regulate judgments* when it is relatively more top of mind (i.e., temporarily salient) and/or when it is relatively more important to a person's self-concept (i.e., self-important) (Reed & Levy, 2007).

3.3.2 Centrality of Moral Identity

Centrality of moral identity refers to *how important the moral identity is* to the individual's identity. In other words; some people have a particularly strong moral identity, and for some people the moral identity is less important to their overall identity as a human being. The centrality of moral identity can explain why some people are very idealistic when it comes to morality – some people will devote their lives to do good for other people. For other people, other parts of their identity are more important which places the moral identity more in the background. It must be noted that despite the fact that for some people the moral identity is in the background, it is assumed that all human beings have some kind of moral identity – that is what makes us human.

People whose moral identity occupies greater centrality within the self-concept should perceive that being a moral person is more self-definitional relative to other identities (Blasi, 2004). Furthermore, the moral self-schema of someone for whom moral identity is highly central should be activated more strongly and more frequently than the other self-schemas comprising his or her net-work of self-identities (Higgins & Brendl, 1995). The greater the centrality of moral identity is, the higher its *activation potential* and the stronger its ability to affect information processing and moral behavior. Activation potential refers to the extent to which a knowledge structure tends to be readily accessible for processing and acting on information (Higgins & Brendl, 1995).

decision, makes a judgment on what is right or wrong based on his or her values, and then acts according to this judgment.

As a researcher I do not want to be the judge of what is right or wrong, since there in most moral dilemmas is no such thing as right or wrong – it is a matter of preferences in conflicting values. Therefore, I find it appropriate to define moral behavior based on what each individual consider the right thing to do, which implies that moral behavior can be defined as *acting according to one's own values.*

3.3.6 Happiness

In this thesis, I define happiness as Seligman's (2010) PERMA-theory, consisting of *Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning,* and *Achievement.* It is important to split the happiness variable into these five components because it is conceivable that moral behavior affects people differently and that multiple components can be affected simultaneously.

clarify your understanding of a problem, such as if you are unsure of the precise nature of the problem. Exploratory research has the advantage that it is *flexible* and *adaptable* to change, and the path of the research will typically change as new data and new insights appear.

This thesis also has components of an explanatory nature. An *explanatory* study involves studying a problem or situation in order to explain the relationships between variables, often with the aim of establishing causalities (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). From the research model and hypotheses you can see that some components of this study are more of an explanatory nature, trying to test relationships between variables that are suggested in prior research.

4.2.2 Research approach: Inductive vs. deductive

There are two main approaches to conducting research; deduction and induction, which are primarily based on how theory and conclusions are derived. *Deduction* starts with theory which is later tested through a research strategy (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Deductive reasoning occurs when the conclusion is derived logically from a set of premises, the conclusion being true when all the premises are true (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010). In contrast, *inductive* reasoning starts with collecting data to explore a phenomenon and then generating theory from the findings from the data (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). In inductive reasoning there is a gap in the logic argument between the conclusion and the premises observed, the conclusion being "judged" to be supported by the observations made (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010).

Following my explorative intent, an inductive approach seems to be appropriate. On the other hand, this field of research has a lot of good theory which needs further in-depth testing, which fits well with a deductive research approach. Saunders et al. (2012) note that research approaches does not have to be rigid divisions, and that the best approach is combining deduction and induction in the way most suitable for the specific research at hand. Along the same lines, Arbnor and Bjerke (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009, s. 8) believe that "methodology is not a recipe found in a cookbook, it is not decided by finding the one suitable method for the specific problem you wish to study". Methodology is, as a "creator of knowledge", actively choosing techniques based on reflections about what makes a study consistent and fitted for the task at hand (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009). Because of the amount of and complexity of the theory in the field of moral decision making, in addition to the lack of united theory and deep

4.3 Data Gathering

The initial interviews had a broader focus where the purpose was to get an overview of the topic, to understand more of the moral decision making processes, and to see which topics related to moral decision making would be fruitful and interesting for the further research in this study. As described in section 4.4 Data Analysis, *constant comparison of data* was made to give direction for the further interviews. In addition to the constant comparison and theoretical sampling, I conducted a thorough literature study which was important for guiding the focus of this thesis.

Throughout the process of gathering data the focus of the interview changed and became narrower as more samples were studied. Based on some findings and my thorough literature study, I decided to narrow the focus on *Moral Identity* and it's relation to the decision making process and happiness (see Chapter 3: Research Model). However, the overall design stayed the same: I used the same sampling method, interview technique, ethical considerations, interview guide design and the same method of analysis. In the coming section I will describe the process of data gathering and the decisions I made.

4.3.1 Literature Study

Simultaneously as the first interviews were designed and conducted I began the search for relevant literature for this study. I mainly used Google Scholar and the MIIS Library in this process, and the access to and amount of literature related to the topic was almost overwhelming. From the articles I found, I dived even deeper into the different topics by looking up the primary references which lead to yet more articles. As mentioned earlier the topic of moral decision making is a crossroad of philosophy, psychology and behavioral economics. The amount of literature in the field is overwhelming *and* limiting – overwhelming in the sense that there is an ocean of articles to drown in, and lacking in the sense that most of the studies are not uniting the three main fields.

My aim for this thesis was not to unite this gap in literature, but at the same time it was necessary to include theories from the different fields to provide a broader and more holistic background for my thesis. There is a fine balance between too much theory and too little, and one should be careful including theories that are not actively used in the design of the research model and the discussion of the findings. I have tried my best finding this balance, which ultimately resulted in the critical Literature Review in Chapter 2. However, in choosing

Designing the Interview Guide

I designed mainly *two different interview guides* for the semi-structured interviews; one for the first six interviews and another one for the following five interviews (see Appendix). In addition to this, there were small variances in the content of every interview, based on findings from previous interviews and interesting topics that emerged during the interviews. The second interview guide was more in depth on the topic of moral identity, but still provided flexibility to me as a researcher and the respondent, and was considered more a guiding rather than binding framework.

In designing both of the interview guides I wanted the conversation with the interviewees to be based on some specific decisions they had made. Decision making is a complex topic in the first place, and adding the ethics component makes it even harder formulating questions that are of some measurable value and at the same time possible for the interviewees to answer. A difficulty when it comes to asking questions about morality and identity is that the topic might be hard to grasp, and answers can be too lofty and general to be measured and categorized. Relating all of the questions to *specific decisions* make the data more detailed and grounded in real life situations. When the two decisions are contrasting (positive-negative or proud/regretful) this provides a foundation for comparing the data, enabling comparison for each respondent and between respondents.

Interview Guide I consisted of three themes: characteristics of the decisions, mood, and post mode evaluations. Interview Guide II consisted of four themes: characteristics of the decisions, situational factors, happiness, moral identity. Within these themes I constructed *open ended questions*, which allows the researcher to dig deeper on interesting topics and allowing participants to more freely elaborate and reflect upon the questions asked. When constructing the variables and questions for the interview guides, I used prior research to find inspiration on how to *operationalize* (and measure) the variables in a suitable way. However, not all themes and variables had sufficient information on how to measure and operationalize, so creativity and critical thinking was necessary to create the interview guides.

The Interview Setting

Prior to the interviews I sent the interview guide to all participants. I did this of several reasons. First, letting the interviewees know the content of the interview seems fair and ethical, especially when preventing insight to the questions will not give any methodological benefits. Second, giving the interviewees access to the questions gives them more time to

4.4 Data Analysis

4.4.1 Preparing the Analysis

As already mentioned, most of the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim, i.e. word by word. For the interviews that were not recorded, thorough notes were taken during and after the interview. After every interview I made time to take notes and sum up my first impression of what the main findings from each interview were. After transcribing I would go over the notes again and add more findings and details, and for the interviews that were conducted and transcribed in Norwegian I also had to translate the content to English. Having to translate the data involves the *risk of changing or losing the meaning* of some things, but I consider it preferable over having the respondents answer the interviews in their second language which could also disrupt the data because of possible difficulties expressing themselves sufficiently and feeling uncomfortable during the interview. When translating the transcribed interviews I focused on capturing the essence rather than a word by word translation.

4.4.2 Method of Analysis: Grounded Theory Analysis

The Grounded Theory Method is often associated with a number of defined procedures to collect and analyze data, with a number of precise procedures to be followed in relation to each of its analytical processes (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). However, different approaches have emerged, and some are less strict than the original method (e.g. Chamaz, 2006). I have not followed a strict method, but rather put emphasis on the three main procedures that are important for the analysis of data: 1) *constant comparison*, 2) *theoretical sampling*, and 3) *theoretical saturation*. How I treated theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation was discussed earlier in this chapter, so this section will mainly focus on the constant comparison of data.

In general the data analysis process can be divided in two parts; initial coding and focused coding (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). In *initial coding* the data that you collect will be disaggregated into conceptual units and labeled, the same label will be given to similar units of data. These labels can relate to a few words, a sentence, a number or sentences or a paragraph. An example of a label is "Values" which can contain words or sentences related to the interviewees' values. Here it must be noted that there is ongoing analysis in the process of labeling and categorizing the data; for example for the label "Values" some units will be

semi-structured interview is considered a strong method as long as the interviewer explores the relationships between the variables in a thorough manner.

4.5.2 Construct and Communicative Validity

Construct validity is concerned with the extent to which your research measures actually measure what you intend them to assess (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012), but this is more related to quantitative methods of research. For qualitative research, a more relevant measure of validity is communicative validity, which concerns the extent to which the researcher *interpret the communication accurately* and in the way intended by the interview subject (Ims, 1987). To ensure communicative validity I let the interviewees have a look at the written material from the interviews to confirm my interpretations and having the opportunity to add and correct information.

4.5.3 External Validity

External validity is about the extent to which the findings from the research can be generalized to other contexts, such as other settings or groups. A semi-structured interview cannot be generalized statistically due to its qualitative research design and small (and unrepresentative) sample size (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). By using this methodology it is impossible to achieve an optimal degree of external validity, but the findings can still be used to *discover patterns and hints* about what might be true for the population, and such hints are valuable for future quantitative research with the aim of generalizing the findings.

Additionally, it must be noted that the sample of this study is *heterogeneous*, both with regard to age, gender, educational background, nationality, industry and positions as decision makers in organizational contexts. This is an advantage in the way that findings across this diverse group of people might indicate some degree of generalizability for the population as a whole. On the other hand, this must also be considered a challenge, since differences between these individuals may be due to several different factors which are difficult to isolate.

4.6 Reliability

Reliability refers to whether the data collection techniques and analytic procedures would produce consistent findings if they were repeated on another occasion or if they were replicated by a different researcher (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012, s. 192). In general,

generalize for the whole population, in addition to the sample being very diverse and all interview subjects agreed to participate immediately.

4.7 Research Ethics

"In every meeting you hold some of the other person's life in your hands"

- Knud E. Løgstrup -

This quote from Løgstrup is of great importance to me, and since the first time I heard it I have tried to have it in mind for every meeting in my life – and especially when interacting with the interview subjects for this thesis. Løgstrup emphasizes relationships and intimacy in his ethics, and the potential power you have in any meeting with other individuals should be treated with respect. Further, a good meeting requires trust between the meeting parts, which in turn cannot be accomplished without the individuals showing courage to be vulnerable towards each other (Brown, 2012).

Conducting research like this involves a lot of vulnerability on the interviewees' part. Giving a researcher (in fact a stranger) access to deep thoughts and personal experience requires a lot of trust, in addition to time and resources. These trusting, open and giving acts are of great admiration from my part, and they deserve the same amount of respect and trustworthiness in return. The following section describes how I have worked ensure the highest level of quality regarding the moral issues related to my research.

4.7.1 Informed Consent

The principle of informed consent involves researchers providing sufficient information and assurances about taking part to allow individuals to understand the implications of participation and to reach a fully informed, considered and freely given decision about whether or not to participate, without the exercise of any pressure or coercion (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). Thus, it is my aim to meet the interview subjects with respect and care, ensuring their autonomy and privacy rights through being open and truthful, without compromising the quality of research.

Before each interview the interview participant was informed about the purpose of the study, as well as consent on voluntary participation. In addition to this, they were given insight to the content of the interview by receiving the interview guide prior to the interview. As a

4.8 Weaknesses and Limitations

The most important limitation of this study is the time and resource constraints. With more time and resources on hand I could have increased the sample size and the scope of research. Especially since sampling technique is based on theoretical sampling, more time and a larger sample size could have provided a higher level of theoretical saturation. Also, more time for each interview, or multiple interviews with the same individuals, could have provided more depth to the research.

A second weakness is that I cannot know for sure whether the respondents answered the questions in a truthful and honest manner. A respondent may give false information or hold back information about his or her life and experiences. Especially since a significant part of the interview is about a decision that the interviewee considers regretful, shame and blameworthy parts of the stories might drive the interviewee to intentionally or unintentionally telling the story inaccurate. Besides the measures I have discussed earlier in this chapter there is not much I can do to control this issue. One solution is interviewing other people that know the participant to verify the data, but this would be time and resource consuming in addition to the potential issue of these people not presenting the data accurately either. For me it comes down to trusting the participants and creating a trusting and safe environment for the interviewees to be open and honest. Another issue related to this research method and the interview design is post evaluation biases. Humans do not necessarily remember the past accurately, e.g. when it comes to remembering mood, pain, and what actually happened in the specific situation. This implies that even if the interviewees are trying their best to remember and retell the story of the decisions accurately, there is a high risk of their memory being biased.

Another weakness that I have mentioned earlier is the lack of recordings for two of the interviews. Having to trust and be dependent upon my own memory of the interviews increases the risk of losing important details or misinterpreting findings. By taking detailed notes during and after the interview, keeping an objective approach, and giving the respondents the chance to verify and add data I hope that this weakness does not deteriorate the quality of this research. Related to this is the issue of presence and focus during the interviews. As a researcher it is difficult to keep the conversation flowing and authentic at the same time as paying attention to details and making good notes. I think the interviews could

Chapter 5: Findings

"Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom"

— Aristotle

5.1 First Findings

As discussed in Chapter 4: Methodology this thesis is based on the Grounded Theory Method. This means that the topic of the interviews has slightly changed during the process of data gathering and data analysis, in addition to new literature being included along the way. Even though every interview is different from the other, the interviews can be grouped in two main categories. The first six interviews are more explorative, less founded on theories from the literature, and a little shorter in time with each interviewee. Due to less data and short meetings in this first section of interviews, I have chosen to not personalize the findings like I do in the next section. When citing the interviewees from the first six interviews I refer to them by numbers (see Appendix for list of participants), and in presenting the findings from these interviews I chose to present the findings collectively rather than as separate profiles. However, when analyzing the data in Chapter 5 the data from all eleven interviews are treated equally.

5.1.1 Main findings from the first six interviews

The first finding is that mood at the time of decision making proves to be difficult to research. First, most of my interviewees *did not remember the mood* at the point of decision unless it was an extreme case of mood. Based on these six interviews (and twelve decisions analyzed) it seems like extreme moods are not common, and five out of six interviewees could not remember being in any specific mood at the point of decision. Furthermore, researching mood offers challenges because many decisions are taken over a long period of time – either as a long decision process in the organization or as series of incremental decisions – which includes a variety of moods.

A second finding is that the interviewees showed *varying degrees of ethical sensitivity*, which is the ability to recognize that a moral issue exists (Sparks & Hunt, 1998). When answering the question "Were there any ethical issues or conflicting values related to the decisions?" some of the interviewees did not see the moral aspects of the decision situation. I think this

the person's identity, confirming and strengthening the moral identity. In this process and through post mode reflections on the decisions, the interviewees got to know themselves better. "Who I am and who I want to be," "conforming with my values", "it felt right", "something I stand for", "important to me" are some of the words used to explain why they made that specific decision. On this topic of moral identity I could see a difference between the students and the more experienced interviewees; it seemed like the experienced interviewees were *more aware of this connection* to their identity and they spoke more in depth and directly about their moral identity while the students talked more indirectly and unconsciously about this relationship.

5.1.2 Implications and Further Research – The Next Section of Interviews

Based on the findings discussed above, I found it appropriate not to study the mood at point of decision. However, looking closer at how positive decisions affects the long term mood (happiness) for individuals is an interesting topic. Positive psychology has become popular also in business, and the findings from this pilot study indicate that positive (proud) decisions can be a sustainable source of long term happiness. This relationship should be researched in a deeper manner.

Another interesting topic is impulsive and thoughtful decisions and their relation to success and failure. Are the proud decisions more often thoughtful rather than impulsive? And are the thoughtful decisions really more successful or it is just easier to feel proud when more thought has gone into the decision making process? In addition to this, it would be interesting to see whether people would like to have more time for decisions and more perfect information (indicating perfectionism), and possibly how they would spend this extra time. Are there differences between genders, industries and leadership roles on this matter?

Based on the main findings from the pilot study, it would be interesting to look closer at how moral identity influence decisions, and also how decisions and decision outcome affects the individuals' (moral) identity. The interviews indicate that there is a relationship going both ways, where moral identity forms decisions and decisions forms the moral identity of the individual. In relation to this point, it would be interesting to examine how moral identity is formed, how people become acquainted with oneself, and whether different moral identities can be attributed to different characteristics (e.g. whether women have a different moral identity than men). These findings in addition to relevant literature gave directions for Interview Guide II and the following interviews.

Sigurd does not feel comfortable using the words "proud" and "regretful" when talking about his decisions, so I let him use the terms positive and negative decision since that is more in line with what he feels about these decisions. Regarding the proud part, Sigurd explains "I'm not particularity proud. It is not like a proud moment for me, it was just the good feeling of doing the right thing. For me there was never any doubt whether the decision was good or not – it was about doing the right thing. Is was about doing justice in a way, and being true. People should not get away with lying and cheating the public and doing harmful things to *our* environment".

Sigurd puts great emphasis on the word 'our' when he is talking about environment. "Our environment is important. And the use of 'the environment' creates a distance, like we're not responsible. Like it is some external factor that is just there and we can do nothing about". This explains why Sigurd feels the responsibility to talk the cause of nature and environment – and this responsibility is what drives all the difficult decisions he has made. In all his decisions he could have chosen to close his eyes, but instead he takes responsibility and becomes the voice of moral actions. "I'm trained as a life guard –and when you're trained as a life guard you can't pass someone that is drowning. And that's kind of what this was like: I saw our community drowning and I had to help. So it wasn't really much of a decision – you have to help!". He talks further about this relationship to nature "I feel responsibility of protecting these places that I know and love. The forests and nature around here…I know them very well. They're kind of like my friends, and I want to protect my friends. And nature can't vote. So that is important to me."

The decision Sigurd characterizes as negative is particularly interesting because there are so many positive things about it – the motivation, the rightness and the end results. Sigurd accomplished what he wanted, but at a high personal cost. "I underestimated the power of politics and what people are willing to do to gain power and keeping face. I should have realized that all the factors were not in place for this decision to work out. Although, I did what I felt was the right thing to do, and I showed care for someone that did harmful things". Even when dealing with "criminals", Sigurd shows mercy and care. "We had all agreed on the main decision of exposing this information to the public, which implied this leader would have to go. I thought that informing him about what was going to happen and giving him the chance to resign and save his reputation was the human thing to do, despite his harmful actions. And people agreed with me on this, encouraging me to inform him. It is interesting

5.2.2 Unni

I met with Unni on a Friday morning. Her lively appearance and the coffee in our cups made this early meeting anything but sleepy. The two decisions that Unni chose for this interview are both dated some years back, but she remembers both of them like it was yesterday. And they are surprisingly similar – both of them are about quitting her job. The regretful decision is the time she got a new job, and her boss wanted her to keep it a secret to the other people in the company that she was leaving. "My leader asked me to not tell anyone about my decision to leave, to help them stay focused on delivering the work. So I walked around not telling people the truth about leaving the company, and this was hard for me. I had to stand upright knowing something the others didn't know, and just keep going to finish the deliverables. But you have to find some honesty and credibility for yourself too. There is a tension between being true and authentic towards my co-workers and myself, and trying not to think about it and getting the job done." Unni characterizes herself as a very open person that likes sharing, and that being used to sharing a lot made it even more difficult to hold back this information. And when the HR systems failed in hiding this information it resulted in her co-workers discussing the situation without her having the chance to tell them first.

"I wouldn't say that I really regret the decision of holding back the information, but if it was only up to me I would have shared it with my fellow employees. My leader was sad to see me go. We had a close relationship, we worked really well together and we had been through a lot of pressure together. It felt natural to me to restore the harmony in our relationship – and not saying anything was the least I could do". It is clear that relationships are important for Unni, and that is also something she seeks in her career. "When I have leaders I find it very interesting getting close to them and it is important to me to have close relationships with my leaders."

On the other hand, Unni also points out that being a part of a bigger whole sometimes means putting yourself to the side. "You have some values yourself, but you are also a part of something bigger. And sometimes you need to show loyalty not to yourself, but loyalty towards a greater whole". Being a part of a greater whole is one of the things that drive her. She is a team player and believes strongly in creating something together and building each other stronger. "I like people a lot, and I get a lot of good feedback on that, but I think it is my strength and my weakness. My identity – being very open. There is something special and beautiful about being close to other human beings. But when you're a leader, or in other

5.2.3 Njord

I met with Njord through the video conference tool FaceTime a late night in Norway, and the morning sun was shining in his office of a large multinational corporation somewhere far away. Right from the start he feels energetic and awake, almost alert in a way – ready to tackle the tasks and decisions coming his way. He has had a long career in a company and my impression is that he has a lot of experience from the corporate world; he is professional in everything he does, and his charisma tells me he combines the role of being a doer, analyst and a leader.

We start out talking about Njord's proud decision. This decision is the stereotype ethical dilemma you picture multinational corporations dealing with; transparency and corruption. "We got the license to operate in an African country. When you start operating in a new country, you have to pay taxes to the country, but some countries, like this case, also require large signature bonuses from entering companies. Our company has a transparency policy which implies publishing how much we pay to every country we operate. The dilemma emerged when this specific country had laws that prohibited publishing of these numbers." This decision was of high strategic importance and involved high financial risks for the company. "Not only was this a dilemma between sticking to our own values, possibly violating some established interpretations of local regulations and risk losing the license and billions of dollars. It was also a conflict between our company's own values. Transparency and compliance are two important values for us, and compliance means complying with all global and local laws in the countries we operate". What makes you proud of this decision? "What I am proud of is not only that we did what I think was the right thing, but we did it well. We developed a thorough strategy, followed through and succeeded. We published the numbers without being in conflict with the authorities of that country". For Njord it is important that the company sticks to its values, because the values are the core of the company and central to the identity of those who work there. "It is important that we maintain the company's integrity".

How does this relate to your goals in life? "For me, my main professional goal is helping this company becoming an even better and stronger company. A company with good values, a company showing courage and being a leading example in the industry, and a company that can survive and stay strong for a long time. Having a meaningful job is important to me, and I find meaning in being part of something greater than myself, and being a change agent

decision for a new company – and Vidar knows that surrounding yourself with talented people is the key to success. "I am proud that I got my two partners on board and I am proud of my business idea, my concept. My two partners are good professionals and they would not invest their spare time in something they don't believe in. First, the fact that they joined my team is a proof of a good idea to begin with. Second, I am proud that I got so talented people on board."

Vidar thinks highly of his partners and cherishes them not only for their skills and talents that will be valuable for the running of the business, but he cherishes them as good people that he trust gets along well with. Getting along with people does not seem to me like Vidar's kind of problem, being very sociable, outgoing and the networking kind of guy. Still, he recognizes the value of good and stable relations. "Conflicts arise in businesses every day, conflicts are a part of business life. But being able to see which types of people that fit together and not is an important skill, because at the end of the day business is all about people. This is why 'people skills' are so important – in the end it is not about the specs or numbers, it's about the people."

From his happy feelings about his business partners, I can see that Vidar feels a lot of regret and blame for the second decision. The second decision is his choice of ownership structure of the company, which has shown not to be viable for several reasons. First, he should have kept a bigger part to himself for being the main founder and having a clear majority of the shares. Second, the ownership structure will not be viable in the eyes of investors, and can be viewed as a 'lazy' beginner's mistake. "I see the problem being that I made a promise both verbally and legally to my partners, and now I will have to go back on my word and cause conflict so early on in the process – because this will definitely cause conflict. We are in the phase where we're trying to get a product built, and now we'll have a conflict on a company that has actually zero customers and zero revenue, and zero investments. So before we get off the ground we're going to be fighting over some mysterious sum of money that we don't even have – and this is going to be a distraction. This restructuring of the ownership is a necessary evil, something that has to happen, but I regret that we didn't structure like that from the beginning."

Vidar describes both decisions as easy and instinctive at the time being, and he says that a lot of decisions in business are based on gut feeling. When he is reflecting upon the reasons for this structuring mistake he states that "The reason for this mistake is me not doing proper

5.2.5 Bodil

Bodil is the CEO of a big company in Norway. Despite her busy schedule Bodil was immediately positive and eager to be interviewed for my study. Her proud decision happened recently when she and her company were negotiating a contract with another company. After the negotiations the other company came back with a contract stating that Bodil's company would be the subcontractor for another company – which was not agreed on during the negotiations. Bodil though that this was reprehensible behavior both in terms of moral, legal and competitive reasons, and decided to not let them get away with this. Risking losing the whole deal, she confronted them and negotiated a new deal with better terms for her company. "What makes me proud is that I was brave enough to pick this fight and that I worked in such a professional manner that I won the case. Being a subcontractor affects our employees in several ways; their pride, their feeling of safety, and the difficulties in communication from having a customer like that. And I know that few people would have done the same because they see it as too risky potentially ruining the relationship with the other company. For me this is about the pride and integrity of the company, and that is something I can't let pass"

Bodil has had a long career and has experience from many different industries and companies. My impression is that she is a strong and brave woman, and that she is highly respected both by her own employees and competitors in the industry. What does this decision mean to you? "Oh, it means a lot to me! It shows that I make a difference. I am proud of doing something good for the company. It shows that if you work hard and show courage you will reach through." What have you learned about yourself from this decision? "I've learned that I'm taken seriously and that people listen to me. This has given me additional confidence in myself and my abilities to make good decisions."

The second decision, the one she regrets, was more difficult in some ways. The first one was provoking and it was natural for Bodil to take action. This decision was regarding a conflict between some of the employees, where Bodil felt a loyalty conflict on a deeper personal level. "I hired a person that I believe is very talented and bright – a great resource for the company. This person is disputed and many people feel threatened by her. I felt sure that she had great potential, but I also saw some of her shortcomings and the need for correction. She was supposed to work together with this other guy, who several times tried to lessen her role in the project. And the regretful part is that I let this happen; I gave some room for bullying her – or not necessarily bullying, but attempts of exclusion." Later, Bodil corrected her mistake of

for too long and that is lack of decisiveness – and I don't want to be like that. As I said, I want to be a positive role model!"

definition worked fine for this research, but has major limitations when it comes to studying a broader population. This definition is based on two assumptions; 1) all human beings are fundamentally good and possess good values, and 2) immoral behavior is due to lack of utilizing the good values, not a lack of good values. I think these two assumptions are true for many people, and in this study this limited definition of moral behavior worked fine. The reason for choosing this definition was that moral dilemmas usually have no right or wrong. If there is one clearly right decision and one clearly wrong decision it is most likely not a moral dilemma. Moral dilemmas are situations with conflicting values, where you have to prioritize between values that are important to you. Therefore, as a researcher, it was better to not take the role as the "moral judge" and rather let the interview subjects be the judge of their own actions.

However, it is important to see the limitations of this definition. I think there are many examples of people acting according to their own values and still acting immoral. Some people are willing to kill and do other harmful actions, fully aware of what they are doing and believing they are doing the right thing. Whether they are truly acting according to their values or whether there are situational factors disabling them to know their values and moral identity are important questions to ask. This question of "what is morality" is important to raise when researching moral behavior; would the world become a better place in everyone acted according to their values, or is there a set of universal values that should be followed? Philosophers have been asking these questions for thousands of years and there is still no clear answer to this. In finding the answer of this question I think a key gaining a deeper and broader understanding of humans' moral identity. If we study thousands of people from different parts of the world, do we deep down have the same values and moral identity or are there big differences? This should be a focus for future research on the topic.

My definition of moral behavior does not pose a great threat to the quality of the data in this study, because all interviewees exposed values that are universally acknowledged as good and important. So for the further discussion of the findings, the definition of "moral behavior is acting according to your own values" is valid.

6.2.2 Pride and Regret
A second issue that must be discussed is the use of the words proud and regretful when describing the decisions. The interviewees were explicitly asked to choose one proud and one

However, there is one element that might partly explain this relationship. The individuals with a central moral identity chose to describe decisions with far more *ethical complexity* and moral character than the individuals with a less central moral identity. An example of this is Unni, who described a life altering decision where she put the company's interests before her own – and described the decision as being true and authentic. At the other end of the scale is Interviewee 3, who chose a technical decision and could not see any ethical nuances related to the decision. The question is what can explain this finding. Is it because the individuals with a central moral identity actually engage in moral behavior more often than those with a less central moral identity? Or is it because the individuals with a central moral identity are more morally oriented in general (i.e. more concerned with ethics) and thus chose decisions with a moral character rather than the "simpler" technical decisions in their life? This should be explored in future studies.

My general impression from their life stories can help enlighten this topic as well. The interviewees in this study varied in age, gender, nationality, education, employment and background. From their life stories, not only the two decisions discussed in the interview, I got a sense of the interviewee's general behavior and moral identity. For some of the interviewees that have a particularly *central moral identity* (e.g. idealist or philanthropic outlook) I could see a pattern of moral actions throughout their lives. For example Sigurd has chosen to dedicate his life to protecting our environment and repeatedly he chooses to do what he sees as right even when there is great risk and costs related to the decision. Other interviewees, such as Unni and Bodil, also seem to have a similar pattern of behavior. It is important to note that how they portrait themselves and how they tell their life stories might be biased, but my impression is that their stories were honest and authentic. For the individuals with a less central moral identity I have no data indicating that they engage in less moral or immoral behavior.

The findings from this study can neither support nor reject the findings from prior research, although some of the findings might indicate such a positive relationship.

6.3.2 Hypothesis 2: Situational Factors
Prior research suggests that the accessibility of moral identity is a combination of two things; the centrality of moral identity and situational factors that may strengthen or weaken the accessibility of moral identity. Through the participants' descriptions about the circumstances and issues related to the decisions, five main categories of situational factors emerged from

Thoughtful vs. instinctive

The use of instinct, intuition and gut feel in decision making is debated, but there are certainly a good amount of decisions in organizational life that are based on gut feel. If I was to evaluate what is a thoughtful and what is a distinctive decision, the categorization would be very much congruent with the time for decision making, and thus would not provide any new insights. When categorizing decisions as thoughtful or instinctive I chose to do this based on *the interviewees' own opinion* on what was thoughtful and instinctive decisions. Many of the interviewees used neither of these words describing their decisions, which mean there is not that much data on the subject.

Out of the eight decisions that the interviewees characterized as instinctive decisions, five were regretful and three were proud. The data does not suggest any relationship between instinctive decisions and outcome, neither a relationship between instinctive decisions and accessibility of moral identity. This could be interesting for future research, especially since instincts often are rooted in some deeper values and schemas, and the relationship between this and moral identity needs further exploration.

Influence from others

Another category of situational factors is whether the decision process was influenced by other persons, or whether the decision maker was all alone in making the decision. This category is further divided into three different forms of influence: 1) Positive or negative pressure from others, 2) seeking or receiving advice, and 3) group think or conformity pressure. Pressure goes for both individual and group decisions, seeking or receiving advice goes only for individual decisions, and group think and conformity pressure goes only for group decisions.

When it comes to *direct pressure from other people*, there are several examples of that. Unni was in a way pressured by her boss to keep quiet about leaving her job. However, here it must also be noted that Unni kept quiet not only because she was pressured, but because she cared about her boss and she also found it the professional way of dealing with the situation, not creating too much noise in the organization. Interviewee 2 was partly pressured by others to address a topic with his boss, which had negative implications for his relationship with this person. Interviewee 5 was pressured to take a position in an organization without really wanting the position, which had negative implications for herself and the quality of her work in the organization. Last, interviewee 6 was partly pressured (or at least strongly advised) to

and two co-workers decided to hire the "experienced outsider" rather than the younger person from within the company, and he explained that all three of them agreed on the decision. Also this decision might have been affected by group think.

Mood at time of decision
This is discussed in Chapter 5: Findings and will therefore not be discussed in further detail here. To briefly sum up, the interviewees were *not able to remember* being in any specific mood at the time of decision, with exception of Interviewee 3 that could remember being in a very positive mood when making a regretful hiring decision. According to prior research (Wright & Bower, 1992) mood is expected to result in groundedness of decisions, where negative moods influence people to be more exact observers. For this case it is likely that the positive mood influenced the decision maker's ability in critical thinking and exact judgments. This does not necessarily have any influence on the accessibility of his moral identity, but it is also possible that the positive mood "drowned" the moral identity in the way that it made him forget his deeper values.

Commonality or rarity
The question of commonality or rarity can provide interesting data in several ways. First, it says a lot about the company's culture and values, and whether there are any moral exemplars or heroes in the organization. Additionally, it tells us whether the decision was controversial or expected by others which in turn indicates *the difficulty of making the decision*. Making decisions that breaks the "normality" in organizations is expected to require a more central moral identity; while making a decision that is highly supported by the organization reduces the importance of a central moral identity. Out of the 22 decisions analyzed seven are characterized as rare and six as common, the rest are either neutral or non applicable. From the rare and common decisions there is no clear pattern related to the outcome of the decision. There are slightly more proud decisions that are rare compared to common ones, but this difference may be explained by the choice of decision – people might be more proud or likely to pick a proud decision that was "difficult but successful" rather than "easy and successful". To conclude, the data from the interviews does not indicate a relationship between rarity/commonality and accessibility of moral identity.

6.3.3 Hypothesis 3: Moral Behavior
According to prior research, a high accessibility of moral identity should (amongst other variables) positively influence the moral decision process towards moral behavior. So the

moral action to happen, and it also shows that even if the situational factors does not "drown" the moral identity there could be other factors making the decision maker not engage in moral behavior.

6.3.4 Hypothesis 4: Enhanced Centrality of Moral Identity?

This hypothesis was based on findings from the first six interviews where several interviewees seemed to have *been through a distinctive moral decision which further made them more morally focused and aware of their own moral identity*. Examples of this were Interviewee 4, 5 and 6 who described difficult and meaningful decisions that made them realize who they are and what is important to them. Additionally these experiences made them more focused on "doing the right thing", "being good to others" and "knowing oneself". This made me want to explore this relationship further.

Out of the next five interviews, three interviewees (Sigurd, Unni, and Bodil) seemed to be characterized by the same tendencies. Sigurd has been working on moral cases for decades now, and it seems to be rooted deeply in his moral identity. He also described a life changing decision, and how this has implicated his later decisions. Unni also made a life changing decision, and seems to be more concerned about ethics and existential questions after that experience. Bodil explained how she has changed as a decision maker throughout her career, and she said that she takes human aspects more into consideration now than before, and her moral identity and values seems to be the foundation for most of her decisions.

However, there are multiple uncertainties regarding this relationship between moral action and strengthening of moral identity. First of all, it is a question of "the chicken or the egg". Are these individuals more ethically centered because of all the moral decisions they have made? Or did they make all these moral decisions because they were morally centered in the first place? Or is this an eternal circle of increasing morality, meaning moral individuals will act morally and then become even more concerned with morality and the act more morally, and so on? And if there is such a circle, is it possible to research this and see if life altering moments and decisions (turning points) can happen and evoke this circle of morality? If there is a relationship like this, knowing what might evoke this relationship and make individuals more ethically concerned could be of value both for businesses, society, and people's personal life.

6.4 Happiness and well-being

The interviewees experienced happiness through different components of PERMA, but which elements of PERMA were most important to the interviewees?

This study started out focusing on happiness as a more general term, and the interviewees referred to happiness mainly as <u>positive emotions</u>. Overall, most interviewees experienced some positive emotions related to the proud decision. Some interviewees expressed a lot of positive emotions and joy because of the successful and proud decision, but these positive emotions were often connected to the other parts of PERMA. Many were *happy because of* their achievements, a meaningful job, or positive relationships. This makes it harder to isolate the positive emotions and study them in their "pure form", although my impression is that some of the interviewees also experienced positive emotions in a purer form. Also, this is interesting because it shows that the other components can be drivers of positive emotions, which underlines the importance of pursuing the other components rather than positive emotions in its pure form. This is in line with Seligman's critique of hedonism and the pursuit of pleasure. Additionally, the positive emotions seemed to be less significant in the longer term – in the longer term other components of PERMA took over as the contributor to happiness and well-being.

<u>Engagement</u> or <u>gratitude</u> is the component of PERMA that were the least important to the interviewees – few interviewees mentioned gratitude or being completely engaged in a project or task. This does not necessarily mean that gratitude is of less importance, it might be explained by the other components being easier to talk about for the interviewees and easier to discover for me as a researcher. There were two clear examples of gratitude amongst the interviewees; Sigurd was grateful for the life he is living, and Unni was grateful for all the good relationships in her life. Also here the components are related to each other – Unni was grateful *because of* her positive relationships, and as I interpreted it Sigurd was grateful *because of* the possibility to pursue such a meaningful career.

Several interviewees mentioned <u>positive relationships</u> as important. Unni and Bodil talked openly about all the good people they are surrounded by, while Njord and Vidar talked about family as the most important thing in life. Nearness, intimacy and love from relationships seem to be of high important to the interviewees in my study.

	Sigurd Proud	Sigurd Regret	Unni Proud	Unni Regret	Njord Proud	Njord Regret	Vidar Proud	Vidar Regret	Bodil Proud	Bodil Regret
Transcendence: strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provides meaning	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Justice: civic strengths underlie healthy community life	X	X			X	X		X	X	X
Temperance: Strengths that protect against excess			X	X						
Courage: emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal	X		X		X		X		X	
Humanity: interpersonal strengths that involves tending and befriending others	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Wisdom and knowledge: cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge	X				X				X	X

Figure 4: Virtues from data

It is important to note that these findings are not necessarily representative for the interviewees' general behavior and being – a different choice of decisions might have given different results.

As you can see from Figure 4, the findings indicate that (not surprisingly) the interviewees practiced *fewer virtues in the regretful decisions compared to the proud decisions*. This is in line with the assumptions that practice of virtues is the key to moral behavior. There is no

making as well as other aspects of business life. Additionally, there is a great gap in the number of female leaders and board members compared to the male proportion. My initial thought was that there might be some aspects of morality and moral decision making that could help explain this gap.

The number of men and women in this study is not large enough to draw conclusions about gender differences, especially since the sample is diverse when it comes to background, age, education and employment. Additionally, most of the female participants in this study had either been holding or are holding leader positions in a company, which might make them different from those women who do not take leader positions in business. Regardless of this, I find it interesting to see whether there are any tendencies towards gender differences amongst this sample of interviewees.

The women in this study talked more about morality, moral identity and values than the men. This could indicate that the women are more morally oriented or has a more central moral identity compared to the men. This could also be just a coincidence because of small sample size, or it could be that women more easily and freely talk about such topics. Another explanation to this difference could be that women open up easier, or that women open up easier towards a female researcher than men do. Overall there is not a significant difference, but there might be a slight tendency that women's moral identity is more central than that of men.

Gilligan (1982) argues that men and women have different moral orientations, meaning they see different virtues and values as important. The typical distinction that Gilligan found is that women emphasize love and care, while men emphasize fairness and justice. Overall the data from the interviews support this distinction; several of the female participants mentioned love, care and relationships as important, while several male participants mentioned fairness as important. However there are also exceptions; Sigurd talked about care as his core value and for Bodil fairness was a central value. Thus, there is no clear indication of such a difference between men and women.

6.4.3 Motivation
Another finding from this study is the relationship between moral identity and motivation. Moral identity itself has a motivational force, but what was also discovered through the interviews is that motivation might work as a situational factor influencing the process of

I have been reflecting upon the possible reasons of this disconnect and distance between himself as an individual and the professional Njord working for the company. Is it because of a strong sense of professionalism that he does not address personal topics? Is it because of his long experience in this industry that he has learned to be very cautious about what to share and not? Is it because he works in an industry that receives a lot of critique from media, and thus he is not sharing more than necessary? Or is it a result of a corporate culture that does not make room for individual values and thoughts? Or is the answer simply that his moral identity is not central to him? Unfortunately I do not have the answer, but the relationship between industry, corporate culture, position in the company and moral identity might be an interesting topic for future research.

6.4.5 Knowing yourself

One of the most important findings from this study, in my opinion, is the relationship between knowing yourself and the centrality of moral identity. The interviewees with a central moral identity had *spent a lot of time reflecting upon moral issues* and existential questions such as the meaning of life and what a good life is. As discussed earlier in this chapter this could also be the other way around; that because of a central moral identity they spend time on getting to know themselves. I believe this relationship could go both ways, but through their life stories and how I experienced the interviews I think there is great potential and value in getting to know yourself.

After the interviews several interviewees expressed that they got to know themselves better through the interview and they found it interesting thinking about topics of morality that they had not been thinking about before. My impression is that many people do not spend time thinking through these issues and they are not familiar with their moral self because of that. I believe that the reason for some people having a less central moral identity might be that they have not explored their moral self yet. But if there is a positive relationship between exploring your moral self and the centrality of moral identity, and further a relationship between the centrality of moral identity and moral behavior, there is great value potential in helping people explore their moral self. If one interview helped the interviewees in getting to know themselves better, there are many initiatives and "interventions" we can make in business schools and in organizations to stimulate people to know themselves.

It seems like morality is a part of the self that cannot be excluded from certain decisions, as well as morality is a part of every decision – there are always some moral aspects to consider. Thus, the need for a more *holistic approach* to (moral) decision making is needed to better explain and understand human behavior related to moral issues.

7.2 Research Questions

To conclude what we might have learned from this study, I will elaborate on three of my research questions.

7.2.1 How does moral identity affect decision making?

The process of moral decision making is complex and this study does not provide enough data to conclude any causal relationships between the variables. The most difficult part of the research is accessibility of moral identity, because there are many different variables that possibly influence the accessibility. Based on the findings, moral decisions take place under many different circumstances, there was no clear pattern between situational factors and moral behavior. Despite these issues, the overall findings are that the centrality of moral identity seems to be of importance for moral decision making and moral behavior; people with a central moral identity make moral decisions more often that people with a less central moral identity.

7.2.2 How does moral behavior affect the moral identity of a person?

The findings from this study indicate that moral behavior is related to a central moral identity. Which way the causality in this relationship goes is not clear, but it is likely to go both ways. Thus, moral behavior might confirm and strengthen the centrality of moral identity, and a central moral identity will lead to more moral behavior. The findings also indicate that certain decisions, typically major decisions in life that represent turning points or big changes, are in particular of importance to the moral identity. Such decisions will guide decisions made later on. But how does immoral decisions and behavior affect a person's moral identity? My study does not answer this question, but this could be an interesting question for further research.

7.2.3 And how does moral decision making influence the decision makers' happiness?

As also discussed in Chapter 6, one of the main and unambiguous findings is that moral behavior (defined as acting according to your own values) through decision making can be a sustainable long term source of happiness and well being. Moral behavior leads to long term

questions, had a stronger moral identity. This might indicate that knowing yourself is a key to a central moral identity.

If knowing yourself leads to a central moral identity which in turn leads to moral behavior that ultimately leads to many positive implications, there is one easy and important thing organizations should do: encourage and help people get to know themselves. Morality is a part of every individual, but not everyone is used to thinking about existential and moral questions. Stimulating employees to get to know themselves better can be of great value to the company. This can be done through ethics training e.g. in seminars, meetings, or as a part of team building and social events. Ethics training is not only important in organizations, it is important everywhere. This kind of ethics training should be a part of schooling, especially business schools. Students should be encouraged to get familiar with their moral identity and stimulating their awareness of their deeper values.

7.4 What does it mean to know yourself?

As one of the main findings is that knowing yourself is the key to a more central moral identity and moral behavior, a central question in this context is; what does knowing yourself really mean?

Different philosophers may argue differently on this question, but the overall view is that knowing yourself is related to the ability to introspect. Introspection is the examination of one's own thoughts, impressions, feelings, sensations, etc. – sometimes referred to as self-examination. Socrates argues that knowing yourself involves knowing your own limitations, knowing your strengths and weaknesses. This is also related to control over the self and the ability to curb yourself – based on your knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses and your knowledge on who you are and who you want to be, you will curb yourself to act within these limitations. An example of this from my findings is Unni, who curbs her own aspirations for power, influence and ambitions to give up her position in the company to the benefit of the company and the other leader. Unni chose to curb some of her desires to follow a different path – a path she felt was right for herself and the company.

But is knowing your limitations enough? As discussed earlier, Njord had a more distant relationship in how he sees himself as an individual in relation to the company he is working for – which might be explained by a less central moral identity. Based on how Njord saw himself and his values in relation to the company, his introspection abilities may be perceived

finding of my study; morality and knowing yourself are closely related. The second point underlines the weakness of my definition of morality, because moral behavior is more than just acting according to your own values – it also involves taking the situation and some universal values into consideration. According to Taylor (1992), Moral behavior is acting according to your own values *within the horizon of what is commonly considered important values*. This leads us to the next question; what are universally considered important values?

One possible answer to this question is through the seven cardinal virtues (see Chapter 2: Literature Study for more on Virtue Theory), which have been considered the most important values or character qualities over a long period of time and across different cultures. The seven cardinal virtues are; prudence, justice, temperance, courage, faith, hope, and charity. A virtue that might be particularly related to knowing yourself is temperance, or moderation. Moderation requires an understanding of one's limitations and the strength to control your desires. Although justice is sometimes considered the most important virtue of all, Plato considered moderation (or Sophrosyne, as he called it) the most important virtue. Temperance is important in everything you do and in every decision you make, and is often expressed though other characteristics (or virtues) such as chastity, modesty, humility, prudence, self-regulation, forgiveness and mercy; each of these involves restraining an excess of some kind. The other six virtues are also important, because they represent characteristics that are necessary for moral behavior. Earlier I argued, based on the findings from my study, that in order to act morally you need to know yourself. Taylor (1992) argues that when you are acting morally that is when you know yourself. Whether these two arguments are supporting each other or differing in terms of the direction of the relationship is unclear, but what is most likely certain is that there is a relationship between knowing yourself, moral identity and moral behavior.

This view is supported by Ims' (2006) triangle of responsibility, where the decision maker has to consider their professional responsibility, personal responsibility and common morality. Thus, moral behavior cannot be isolated to only include one's personal values – as decision makers we are a part of a broader system of stakeholders that are dependent upon and affected by each other's actions. This is what makes morality an issue in the first place; this interdependence makes it necessary to not only follow our desires – we need to consider the implications on others.

Every human being is a universe of meaning – we are ambiguous creatures. Our life worlds are complex, and we can never achieve complete introspection. If it is not possible to know every element of the self – how can we fully understand others? There are limits to how deep we can hope to sig into people's life worlds and how deep we can expect to understand others. This is a limitation for future research on the topic. Practically it poses challenges because one cannot expect to understand every aspect of another person through an interview. This is due to time constrains, the relationship between researcher and research subject (who are strangers), and the fact that the interviewee most likely does not know every element of his or her moral identity. Further, how can we expect to deeply understand others if we do not fully understand ourselves? And how can we expect to fully understand others if they do not know themselves – how can they communicate what they do not know?

This topic of knowing yourself was introduced by Socrates and has been studied for thousands of years. This is an enigmatic topic, and to gain a complete understanding of humans is unlikely. On the other hand, it is a deep and important topic and I think further research on moral identity and knowing yourself can be fruitful.

One finding from this thesis and previous research on happiness is that positive emotions (or hedonics) have limitations with regard to its potential contributions to people's long term happiness. Related to this is positive emotions impact on self understanding and introspection. A person dominated by positive emotions will most likely get a flat impression of reality, and thus a flat impression of the self. Deep introspection requires investigation of all sides of life, not only the positive ones. Additionally, as Wright and Bower (1992) argues, for critical and thorough thinking to take place the state of mind should be slightly negative – positive emotions influences our abilities to think clear and exact. This underlines the limitations of positive emotions and why we should rather emphasize engagement, meaning, relationships and achievements.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed different ways to get you know yourself better, like asking existential questions, solving ethical dilemmas and engaging in role play. Some people argue that the only way to deeply understand ourselves is through literature – through learning to know others through empathy and imagination. Literature can enhance your ability to feel empathy, and through knowing and understanding different characters you might understand more of yourself too. There are many examples of literary works that focus on the existential questions of life. One important contribution on this field is Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt, where

yourselves on a deeper level and that you through making good decisions will experience happiness and well being.

Thank you.

Hannah, S. T., Avolio, B. J., & May, D. R. (2011, Vol. 36, No. 4). Moral Maturation and Moral Conation: A Capacity Approach to Explaining Moral Thought and Action. *Academy of Management Review*, pp. 663-685.

Haviv, S., & Leman, P. J. (2002). Moral decision-making in real life: factors affecting moral orientation and behaviour justification. *Journal of Moral Education*.

Higgins, T. E., & Brendl, M. C. (1995, May Vol.31, Issue 3). Accessibility and Applicability: Some "Activation Rules" Influencing Judgment. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, pp. 218-243.

Ims, K. J. (1987). *Leder i dialog. En studie av informasjonssøk med metoder for personlig utvikling.* Bergen: Universitetsforlaget.

Ims, K. J. (2006). Take it Personally. In L. Zsolnai, & K. J. Ims, *Business Within Limits.* Oxford: Peter Lang.

Ims, K. J., & Pedersen, L. J. (2015). The future of business ethics: a structures dialogue between participants. In K. J. Ims, & L. J. Pedersen, *Business and the Greater Good. Rethinking Business in an age of Crisis* (pp. 262-280). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Jeffries, V. (1998, 41). Virtue and the altruistic personality. *Sociological Perspectives*, pp. 151-167.

Johnson, C. E. (2012). Ethical Decision Making and Action. In C. E. Johnson, *Organizational Ethics: A Practical Approach* (pp. 59-86). Sage Publications.

Ketokivi, M., & Mantere, S. (2010, 35(2)). Two Srategies for Inductive Reasoning in Organizational Research. *Academy of Management Review*, pp. 315-333.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *A Realist Aprroach for Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks, CA, US: SAGE Publications.

McAdams, D. P. (2009). The Moral Personality. In D. Narvaez, & D. K. Lapsely, *Personality, Identity and Character: Explorations in Moral Psychology* (pp. 1-29). Cambridge University Press.

INTERVIEW GUIDE II

I would like our conversation to be based on two decisions/choices you have made in an organizational or business context. I would like one of the decisions to be a decision you look back on with pride (Decision 1), and the second one a decision you consider regretful (Decision 2). It is advantageous if the decisions are quite "fresh", preferably made during the past three weeks, and the decisions should be of such an importance for you that you remember the details and can reflect upon them. If you need to prioritize between important and recent, I wish that you choose an important rather that recent decision. And last, it would be even more interesting if the decisions are of a moral character - i.e. conflicting values. These are not meant as criteria, but rather guidelines, so do not worry if you cannot find any decisions that match all these guidelines - any decision will be interesting to discuss.

TWO IMPORTANT DECISIONS

1. What makes you proud of the positive decision?
2. What do you see as regretful in the other decision?
3. Are there any *similarities* between the two decisions?
4. Are there any *differences* between the two decisions?

SITUATIONAL FACTORS

For the regretful decision:

5. Was it difficult for you making the decision?
6. Do you understand why you made that decision at that time?
7. Looking back on that decision, are you surprised that you made that decision?
8. Did you talk to anyone about the decision?
9. Did you feel support for making the decision?

Positive/proud decision:

10. Was it difficult for you making the decision?
11. Did you talk to anyone about the decision?
12. Did you feel support for making the decision?
13. Do you know of others (in your organization) that have done the same?
14. Do you think it is common to make this kind of decisions (in your organization)?

INTERVIEWEES

Nr (chron.)	Gender	Age	Nationality	Interview	New Name
1	M	40's	Norwegian	In person	Interviewee 1
2	M	20's	Norwegian	In person	Interviewee 2
3	M	20's	Norwegian	In person	Interviewee 3
4	F	40's	Norwegian	In person	Interviewee 4
5	F	20's	Norwegian	In person	Interviewee 5
6	F	30's	Norwegian	FaceTime, no recording	Interviewee 6
7	M	50's	American	In person	Sigurd
8	F	40's	Norwegian	In person	Unni
9	M	50's	Norwegian (in America)	FaceTime, no recording	Njord
10	M	30's	American	FaceTime	Vidar
11	F	50's	Norwegian	Phone	Bodil