

Johanna Sandbäck Forsell

Caring in Creative Writing





Johanna Sandbäck Forsell

Born 1976

Previous studies and degrees

Master of Health Sciences, Åbo Akademi University, 2015

Master of Health Care, Centria University of Applied Sciences, 2012

Bachelor of Nursing in Health Care, Svenska Yrkeshögskolan, 1999

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Johanna Sandbäck Forsell

Health Sciences, Caring Science
Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies
Åbo Akademi University
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Kokkola, 1st of May 2023

Johanna Sandbäck Forsell

Abstract

Sandbäck Forsell, Johanna, 2023: *Caring in Creative Writing*.

Supervisors: Professor Linda Nyholm, PhD, University of Stavanger, associate professor, Åbo Akademi University; Professor Camilla Koskinen, PhD, University of Stavanger, associate professor, Åbo Akademi University

Aim: The aim of this research is to gain a deeper understanding about caring in creative writing in relation to human becoming and life.

Methods: The research design is qualitative and conducted with a hermeneutic approach. The thesis consists of four studies that build upon each other. Thus, the used research questions have been developed from the understanding that is created during the research process as it progresses. The first study is a case study focused on caring in creative writing. The second study uses e-forms and a diary design with a focus on human becoming in the process of writing creatively, where the participants are 19 in total. The third study explores the human being's understanding of life in the aftermath of writing creatively through change in life. The material consists of unsolicited written narratives by three writers. The works convey experiences of hardship in life and creative writing as a way to handle life in times of pressure. The fourth study has an interest in temporality and creative writing, and the material consist of written accounts by seven hobby writers.

Results: The findings show caring in creative writing as caring in relation to oneself, caring in relation to the world one lives in, and caring in relation to one's time perspective in life (study 1). Creative writing is found to aid human becoming as an act of emotional reactions and release and as a key to self-understanding and growth (study 2). The findings show the human being's understanding of life as a humble stance towards the changefulness of life after writing creatively through forced change (study 3). Furthermore, the findings also show caring as temporal turns in creative writing (study 4). The results from the four studies are interpreted and the knowledge formation is presented as four abductive assumptions concerning caring in relation to human becoming and life.

Conclusion: Creative writing provides opportunities for caring for a writing human being as caring influences personal growth and life attitude. Caring entails courageous movement in human becoming and life. Caring also entails being authentic in relation to human becoming and life. Caring is an exchange of gratitude and a humble approach towards human becoming and life. Caring also entails freedom in creating wholeness in human becoming and life.

Keywords: caring science, caring, creative writing, human becoming, understanding of life, wholeness, temporality

Abstrakt

Sandbäck Forsell, Johanna, 2023: Vårdande i kreativt skrivande

Supervisors: Professor Linda Nyholm, HVD, Universitetet i Stavanger, docent, Åbo Akademi; Professor Camilla Koskinen, HVD, Universitetet i Stavanger, docent, Åbo Akademi

Syfte: Syftet är att erhålla fördjupad förståelse om vårdande i kreativt skrivande i relation till människans tillblivelse och liv.

Metoder: Forskningsdesignen är kvalitativ med ett hermeneutiskt närmelsesätt. Avhandlingen är uppbyggd av fyra studier som bygger på varandra. Forskningsfrågorna har således utvecklats utgående från den förståelse som skapats medan forskningsprocessen framskridit. Den första studien är en fallstudie med fokus på vårdande i kreativt skrivande. I den andra studien används e-formulär och dagboks design, informanterna är 19 totalt. Studie tre utforskar människans livsförståelse efter en livsomvälvande förändring som hen skrivit sig igenom. Materialet består av publicerade verk av tre författare. Verken förmedlar erfarenheter av svårigheter i livet och kreativt skrivande som ett sätt att hantera prövningar i livet. Den fjärde studien har ett intresse för temporalitet och kreativt skrivande, och materialet består av skrivna skildringar av sju hobby skribenter.

Resultat: Resultatet visar på vårdande i relation till en själv, vårdande i relation till världen som man lever i och vårdande i relation till tidsperspektivet i det egna livet (studie 1). Kreativt skrivande främjar mänsklig tillväxt genom en akt av känslomässiga reaktioner och förlösning, samt som en nyckel till självförståelse och tillväxt (studie 2). Resultatet visar på en livsförståelse som en ödmjuk hållning gentemot livets föränderlighet efterförloppet av att ha skrivit kreativt genom tvingad livsförändring (studie 3). Dessutom visar resultatet vårdande som temporala vändningar i kreativt skrivande (studie 4). De fyra studiernas resultat har tolkats och kunskapen formulerats i fyra abduktiva antaganden om vårdande i relation till mänsklig tillväxt och livet.

Konklusion: Kreativt skrivande ger möjligheter för vårdande för en människa för vårdande inverkar på personlig tillväxt och hållningen till livet. Vårdande innebär att erfara mod i sin tillblivelseprocess och livet. Vårdande innebär även autenticitet i relation till sin tillblivelseprocess och livet. Vårdande är ett utbyte av tacksamhet gentemot livet och en ödmjuk hållning till dess föränderlighet i samband med sin tillblivelseprocess och livet. Vårdande innebär även frihet i att skapa enhetlighet i sin tillblivelseprocess och livet.

Nyckelord: vårdvetenskap, vårdande, kreativt skrivande, mänsklig tillblivelse, livsförståelse, hel, temporalitet

List of original publications

I

Sandbäck Forsell, J., Nyholm, L. & Koskinen, C. 2019. Caring in Creative writing – A Case Study. *International Journal for Human Caring*, 23 (1), 91–100.

II

Sandbäck Forsell, J., Nyholm, L. & Koskinen, C. 2021. A caring science study of creative writing and human becoming. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, 35 (1), 156–162.

III

Sandbäck Forsell, J., Nyholm, L. & Koskinen, C. 2021. A caring science study about the understanding of life and creative writing. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 34 (4), 256–266.

IV

Sandbäck Forsell, J., Koskinen, C. & Nyholm, L. 2022. Creative writing and temporal turns in life. *Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health*, 4 (1), 1–11.

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1. Introduction

This research has a caring science perspective on creative writing and focuses on caring. The theme of this research came somewhat spontaneously to me due to an interest in lifelong learning and development as a human being, caring, and a fascination with writing creatively. I have wanted to learn more about the meaning that writing can have for persons who write creatively. I have personal experiences of writing freely from within, without writing tasks, and have found this to be beneficial to me.

There are many different perspectives that can be used to outline how writing is perceived in this research. The uses of creative writing as a tool or pathway can span from personal development to specific therapy, where these are often entangled and the situation or context of writing influences how the practice is seen (Wall et al., 2019). For instance, writing in therapy settings is outside of the scope of this research. Issues of relevance for this research are highlighted to clarify the core ideas of how writing is viewed henceforth in this research.

Writing is a complex field. By looking at the role and importance of the writing process, and the text as a product, one can differentiate writing into creative writing practice and creative writing for health and well-being (Wall et al., 2019). In creative writing practice, the created text is mostly assessed by its artistic value, and in creative writing for health and well-being, the process and created text or product are valued because they may possibly improve the writer's life. There are some generally accepted ideas on the benefits of creating narratives. They aid in coping with difficult situations in life, verbalisation of experience can be beneficial in itself, and narrating opens a space for reflection and inclusion in community (Asplund Ingemark, 2013).

The distinction between literary and therapeutic writing is not clear. Some people oppose emphasising the process of writing over the product and the value it has for the writer. For instance, Kuhl (2005) acknowledges the therapeutic potential of writing, but prefers a clear distinction between therapeutic writing and literary writing. The author draws upon the role of revision as a central difference in public and private writing, making it a necessity for private texts to undergo extensive revision and perhaps transformation before they suit an audience as a literary piece.

On the other hand, researchers view therapeutic writing and creative writing as somewhat similar. Bolton (1999) describes how literature relies on very charged material to make an impact, a charge that comes from the writer's emotional relationship to the writings. Thus, writers are seen to have a strong, personal connection to their writings.

According to the author, therapeutic writing may occasionally be publishable without further work and can become art through redrafting, but a beginner or therapeutic writer is not benefitted by the thought that the writing may be publicly shareable as art. Hunt (2000) also views creative and therapeutic writing as very similar and rejects the idea that therapeutic writers' material is so subjective that it is of no use for other persons.

Whether writing is seen as literary writing or therapeutic writing, the redrafting and crafting is of importance and relates to the public and private sphere of writing. The view of writing as art or therapeutic can change during the writing process when the text is worked on and redrafted several times. The self-revealing and emotional connection that a writer has to one's own writings is at times described with powerful metaphor, and some describe it similar to laying naked on the page (Hunt, 2000). Furthermore, as the text is crafted and redrafted, it may be described as removing the bleeding heart or tortured body from the page (Bolton, 2011) and making the text shareable with others. No matter what the intention is when writing, both therapeutic writing and literary writing are creative. Therefore, writing in this research is referred to as creative writing.

Much of the research on therapeutic writing or writing for health and well-being has for three decades been researched from a specific paradigm concerning expressive writing. Therefore, it is necessary to take an orienting look at expressive writing. The research explores the parameters or boundary conditions of writing for a few consecutive days about the writer's deepest thoughts and feelings, and it has raised awareness that the effectiveness of writing in this way cannot be explained by a single cause or theory (Pennebaker & Chung, 2010). The research does show that expressive writing has been found to be most beneficial when the writer openly acknowledges emotions, works to form a coherent story, switches from one perspective to another, and finds a voice that reflects oneself (Pennebaker & Evans, 2014).

Costa and Abreu (2018) have compared expressive writing and creative writing in a mental health context. According to the authors, expressive writing reorganises and provides new meaning to experiences, and writing in accordance with one's own true experiences enables the individual to trust new visions and identify oneself with the writing. Creative writing is a process of transformation where information is made significant, and this can protect against negative mood when facing overwhelming issues (Costa & Abreu, 2018). Furthermore, the authors view creative writing, compared to expressive writing, as a longer and more gradual process that also requires reflexive attention and deep rational processing. This coincides with Nicholls' (2009) description of creative writing as developmental creative

writing, where writing is not task-oriented. A short and early phase may resemble expressive writing, but the writing takes place at the writer's own pace and the writer moves through different, independent cycles in the process, which can last several years (Nicholls, 2009). Writing is self-exposing. This means that the self is always on the page and the human being has a connection to the written. There cannot be a straightforward intention to write therapeutically, as "to work both as writing and therapeutically it has to be undertaken in a pure spirit of enquiry" (Bolton, 2011, p. 19). For some persons the therapeutic or caring is a discovery that is made during the process of writing. This research focuses on writing where the process is seen as longer than a few days, compared to the expressive writing paradigm. How the human being views one's own practice of writing can change over time. For instance, the human being can quit writing when writing has served its purpose or writing for therapeutic purposes can change to writing as art.

Creative writing in this research is viewed as any kind of writing where the writers' imaginings and ideas create something that did not exist before (McVey, 2008). Thus, something new is created when the human being writes. It may result in very different kinds of end products or writings, as the "writing can be in **any** form including text, poetry, dialogue, free-flow, verse, journal, word-cloud, pantoum, oral, RAP, play, recipe, dream, account, graphic, clusters, poetic form, word-art, obituary, advert, note, institutional language, symbols, song, blog" (Williamson & Wright, 2018, p. 118). There will most certainly always be persons who write for whom writing will not result in either therapeutic benefits or a literary product as art. Writing may still be a refuge in a good way for these individuals, according to Hunt (2000).

Through writing, the human being creates something, which has a connection to her or is of importance to her. In this research, the emphasis is on persons who do not write for a living but are more like hobby writers. The choice to focus on amateur or hobby writers, rather than professional writers, is done without weighing the strength of the writer's connection to the written. I assume that the writings of hobby writers are more personally tinted and less reworked than the writings of professional writers. Privacy can for some enable the personal to enter and stay in the writings, while the writings of professional writers may be more processed and prepared to be suitable for the eyes of a larger audience.

A human being who writes creatively creates. From a caring science point of view, Eriksson (2018) describes how every human being carries a wish to be confirmed in connection to what she or he has created, and to truly become confirmed entails that someone else says yes to one's self and verifies one's right to be oneself. Thus, a human being needs others, and one can wonder if caring with a focus on oneself is possible

for a long period of time and sustainable in the long run. As the answer is probably not, I therefore acknowledge that a human being is dependent on others. This does still not diminish or rule out the phenomenon of caring in solitary and private creative writing. Earlier, some aspects of therapeutic writing and literary writing were put forth. Human beings need others and are capable of caring for oneself. Hunt (2000) views therapeutic writing and literary writing as quite similar because, as a reader of one's own writings, a writer can often distinguish them as art or therapeutic writing, but when a person has trouble doing that, that is when the need for others arises. Thus, the need for others may then be filled with caring professionals, writing therapists, or other persons to connect with, depending on the situation at hand. This research, thereby, starts out from a basic assumption that creative writing can be caring for the human being and thus promote health and human becoming. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding about caring in creative writing in relation to human becoming and life.

2. Previous research concerning the meaning of creative writing for the human being

The previous research has been gathered during several years, from 2015 to 2023. The previous research that is described henceforth comes from a variety of scientific fields, such as psychology, psychotherapy, social sciences, adult pedagogy, medical humanities, rehabilitation sciences, nursing science, and caring science.

The used search words are: caring, therapeutic, expressive writing, creative writing, healing, poetry therapy, haiku, diary, journaling, blogging, life-writing, autobiography, creative writing for therapeutic purposes, CWTP, bibliotherapy, memoir, graphic journal, novel, scrapbooking, doodling, reminiscence writing, writing guide, writing program, self-help, self-healing, self-guided writing, storying, written story, self-care, self-caring, and auto poetic. These have been used in different combinations. The search has been conducted in the following databases: Academic Search Premier, CINAHL, Journals@Ovid, MEDLINE, ScienceDirect, Social Sciences Citation Index, PLoS One, and Web of Science. Research has also been searched with the use of Google Scholar.

Some of the used literature regarding previous research in this field uses the word therapeutic to describe the gain or effect of creative writing. Therapeutic can be understood as having a beneficial effect on the body or mind (Kielikone Oy, 2023) with well-being as a result or consequence, amidst an unchanged burden of disease (Stolt, 2003). Therapeutic and caring do not have the same meaning, but they do not contradict each other, and it has been a necessity to include research from different scientific fields to gain comprehensive knowledge of the benefit from creative writing for the human being. The previous research focusing on creative writing for therapeutic purposes provides valuable information for this research. Research that concerns writing for a few days, and being somewhat like the expressive writing paradigm, has been excluded from the previous research. This is research where the focus is mostly on the conditions or technical aspects of the practice of writing. This research is interested in caring in creative writing.

2.1 The writer's own voice and narrative

Research shows that to write in a form that is suitable for one's own voice and experience is of importance. Wright (2009) describes a form of self-directed writing for well-being—to write to oneself in a non-

judgemental, compassionate voice. Baker (2009) describes how writing may not adhere to historical facts and of greater importance is to be faithful to the emotional truths. According to Robinson (2000), creative writing can promote well-being when the writing process involves revision and active choice of words that make the text specific and in this way becomes serviceable for the writer. In addition, Ryan et al. (2009) indicate that writing brings mastery and strength when characterised by patience, objectivity, and acceptance.

Creative writing has been found to have a purifying effect for the writer (Elford et al., 2005; Kidd et al., 2011), and by creating a reflexive space, it enables development of writers' attitudes towards their own situations (Willig, 2009). The language used during an autobiographical writing process has been found by Smorti et al. (2010) to change from being centred on memory to a narrative that conveys insight. Lieblich (2013) proposes the possibility of something being lost when memories and experiences are replaced with final writing. For adult learners, Sabeti (2015) describes the intense crafting of language as a means for being in the present, giving them feelings of youthfulness and energy. Wright (2010) also describes how the writing of a personal journal enables focusing on the present moment even when the thoughts and emotions are uncomfortable. Kazi et al. (2014) has found that writers experience writing activity under such conditions as to last longer than the actual duration.

2.2 Creative writing supports self-identity work

Creative writing makes a difference on how a human being views oneself. Bolton (2008) has found that writing can represent self-discovery that reinforces the awareness of and ability to express thoughts, while it simultaneously brings satisfaction and a vital sense of fulfilment.

When medical language primarily seems to describe the human being's injury or illness, writing poetry can be a way of discovering abilities, according to Pinhasi-Vittorio (2008). People with mental health conditions can benefit from creative writing as it can help in identity finding. Writing creatively can expand the view of oneself beyond being a user or receiver of care. Brooks (2004) describes creative writing as giving meaning to illness as part of a person's life story. Furthermore, writing one's story can be empowering and the most powerful narratives can transform a story of illness into a new one.

According to Haertl and Ero-Philips (2019), writing aids in making sense of one's own identity, as it connects writers with their emotional and creative selves and helps to facilitate perspective-taking. Sagan (2007) has found it to be a process of coming to terms with a new self-

narrative, and Taylor et al. (2014) have described it as a process of restoring identity and personal growth. Somewhat similarly, Cooper (2014) has found that it enables cognitive change and provides opportunities to explore life experiences, which improve understanding of self-identity.

Rhodes (2011) sees poetry writing as a way of handling emotions and an opportunity to grieve. When dealing with loss, creative writing can support the development of a new self-identity. Berg Wikander et al. (2012) have found writing to be relieving and to make reflections and memories clearer. Saresma (2003) notes that writing about personal bereavement can aid in the recovery from the loss and the construction of a new identity as a survivor of a sibling's suicide.

2.3 Meaning making and control through creative writing in relation to illness and hardship in life

Creative writing can contribute to creating meaning in life, and writing during illness can facilitate meaning making from the illness experience (Ryan et al., 2009; Willig, 2009). From a family perspective, creative writing can help to make sense or to find the meaning in the encountered difficult matter (Rhodes, 2011) or loss (Den Elzen, 2015), and, according to McNichol (2016), aid in finding meaning in life and accepting reality. The impact of creative writing can lead to a change that makes it possible to move on in life. According to Raab (2014), writing memoirs can provide inner peace in relation to a transcendental or central event in life that is both transformative and empowering. McCartney (2011) states that creative writing at times of personal difficulty helps to integrate and move beyond the difficult life experience. This can be related to Mayuzumi's (2006) description of her writing as a transformative journey which is healing her from experienced social constraints.

In the field of mental health, creative writing has been used for people with depression. Suhr et al. (2017) describe the writing of a resource-oriented diary after inpatient psychiatric care lowering depression, and similarly, Mastel-Smith et al. (2007) have found that creative writing in workshops for community-dwelling older adults reduces depressive symptoms. Cooper (2013) also describes creative writing to have benefits for people with depression, as it gives distance from painful emotions and increases self-knowledge. Writing about dreams is, according to Repo and Kuuskorpi (2014), empowering and has a decreasing effect on levels of depression for people having experienced a crisis. Laitinen and Ettorre (2007) describe journal writing by depressed women to be a way of having control over psychological and physical pain and as a tool for self-reflection. Wohlmann (2014) views

the writing of autobiographical self-help books as connected to control in relation to (the writer's) time, feelings, and the body. For people with serious illnesses, writing can increase well-being through decreased emotional distress (Rickett et al., 2011). To write creatively can aid in the structuring of an illness experience, such as cancer, in which case Kohler Riessman (2015) has found creative writing to enable order and meaning. For cancer survivors, Thomas et al. (2017) have found that creative writing in community-based workshops aids in focusing on oneself amidst everyday demands, thus facilitating self-care.

2.4 An embodied self through writing

Ofri (2010) states that illness can render a person speechless, and the writing of poetry can be a way of reclaiming one's voice. Somewhat similarly, Penn (2001) says that creative writing can break the silence that illness brings on. Writing can also embody the human being's inner voice, according to Laitinen and Ettorre (2007). Maltby (2008) has focused on the self-experience of creative writing, and to fail first in an intention to write poetry is described as an objectification of the self and the writing. Furthermore, this experience is also realised in an underlying sense of a separate self in the writing process; a changed experience of the self emerges that is more embodied and flexible in terms of presence and awareness. Similarly, Tobin and Tisdell (2015) view creative writing as healing and contributing to an increased sense of embodied awareness, which promotes flow in the writing process.

2.5 Creative writing spurs connections to others and spiritual growth

Haertl (2014) describes how creative writing aids self-development due to the personal and interpersonal nature of creative writing. Cooper (2013) describes writing in a mental health context to increase the understanding of the interface between self and others. Women with breast cancer describe writing as a channel for emotions and thoughts that enables sharing, which has a healing effect, according to Vargens and Berterö (2017). Writing serves as an outlet for personal expressions, and Gilzean (2011) emphasises writing as a way of controlling both inner chaos and enhancing communication with others and oneself. Writing can also promote caring connections between people. In a study by Feinblum et al. (2016), mothers' journaling is described as a pathway for establishing caring attachments to their newborns, as well as to a professional carer.

Dillon (2011) describes that writing a spiritual autobiography connects the human being with a pulsating and resonating power in life

that contributes with new meaning and direction. To write creatively can initiate a developmental process or spiritual growth. Epple (2007) describes epiphanies that emerge in writing which can provide a new view of life and bring new actions into the world. In a somewhat similar vein, Gladding and Drake Wallace (2018) describe creative writing as an aid for a person to see oneself and the world more clearly. Edmonston (2006) says that doodling can be a spiritual practice. Sinats et al. (2005a, 2005b) describe how writing develops inner resources needed for mental or spiritual selfcare by creating seclusion and transformation that bring peace. Writing emerges naturally from trusting an inner instinct to take care of the soul: an unconscious or conscious force pushes on to find a way of expressing itself (Sinats et al., 2005a). Through an imagined audience, a link is forged beyond the self, and writing supports a connection between maintaining mental or spiritual sensitivity and supporting the inner voice (Sinats et al., 2005b). In a later stage of a human's developmental process, creative writing is a possible way for dealing with one's maturing from a holistic point of view. Saunders (2005) has found gerotranscendence to be a more prominent theme in the writings of the elderly amateur poets compared with the writings of professional poets.

2.6 A summary of the previous research and justification of this research

Research on creative writing appears to emphasise its effect for the human being. The found studies include research from different fields of science, such as psychology, psychotherapy, social sciences, adult pedagogy, medical humanities, rehabilitation sciences, nursing science, and caring science.

In summary, the previous studies show that the human being can gain self-awareness and find a voice through creative writing. To write creatively supports the human being in building a new self-identity in relation to life-changing experiences. It can facilitate meaning making and provide a sense of control in relation to illness and when facing difficult matters. The research shows that creative writing can be helpful for the human being in relation to the communication and connections to other persons or in relation to spiritual connections beyond oneself. Some of the conducted studies describe creative writing interventions in care and outcomes of such (cf. Feinblum et al., 2016; Laitinen & Ettore, 2007; Rickett et al., 2011).

A great deal of the found research on creative writing shows that writing has a beneficial impact for the writer, indicating possibilities for caring and self-caring. With a held interest for caring, creative writing is thus an area in which it is fruitful to conduct further research from a

caring science point of view. This provides opportunities to gain a deeper understanding about the human being, her world—viewed here as the human being’s life—and about the phenomenon of caring. These are central concepts in caring science, which also motivates this study as basic research in relation to them.

3. Aim, research questions, and design

The aim of this research is to gain a deeper understanding about caring in creative writing in relation to human becoming and life. The purpose of this research is to contribute to the theory development of the Theory of Caritative Caring with a deeper understanding about the phenomenon of caring and human becoming. This research has a basic assumption that creative writing can be caring for the human being and can thus promote health and human becoming (for the person who writes).

The used research questions (Rq1 – Rq4) are presented in table 1. These questions were not formulated at the beginning of the research, but they have instead been developed one by one from the understanding that is created and shaped during the research process.

Table 1. The used research questions in studies 1–4

Research question (Rq) and study

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | What is caring in creative writing? |
| 2 | How can creative writing aid human becoming? |
| 3 | How does the understanding of life appear after writing creatively through change in life? |
| 4 | How can creative writing be caring for the human being in relation to life's temporality? |

The research is conducted with a hermeneutic approach in the context of creative writing. The design of the research is presented in figure 1.

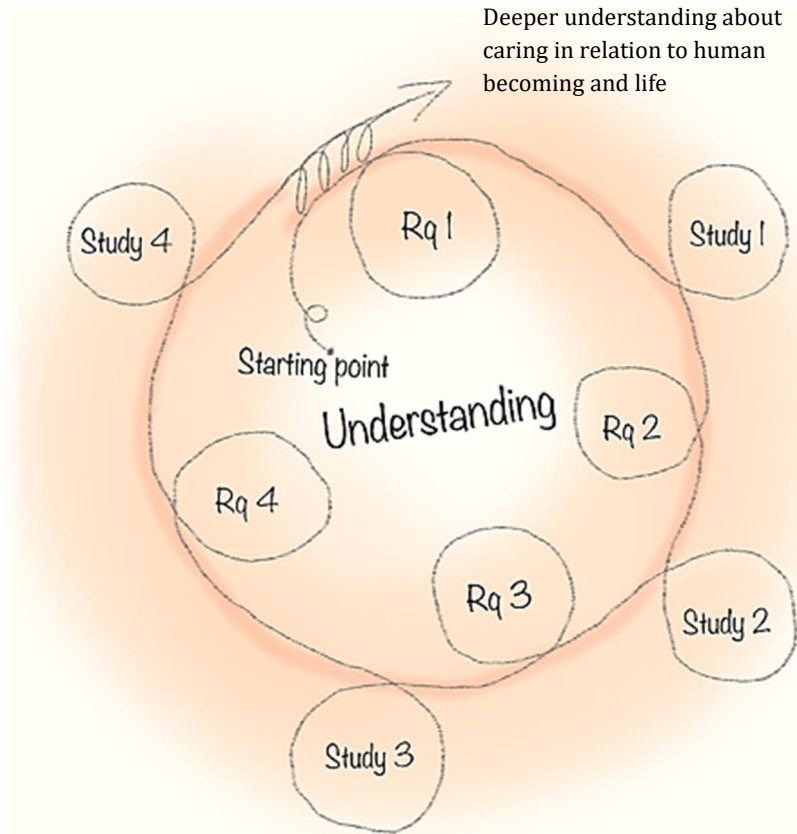


Figure 1. The design of the research

The research design is qualitative and conducted with a hermeneutic approach (see figure 1). It progresses as a circle. The starting point entails a search for and gathering of the previous research in connection to my research interest about the phenomenon of caring in the context of creative writing. As a researcher I also have a private pre-understanding beyond the one scholarly acquired; a subtle sense of the existence of caring in writing creatively that spans from my personal experience of writing creatively. This is one reason why I have chosen to embark on this path. My own writing and my studies in caring science have awakened a curiosity about the phenomenon of caring. Caring is often described from a relational point of view, focusing on a carer and a person cared for, a patient. In this research the interest in caring targets a caring aimed at oneself; the phenomenon of caring for the human being who writes. This is sometimes referred to as self-care. Creative writing forms the context for this research.

All human beings have a pre-understanding, and as a researcher I have a pre-understanding of my own. In this research the pre-understanding is not put aside. That is simply not possible. It is rather put to use by the choice to embark on this path of performing this research with a hermeneutic approach. Thus, the pre-understanding is grounded in the previous research, personal experiences about writing creatively, and the tradition of caring science.

Table 1 presents the research questions that are used during the research. The research question and study they are used in have the same number. Thus, Rq 1 is used in study 1 and Rq 2 is used in study 2, and so on. The hermeneutic approach entails a movement between part and whole, and after each study, I have returned to the whole by combining my understanding with the new understanding that the study has provided.

After examining my pre-understanding, the first study was aimed at broadening the understanding about creative writing and caring in it. Thus, the first research question (Rq 1) was formulated. An answer to this question was searched for through study 1. This study provided new understanding about caring as an answer to Rq 1, but it also aroused new questions. Caring in creative writing seemed to be initiated when the human being discovers caring in relation to oneself. Therefore, the second study focused on creative writing and human becoming. As Rq 2 was formulated and answered through study 2, human becoming appeared aided by creative writing by both a handling of emotions and growth through self-understanding. The first study had shown caring in relation oneself, in relation to the time perspective in the human being's own life, and in relation to the world that the human being lives in. Study 2 focused on caring in relation to oneself and human becoming. Based on the gained understanding from study 1 and 2, study 3 focused on the world, with the use of the understanding of life as the human being's touch surface to the world that he or she lives in. The focus of study 3 is therefore the human being's understanding of life after writing creatively through a change in life. The fourth study focuses on deepening the understanding about caring and creative writing in relation to life's temporality. This was a theme that had not been studied further after conducting study 1. After study 4 was conducted, the substance fragments of caring from all four studies were interpreted and abstracted through abductive reasoning. The final result of this research is presented as four abductive assumptions. This knowledge is formed through what can be described as an abductive leap, a synthesising abstraction, that makes its start from existing interpreted knowledge (Råholm, 2010).

4. Theoretical perspective

This thesis has a theoretical perspective that is mainly grounded in the Theory of Caritative Caring (Lindholm Nyström et al., 2022), developed by Katie Eriksson. The research is situated in a context of creative writing. From a caring science point of view, the central concepts are caring, as in the phenomenon of caring, human becoming, and creating.

The description of the theoretical perspective of this research begins with the human being. This is because, in many ways, the human being is central in this research. Caring and human becoming are themes that connect and are linked to the human being. The introductory view on the human being in this research paves the way for the central concepts.

Human beings live in a complex reality, a complexity that also mirrors the human being's own complexity. This gives our surroundings and inner world a multidimensionality and layers of different meanings that might even be contradictory at times. Through language we meet the world around us and give content to what we sense within or outside of our physical bodies. Our conscious expands much further and breaks the limits of time and space, something that our physical body is not capable of doing. In our memories we can go back in time, and looking deeply in a child's eyes can connect us to something infinite, something bigger than ourselves. Let's connect this to one of the axioms about the human being that describes the human being in the Theory of Caritative Caring. The axiom states that "the human being is fundamentally an entity of body, soul, and spirit" (Lindholm Nyström et al., 2022, p. 148). Body, soul, and spirit are like dimensions, and at times one can be more prominent than the others. A human being is always more than what meets the eye, and acknowledging this capacity for transcendence equals a holistic view of the human being.

4.1 The phenomenon of caring and understanding of life

One of the central concepts in this study is caring. It is important to note that care and caring have a very different meaning. Caring is the effective in care, that which promotes health and eases suffering for the human being, and caring is also an ability that all human beings have (Eriksson, 2018). Aware of human uniqueness on an individual level, I view the caring phenomenon as having one core on an ontological level. The core entails an inner order of the value preferences of love and charity (Lindholm Nyström et al., 2022). Furthermore, this caritas motive is the basic motive for caring and, combined with the respect for human holiness and dignity, determines the nature of caring. That caring has

one core means that whether we discuss the phenomenon of caring for oneself as a human being or the phenomenon of caring in the care for another human being or patient in professional care, the springboard for caring is the *caritas* motive and respect for human holiness and dignity (Lindholm Nyström et al., 2022). Not all care is caring, and care that causes suffering is non-caring, even if the intention is good (Eriksson, 2018).

While most of Eriksson's work concerns caring from a relational point of view, where the relation means the asymmetrical relation of a carer and patient, my interest is the phenomenon of caring where the focus is on oneself. In many contexts this is referred to as self-care (Richard & Shea, 2011). It is important to note that Eriksson (2018) distinguishes between self-care and natural care. Natural care entails that a human being has the ability to be caring towards self and others and regulate the relations between self and others in a constructive way (Eriksson, 2018). Furthermore, self-care entails that the human being's natural ability for caring is supported by a professional carer while managing primarily on one's own.

Eriksson (2018, p. 259) has pictured caring in relation to oneself and others. The connection between self and caring, and between self and others, is a two-way movement. This means that the human being has a natural ability for caring for both self and others. One can ponder if caring can focus on oneself for a longer period of a time. Probably not, as human beings need others on a deep level, even though the amount of needing the support or presence of others differs for various reasons. Natural care entails the freedom to actualise oneself, as a human being that ceases to be oneself cannot be a natural carer of either oneself or others (Eriksson, 2018). Eriksson (2018) describes that when the self is not enough for caring, others are needed. The human being can find support in an abstract other as in a relationship with a god, or from natural others such as family or close ones, and professional others such as professional carers. A third source of support is the collective other, such as society. Natural caring is a part of the interdependence that humans share with each other, a shared humanity. The understanding of life is similarly connected to this interdependency, and it functions as the human being's ethical sounding board (Rehnsfeldt & Arman, 2005). The understanding of life has a wide span, as it can concern something very concrete or something on a very abstract level.

The human being's natural tendency for caring can be activated in a favourable surrounding for self-actualisation; the human being can be whole in relation to oneself and in relation to others. Health is not something that a human being possesses, but a human being is one's health, and health and natural care are attributes of a whole human being (Eriksson, 2018). Furthermore, natural care entails an optimum

amount of freedom for the human being, who can sense a creating force and a continuous development towards a greater degree of freedom. It is a freedom to create oneself and become the person that one is meant to be.

4.2 Human becoming and creating

A human being has the potential to evolve and develop during their whole life span. The human being is in a constant state of becoming and will never reach full completion. It is a paradox of life to have a task as a human being that one will never complete. Or what can completion mean in this sense? Human becoming is at best a continuous process during a human being's life span. Human becoming does not mean developing into a perfect human being. This so-called "perfection" is already given to us through the absolute dignity that human beings have. Instead, this is a becoming process to wholeness that is characterised by a sense of freedom. A wholeness as health, since health means wholeness in the deepest sense. But wholeness in what way? It means to be a whole human being despite the cracks that are brought on by life. What is important to note is that this is a wholeness as a human being without the prerequisite of being broken by suffering. The *caritas* motive and respect for human holiness and dignity is caring, and this knowledge functions as my springboard for viewing caring as aiding human becoming. With human becoming I mean wholeness in the sense of becoming who one is meant to be, a wholeness on a deep level where a human being gradually arrives at home in oneself and becomes integrated with life. As mentioned earlier, this is a continuous process. The process of human becoming entails a build-up and a breakdown in the human being in the tension of what is now and the potential of what might be (Eriksson, 2018; Lindholm Nyström et al., 2022). The *caritas* motive and the respect and reverence for human holiness are the foundation bolts that protect us from complete destruction in the movement of health. It is a constant movement, but freezable by unendurable suffering, which means that the ability for caring is an essential protector. The ability for natural caring is built-in in human beings and concerns caring in the relation to ourselves. Thus, human becoming for wholeness goes hand-in-hand with the human beings' built-in ability for caring.

Eriksson (2018) describes how the human being can create her being and herself, and thus creating is an expression of who one is and enables a human being to become the person they are meant to be. A human being can create something very concrete or something abstract. As this research is situated in the context of creative writing, I view the written to be what is created. The created is part of oneself, and therefore the

human being loves or hates what has been created, depending on the relation to oneself (Eriksson, 2018). Creating is here viewed from the point of view of creative writing, but it entails much more than the physical activity of writing creatively. The written has a connection to the writer. When the human being writes, she reveals something of the inner world or she puts herself out on the page, revealing herself as an unfinished work in progress, a human being in becoming. Creating is a continuous struggle, and the desire to create is, in the deepest sense, an expression for a desire for life and to acknowledge oneself (Eriksson, 2018).

A whole, living, and creating human being engages oneself fully and is always ready to start anew, daring to take a new leap in life (Eriksson, 2018). What is created is always part of oneself, and an evolving understanding of life is also part of creating oneself. Human becoming does not entail becoming a perfect human being but becoming a whole human being, and being whole entails finding one's place in the world and in life, becoming at home with oneself.

An observant reader has now noticed the very different meaning of care and caring—care can be understood as an activity, but caring is what is effective and what ultimately influences the human being. Caring promotes health and protects life (Eriksson, 2018). In this research, creative writing is seen as connected to caring, but it is not understood to involve a conscious aim of promoting health and life when the human being writes. To write creatively can involve caring, and the connection to the phenomenon of caring can be a discovery that the human being makes at some point. Caring aids wholeness for a human being, and wholeness entails human becoming where creating is an expression of human becoming. Creative writing is the context for the research, and to write creatively is assumed to be caring for the person who writes. The chosen theoretical perspective is holistic and thus takes the whole human being as its starting point.

5. Methodological approach

This research can be placed within what Patterson and Williams (2002) call productive hermeneutics. A thought of importance within productive hermeneutics is that a pre-understanding cannot be fully put aside; another person's experience cannot be fully understood and a researcher will produce meaning in the research process rather than just discover it in the process of analysis. This means that interpretation is central in this methodological approach. Interpretation is a subject matter rather than just an aid in the study of something, and the interpretive experience is clarified in relation to understanding, and thus understanding means to have gained something with interpretation (George, 2020). The interpreter is not a neutral observer, and understanding in the fullest sense demands engagement and self-involvement (Thiselton, 2009). In this research it means making active choices all the way, from the choice of subject matter to research to the use of methods, as well as the use of interpretation and my own pre-understanding during the whole process.

This research aims at gaining an understanding. George (2020) describes how understanding is not pursued by stacking beliefs on top of foundations, but rather by an interpretive movement back and forth through possible meanings of our presuppositions that in turn enables a matter to come into view. Furthermore, George describes how the pursuit of understanding does not build higher and higher, instead it concerns an understanding that becomes deeper, fuller, and richer.

The conducted studies one to four are described henceforth, and table 2 shows an overview of the studies. The table presents the used data collection, describes the material and samples, and the used method of analysis. The publications for each study are also listed in the table.

Table 2. Overview of studies 1–4

| Study | Data collection | Material and sample | Analysis | Publication |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | Case study | 71 proverbs, 39 poems, 6 song lyrics, and 2 stories written during 17 years by one participant | Hermeneutic analysis according to Patterson and Williams | Sandbäck Forsell, J., Nyholm, L. & Koskinen, C. 2019. Caring in Creative writing – A Case Study. <i>International Journal for Human Caring</i> , 23 (1), 91–100. |
| 2 | E-forms and diary design | 15 e-forms by writing community members and 4 diaries of participants in a creative writing workshop | Thematic analysis according to Clarke and Brown | Sandbäck Forsell, J., Nyholm, L. & Koskinen, C. 2021. A caring science study of creative writing and human becoming. <i>Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences</i> , 35 (1), 156–162. |
| 3 | Unsolicited written narratives | Autobiographical material and writing guides by 3 creative writing facilitators | Thematic network analysis according to Attride-Stirling | Sandbäck Forsell, J., Nyholm, L. & Koskinen, C. 2021. A caring science study about the understanding of life and creative writing. <i>Journal of Poetry Therapy</i> , 34 (4), 256–266. |
| 4 | Written accounts | 7 hobby writers | Gadamerian approach according to Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb | Sandbäck Forsell, J., Koskinen, C. & Nyholm, L. 2022. Creative writing and temporal turns in life. <i>Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health</i> , 4 (1), 1–11. |

5.1 Study one

The first of the four conducted studies in this research focuses on understanding caring in creative writing with the use of a case study. The choice to conduct a case study as the first study of four is based on the uniqueness of the case. It is also a choice that harmonises with the hermeneutic methodology of this research by focusing on an individual case and a specific occurrence of a phenomenon (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

5.1.1 Study participant and data collection

This study is a holistic single-case study according to Yin (2009) with one participant. The study participant is the case in question, a person who has been writing creatively from a state of deep depression to a state of well-being during a span of 17 years. The material in this study consists of the written texts created by the study's participant and an interview with the same person. The chronological order of the gathered texts is known. Three poems were excluded from the material, as they were seen as not contributing to the study. Material was also gathered through an open interview, resembling a conversation without a prearranged structure (Hirsjärvi et al., 2009). The interview was conducted to provide a more complete picture of the case of interest, since the focus of the interview is the process of writing creatively and the participant's situation in life today, not the written texts. The conducted interview was recorded and transcribed; the interview transcript consists of 16 pages of text in total.

5.1.2 Hermeneutic analysis

The material was analysed with a hermeneutic method as described by Patterson and Williams (2002). This involves creating a system for the purpose of organising, interpreting, and presenting the material. The choice to use this method was justified by the need for a structured method because the data material consists of different types of texts, proverbs, song lyrics, stories, poems, and an interview transcript. The hermeneutic analysis began by reading the material in a chronological order. This was done several times for the purpose of attaining an understanding of the content. The research question, *what is caring in creative writing*, was posed to the texts. The parts of the texts that were interpreted as answers to the research question were marked and became units of meaning. These were recorded, and those that had something in common were grouped together or clustered and labelled according to their content. Subsequently, the groups were added to a word-processing program. They were first grouped according to

similarities and differences, and then read and interpreted. The similarities that emerged from the different groups were labelled and identified as dimensions.

When in doubt regarding the interpretation, the original text was consulted to verify the interpretation. For example, in the beginning of the creative writing process, the writer used “you” in the proverbs. This was interpreted as an internal dialogue with oneself. When there were 10 dimensions, these were examined and grouped in terms of similarities and differences. They were then read and the similarities that emerged were interpreted and became themes. Finally, three different themes of caring emerged: caring in relation to oneself, caring in relation to the world one lives in, and caring in relation to one’s own time perspective in life.

A system for organising the material into tables was created during the analysis process. It was reshaped several times as the process of interpretation advanced and finally resulted in a figure that shows the themes with their dimensions.

5.2 Study two

The second conducted study uses e-forms and a diary design. The focus of the study is human becoming in the process of writing creatively.

5.2.1 Participant selection and data collection

The study participants can be described as persons in different life situations. They have two features in common, the history of writing creatively for several years and viewing creative writing to be of importance in their lives. The study’s participants are 19 in total, three men and 16 women between the ages of 26 and 67.

At the beginning of this study, two existing groups on the social media platform Facebook were chosen and the members contacted with an invitation to participate. The groups were chosen because they explicitly emphasised an interest in creative writing for healing in a holistic way and personal development. The number of participants of this study that are members of the groups are 15, two men and 13 women between the ages of 31 and 67.

Data collection was done with the use of two e-forms, which are interrogative documents “that by its function is a receptacle for the data received” (Ross, 2000, p. 332). Web links to the e-forms were posted in the two groups on Facebook. The used e-forms were created with the E-lomake 3 software and are interrogative regarding what creative writing gave rise to within the writers. In addition to the use of e-forms, data collection was also performed with a diary method inspired by Bolger,

Davis, and Rafaeli (2003). The participants in a creative writing workshop facilitated by two writing instructors at an adult education centre were contacted with an invitation to participate in this study at the start of the workshop. The overarching focus of the workshop was to find one's writer's voice through writing and exploring the written together, with twelve gatherings over a period of eight months.

The participants worked with pen and paper in the creative writing workshops, and thus pen and paper diaries were chosen. This was a way to minimise the participants' burden and attain reliable person-level information (Bolger et al., 2003). The type of diary design used was an event-based design, which requires the participants to provide reports at every instance that met a pre-established definition (Bolger et al., 2003). The pre-established definition was to write down what their creative writing awakened within them, with freedom to shape their diaries as pleased when conveying their own thoughts and experiences. The collected diaries contain stories and poems. According to Sheble and Wildemuth (2009), diaries are a relatively unobtrusive form of data gathering and have fewer recalling errors compared with other methods that capture events afterwards. Data collection with diaries was conducted to further nuance the data material collected with the e-forms. Diaries were written by four participants, one man and three women between the ages of 26–61.

5.2.2 Thematic analysis

The material in total, collected with e-forms and diaries, consists of 44 pages of text, and was analysed with a thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012; Clarke & Braun, 2017). The thematic analysis is used within the hermeneutical approach and the theoretical perspective of this research. It does require clarity in the perspective of the research, and the research question functions as a guide during the analysis. The method is flexible regarding the amount of data and captures both latent and manifest content. This promotes its use as a method of analysis for this study because the material consisting of the e-form answers and the diaries differs between each in textual depth. The thematic analysis contains six nonlinear phases (Clarke & Braun, 2013). These are familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming the themes, and writing up.

The familiarisation with the material was done by reading through the texts several times. The diaries were read out loud by me and converted to text with a speech-to-text program, SpeechTexter. This was done with constant checking that the obtained text was the same as the original diary text. The material from the e-forms and the diaries was

coded separately and merged through the formation of themes. In the initial coding, the parts of the texts were extracted that were found to be of relevance to the research question: *how can creative writing aid human becoming?* As the codes were compared, the ones with something in common formed themes that were named in accordance with what they seemed to capture, and an initial thematic map was created. The themes were read through, and some were merged to minimise overlapping. The thematic analysis resulted in two main themes and seven subthemes.

5.3 Study three

The third study explores the human being's understanding of life in the aftermath of writing creatively through change in life. The study is inspired by O'Brien and Clark's (2012) description of unsolicited written narratives as a methodological genre, focusing on works that convey personal experiences of hardship in life and the possibilities of creative writing to handle life during pressuring times.

5.3.1 Study participants and data collection

Initially, the writing guides of six writing facilitators were chosen for a thorough read-through. This process revealed that the selected writing guides did not provide sufficient material for the planned study. During the reading process, an important discovery was made, which revealed that three of the authors had written memoirs prior to writing a writing guide. These three writers stressed that the writing of the memoir was lifechanging for them. So lifechanging, in fact, that they wrote a writing guide afterwards. Thus, the works of these three authors, presented in table 3, were chosen as material for this study. The year mentioned after the published title shows the year of publication for each book used in the analysis. First editions were not available for all works. The writers can be said to have dealt with somewhat different distressing experiences through writing and then continued to write about creative writing. Diana Raab wrote about the sudden loss of close person at a young age and having breast cancer, Susan Zimmermann wrote about being a parent to a child with a neurological disorder, and Patricia Tudor-Sandahl wrote about a difficult childhood.

The material in this study consists of published autobiographical works and guides for writing creatively. The criteria for inclusion in this study was the writing and publishing of an autobiography followed by a creative writing guide. Raab is the only author to have published two writing guides, which are both included in the material. The included written accounts are unsolicited, narrator-driven accounts about

distressing experiences in life and creative writing. According to O'Brien and Clark (2012), they can therefore be understood to deal with issues that are of importance to the writers themselves. Still, the texts are seen to convey a meaning that goes beyond the writers' subjectivity; through hermeneutical interpretation they can shed light on questions about life, according to Vikström (2005).

Table 3. Authors and works included in study three

| <i>Author</i> | <i>Title of book</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>Diana Raab</i> | Regina's Closet: Finding My Grandmother's Secret Journal (2007) Healing With Words: A writer's cancer journey (2010) Writing for Bliss: A Seven-Step Plan for Telling Your Story and Transforming Your Life (2017) |
| <i>Susan Zimmermann</i> | Keeping Katherine: A Mother's Journey to Acceptance (2004) Writing to Heal the Soul: Transforming Grief and Loss Through Writing (2002) |
| <i>Patricia Tudor-Sandahl</i> | Ett himla liv. En självbiografisk berättelse (1996) [A tremendous life. An autobiographical story] Ordet är ditt (2010) [The word is yours] |

5.3.2 Thematic network analysis

The data analysis was performed according to the thematic network analysis described by Attride-Stirling (2001), which uses a web-like network as an organising principle. The analysis method consists of three broad stages, all involving interpretation: the reduction or breakdown of the text, the exploration of the text, and the integration of the text. Thematic network analysis is well-suited to analyse rich textual data (Hanington & Martin, 2019) such as the material in this study. It shares the key features of any hermeneutic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The following research question was used as coding framework in the data analysis: *how does the understanding of life appear?* Familiarisation with the material was done by reading through the works. First the memoir was read and then the author's creative writing guide. Thus, the books were read in the order understood to have been written by the authors. This was followed by a coding of meaningful text excerpts that seemed to answer the research question and were grouped according to

their similarities and differences. The texts in the groups were read through several times, and themes were created to form six basic themes. A thorough read-through and organising of the basic themes was performed, through which the themes were arranged and formed into three organising themes. The network was drawn and revised several times as the analysis progressed and was finalised with the construction of a single global theme from the three organising themes. The global theme is the heart of the thematic network and the identification of the global theme finalises the thematic network (Hanington & Martin, 2019).

5.4 Study four

The fourth study concerns written accounts of hobby writers. The interest in this study is life's temporality and creative writing in relation to caring.

5.4.1 Study participants and data collection

The participants in this study can be described as amateur or hobby writers, as they do not write for a living. They write creatively for themselves, rarely or never publishing any of their texts. Hobby writers were chosen as participants in the study as they have a close, personal connection to their writing. To primarily write for oneself and not for publication creates vivid material that offers the most personal benefits for the writer (Bolton, 1999). Persons who write for themselves are a somewhat hidden group and hard to get in touch with. Problems associated with sampling concealed populations can be overcome by convenience sampling (Phua, 2004) and snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001); these were both used in this study. Convenience sampling was used by inviting four easily accessible participants to take part in the study by contributing with a written account about the meaning of one's creative writing. These participants write for personal purposes. Snowball sampling was used as a method of contact to invite more participants by starting a chain of referral. This subsequently yielded a total of seven written accounts with informed consent of participation in the study.

The study participants are all women between the ages of 63 to 77. A few of them have published some pieces in magazines. The material was collected as written accounts created by the study participants. Written accounts limit personal contact and can make it easier to communicate sensitive information (Handy & Ross, 2005) and suit persons well experienced in writing. The collected written accounts are, in total, 17

pages in length and the texts are in-depth. They convey the participants' personal and unique experiences and views about their creative writing.

5.4.2 A Gadamerian-based process of gaining understanding

The material of the study was analysed with the Gadamerian-based process of gaining understanding described by Fleming et al. (2003), consisting of a cycle of four steps. A read through of each text was conducted in a search for an expression that communicated the meaning of the whole text. This step was followed by a thorough examination of all texts, after which pieces of text were extracted. These were read through, and with a picture of the whole text in mind, they were interpreted, thus expanding the whole text by relating parts of the texts to the whole (Fleming et al., 2003), and a new understanding was finally formed as six themes. The hermeneutic process may appear linear here, yet the process of interpretation involved reading, re-reading, and pondering the themes in the returning to the whole—in other words, coming full circle in the hermeneutic interpretation.

6. Ethical considerations

This research follows the ethical guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta, 2023). The previous research has been described by giving the authors' results justice.

The participant of the case study received information about the study and the possibility to withdraw at any time. The participant took part in the research voluntarily and gave written, informed consent to participate. For the second study, data was gathered from two writing communities and a creative writing workshop held at an adult education centre. The participants are not considered a vulnerable group. The social media platform Facebook was used as a gateway to reach possible participants by posting information about the study in two different writing groups. For one of the writing groups, permission to post information about the study was requested from the administrator of the group. The other group's written policy allowed for posting information about the study without specific permission from the group's administrator. As a researcher I was available for any questions. Participants had the possibility of contacting me with questions about the study, and one query came about the length of the e-form. Before the second data collection of study two, the principal of the adult education centre and the two creative writing instructors of the creative writing workshop were contacted, and thus I was invited to visit the creative writing workshop when it started. I provided information about the study orally and answered questions. The participant was also given diaries that included the information I had given. The visit at the start of the workshop allowed for me to give a face to the researcher behind the study and see how the participant worked with and shared their creative writing within the group. I was available to be contacted during the workshop and one query about when the diary could be mailed in at the latest came. The diaries were returned with written, informed consent of participation.

The material in the third study is published autobiographical works and writing guides. The use of published material required ethical thinking about properly acknowledging and attributing the material. Study four involves hobby writers, and the participants received information about the study in writing and gave written, informed consent to participate. The study was approved by the Board for Research Ethics at Åbo Akademi University. During the research, data was handled, stored, and protected with secured access to the data with VPN in accordance with the general guidelines of Åbo Akademi University. In accordance with Åbo Akademi Open science policy (Åbo

Akademi, 2017), a national storage service is the chosen long-term data storage, with restricted reuse that requires permit from the writer of this thesis due to the personal character of the material. Concerning the description for storage, the focus is placed on describing the dataset itself instead of the results, conclusions, and publications based on the data, which is in line with the FAIR principles (FORCE11, 2021). Furthermore, the research is published in peer-reviewed scientific publications of high quality, with digital object identifiers (DOI) according to the publisher's procedure, and can be found using search engines. As the writer of this thesis, I have no conflict of interest to declare in connection to this research and no collaboration has been done with producers of commercial solutions on creative writing for well-being.

7. Findings

This section describes the findings from the conducted studies one to four in accordance with the hermeneutic process described in chapter 3.

7.1 Caring in creative writing

The first study explores caring in creative writing (Sandbäck Forsell et al., 2019). It resulted in three themes: *Caring in relation to oneself*, *Caring in relation to the world one lives in*, and *Caring in relation to one's own time perspective in life*.

The theme *Caring in relation to oneself* entails seeing one's own uniqueness as a human being. By valuing and embracing oneself, the good in life can be grasped. A possible change in life is closely connected to oneself, and the self represents an opportunity for change. The human being strives for balance in life and the importance of making decisions that feel right emerges. To fully accept oneself as one is a prerequisite for finding inner peace in relation to oneself. There is a gratitude towards life as a gift, regardless of what life brings. Thus, the human being is contented and prepared to face the future like an adventure.

The theme *Caring in relation to the world a person lives in* involves the experience of an interrelated humanity and sense of fellowship with others. In dealing with prosperity and failure in life, love is recognised as a significant power. To experience friendship, share experiences, and not trying to cope alone contributes to making life bearable. The human being is open to the diversity of the surrounding nature, which enriches life. The human being can sense a connection to a god, which calms and comforts in difficult times.

The theme *Caring in relation to one's own time perspective in life* entails seeing oneself in a succession of generations. There is a gratitude spanning from one's childhood to adulthood. The experience of having been a child characterises the human being and permeates the adult human being's core. From a perspective of generations, the human being strives to pass on what is experienced as good. Knowledge of the transient nature of life aids in making use of time in life and thinking about life after death, and thus the person intends to do the best with the time available. The human being has realised that life can end at any moment, and thus both moments and life itself are perishable. Pausing, allowing oneself to stop temporarily, and striving for calmness becomes a goal instead of being effective and living up to demands. By being present in the moment, impressions are registered through the senses, and the human being experiences a sense of peace and stillness within.

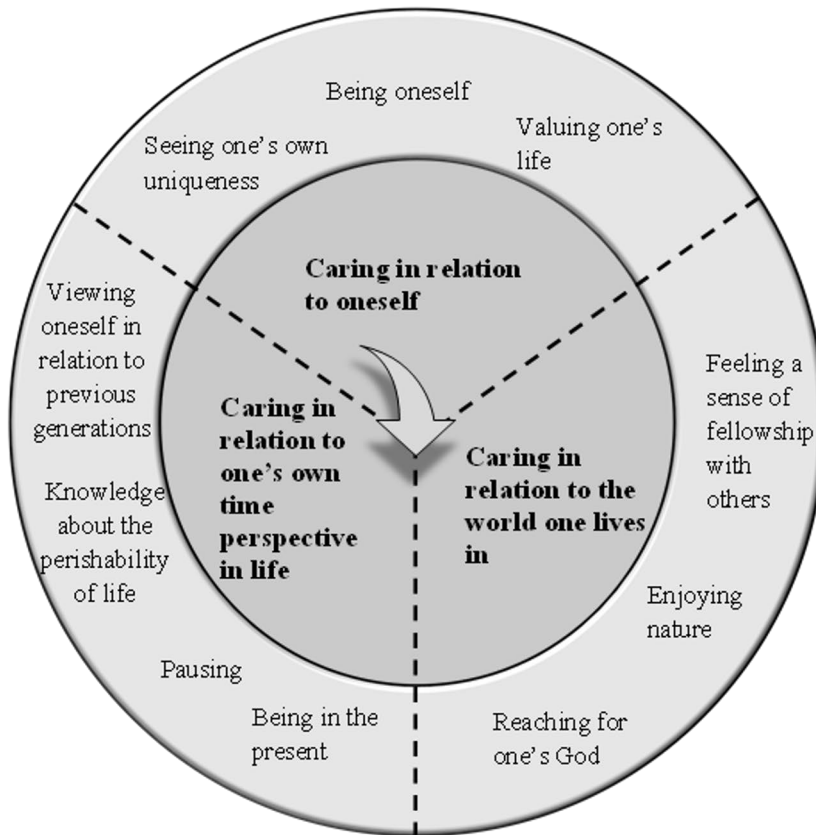


Figure 2. Caring in creative writing. Note. From "Caring in Creative writing – A Case Study" by Sandbäck Forsell, J., Nyholm, L. and Koskinen, C. 2019, International Journal for Human Caring, 23 (1), p. 97. Copyright 2019 by Springer Publishing Company, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

The three previously described themes: *Caring in relation to oneself*, *Caring in relation to the world one lives in*, and *Caring in relation to one's own time perspective in life* are illustrated in figure 2. This figure has an arrow in the centre. The interrelationship among the three themes in the figure is viewed as movement in the creative writing that commences, like the arrow, from caring in relation to oneself. The movement expands towards both the world that the human being lives in and the temporal aspect of life. As a shift in focus from self to others takes place and the significance of others during difficult times emerges, through creative writing the human being can gradually find joy in the thoughts and by doing something for someone else. The will to change can aid in opening up the time perspective of life. This allows for the human being to sense

the passage of time and connects the person to a fellowship sharing equal terms of life.

Summary of findings

Caring in creative writing appears in the connection between the human being and the self, the human being and the world, and the human being and time in one's own life. In relation to oneself, caring awakens the human being to see their own uniqueness and that the starting point for change is oneself. Caring in creative writing opens up a larger view of life, giving existence a unique structure consisting of the world that one lives in and the time perspective of one's own life. Caring in relation to the time perspective in one's own life anchors the human being to a connection in the past beyond herself and gives her a history. Time in life is perishable, and thus there is a focus on true presence in the moments of life.

7.2 Human becoming aided by creative writing

Study two explored human becoming as aided by creative writing (Sandbäck Forsell et al., 2021a). The study resulted in two themes, *A key to self-understanding and personal growth* and *An act of emotional reactions and release*. The themes and subthemes are presented in figure 3. The figure of a flower illustrates how creative writing can enable human becoming through its function as both an act of emotional reactions and release and as a key to self-understanding and growth. The sepals show the subthemes that form the theme *An act of emotional reactions and release*. The subthemes that form the theme *A key to self-understanding and personal growth* are pictured in the petals. The placement of the themes in the flower is influenced by the way they appear in this study. In the sepals the themes concern processes with emotions in focus, while the themes in the petals concern issues of self-understanding and growth, thus being somewhat closer to the self or the core of a human being.

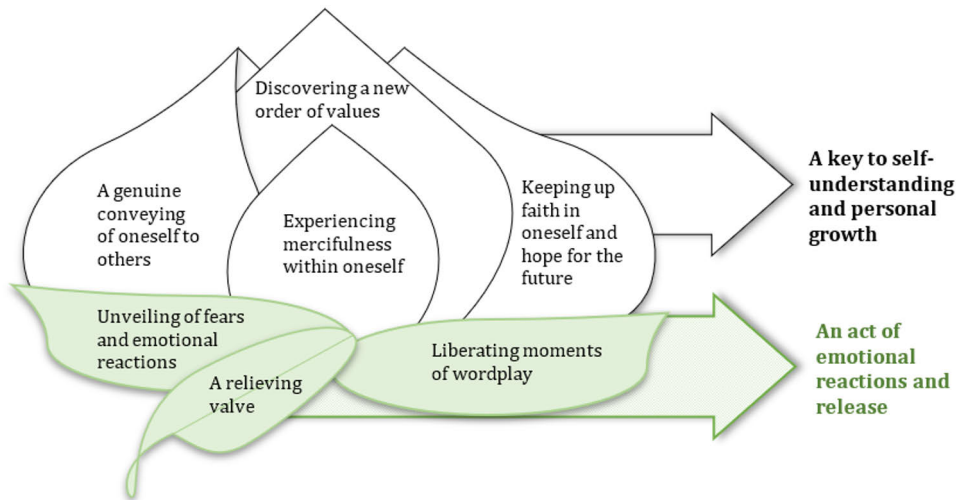


Figure 3. How creative writing can aid human becoming

An act of emotional reactions and release

The writer confronts fears through writing. Writing about failure eases the feelings of self-hatred and gives the experience another proportion. It is possible to explore and gain insight into what fears of failure stem from, such as, at their worst, a fear of dying. To write creatively functions as an outlet for built-up emotional pressure. It is a relieving valve for experiences that the human beings have not been able to express or share. Words on the paper provide experiences a manageable shape and reading them cleanses. Some writing moments are liberating by enabling a space without the pressure of accomplishment, but this entails making a conscious choice to write without aiming for achievement. Subjects concerning serious matters are touched upon through wordplay.

A key to self-understanding and personal growth

To write creatively enables an experience of a genuine conveying of oneself to others, it conduces to an experience of becoming visible. It has an honest tinge to it, a revealing of oneself. As others read a text, a relationship can be formed and an exchange of emotions occurs. The writer's own emotional state is offered to someone else to embrace, and when it touches others, it is empowering for the writer.

A change in perspective during writing aids experiences of mercy towards self and others. For instance, by writing from another person's perspective or writing from the point of view of oneself at different ages. This is empowering, especially amidst feelings of anger.

During difficult times in life, the human being can hold on to creative writing, keeping up faith in oneself when demands from both self and others become burdensome. Seeing new abilities in oneself provides hope about managing various challenges in life. It is even possible to sense that a step has been taken towards a goal in the writing act.

Even if writing sustains hope for the future, it can also reveal life in new and different ways, causing pain and disappointment. Writing about emotional tension in daily life or life-shaking events can reveal a new order of values. For instance, through creative writing the source for tension or fear in relation to one's own mortality can be found to be in vain as the importance of close-by people emerges.

Summary of findings

Creative writing moves a human being within. Human becoming in creative writing involves an unveiling and exploring of raw and unprocessed emotions. Creative writing can unlock a narrowed outlook by aiding a person to raise their gaze from oneself towards others, the surrounding life, and the future. To write creatively, and to share it with others, involves a revealing of oneself. Human becoming in creative writing is enabled through processes that spur freedom and personal growth. Both freedom from the chains of unprocessed raw emotions and growth through a strengthened connection to both self and others are viewed as caring in the process of human becoming.

7.3 The human being's understanding of life as a humble stance towards the changefulness of life

The third study focused on the human being's understanding of life (Sandbäck Forsell et al., 2021b). This is an understanding of life that has evolved through creative writing in connection to both hardship in life and the meaning of writing creatively through it. The result of the study is shown in figure 4, which illustrates a global theme, *A humble stance to the changefulness of life*, with three organising themes with issues oriented towards uncertainty in life, opportunities in life, and the possibility of transformation through suffering in life.

The global theme *A humble stance to the changefulness of life* entails that life is viewed to have its own way of being. It is both unexpected and unpredictable, and thus there is a continuous changefulness to it. The understanding of life is a humble stance because it encompasses conscious and active ways of making use of the possibilities in life. This means that human beings strive to take care of their time in life while knowing that life itself cannot be captured. Furthermore, the humble stance also entails the ability to influence things in life in some way while

still embracing the fact that the possibility to control the conditions of life are limited. The changefulness in this theme also spans the transformation that can come from change where suffering in some way has enabled growth. The changefulness itself is illustrated with water in the global theme in figure 4.

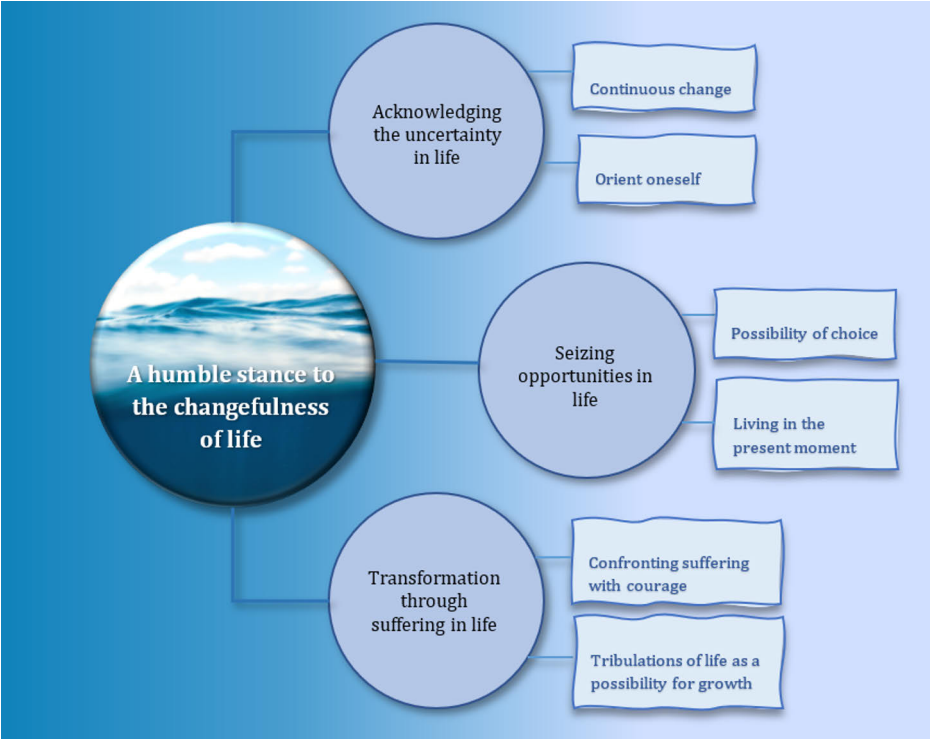


Figure 4. The human being's understanding of life as a humble stance towards the changefulness of life

Acknowledging the uncertainty in life involves continuous change and a necessity to orient oneself in life. Continuous change entails the thought that there is nothing certain in life, besides a continuous change. Thus, change and impermanence are necessities that a human being needs to embrace. Everchanging, life has a rhythm of birth and death. To view life as everchanging can aid in handling setbacks and despair. Life has no guarantees and should be approached as an adventure. The human being is at times forced to explore life and getting to know oneself better. This resembles being in a maze or labyrinth, at times being lost and at times having found a way. Demands in life require a flexibility of the human

being and with experiences spanning from durability towards challenges to an openness towards others. Even while the human being has other persons around them in life, there is a loneliness at the core of the human being's inner life, and understanding existential solitude is gained in the process of maturing.

Seizing opportunities in life involves making use of opportunities where personal choice-making is enabled and striving to be in the moment. Life is viewed as involving continual choice-making, concerning the outlook on life and choosing how to respond to things around oneself. The context of life is seen as grand with small opportunities to influence it. Thus, the importance of taking an outlook on life where there is an opportunity to make choices is stressed, despite not being able to influence and control everything around oneself. To make choices in life also concerns the choice of what one wants to support and cultivate; there is freedom to choose one's response to circumstances in life. Living in the present moment entails a view on life where death brings on an awareness to live more fully in the present moment. Surrounding things and people of importance are easily overlooked and bypassed, but the ability to be in the moment is described as a skill which is possible to learn and develop.

Transformation through suffering shows a need to be courageous and confront one's suffering. The encountered hardship may be an opportunity to grow as a human being. Confronting suffering with courage shows a gained insight that suffering in life demands courage of a human being. Hardship and suffering in life are important to face head-on; it is not just a question of accepting and moving forward. Having courage to face one's fears can increase with age and experience of the complexity of life. Courage is viewed as a necessity for a change of perspective and essential for change to take place.

Hardship itself can be seen to enable growth and moving forward even though it momentarily stops a person. Tribulations of life as a possibility for growth entails focusing not so much on what has happened to oneself, but rather on what follows and the impact that the experience has had on a human being's life. How one uses the experience gained from hardships in life can make an impact on the future development that is greater than the difficulty experienced. Thus, life in the future is not viewed as determined by past experiences and encountered hardships can become opportunities for growth and development in the rearview mirror.

Summary of findings

Life itself has a continuous changefulness, a movement, like waves on water. Aided by creative writing, the uncertainty of life is acknowledged. Creative writing supports the human being in seizing opportunities in life by making choices, even if the possibilities to influence the circumstances in life are limited. Furthermore, it reminds the human being about the brevity of life and aids living in the moment. The demand for courage in the face of hardship is acknowledged and the impact of an experienced hardship appears at times as transformative. The human being's understanding of life evolves to a humble stance towards the changefulness of life; the human being is watchful whilst embracing the idea that changefulness itself harbours opportunities for growth.

7.4 Temporal turns in creative writing

The interest of the fourth study focused on life's temporality and creative writing in relation to caring (Sandbäck Forsell et al., 2022). The result of the study consists of six themes: *Acknowledging a childhood's powerlessness*, *Dealing with losses in life*, *Capturing memories and revisiting them*, *Building a new relationship to one's past*, *Living in the here and now*, and *Being in between the past and the future*.

The theme *Acknowledging a childhood's powerlessness* shows that most of the study participants described their childhood to entail experiences of both joy and insecurity. The atmosphere was characterised by poverty and destitution yet entailing spiritual wealth. The participants described the way of life as changing over time. But what it entails to be a child, on the other hand, is viewed as immutable. To be a child entails a dependency on other people.

Dealing with losses in life describes creative writing as a way of dealing with loss in life. Loss concerns what a person loves, such as close people, animals, or opportunities in life. To write about loved ones is described as caring amidst sorrow and to ease the feelings of missing someone. There is a sense of unfinishedness that is connected to the writing. Through writing, people from the past are revered. Thus, writing is a tribute to the people who were close to the participants during their lifetime. The pain of missed opportunities for self-fulfilment is handled through creative writing, broadening the view of the matter. Self-directed writing may open new perspectives for a person on the matter of missed opportunities in life, which increases understanding regarding the circumstances and is liberating in connection to the experienced pain.

The theme *Capturing memories and revisiting them* shows the participants writing about what has happened in the past to preserve memories throughout life. The memories that the participants capture

through writing are important things that they do not want to disappear from memory, and the written texts can be returned to. The lived life is mapped through writing through which the writer can learn from oneself and from the effects of various decisions. Experiences of life and their meaning are described as being left in the mind of the participants, as both good and bad memories, and these are compared to life as it is lived at this moment. Thus, writing finalises events in life.

Building a new relationship to one's past describes both the experiential past of the participant and the reshaping of this relationship through writing. It is not the past itself, but the relationship to the past that is seen to be strongly connected to the present and the future, how one reacts to similar experiences as in the past or functions in relation to their own future. Having lived through difficult experiences in the past and writing about a painful experience encountered during childhood from an adult point of view, a new, meaningful relationship to the experience is built up through creative writing where the experience does not control life.

The theme *Living in the here and now* illustrates the use of creative writing to manage difficulties in life. Through the managing of hardship, it is possible to live in the here and now, and having order in life by writing creatively increases the possibility of being in the here and now. The theme shows that creative writing is connected to an awareness of one's experiences on an emotional or rational level and to write creatively can strengthen a person's capability to live in the present and increase the sense of responsibility for oneself and others.

Being in between the past and the future illustrates that the writers are at times seated in between the past and the future. To be able to write creates calming moments where the writer has the opportunity to think about the past and make plans, making it possible to reflect on things in life. Opportunities open up in life when the experienced past broadens perspectives and the future brings new choices. This progresses in stages that fulfil one another, and it involves comparing the different stages of life's course by bringing past things to mind and aid planning anew.

Summary of findings

The results show themes that concern early experiences of powerlessness, the handling of shattered dreams and losing loved ones, preserving and revisiting memories, and focusing on forming a new kind of relationship to one's past, living in the present moment through a sense of order in life, and stopping and being in a space in between the past and the future. These themes entail caring in movement in relation to time, and they are viewed as temporal turns in life that people may

make with the help of creative writing. The possibility of making these temporal turns and being in movement is viewed as caring. This is a movement of the mind that also entails stillness. Caring in relation to life's temporality entails both freedom of movement and a connection to time. Aided by creative writing, the human being can be mentally agile and have a foothold in life's temporality, which enables the making of temporal turns in life that can provide a personal sense of continuity and wholeness.

8. Interpretive discussion

This chapter presents an interpretive and interweaving movement of the substance fragments from studies one to four in connection to caring in relation to human becoming and life. The substance fragments of caring have been chiselled out from the results of the studies and extracted by interpreting the results in connection to caring. Furthermore, they have been interpreted considering the aim of the research; to gain a deeper understanding about caring in relation to human becoming and life. The research aim helped guide the process of interpretation. Thus, the substance fragments of caring are derived from the overall findings, and they have undergone a process of interpretation and, finally, an abductive leap, to be presented as answers to the aim of the research. This phase of the research process is shown in figure 1, and the design of the research is illustrated as four spirals. In table 4 (p. 40), colours are used to make the process of interpretation both transparent and traceable for the reader. The colours themselves have no further meaning. The reordering of the substance fragments has been done inductively, and the knowledge formation as four abductive assumptions involves making an abductive leap.

An overview of the research findings is presented in table 4. The table shows the four studies conducted within this research process, which have each answered a specific research question. The research questions used in studies one to four are presented together with a summary of the result of each conducted study. As the table shows, study one has a focus on caring in the context of creative writing. Study two concerns human becoming in connection to creative writing, and the interest of study three is the understanding of life after encountering life-changing hardship. The fourth and final study deals with caring in connection to temporality.

Table 4. Overview of the research findings.

| Study, research question, and findings | Substance fragments of caring | Substance fragments reordered | Interpretation of the overall findings and the substance fragments of caring, guided by the research aim; to gain a deeper understanding about caring in relation to human becoming and life | Abductive assumptions |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p>1. What is caring in creative writing? Caring appears in a connection between the human being and oneself, the world, and time in one's own life. Caring is to see one's own uniqueness and oneself as a starting point for change. There are experiences of gratitude that are caring, concerning both life as a gift and being in a succession of generations. Pausing from demands is caring as time in life is perishable.</p> | Uniqueness as a human being | Self as the possibility for change | | Caring as courageous movement in human becoming and life |
| | Gratitude for life as gift | Unveiling of fears | | |
| | Self as the possibility for change | Confronting suffering with courage | | |
| <p>2. How can creative writing aid human becoming? Creative writing entails emotional processes that provide release and contribute to self-understanding and growth as a human being. Human becoming is aided by experiences of genuine sharing and a revealing of oneself to others, as being able to find mercy within oneself deepens the connection to both self and others. Creative writing entails liberating moments of freedom from demands of accomplishment.</p> | Genuine conveying of oneself | Uniqueness as a human being | | Caring as being authentic in relation to human becoming and life |
| | Mercifulness towards self and others | Genuine conveying of oneself | | |
| | Unveiling of fears | Mercifulness towards self and others | | |
| | Liberating and undemanding moments | | | |
| <p>3. How does the understanding of life appear after writing creatively through change in life? Life has a continuous changefulness to it. In the face of hardship, the demand for courage is acknowledged. The human being's understanding of life evolves to a humble stance towards the changefulness of life; being watchful whilst embracing that the changefulness itself harbours possibilities for growth. Creative writing supports the human being to seize opportunities by making choices, even if possibilities to influence the circumstances in life are limited.</p> | Confronting suffering with courage | Gratitude for life as gift | Caring as the exchange of gratitude and a humble approach towards human becoming and life | |
| | Humble stance towards the changefulness of life | Humble stance towards the changefulness of life | | |
| | Freedom of choice | Gratitude in building a new relationship to one's past | | |
| <p>4. How can creative writing be caring for the human being in relation to life's temporality? For the human being, caring in relation to life's temporality entails both freedom of movement and a connection to time. Aided by creative writing, the human being can be mentally agile and have a foothold in life's temporality, enabling the making of temporal turns in life. This can provide a personal sense of continuity and wholeness as a person through a reframing of the past and a framing of the future with the help of creative writing.</p> | Gratitude in building a new relationship to one's past | Liberating and undemanding moments | Caring as the freedom in creating wholeness in human becoming and life | |
| | Freedom of movement as transcendence | Freedom of choice | | |
| | | Freedom of movement as transcendence | | |

The aim of this research is a deeper understanding about caring in relation to human becoming and life. This section discusses the findings about caring that have been made in this research. These findings connect to human becoming and life and involve authenticity, courage, and the combination of gratitude and humbleness and freedom in creating wholeness. The findings are henceforth discussed without mutual ranking according to their importance in connection to caring.

The abductive assumptions are (see table 4):

- Caring as courageous movement in human becoming and life
- Caring as being authentic in relation to human becoming and life
- Caring as the exchange of gratitude and a humble approach towards human becoming and life
- Caring as the freedom in creating wholeness in human becoming and life

8.1 Caring as courageous movement in human becoming and life

The findings in this research indicate caring through the human being's evolving view of oneself which is connected to courage. Courage is to persevere despite fear, while experiencing no fear while carrying out dangerous acts is fearlessness (Rachman, 2004). This research shows that the human being views oneself as significant for change, meaning that a possible change in life starts with oneself, and to realise one's own role or meaning in connection to change entails courage (study 1). Furthermore, courage is a necessity for a change of perspective and essential for change to take place, as in human becoming. For the human being to realise that oneself is the starting point involves a clarified view of oneself as having the opportunity for change and that the responsibility for that change does not lie elsewhere. Eriksson (2018) describes how creating takes courage, as the human being gives out a part of oneself in the product that is created, and thus, creating also involves change connected to the self.

Especially in the face of hardship and suffering, the need for courage is actualised within the human being, and she confronts her suffering with courage (study 3). Suffering is part of being human and a human being's life, and one form that suffering takes in these findings is fear. The findings show the human being facing her fears in study two and confronting her suffering by recognising the call for courage in the face of hardship and the demand for a head-on approach (study 3). The findings of this research do not indicate courage as absence of fear.

Instead, the findings show the human being unveiling fears with the help of creative writing, especially fears that are connected to possible personal failure in something the human being attempts (study 2). Through creative writing the human being searches for the roots of her fear, explores the sense of fear, and brings her fears into daylight, which gives them a new proportion. Thus, the human being's movement is not fear-driven, but instead she can progress in the movement of becoming one with her fears, which at times are more or less prominent. McGee (2014) makes a connection between fear and authenticity and describes the facing of fears as a prerequisite for developing one's own authenticity and that fear threatens authenticity. The interpretive assumption concerning caring as being authentic is discussed in chapter 8.2.

The findings on courage in connection to human becoming coincide with Eriksson's (2018) thought that it takes courage to be human, to dare to be, and to become who one is. Eriksson further describes that when a human being demands to be oneself, the human being can actualise the exchange of giving and receiving love that is natural for a human being. In the light of the findings of this research, this is an exchange that the human being makes with life itself. It is an exchange of gratitude and a humble stance towards the changefulness of life in the process of becoming, and this connected to courage. The assumption concerning caring in the exchange of gratitude and a humble approach towards human becoming and life is discussed in chapter 8.3.

8.2 Caring as being authentic in relation to human becoming and life

The human being's experience of being authentic is viewed as caring. Being authentic is understood here as state authenticity, as in the subjective sense of being one's true self (Lenton et al., 2013). To be authentic in connection to human becoming and life involves, according to the findings of this research, experiences of being a unique human being, being genuine in the connection to others and the self, and the ability to be merciful towards oneself and others.

This research has shown the human being's experiences of uniqueness as caring in connection to oneself, meaning that the human being comes to appreciate and value oneself as a unique person and unique among other human beings (study 1). The gaining of understanding and appreciation of one's own uniqueness enables the human being to assimilate what she finds good in life (study 1). This can be viewed as supportive of the interpretation made concerning the thought of being authentic. Being authentic and living authentically can be regarded as somewhat of a necessity for a sense of truly grasping the

depth of life, meaning that a human being can recognise what is of importance to oneself and one's own importance as a human being, even if the vision at times can become restricted by a limited view of oneself. In a somewhat similar vein, research has found creative writing to involve self-identity work in connection with life-changing experiences, where new abilities can be found beyond a fixed view on oneself brought on by illness (Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2008; Brooks, 2004) or loss (Saresma, 2003).

Another substance fragment of caring concerns the human being's experience of a genuine conveying of oneself to others (study 2). This involves that the human being is genuine in relation to others, as in being without masks and pretending. She can experience an honest revealing of oneself to other people. Narration through writing, and enabling others to read, creates a relationship where the human being offers the written for someone else to embrace, or reject. This means that the human being puts herself out there, subjecting herself to a possible rejection, which requires courage. The findings of this research show the human being experiencing being genuine in the conveying of oneself to others. Research has likewise found creative writing as self-discovery to reinforce the awareness of and ability to express thoughts (Bolton, 2008) and enhance the connection to an emotional and creative self (Haertl & Ero-Phillips, 2019), thus supporting the interpreted assumption concerning the experience of being authentic as aided by creative writing.

The discovery of mercy towards another person is here viewed as being connected to being authentic, and mercifulness towards another human being is awakened by becoming aware of an incomplete characteristic to all human beings (study 2 and 3). This can be connected to the interdependency (Rehnsfeldt & Arman, 2005) and the natural caring that human beings share with each other. For the human being to find mercy towards other persons within oneself is understood as caring. At times, mercy towards others is awakened as the human being comes to understand another human being's choices and actions, as this research shows the human being able to see the other as an incomplete human being, fallible and making mistakes (study 2). Besides finding mercy towards others, the human being can find mercy towards oneself. This research shows that the human being explores emotional reactions and fears through creative writing and recognises different demands as prerequisites for an accomplishment, meaning the demands that the human being puts on herself. The research findings show that the human being experiences an undemandingness, to be in a space without the strain of accomplishment as mercifulness towards self that is empowering (study 2), involving promising oneself that writing is not to be an achievement. In quite a similar manner, Wright (2009) has found

self-directed writing for well-being to entail writing to oneself in a non-judgemental, compassionate voice.

8.3 Caring as the exchange of gratitude and a humble approach towards human becoming and life

The findings of this research show caring through an exchange made with life itself that consists of gratitude towards life and a humble stance towards it. The findings show that the human being experiences gratitude for life, as life itself is perceived as a gift (study 1). To regard life as a gift involves a view of oneself as a receiver, as life itself is a gift that the human being has been given. The experience of having been a child will characterise the human being and permeates the human being's core in adulthood. To have a connection to previous generations and a sense of belonging there fosters gratitude and a strive to pass on what the human being finds good in life (study 1).

For the human being, the experience of gratitude is connected to building a new relationship to one's own past (study 4), where encountered difficulties may become sources of gratitude when they are viewed in the rearview mirror. There is an unfinishedness connected to loss, concerning loss of what is loved, such as close people, animals, or opportunities in life where focus is set on remembering the meaningful in the past (study 4). The utilisation of creative writing in connection to a forced change in life impacts how the human being approaches life later. Life itself is viewed as continuously changing, and it may appear as unruly and restless at times. The findings indicate that the utilisation of creative writing in connection to a non-chosen and forced trial in life may aid handling of the changefulness of life as the human being develops a humble stance towards the changefulness (study 3).

A humble stance as an approach towards life itself is not viewed as aspirational or superior compared to another perspective on life in this research. This research does not take a position regarding what the optimal outlook on life is. According to the findings of study three, a humble stance towards the changefulness of life may be developed with the help of writing creatively and as the human being explores the meaning of her writing. The changefulness of life calls for the human being to respond and can be connected to the findings of Dillon (2011), who describes creative writing connecting the human being with a pulsating and resonating power in life, giving new meaning and direction to life. A humble approach towards life is not an approach that is characterised by passivity and subordination of self. Instead, it involves being open to the surroundings and daring to confront suffering and to make active choices, even if it is not possible to influence the circumstances. This interpretation coincides with the description of

Epple (2007) in that intuitive insights that emerge in writing can bring new and future actions into the world.

From a human being's point of view, life gives and takes in an exchange. There is a gratitude for what the human being has received, but what she has received is so grand that the human being is simultaneously humble towards its changefulness. This can be connected to the findings of Saunders (2005), where gerotranscendence is prominent in the writings of elderly amateur writers, thus indicating a similarly large view on life at mature age, which in this research is connected to gratitude and a humble stance towards human becoming and life. According to Manela (2021), humility-related beliefs can become connected to gratitude in the response of a person who receives something severely needed while not being able to provide it for oneself. The findings of this research indicate caring through the exchange of gratitude towards what life gives combined with a humble stance towards the changefulness of life, as the changefulness demands the human being to answer it. It is an exchange that is made between the becoming human being and life itself, and this involves courage. Humility and gratitude are considered by Kruse et al. (2014) in the same way as in this research. According to the authors, humility and gratitude exist within human beings in a mutual reinforcing relationship, and they are considered in a similar vein in this research.

8.4 Caring as the freedom in creating wholeness in human becoming and life

The findings of this research show that the human being experiences freedom that is viewed as caring. The human being is in motion and utilising the freedom in connection to time that spurs wholeness. The freedom to create enables a reframing of the past. This involves building a new relationship with the past and early experiences of powerlessness, the handling of shattered dreams and losing loved ones, and preserving and revisiting memories (study 4). McCartney (2011) has found, somewhat similarly, that creative writing aids in integrating and moving beyond the difficult experience encountered in life.

To write creatively enables moments in the present that are liberating for the human being by enabling a temporary space that is free from the strain of accomplishment (study 2). In a similar vein, Sinats et al. (2005a, 2005b) have found creative writing to create seclusion and transformation that bring peace. In this research it is not a given freedom simply created through writing, but it involves an active choice, a promise that writing is not to be an achievement that undergoes demands. Thus, there is freedom to choose non-achievement and play in

the present moment (study 2) and stopping and being in a space in between the past and the future (study 4).

The findings of this research show that the human being in the aftermath of forced change cultivates the idea of freedom of choice to concern the small things in life, knowing that it is not always possible to influence the circumstances of life (study 3). Thus, the human being utilises the possibility of choice, so that even in situations with the given circumstances something can be done. Even if it does not have a causal effect on the encountered issue, there is still the freedom to choose, which is aimed at the future regarding what to support and cultivate in life. This can be connected to creating meaning in life, as research has found creative writing to facilitate sense making (Rhodes, 2011) and accepting reality (McNichol, 2016).

With the help of the freedom of movement in time, the human being's past can be reframed, the liberating and undemanding moments are connected to creative moments of being in the present, and the freedom to make choices has an emphasis on the future. The findings of this research view caring through the creating of wholeness in connection to time. Wholeness, as it is viewed in this research, can be connected to self-continuity and, as defined by Becker et al. (2018), is the sense that one's past, present, and future are meaningfully connected. Thus, the human being can sense wholeness as these three temporal forms in life are linked to each other.

9. Methodological considerations

The research that is presented in this thesis is examined with the use of eight criteria for quality in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). The criteria are worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence.

The first criterion concerns the question of whether the topic is a worthy research topic. Much research has been done about creative writing, but as the initial search for previous research revealed, the research found concerning caring in connection to creative writing was sparse. This research has the potential to reveal a new perspective, or a different way of looking into creative writing, with the help of caring science theories and concepts. Concerning the criterion of rich rigor, the implementation in this work has followed the guidelines of the Finnish national board on research integrity, TENK. The data has been described, for example, by the number of pages of the different data materials and the type of texts and characteristics of them. The chosen methods of analysis are material-specific and in line with the hermeneutic approach used in this work. The process of analysis is written out so that it is transparent to the reader.

The used methods for analysis of the material may seem to be many for research that identifies with hermeneutic methodology, where emphasis is not on the methods. The manner of analysis has firstly been chosen with consideration to the qualities of the data materials. This research has also been a learning process for the author in the act of becoming a researcher. I have been curious, wanting to learn and try out different ways to wield materials that comply with hermeneutics and suits this researcher and material combination. Thus, emphasis is not on the method itself but on what happens when one meets the text as a researcher. However, different methods may be dissimilarly helpful in the reading and interpreting texts as a researcher. The hermeneutic analysis, the thematic analysis, the thematic networks analysis, and the Gadamerian-based method for gaining understanding all have the use of interpretation as a feature in common. The use of interpretation runs like a thread through the whole process in this research. Concerning the criterion of sincerity, attempting to be both observant towards my pre-understanding and to challenge it, I have used a diary to document thoughts and poems. At times I have returned to my writings during the research process, to read, re-read, and reflect on my pre-understanding. The implementation of the research is transparent in terms of methods and the research challenges. For instance, a discovery made in study

three during the data analysis brought on a change of data material which has been described.

In connection to the criterion of credibility, different types of texts have been used as material, like triangulation. The texts used as material target creative writing from different perspectives. They are products of creative writing (study 1), texts concerning the process of writing (study 1), texts about what creative writing does for a person and awakens within a person (study 2), texts about experiences in life, such as hardship and forced change (study 3) and texts about writing, instructional guides (study 3), and texts about the meaning of creative writing (study 4). The data complexity has been shown by using direct quotations from the material produced by the participants in the research. Regarding the criterion of resonance, results in this work are presented with the use of illustrative figures to enhance the comprehensibility for the reader. Concerning the criterion of significant contribution, the research contributes with theory development of the Theory of Caritative Caring concerning the phenomenon of caring by deepening the understanding about caring in relation to human becoming and life.

The criterion of ethics concerns procedural, situational, relational, and exiting ethics (Tracy, 2010). The procedural ethics is comprised by the research permit from the Board for Research Ethics at Åbo Akademi University. During the research, data was handled, stored, and protected in accordance with the general guidelines of TENK and Åbo Akademi University. The participants gave informed consent and have been granted anonymity. Situational ethics have been used as the participants are protected by including quotations in the final research report that do not harm or enable identification of the participants. Relational ethics have been applied with the use of data collection, for example, using diary design in study three to minimise the interference to the participants. Concerning exiting ethics, the research has been shared by choosing publication channels with peer review listed in Publication Forum to ensure the scientific quality of publications in connection with this research. Regarding the criterion of meaning coherence, the research has achieved the stated aim of deepening the understanding of caring in relation to human becoming and life. The previous research is multi-scientific, where inclusion has been weighed with care concerning caring. The reviewed literature has been carefully combined with the research focus, used methods, and study findings.

To conduct this research has been a learning experience for me in many ways. At times I have felt lost and not known what to do, especially when I have been sitting with a data material, looking at it, reading it, and experiencing that nothing happens. Nothing happens, no magic, and no meeting with the text. Many times, my thoughts have gone Vikström's

(2005) description of meeting the text, that a meeting with it only occurs when a reader feels called to play together with the text. This has made me wonder if I do not understand what I am doing or does the text that I am analysing not awaken anything in me? This challenge was biggest at the beginning of my research, especially with the materials of study 1 and 2. I gradually came to understand that it was the approach of my research, the productive hermeneutics, that was challenging me. I finally understood that yes, the texts did move and touch me within. And yes, a meeting does occur, but the challenge was that I was at times too cautious in answering the calling of the text.

10. Conclusion, practical implications, and further research

Engaging in creative activity has the potential to benefit human beings. Creative writing provides opportunities for caring for a writing human being and makes a difference by influencing personal growth and the attitude towards life. Caring involves the experience of courage in the process of human becoming, where having courage entails acknowledging fears. Caring entails being and living in an authentic way, having a unique and genuine sense of self, and finding the ability to be merciful. The human being's involvement with life is caring, where a sense of gratitude towards life, and the humble stance towards change in it, intersects. The freedom to create in connection to time spurs wholeness as caring, bringing together the sense of being the same person over time, while constantly being in change as a human being in becoming.

Based on the results obtained in this work, creative writing should be more strongly promoted, for example, in adult education centres or similar educational institutions. Furthermore, there should be more opportunities to study creative writing for young people, for example, as optional alternative courses in primary education, high schools, and folk colleges.

In health care settings, creative writing should be made available as part of care. It should be made possible for patients to engage in creative writing and have the possibility of support by professional carers. This should be considered in the education of health care personnel by offering to study creative writing as part of specialisation studies. The findings of this research can be benefitted from in various contexts when there is a need to support human becoming and the connection to life. This can concern persons of different ages, off-balance with self and/or life, which may be brought on by forced change that causes suffering. Caring in creative writing can thus aid in developing the human being's dynamics towards human becoming and life. The findings presented as four abductive assumptions concerning caring in relation to human becoming and life could be further worked on and developed into a writing aid.

Further research could be to develop the findings into a writing guide that could function as aid for professional carers working with a diversity of persons in need of caring. A writing guide could help to facilitate communication, discussion between carers and patients, and aid natural caring, both in and outside of clinical settings. This research is conducted in the context of creative writing, but the research findings are nevertheless limited to it. The research has provided a deeper

understanding about caring that is useful outside the field of creative writing. The gained knowledge can be used beyond the context of creative writing in settings where there is a need for knowledge and understanding about caring. To write creatively may not be suitable for everyone, but caring is an essential part of human beings' lives. Thus, the findings are valuable and usable even without the direct use of creative writing in care praxis, meaning that utilisation of the research findings is not limited to caring activities involving creative writing. Further research could aim to develop an alternative aid to writing, such as a visual guide, as a thought awakener, based on the findings concerning caring as courage, authenticity, gratitude and a humble stance, and freedom, in connection to human becoming and life. The use of such a guide has the potential to help create personal content that facilitates natural caring, assumed to be especially of importance for human beings with a fragile connection to becoming and life.

The findings have a depth, which is the strength of this work. It brings forth pieces of importance in connection to caring, concerning courage in connection to authenticity, as in being oneself and becoming who one is meant to be. The findings also indicate the importance of courage in relation to the human being's approach towards life and the movement of human becoming, as a giving and receiving of gratitude and the humble stance towards life and one's own development as a human being. An essential part of the results are also the findings concerning freedom, as the possibility to create wholeness by transcendence and navigating personal time. Here is great potential to further develop caring science and caring to benefit patients and caring as natural caring.

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