

**Childhood Dream and Near-Death Experience:
A Preliminary Investigation Into the Occurrence of a
Near-Death Experience as Related to a Childhood Dream**

A Final Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Diploma Program
and Master's Degree in Process Work

by

Christa Strotz

Process Work Institute

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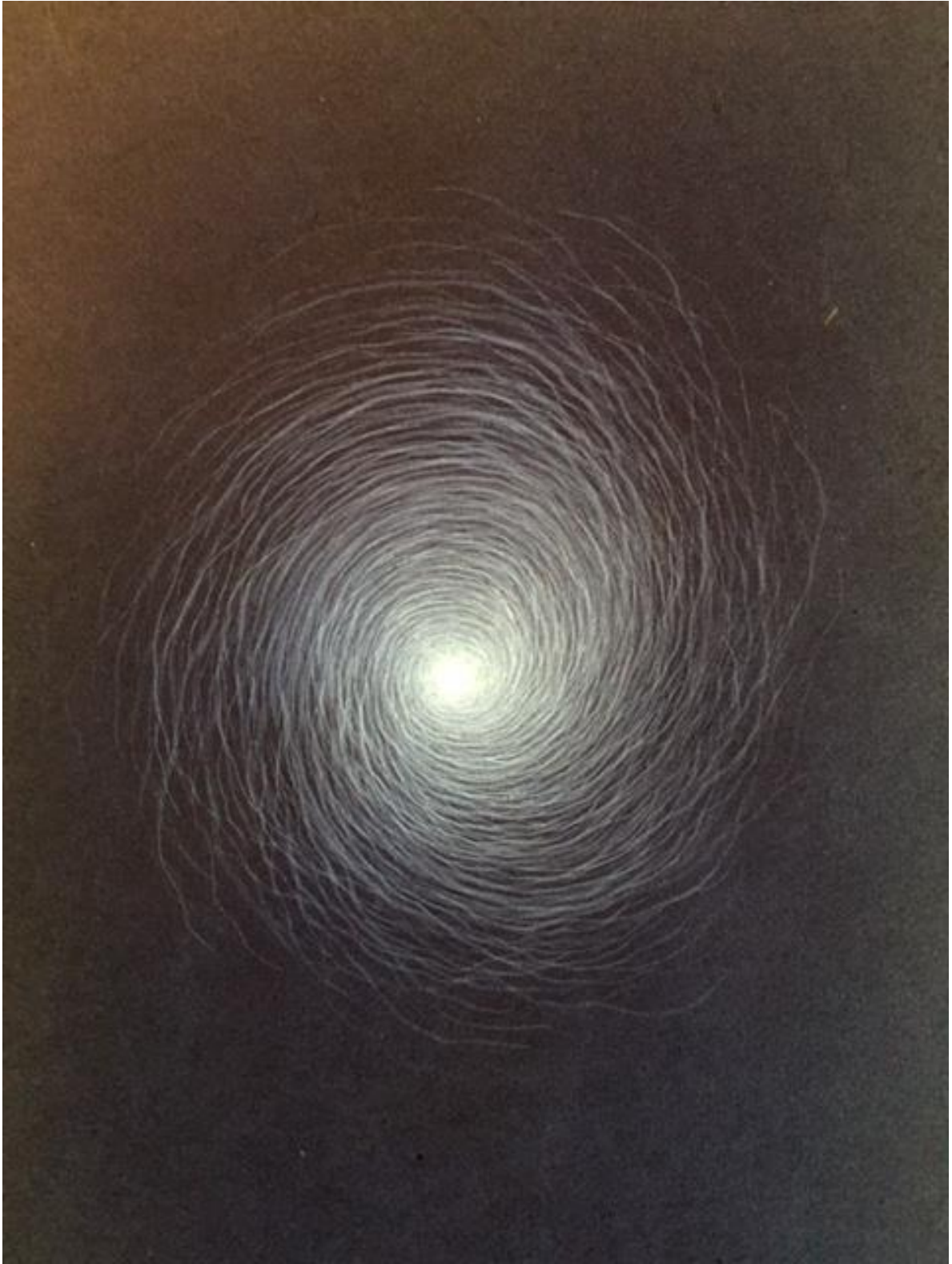


Figure 1. Hypnogleam 7. Art work courtesy of Zachary Rossman.

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Abstract

Childhood Dream and Near-Death Experience: A Preliminary Investigation

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Near-Death Experience as Related to a Childhood Dream

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In this qualitative theoretical pilot research, I explored a possible relationship between a person's Childhood Dream (CD) and her / his Near-Death Experience (NDE). Processwork was the base for my inquiry, and I used the same format in looking at both CDs and NDEs. I interviewed 3 participants who also completed a study-specific questionnaire. My own NDE and CD were included in the data, and I considered all 4 of us to be knowledgeable about the experiences being explored. Although further research is needed to clarify the nature of the relationships between the NDE and CD, results to date indicate that they complement each other, and show themselves as blueprints that can guide and provide us with a depth that supports and leads us into becoming whole. As dream-like experiences, the NDE and CD are works in process that can have long-lasting effects, spiritually and psychologically, upon the experiencer.

Dedication

Light Beings Before the Storm

Light, so silver fine, creates illuminated portals in the mountain-cloud sky
All manner of beings inhabit this realm—transcendent, mythic heroic,
Each painted with a loving hand high above the sculptured land.
As the storm gathers this soaring beauty fills the sky heart with wonder
That one so small can see magnificence so large
And not be crushed, but filled.
And were we all—each bird, each tree, each river and squall to combine
Who would remain to see the spectacle?

(From one of the participants)

Not Alone

I cry because you have spoken so beautifully to me
Indeed because I have heard you at all.
I don't feel important but here you are
The you that is me and yet infinitely more
You tell me "I . . . we are always here
We never left and neither did you
You are just forgetting, in the moment, the home from which you came.
Never really alone,
Only lost for a moment in forgetting."

(From one of the participants)

The Place From Which I Cannot See

There is a place inside myself from which I cannot see
A smooth, delicate surface of skin stretched taut
That tingles in the breezes of perception
But cannot yet receive the light.

It blinds and confuses me
Keeping me on the edge of understanding
Unable to leap across the opening
To the clarity beckoning at the edge of my vision

It holds me apart and separate
Angry, wary and afraid
A prisoner of this current within me
That draws me from the voice of my heart.

But something calls to me through the window –
The moonlight alive in the night
A silver steam joining heaven and earth
Whispering of a knowledge from the darkness
Of this place from which I cannot see.

“Travel the road; face the fear that wears your face.”
My blood runs cold as winter but holds the seeds of spring.

(From one of the participants)

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I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my Study Committee of Kate Jobe as advisor, and Dawn Menken and Jan Dworkin for their support, wisdom, and caring natures throughout my studies. I came to an impasse in writing my FP, and needed to extend my studies due to my grieving the loss of my parents that catapulted me into deep places that I needed to be, as in time to grieve deeply, feel, and explore becoming an orphan. Thank you

ever so much for believing in me to complete my final project, and working with the tight timeframes that I presented to you.

It was a God-send when Suzette insisted that I should look into getting an editor to resume my writing, as I just did not know how to even start or restart all over again. My deepest gratitude and thanks go to Susan Newton. She has been an invaluable key figure in getting this project going once more, and her frequent emails and encouraging presence, keeping in touch with me over the last many months, her Aikido moves and expert gardening and pruning within my writing helped me to produce what you now see as my Final Project.

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and dying and advice as how to go about starting and writing about this subject. As it turned out, the theme within my FP took another spin and went even further, to looking beyond death in the form of a NDE and in its connection with the CD, as the stories from my participants and myself came alive.

To my participants in this FP: I have enjoyed being with you, hearing and feeling your stories that you so beautifully shared with me, aiding me with investigations that were beyond my own knowing at the time. Your stories and sharing established the framework for this final project in a most intimate way which is a gift in itself. Thank you for being present with me, as I know your lives have been / are busy. Your willingness to aid me with information, adding bits and pieces to what already was emerging has been outstanding, and greatly appreciated.

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To my dear parents, who left this world in the past year within 4 months of each other, you have always been interested in what I was doing, no matter if it was agreeable or not to you. You believed in me and my work in particular while caring for the very ill and dying. Now you are on the other side, and know what lies beyond death. I have felt / feel

your spirits as you looked at me through photographs (together with my grandmother and some unidentified relative), while up in loft, having many conversations with you, sharing my tears with you. I truly miss you and know, and feel, that you are still with me. I hold you dear in my heart, until we see each other again.

To all those who have had a near death experience in this world and also to all the departed ones: May your true natures shine and guide us here. To the ones who are still with us: Your sharing and believing in yourself in telling us your incredible and vast stories that lie well beyond what is seen here in consensus reality, is of immense relevance.

It is also my hope that all people with so called mental health issues find a space in society and alone, in sharing your world that seems to be strange to others. We all need to feel community of some sort in expanding ourselves, as vast the universe itself with its ever changing and moving moods and landscapes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

What Led Me to Choose My Topic?

A few years ago, in one Arnold Mindell's classes about death / dying and serious illnesses, I asked him if there was any connection between the Childhood Dream (CD) and the dying process? He thought this was definitely an intriguing question and worthy of further investigation. I chose to explore this for my final project. However, it was difficult for me to find people who were actually dying that I could work with in the USA. A friend suggested that I work with Near-Death Experience (NDE). I warmed to this new thought, and sent out a recruitment email (see Appendix A) through the processwork string, an international online string that facilitates communication and sharing information within the context of processwork. People who were willing and interested to work with me on their respective CD and NDE contacted me.

Death, dying, and NDEs have been part of my life since its beginning. It was initially unconscious, as my granddad's spirit appeared in a dream / vision to my mother, letting her know all was well. She was pregnant with me and due to give birth in a few weeks' time. Information about my granddad's death was initially withheld from her because of fear of a premature birth. I seem to be a silent witness, still in my mother's womb. This story is significant for me as my life unfolded and so did my personal relationship with death.

My own NDE of nearly drowning is described a bit later in this chapter. It predates my prenursing experience, when I worked with older and very ill people. As a result of such experience, I felt catapulted into facing death in every sense—physically, psychologically, and spiritually—which left me with nightmares and a heightened sense of awareness, often intuitively feeling the arrival of death prior to its actual occurrence. At the age of 18, I began

to read the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and was fortunate to attend one of her conferences in Zurich around 1980. I felt drawn to her work, excited with all my being, and had a sense of true homecoming. That was the catalyst for my seeking understanding and feeling fascinated with the mystery of death that has continued to the present. Since then, I have been fortunate to be with the dying over many decades, with children and adults of all ages. They have been my teachers and significantly contributed to my personal growth. In my early 30s, I met my mentor and friend Carole, who since then has died. She introduced me to Hospice work in a way that touched me deeply, and brought fulfilment in working with the dying. As I approached my 50s, I was caught by the work of Arnold Mindell, founder and developer of process-oriented psychology, also known as Processwork. More on his model is in the literature review. As this project evidences, my studies within this modality have been transformative.

My Research Question

This project has been sparked by my own interest in and curiosity about experiences that happened to me at young ages. I posed the question: Is the NDE a mythic experience that contains a similar pattern of information as in a Childhood Dream? I sought participants who were willing and able to share their experiences. My own experiences are also included in the data. Brief descriptions of my CD and NDE follow, to illustrate the kind of material that I worked with.

My Own Childhood Dream

My CD was a night dream that occurred multiple times when I was around 6-years-old. It is the earliest dream that I can remember.

I was in a forest with lots of tall beautiful trees and lush undergrowth with shrubs and intertwined growth, kind of a bit wild. There was no path present. I was walking,

skipping along in this beautiful forest, feeling at home. I was on my own. The light was filtering through the leaves, kind of dim. I could smell and sense nature. There was a brook bubbling along as well, just beautiful. I began to sense that something else was present. I felt uneasy about it, looking around, and couldn't see anything. I began to walk faster, and at some point knew something was following me. I turned around and from behind a tree, a huge bear appeared. I was very scared and started to run, faster and faster, but couldn't really. The bear chased me. I tripped up on a log and woke up.

My Own Near-Death Experience

I was about 16-years-old when my NDE occurred. As with my CD, it is presented here as an example of the experience being investigated. In chapter 5, it is unfolded more thoroughly.

At the time, I had just finished my high school years in Switzerland. A nice sunny and warm day invited some of my friends, my brother, and myself on a rafting trip on a river close by where I used to live. We had two rafts made out of rubber. The scene was glorious, lush bushes and forest laced the riverbanks, as the swift waters invited us on an adventure.

At some point, we came across rapids as we journeyed down the river. It was so much fun and exhilarating going through the rapids that we decided to do it again. Clambering up the river bank and walking back to a suitable place, we entered the water. Down we went once more, but alas, the force of the water turned our boat upside down, and we all fell into the churning water.

I became separated from the others, and slid down a big huge rock, pushed down to the very bottom. I remember trying to fight my way up, but was held in place firmly by the water. As I was sitting firmly on the bottom of the river, I suddenly realised the gravity of my situation. I looked up to the surface where sunlight was filtering through the water above. The only thing I knew was not to breathe. So I focused on holding my breath. Time went by, and I began to worry a lot.

At some stage I thought, "This is it." I fervently tried to think what to do next, but there was nothing to do anymore, so I began to pray in my head. The only prayer that came to my mind was "Our Father." I remember that I didn't quite know the words but resigned myself to my feelings about it. Then a tremendous peace descended upon me. It was so amazing and tranquil, as I found myself surrounded by pure bliss and love that I had never experienced before. There was the sense that someone was with me. I felt a light opening into my vision, so bright and beautiful. It was perfect. I felt one and loved and in total peace with all that was happening. It

was completely serene. I was aware, that I was going to die, and that was just fine with me. No panic at all, no fears.

Then, out of nowhere, my life began to unfold, going from my current age back to being a new born baby. All the way, situations of my life appeared into my vision, one after the other, and I could feel deeply what was going on. I had an overall view of what was unfolding in front of me. Everything made sense. Wow! I felt myself in a heightened state of total awareness. The presence beside me felt like a guide, who opened the vista in front of me and guided me through.

I remember the clear wow! factor in me, and my amazement as my life began to unravel. As I went through my years lived, the speed of this internal movie, as I call it, began to increase. Faster and faster my life presented itself, until I got to my baby stage, and then I thought, “Now I am going to die.” As I had this thought something very strong, like a surge of the water, like a big wave pushed me upwards. I remember the feeling of this kind of vacuum that pushed me upwards, then I thought, “O wow, I am going to the surface.” I wasn’t entirely happy about it. Yet, I began to feel my lungs, and the urge to breathe, and started to make swimming motions, till I arrived at the top. It felt like crazy, as my lungs where just about to burst. Then I was bobbing out of the water, with one huge intake of my first breath. It felt strange. While I am writing all this down, it feels like I was born again. I drifted down the river for a good while, and then I saw my friends, waiting on the river bank.

I never talked about this experience with anyone, as far as I can remember, until I began my processwork studies.

Reflections and Lasting Blueprints From My CD and NDE

My CD began to surface when I started studying processwork in 2010, doing my Process-Oriented Palliative Care Certificate here in New Zealand with Ingrid Rose and Kay Ryan. It was, and continues to be, a deep and profound experience as I discover and rediscover reoccurring parts from within my CD, and became aware of the inevitable journey of personal growth unfolding. Since then, I have had many aha! moments, as in “there it is again,” perhaps above all seeing the bear (my most disturbing figure) as something less threatening than it was in the dream. Yet, I continue to wrestle with it as I am writing this final project.

Looking back on my NDE, that dream-like experience was something that has had its own life within me for many years. My personal beliefs about god, religion, and the world unfolded and changed, knowing that there was life after death, and having had the indescribably beautiful feeling of being unconditionally loved with a depth that can only be lived. Many times through this present research I have relived my NDE in a way that seemed almost unreal to me. How was I able to relive such an experience again and again? This touched me deeply and evoked a deep gratitude in me for a presence that precedes my human existence and nurtures a sense of belonging in me.

Together with a process-oriented approach, the CD gave me permission and a certain freedom to look at and work with its pattern from a broader understanding than in my younger years. Working with my NDE from the same perspective continues this process.

I have added several drawings and poems from my anonymous participants who have reflected on their personal journeys with their CD or NDE. As a form of expression, art work is an important factor in processing the CD and NDE in a way that is meaningful to the one who has had these experiences. Words are often felt as insufficient to fully describe the experience.

As I began my research, I came across these words from Anita Moorjani (2010), a person who has had a near death experience and also a cancer survivor. Her words resonated with an idea of who we really are that felt congruent and supportive of my own view:

If we can go through life armed with humour and the realization that we are all love, we'll already be ahead of the game. Add a box of good chocolates into the mix, and we've really got a winning formula! I wish you Joy as you realize your magnificence and express yourself fearlessly in the world. (p. 186)

The next chapters contain literature review that forms context for my study, how I constructed my research approach, what I found, and conclusions I drew.

Chapter 2: From the Literature

What Is a Childhood Dream?

The concept of the CD came from Jung (2008). He saw the earliest dream or childhood experience, as expressing the central patterns for a person's life, and referred to this pattern as a personal myth. Carl Gustav Jung paid close attention to the CD, saying that its mythical and symbolic values were linked to the unconscious, containing archetypes that showed themselves throughout life. In Jung's *Children's Dreams*, the editors wrote,

We find a particular impressive application of the theory of the archetypes, because the personal context largely fades into the background in children's dreams, most of them remembered only in adulthood, and because archetypal images and situations come to the fore, owing to the child's greater proximity to the collective unconscious. (p. xvi)

Of central importance to my study, Jung (2008) stated,

Furthermore, it lies in the nature of the earliest dreams of childhood that one does not get related associations: they are manifestations of a part of the unconscious, standing alien in time. These early dreams in particular are of utmost importance because they are dreamed out of the depth of the personality and therefore, frequently represent an anticipation of the later destiny. (p. 1)

Arnold Mindell (1989) spoke of a childhood dream while working with a very ill client named Peter: "The first childhood memory or dream is a pattern of our personal myths. Living the childhood myth in reality must be the new plan" (p. 35). Processwork is especially helpful in working with both a CD and with an early childhood memory, building upon Jung's (2008) work (Arnold Mindell, 1987, 1989, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2013, 2017).

The dreamscape within a Childhood Dream (CD) is personal, deep, and mythical in the sense that figures, an environment, and its story are often embedded in a way that initially may not make sense to the dreamer. The dream is significant enough to remember as a CD in later life, just as a repetitive dream may be more easily remembered by the dreamer. Often

the dream contains parts that are scary and unsettling at the time. Some people remember a CD readily, whereas others do not. A CD can be shaped by environment (i.e., the dreamer's family structure) as well as the social, psychological, and emotional states of the dreamer as the dreaming occurred. Mindell (2017) noted that "The edges in your first memory or dream say a lot about what will possibly be a recurring theme, so don't be surprised when it comes around again" (p. 116).

Using a CD. After identifying the dream figures, the setting within a CD, and the energies that came forth, one can use them in unfolding its meaning, and also explore stepping into the various aspects that show up in the moment while working with it. In return, this can be linked to a current or longstanding problem appearing in one's life. Often such patterns can show up in chronic or recurring body symptoms, cycling relationship patterns, other serious illness, and in the end-of-life stage.

The encrypted information in the CD can be challenging for the dreamer, and needs to be integrated in order to be less troublesome for her or him. The dream figures and their energies suggest what is missing or in need of integration within the dreamer's life. In my case, where a big bear shows up and is chasing me, I can expect that the fierce, strong, bigness of myself may be chasing me through life until it becomes integrated by me. Many difficult times in life where one may feel stuck, relationship patterns cycle, or illnesses show up, can be related back to the CD. Working with the figures and their energies from the CD, following them closely, unfolding them, and even becoming the chasing bear myself, allowed me to get in touch with that big bear energy and really feel it. Once the essence was unfolded and deeply felt, relating back to the problem may bring some insight and meaning, such as in how to work with a longstanding difficulty, wherever it might occur.

Regarding how the CD may transform over time, Ingrid Rose (2014) stated,

While growing into our childhood dream, we will also further our developmental progress in life. The dream itself has the ability or tendency of the childhood dream to evolve, and expand. Another great question is: how does a childhood dream evolve? A childhood dream always remains a childhood dream. But we can notice, how in future dreams and recurring dreams that might link in theme referring to the childhood dream, that new elements appear or new dynamics form, or new figures are represented, that if we really study them on a long-term basis, that show the unfolding childhood dream as it evolves and as we work on it, as the elements are becoming more integrated as it [CD] transforms. (Rose, 2014)

She further said,

Don't get hooked on this idea, that the childhood dream is fixed forever, that it's never going to change, because it's there as a guiding principle and it shows us what we are going to be wrestling with. But that doesn't mean that what we are wrestling with doesn't make a positive transformation for us. Jung would say that in the individuation process, that is exactly what we are doing, is we are eating up the childhood dream, while making it part of ourselves, so that we get to know all its parts and that we become those parts and begin to live them more, as we mature. That's the individuation process. The more we become ourselves the more the aspects of the childhood dream live through the small self, the primary process as we integrate them. (Rose, 2014)

“What happens with a childhood dream at death, the life myth pattern? It could be that at the end of life, one's childhood dream may come to fruition, in the sense of fulfilment, which needs a lot more research” (Ingrid Rose, personal communication, 2014). Not everyone knows their CD. Although the CD conveys a person's personal mythical patterns, the actual life myth is not dependent on the CD itself, but rather is an expression of it. I was not aware of mine for a very long time, and it only resurfaced when I began to study processwork in 2010.

Value of a CD. The deep and mythical aspects within a CD form a viable thread through a person's psychological life, that offers a map of one's psychodynamics and psychic structures as we mature and grow in our lives. Once the CD is unfolded, it offers messages that enable us to face and work with challenges in life, be they psychological, emotional,

physical, or spiritual. Recently, Arnold Mindell (2017) counselled, “your basic childhood dream or early memory is a central tool to work with anytime you get stuck in life. It shows the problems and the potential solutions” (p. 115). To reiterate, both challenges and their solutions are held within the CD or early memory.

What Is a Near-Death Experience?

A Near-Death Experience (NDE) is a deep and profound psychological and spiritual experience, after which people who came close to dying, relate their experience. They may be peaceful or may be hellish, with many variations in between. It is the peaceful NDEs that I focused on in this research project. It is not comparable to any other lived experience in our usual lives, and may have an equally profound impact on the person during and after the Near-Death encounter. Often words fail to describe the actual experience, because a reality unfolds that resembles little of what we know in the here-and-now.

The great unknowns of this mythical venture into death and the beyond have been partially captured and documented by many throughout human existence. Several of the foremost contemporary researchers, Kenneth Ring (1985, 2000), Pim van Lommel (2010), Eben Alexander (2012), Melvin Morse (1994), Raymond Moody (1983), and Bruce Greyson (2000), have collected data and conducted research into NDEs since the mid-1970s. In my research, participants who have experienced a NDE tell the stories of their own ventures into the great unknown. They offer a glimpse of the beyond, along with teachings that may be useful to us in everyday life, remaining mindful of death’s great mystery.

Pim Van Lommel (2010) wrote,

Throughout history, in all times and cultures, people have been known to remember an extraordinary experience after a life-threatening crisis. A Near-Death Experience (NDE) is the reported recollection of all the impressions gained during a special state

of consciousness, which includes specific elements such as witnessing a tunnel, a light, a panoramic life review, deceased persons, or one's own resuscitation. (p. 7)

Greyson (as cited by Van Lommel, 2010) wrote, "Near-death experiences are profound psychological events with transcendental and mystical elements, typically occurring to individuals close to death or in situations of intense physical or emotional danger" (p. 8). He also stated, "A NDE is an overwhelming confrontation with the boundless dimensions of our consciousness" (Greyson, as cited by Van Lommel, 2010, p. 45).

NDE as a glimpse from the beyond. Glimpses from the beyond may be manifold and unique, yet also have commonalities as experienced with a NDE. Those who venture beyond their physical existence for a matter of seconds, minutes, hours, or days, and return, offer an inside view of a vast life spectrum that barely resembles our everyday world.

The unfolding of dream-like landscapes in a NDE was often described as a far-out venture, that included seeing a bright light, or travelling through a tunnel. It may also be experienced as a dark space with a speck of light in the distance, or feeling hurled towards a bright but nonblinding light that seems vivid, inviting, and irresistible to the experiencer.

Guides, sometimes deceased people or animals known to the dying / dead person, are present. They are experienced as beings bathed in light, radiating an almost impossible to describe sense of loving presence, that of knowing and understanding in an all-encompassing, empathetic, loving, and deeply compassionate way.

The sense of time as we know it has vanished and been replaced with an eternal never-ending existence that the experiencer feels drawn to, as if they belong there. For some of those who have had a near-death experience, a new and completely different world unfolds. They find themselves in an intense and colourful landscape where one sees, hears, and feels in a way never before experienced prior to this state of being.

Out of Body Experience. Often an Out of Body Experience (OBE) allowed a view of what was happening around them, as they viewed their own body below, hearing and seeing at the same time what was going on from where they were in their present state. It may seem that the world from the here-and-now and the beyond merged as a veil was lifted for a period of time, which also allowed the experiencer be in many places concurrently. Literally, that was a very far-out state.

Heightened awareness allowed the experiencer to hear and feel not only the presence of thoughts coming across, but also to experience the feelings and emotional states of people who are with **their** physical body in what I term a dual state of existence. People who have come back from a near-death experience often stated that they wanted the people around them not to feel sad or rushed or panicked about saving their lives, even as the dying process was taking place. This kind of serene observing attitude of the person having a near-death experience reflected little to no concern about what was happening with their physical body. Part of the OBE experience described here was also present for some of my participants in their NDEs (see also van Lommel, 2010, pp. 19-26; Ring, 1985, p. 37).

Return from NDE. One wonders why and how a person who has a near-death experience comes back into her or his body, awakening once more to their human existence. A return to one's body is very unique and personal. For some, a guide being gives a clear sense that it is not time to cross over into this spiritual realm, as more work needs to be done as a human being. The very specific reasons seem to be tailored to the person's life. Some people also said that they were given a choice, either going back, or crossing over now. There are accounts of a person closely connected with the dying person not only pleading but deeply connecting with the person experiencing near-death, and that their influence helped

determine the experiencer's return to their body. More specifically, Eben Alexander (2012) experienced the call to get back into his body, and later wrote,

This face took on ever greater detail, until at last I saw that it—that *he* (Alexander's son)—was actually pleading for me to return (to my body): to risk the terrible descent into the world below to be with him again. I still could not understand his words, but somehow they conveyed that I had a stake in this world below—that I had, as they say, “skin in the game.” It mattered that I returned. I had ties here—ties that I had to honour. The clearer the face became, the more I realized this. And the closer I came to recognizing the face . . . the face of a young boy. (p. 111)

However, few of the people who have experienced this immensely deep and seemingly irresistible light and / or peace prefer to remain in their embodied state of existence (van Lommel, 2010, p. 40).

Not all NDEs are positive. According to studies (Greyson & Bush, 1996), for about 1% to 15% of those experiencing near-death (Bonefant, 2001), the NDE turns into a distressing event, for example, feeling out of control while rapidly travelling towards the light or in a tunnel, which may be frightening. Another distressing category of NDE is feeling one's nonexistence, that in fact one never existed before, and is completely alone. From the third category of distress come reports of hellish, ugly, and foreboding landscapes, loud noises, frightening animals, and other beings in extreme distress. On very rare occasions, the person experiencing near-death feels negatively judged rather than feeling unconditionally loved (Rommer, 2000). The International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS) asserts that the amount of unpleasant NDEs is not really known, again, for reasons similar to pleasurable NDEs. Perhaps feeling judged by others, as in a nonblissfull NDE, may in general be under reported. Bush (2002) said,

A psychospiritual descent into hell has been the experience of saints and sages throughout history, and it is an inevitable episode in the pervasive, mythic theme of the hero's journey. Those who insist on finding the gift, the blessing of their

experiences have the potential ultimately to realize a greater maturity and wholeness. (p. 129)

Not only do they welcome their return to the body, but also they may require help and support to work through their NDE experience.

View of a person who had a NDE with an OBE. How clearly and accurately a person with a near-death experience was able to recall their experience within their OBE, that matched the scene unfolding around their physical body, remains a mystery. Bystanders, medical staff, and the person share the same view of events happening in tangible reality, even though the access of the person with the near-death experience was via an OBE. Pim van Lommel (2010) wrote,

During an out-of-body experience people have verifiable perceptions from a position outside and above their lifeless body. Patients feel as if they have taken off their body like an old coat, and they are astounded that despite discarding it, they have retained their identity, with the faculty of sight, with emotions, and with an extremely lucid consciousness. (p. 19)

Further he said, “This out-of-body experience is of scientific importance because doctors, nursing staff, and relatives can check and corroborate the reported perceptions and the moment when they were supposed to have taken place” (van Lommel, 2010, p. 20).

Elisabeth Kübler Ross made a significant breakthrough in 1969, in lifting the taboo on researching death and dying within the Western world through her tireless work with patients who were close to death or dying. In 1975, Raymond Moody published his first book on the topic of NDE. Since then, many have researched NDE and its phenomena. Historical recordings of NDEs can be found in various world religions and mystical experiences, such as in Hinduism, contemporary India, Tibetan Buddhism, ancient Greek philosophy, Medieval Jewish mysticism, Christianity, and Islam (van Lommel, 2010, pp. 86-

103). Nonetheless, the mythical aspect of a NDE remains beyond a veil that lies between life and death as we know it. How we make meaning of it is an ongoing mystery.

Split of experiencing body and subtle body. When entering a NDE, a complete shift in perception and awareness takes place on many levels for the person entering a dream-like state. It is also an individual experience, as seen both with this study's participants and as noted in NDE research (Ring, 1994, 2000; van Lommel, 2010). However, there are areas of common ground. One aspect is the way that one views her or his own everyday reality in physical existence which is left behind, not so much in content, but more from a feeling aspect. Their own existence as a human being prior to the NDE seems to become less of concern, at least for a while. Often a person with a near-death experience wonders what the rush or urgency is about, and wonders what happened? It is difficult to determine how the "detachment" from the body could be happening, and yet it seems to be a very real and astounding fact. Another aspect is a sense of timelessness, as the 24-hour clock seemed to have stopped and yet time expanded into a different dimension / zone that some people describe as infinity / eternity. A heightened sense of being as if within a three dimensional awareness is often recorded. All of these seem connected with the split from their bodies.

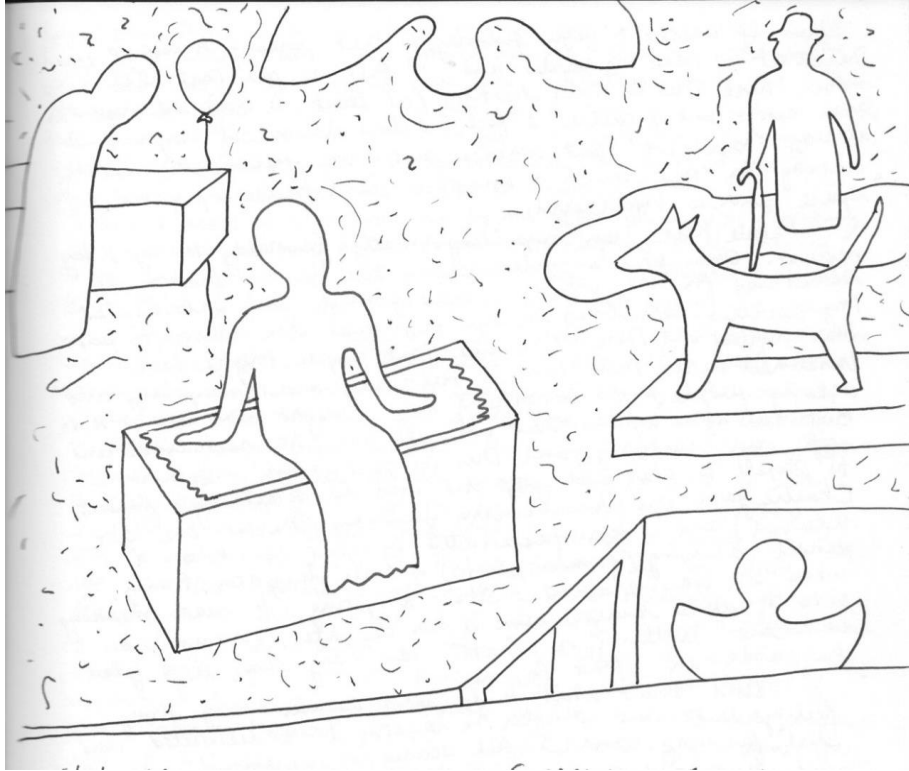


Figure 2. Cloud People, by Anonymous.

Levels and depths of consciousness while experiencing NDE. Studies have been done on levels and depths of consciousness within a NDE (van Lommel, 2005, 2010). Van Lommel (2010) wrote of Kenneth Ring's (1980) study. In order to determine the depth of a NDE, Kenneth Ring (1980) developed the Weighted Core Experience Index (WCEI). This study was done with 102 people who had experienced a NDE and took part in a 10-point interview.

Ring (1980) concluded there was a *core experience* that unfolded in a characteristic pattern which included:

- An experience of peace, wellbeing, and absence of pain
- A sense of detachment from the physical body, progressing to an out of body experience

- Entering darkness, a tunnel experience with panoramic memory and predominantly positive effect
- An experience of a light, which is bright, warm and attractive
- Entering the light, meeting persons and figures.

Ring (1980) also wrote of a *noncore experience*. This included among others, reviewing one's life, encountering a presence, encountering deceased loved ones, and deciding to return. Ring believed a NDE consisted of stages and wrote, "In general, the earlier stages of the experience are more common, and the latter stages manifest themselves with systematically decreasing frequency" (Ring, as cited in van Lommel, 2010, p. 12).

The Greyson NDE Scale is the preferred measure for evaluating NDEs, as it was systematically developed and validated (Mays & Mays, 2011, p. 10). It is a 16-question scale designed to measure the depth of an individual's near-death experience (Greyson, 1983).

Not surprisingly, there are differences of opinion regarding this domain, as trying to determine and categorise a NDE and its experiencer also reflects the complexity of a NDE in psychological, spiritual, physical, and scientific fields. As may be seen from the participants' NDEs, there are differences in levels and depths of a NDE in an individual as well as similarities across the participant sample.

Venturing into the beyond for a longer period of time, Eben Alexander (2012) wrote of a vast and seemingly incredible reality that unfolded, which he described on return from his encounter with death and the beyond. While on his journey into other worldly realms, he claimed to have been in the very essence of existence experienced as an "inky darkness, that was also full to the brimming with light" (Alexander, 2012, p. 48) that could be felt and

heard by the experiencer as pure and unconditional love. This and much more took place while he remained in a deep vegetative coma after contracting meningitis, which left his brain literally in tatters. From a medical point of view, the brain itself lost its function *per se*. Yet after his return, he was able to write and share his journey in a way that has seldom been recorded. An associate professor and lecturer of neuroscience and an academic neurosurgeon, he began not only to question his knowledge in regard to the brain and its functions, but also the seat of consciousness and its relationship to the brain. He described it this way.

Far from being an unimportant by-product of physical processes (as I had thought before my experience), consciousness is not only very real—it's actually *more real* than the rest of the physical existence, and most likely the basis of it all. (Alexander, 2012, p. 150)

This feeling of unconditional love and the supreme purity he mentioned, I suspect is of the same quality for the experiencer who may not travel as far or be within the NDE as long as Alexander (2012) was. One cannot really define someone else's depth and quality of experience because it is completely personal and words have limits. We cannot impose strict categories upon a NDE. The challenges of categorizing and also understanding such experiences when we study them after the fact, rather than when they are occurring, are very real and present.

What changes and what remains after a NDE? It has been recorded, although less often with a child's NDE, that the general outlook on life has changed after a NDE. This is very specific for each experiencer. Some gain clarity about what they want to do or where they want to be on returning to their everyday lives. Others seem to remain in wonder about what happened to them, and feel this blissful state as one to be longed for. This change in outlook can be brief or longer or for good. My hunch is that this process also depends on

factors such as the integration of a NDE, age, social circumstances, means of communication, and general personal needs.

For many, a NDE opens new worlds, and their perception of reality as known prior to their NDE changes. Often, this is a spiritual and psychological process illustrating that what we see, hear, smell, and experience in the here-and-now is not all there is to life. What might have been important in life prior to their NDE may no longer hold much interest afterwards. Often, valuing and striving for worldly things were of diminished interest. Life can become a quest and search for meaning that allows depth and transformation to continue in the world of a person who had a near-death experience as well as for others. What remains is a strong sense of knowing that there is more to life than what we see and strive for. This seems imbedded in the person with a near-death experience and showed itself in various ways.

Treasures and challenges post-NDE. Can a NDE be accessed later on in life and usefully enhance one's life post-NDE? Eben Alexander (2012) described his journey through the “underworld and the brilliant world above” (p. 68). He also stated,

The unconditional Love and acceptance that I experienced on my journey is the single most important discovery I have ever made, or will ever make, and as hard as I know it's going to be to unpack the other lessons I learned while there, I also know in my heart that sharing this very basic message—one so simple that most children readily accept it—is the most important task I have. (Alexander, 2012, p. 73)

Data indicated that a person coming back from the beyond often needed help with integrating the experiences of their journey. In some of the surveys, the main obstacle for a successful integration was nested in the very early stages of their return. Kenneth Ring (1985) summarized his research through post interviews with NDE participants:

Obviously, many experiencers do have a difficult time to adjusting to “ordinary life” again, especially in their first year following their experience. NDErs can and, it appears, usually do come to terms with their experience and are able to integrate it

into their daily lives. Of course, some do not and remain in a state of longing to return—but they are the exceptions. (p. 98)

As seen in the above quotation, it is customary in the field of NDE research to use the term NDEr to refer to the person who had a near-death experience. However, in my writing, I have chosen to use some variation of the phrase “person who had a near-death experience” in order to distinguish the person from the experience.

Some of the people with a near-death experience wanted to let the surrounding people know about what happened while they were dying. Yet, their stories seemed to be of less interest to people who were apparently more concerned about the physical trauma inflicted upon a person who had a near-death experience and recovery from it. Rather, the person with a near-death experience may be referred to as being confused, dreaming, being psychotic, or just simply hallucinating.

Because of the nature of a NDE with its other worldly content and its intensity, people were often unwilling to share their NDE at all, or only much later in life. Some people may not share their experience for 50 years or more. I believe this is connected to the fear of not being taken seriously, and thus, withholding her or his own NDE. Treasures of blissful intimate states and the fulfilment of being completely loved and nurtured while in a NDE merit further attention, so that a person with a near-death experience can access this state of consciousness while living an earthly life.

Treasures brought back from a NDE may become challenges. A person who had a near-death experience may benefit from the presence of a listening and compassionate person who can deeply understand their state and help them to integrate their experiences. Using spiritual practises such as meditation or prayer or connecting with nature may also be of benefit. The use of expressive arts such as drawing and poetry (as used by my participants),

as well as painting, writing, body movement, sounds, music, and in fact, all personal creative expressions are of value for the person in the process of integrating a NDE.

Changes post-NDE. Many changes are possible post-NDE and are specific to the experiencer. They may include a transformation of their views on life and the loss of fear about death, as well as acceptance of and unconditional love for oneself (including of one's dark side), others, and nature. For some, there seems a knowing of the interconnectedness of all things. Others described his / her consciousness surviving outside one's body (OBE) as destabilising his / her life. Van Lommel (2010) gave some in depth examples about a person with a near-death experience's struggle post-NDE, as a feeling of being excluded and isolated, "a fear of being ridiculed or rejected by others" (p. 51). The marked personality change was seen as a

social death of the former personality, and sometimes absurdly high expectations of relatives who learned about positive post-NDE changes from popular science writing, radio, or TV programs. Friends and family often struggle to accept personality changes, but they may also put the NDEer on a pedestal, expecting an all forgiving personality to emerge, with the patience of a saint, miraculous healing powers, and the gift of prophecy, and if the NDEer fails to meet these unrealistic expectations, disappointment and rejection ensue. (Van Lommel, 2010, p. 62)

Life post-NDE is not always particularly rosy. A NDE may leave a person with paranormal gifts or heightened intuition that can be problematic. Willed or not, premonitions and visions as well as intense encounters emotionally with those around them are often part of this person's daily experience (Van Lommel, 2010).

The process of a person with a near-death experience's integration involves their social background as well as relating to different age groups. Receiving emotional, psychological, and spiritual support as needed about gifts and curses (i.e., intuition and

feeling states and their intensity) is also essential. Van Lommel (2010) commented on the entry back into the body as a

conscious return, often described as extremely unpleasant, where patients feel upset, that something so beautiful as within the NDE experience being denied. Some people react with indignation, disappointment, or rebellion as soon they regain consciousness after resuscitation or wake from a coma. (p. 40)

Accessing the essence of a NDE in everyday life. A NDE seemingly had its own life, in that on a deeper level, a NDE prompted immense changes in a person with a near-death experience. These changes were actually guiding such a person, potentially into a new way of life. Children with a NDE seemed naturally able to live with their new way of life, also being influenced by their age and social background. As one grew older and lived a life shaped and formed through interactions with their environment and surroundings, awareness about a NDE and its values and gifts surfaced, becoming more conscious to the person with a near-death experience. This process in service of integration is crucial not only with children but for everyone, regardless of their age.

Processwork and NDE. Process-oriented psychology, also known as Processwork, offers a multilayered view of reality, and may be especially helpful in working and processing a NDE. Processwork looks at three levels of reality: consensus reality, dreamland, and essence. Consensus reality (CR) is that which we can all agree is real, tangible, finite, and measurable. Going deeper under CR is the dreamland (D) level, home to roles, dream figures, and myths as well as nighttime dreams and daydreams. Even deeper is the Essence (E) level, which is nondual, preverbal, sentient, and home to the Processmind or organizing principle “tending to move you” (Mindell, 2010, p. 23; see also chapter 4, this document). This approach provides an integral way to honour and work not only with the dreaming level and its aspects, but also to facilitate the person who had a near-death

experience to go deeper into and unfold their experience that belongs to the essence level.

(More information on working with coma and other distant states, see Amy Mindell, 1999; Arnold Mindell, 1989; Rose & Ryan, 2016).

Processwork values and follows all that is within the dreaming process of a NDE in a nonjudgemental and welcoming way. Indeed, this approach may more fully support a person with a near-death experience to access the essence within her or his NDE than a mainstream approach. In my experience, and in mainstream literature, the integration of a NDE was guided towards a goal that would allow the person to live more fully in everyday life, with their newly acquired knowing of the beyond. Processwork is less goal-oriented, and allows the dreaming to unfold. (Chapter 4 contains details of how to use processwork to work with a CD or NDE.)

Arnold Mindell (1989) spoke of NDEs: “I knew from previous work with the dying that frequently those who were thought to be clinically dead saw great visions. These visions revealed secrets to them in their sleep and comas that were usually forgotten later” (p. 35). He asked himself, “Why do we forget the magical key?” (p. 35). He further stated that “The death experience ends our ordinary thinking” (p. 35), and said,

What the (NDErs) got was not a new agenda for life that could be recalled by them and that needed to be followed, but an indescribable and, in some cases, contentless but joyous feeling of connectedness that could only be lived. Indeed, one of the secrets of life is to fully experience it. (Arnold Mindell, 1989, pp. 35-36)

Working on my own NDE. As far as I remember, perhaps because I did not share my NDE with anyone fully, the NDE was something that happened to me. Remembering the isolation, I felt left alone with my NDE. For me, through my work with the dying since the age of 17-years-old, the gift of my NDE was to be with the dying, at least in part. At times,

if I would have been able to access my NDE and its blissful state, I might have felt more grounded in being with my everyday life and the dying at the same time.

At early stages in my processwork training, and then when beginning to work on my final project, I worked in therapy on my NDE. I was astounded by how real and profound my inner world around my NDE was as it surfaced with the guidance of my therapist. There certainly was something that I needed. A state of pure serenity began to unfold as I went through my NDE accident and slowly descended into the waters, re-experiencing all that belonged to my NDE, especially in working with my breath. The breathing out and remaining in my effortless nonbreathing helped me reclaim something that was in my subconscious all along. It was particularly helpful and even joyful to be in that state I call pure bliss. It has been a form of meditation for me, and an important thread in my life that has been woven into connection with the essence level, my refuge in turbulent times.

Working with my NDE and related aspects as well as what led up to my NDE, has given me meaning and allowed me to re-access my NDE with less trauma. From a less traumatized perspective, I was consciously able to work and relate to the dreaming components / dream figures that included the wave, water, boulder, sitting on the bottom of the river, experiencing my life review and the guidance, as well as the blissful state and return to the surface. Working on my NDE gave me access to a broader perspective on my life's energies and patterns.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this chapter, I consider first my research question, then how I located participants, the method I used to gather data, and how I planned to analyse them. Also described are ethical procedures utilized in protecting participants' confidentiality.

Research Question

My research question was: Is the NDE a mythic experience that contains similar patterns of information like in a Childhood Dream? This is what I explored.

Research Approach

My project falls under a qualitative theoretical pilot research study, wherein I have gathered data from literature within the category of CDs and NDEs separately, as well as reports from three participants and my own CD and NDE. I have conducted interviews and gathered responses to a questionnaire I created, in person and via Skype as well as via email. My focus was to gather information that allowed me to look at CD and NDE from an observer's point of view, and then to look freshly at the raw data. I have solely used data provided by my participants for analysis in this preliminary investigation within my project.

I have been studying books, articles, journals, audio recordings, and TED talks regarding both CD and NDE. I found little material in mainstream literature about CD and NDE in relationship with each other. However, the book *Proof of Heaven* by Eben Alexander (2012) began with his early childhood dream, and he later shared the wisdom of his journey into the beyond. In processwork, most recently Arnold Mindell (2017) has noted in his work with people at the end of life, "In situations where I knew their childhood dreams, it seemed as if their childhood dream figures often appeared to organize near-death experiences" (p. 88).

Participants

I found my participants through the processwork email string. All of my participants were familiar with processwork. My participants were all female and middle-aged. I have not provided further information about them, to protect their identities. I know some of the participants personally and to some degree have a dual relationship, in that they are friends and colleagues, as well as participants. This created a situation of having potential bias and required me to work with awareness, and a certain degree of detachment in order to fully embody the role of a researcher.

I created an informed consent form, so as to uphold the confidentiality and integrity of their experience. I shared my transcripts with them as I went along, insuring that they were in agreement with what was shared around their respective CDs and NDEs.

Data Collection Process

Initially, I put out a request for participants for this study on a processwork email string (see Appendix A). I then contacted those interested and sent an informed consent form to them (see Appendix B). After it was signed and returned, I sent a questionnaire (see Appendix C) to each of them. When these were returned, I scheduled an interview time, and asked questions about their respective relevant and / or related experiences. Interviews were conducted either in person or via Skype, and recorded. I transcribed them myself. Then they were sent to the respective participant for a member check, which allowed them to verify the accuracy of how their experience was represented. This member check step added to the validity of the data.

Approach to Analysis

As a way to look at and work with the CD and NDE data from my participants, I chose to use a process-oriented lens. More specifically, I used processwork structural analysis and framing as my guide in working with data as dreams, described in Chapter 5.

The CD and NDE for each participant are presented. I looked at the information provided by participants within and outside of the CD as well as the NDE. I worked with and focused on material that informed me about their CD and NDE. More specifically, I looked at relationships, similarities, symbols, or other possible links between them.

Data Processing

I used processwork structural analysis to map the process of the CD and NDE (more on this in Chapter 4). I worked with the presented CD and NDE according to the already known and explored experiences, and compared the findings within each participant's CD and NDE. I also included any personal meaning, values, and changes for my participants that resulted from their reflections on their respective CD and NDE. Then, I made hypotheses.

Chapter 4: Processwork Views and Applications to the CD and NDE

In this chapter, I offer explanations of the terms within the processwork approach that I have used in this paper to contextualize and work with the data. I briefly describe the levels of reality, channel work, roles, and dream figures and the various bodies (e.g., mythbody and so forth) we may have and / or access in exploring the territories of CD and NDE. Concepts of primary and secondary identity as used in processwork structural analysis are explained. How to use processwork in working with a CD or NDE (i.e., mapping the process) is also clarified. The work of Arnold Mindell (1982, 1987, 1989, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2017) was foundational in the formulation of this theoretical framework.

Levels of Reality

Consensus reality. To reiterate briefly, consensus reality (CR) refers to everyday reality. It is one that we all can agree upon, contains measurable signals, and can be observed and described in an objective and linear way.

Dreamland. Dreamland (D) is home to dream figures that may show up in night dreams or day dreams, as well as being aspects of a symptom. The pain or state of physical, emotional, and / or psychological aspects may show up in ways that can only be experienced, and cannot be measured in CR. This realm hosts the subjective part of a disturbance or experience in the psychological / symbolic arena that may invite the dreamer to enter fantasies, or to describe moods in working with figures that appear in unfolding a symptom, or may be apparent in the disturbers and polarities that arise.

Essence. The essence level is considered to access a sentient and deep experience that has nondual aspects and is likely not to be agreed upon (i.e., different people will have

different experiences). It is a very subtle experience that refers to a state which cannot be verbalised, is immeasurable, and is the base from which both dreamland and consensus reality emerged. The essence level is also referred to as oneness, the guiding dreaming, the Tao that cannot be said, or as Arnold Mindell (2010) framed it, the processmind.

Channel Work

Channels are the doorways to the dreaming process. They represent and organise information given to a person in night dreams, or any other dream-like experiences, such as in body symptoms, relationship conflicts and illness (Diamond & Jones, 2004, p. 25). We experience life and its events through information that comes in channels (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic, proprioceptive, world, and relationship). What we do with that information and how it may inform, guide, and / or shape how it moves us, reflects our dreaming process. I have included channels and the information they contain in both CDs and NDEs in order to suggest and illustrate a common language between them.

Real Body, Dreambody, Mythbody, and Immortal Body

Real Body. We normally identify with our real body, in saying how we feel when someone asks how we feel, or what we experience as within the body as in general. For example, I have a cold, or a sore throat, or a sore knee or head. It is our consensus reality experience of our body.

Dreambody. The dreambody is the experience of the real body, including all physical sensations as well as psychological states of mind. We usually identify less with the dreambody, and use descriptive terms in explaining the nature of the experience such as a pounding headache, or the piercing pain in the knee. One can say that the real body carries the symptom, while the dreambody is actually producing the symptom. Thus, we usually

notice the dreambody as a disturbance to the real body. In dreams, we see it as figures or challenging situations to our individual identity (Arnold Mindell, 1989).

Mythbody. The mythbody usually remains hidden and yet can be felt, for example feeling well at first and then through massage, experiencing a body symptom, perhaps a piercing headache that follows a vision which allows a surprising figure or scene to come forward that had not been in the dreaming field prior for the experiencer (Arnold Mindell, 1989). Mythbody images are usually less familiar and accessible, and belong to the archetypal realms. Arnold Mindell (1989) said, “The Mythbody is a creator body, timeless and free” (p. 85). Drugs such as LSD can also connect a person to the mythical realm. However, it is a less desirable access as the person cannot process these states in detail while they are happening (Arnold Mindell, 1989).

Immortal Body. Experiencing or becoming the immortal body feels timeless, as in being immortal and with an ultimate freedom that a person with a near-death experience may describe as complete bliss and oneness, or being within pure and unconditional love, or the wisdom centre, or the bigger Self. Arnold Mindell (1989) described the immortal body as a “unification and transformation of the soul bodies” (p. 90), as a transpersonal, timeless, and archetypal experience. He further said that this transformation can be seen with dying people, when their personal psychology and physical body reflect such a transformative process happening.

Dreambody, channels, and NDE. Generally speaking, our physical bodies are one of the processing hubs of our experiences, and express the dreaming body (invisible in its own form) through the various channels as mentioned above. There are both intentional aspects and unintentional aspects of body experience. For example, picking up a glass is

intentional. If it slips and falls from your hand, it is unintentional, and is more of a dreambody experience. Yet, in a NDE, the channel experiences express themselves to the person through the dreaming body, where the physical body is not directly involved. From this point of view, the physical body is actually functioning and directed under perception and guidance from the dreaming body. The person with a near-death experience can feel, hear, move, see, and interact with the dreamparts / figures in the NDE without their actual physical body, and with a far more acute perception and awareness.

Arnold Mindell (1989) observed,

comatose states and near-death experiences contain a virtual kaleidoscope of body experiences. The various experiences one may have in a coma go by such names as “real body,” “astral body,” “subtle body,” “ethereal body,” “the double,” “out of body experience,” or “end of the human form.” (p. 80)

Working with the dreaming body. From another perspective, Arnold Mindell (1985/2002a) observed, “Apparently, seeing, hearing, and feeling continue to function in the dying person. In fact, they continue to experience a body proprioceptively, though their body is only loosely attached to the real body” (p. 112). He further noted, “Interesting hypotheses come from the evidence that the dreambody is basically a perception system and that consciousness means awareness of our ability to perceive” (Mindell, 1985/2002a, p. 114).

If we could step out of the life-death cycle for a moment, be fair and just observers of existence, we might be able to see the eternal dreambody as a perception system. During a greater part of life, dreams and body problems form our unconsciousness. But near death the real world becomes our dream. Thus, we can speculate that the events of this world are the dreams of the dying. So, being conscious at any moment means considering any remarkable perception to be our dream.

Powerful and disturbing information forces us to be our dreambody. This means that we must realize that we have bodies, yet can also leave them. It means that if we have developed some awareness, that it might be independent of the living body. It means that near death and afterwards we have to be careful not to become unconscious of the problems and events of this world. (Mindell, 1985/2002a, p. 115)

CD and NDE: Dreamland and Essence Levels

Both CD and NDE refer to the dreamland and essence levels, although the names of the states themselves are CR labels. Working with and referring to the CD as well as to an early childhood memory, a story unfolds and the mythical structure becomes visible and more tangible, opening in a way that may make little sense to the dreamer. Here the “gold,” as I call it, is in unfolding the myth and making it meaningful to the dreamer, because the dream holds patterns and a flexible structure from which the meaning for her or his life may be extracted. The dream is mythical, its contents unfolding while working with the dream and not yet known at the time of the dream’s occurrence. Sometimes the essence level can be reached in working on a CD, depending upon the nature of the dreamer and everyday life circumstances.

The NDE itself seems to catapult the person into a dreamscape of unknown dimensions. Perceptions (i.e., feeling, seeing, hearing, sensing, and relationship to others) seem accentuated, and heightened senses allow the person with a near-death experience to feel another person, as if within the emotions and inner state of the other being. The experience and its intensity leave a lifelong impression, consciously or perhaps even unconsciously shaping one’s life.

Often the feeling described by a person with a near-death experience is difficult to put in words and she or he can only describe what it was like, which is unable to transfer the actual feeling directly to the listener. Frequently, it is referred to as a loving, all-compassionate presence, sometimes with a feeling of being One, complete and well, which also relates to the immortal body as an expansion of the mythbody.

Processwork Structural Analysis as Used in Mapping the Process / Dream

In working with one's experience, with a client, group, or oneself, processwork uses a form of structural analysis often referred to as mapping the process. Guiding questions within a structural inquiry may include: "What is most familiar or known or usual?" (primary). "What is less known, unfamiliar, or emerging?" (secondary). What are the channels that are being consciously used (occupied) and not used (unoccupied)? What level of reality is present (e.g., consensus reality, dreamland, or essence level)? What roles are present, and what dream figures? Responses to these may indicate what is missing and / or needed for wholeness. This structure in mapping helps to explore the dream and the meaning the dreamer may find.

As Diamond and Jones (2004) clarified,

Channels are signal vehicles, which convey intended and unintended communication. A channel may be "occupied" or "unoccupied." An occupied channel is one that is characterized by conscious intent. It is used to transmit a message from the primary process. An unoccupied channel carries information that is marginalized by the primary process. (p. 64)

Thus, in using processwork with CD and NDE, both can be usefully mapped.

Chapter 5: Analysis of Participants CDs and NDEs

This chapter presents the participants' CDs and NDEs, through data drawn from the questionnaire I created, as well as the interviews I conducted with each of them. Complete responses to the questionnaire and interviews comprise Appendix D. Also included in this chapter are my analyses of the data gathered, my own included. As my participants have somewhat unfolded and explored their NDE and CD prior to our interview, I analyse only the data they provided. In other words, I have not worked directly with my participants' CD and NDE.

I explored the presented dream figures, their energies, and also determined how they are perceived by the dreamer within the channels they appear. I also took into account what the dreamer identifies less with, in particular the things that happen to them, or what they are appalled by, or what is terrifying and out of place for them, as this material offers secondary information.

I used the same approach for the CD as well as the NDE. Information was gathered that allowed me to look at and feel potential patterns, values, meanings, and commonalities between the NDE and CD. Findings, as well as hypothesis are then presented in connection with the NDE and CD. Next, I introduce my three participants' CDs, NDEs, and my analyses of their data.

Participant 1 Data

P1 Childhood Dream. This was her report.

I am standing in front of a really big wall that's dirty. It has got faded painting and stuff on it, lots of gunk and shit. I am standing in front of it with an oversized paint roller, and I am dipping it into a big white tray and am rolling over it with fresh paint on the wall.

She began to explore the CD concept in her 30s through processwork, while also studying for her somatic psychotherapy diploma. The richness that came from her work on her CD was viewed as a blueprint and doorway for her soul and life's journey.

Her CD showed basic dynamics in life to work with. More specifically, she said,

I understand the bones of my childhood dream are about that I can recreate a new life, a new me. Whether as I create a new meaning in my life, or radically change direction in my life. A number of times in my life, I have taken a left or right angle turn, and at different times, I have focused on the different parts of my CD (the paint, the roller). Like in the beginning when I started working on my CD, I felt a little oppressed, like cleaning other people's mess, and at the time, which was the time when I came to this community, I really did feel that way. So in the past, when I worked on my CD, I also worked a lot in my CR life as a therapist and activist, and found myself working in particular around difficult subjects and abuse, that I have encountered myself as a child and adult.

She noted changes when she worked on her CD from a processwork perspective.

Now, the last time when I worked on my CD, I had far more detachment, working and being from a different place. So what I have learned from my CD is that I have the capacity to reinvent myself, and restart my life. I am trying to find ways of having a new relationship to this core dynamic of grief and sadness that sits under there. I am in shamanic training for years now, because I want to transform energetically my relationship to grief. So, it's not more about change career or where I live or relationship or anything, it is not on the outside anymore, at least not this time in my life.

P1 NDE. More than 10 years later, just after completing her studies in psychotherapy, P1 was diagnosed with cancer, and faced surgical removal of the tumour.

This surgery brought on her fifth NDE. She described it as follows:

I am on the operating table, being operated on to remove this very large tumour on my pancreas. There is my surgeon, me, and the very tall handsome anaesthetist, then there is the Asian nurse, and I think there is a 4th person. So I am watching them operate on my body. And I particularly notice how the stain of my blood on the sort of blue green scrubs makes such a pretty colour. But I am up in the corner of the room looking down at them. And I have no body but have a presence. I am watching them doing like a kind of a dance with what they are doing and they are moving quickly as a team. I don't think I heard the medical team talking but I knew close to exactly what they were doing and how they sensed each other—like a well-oiled machine or like a long married couple although there were 3 not 2 people there, with 1 other

coming and going, as I bleed out. And then just over there, again up in the air, in the room I am looking over, there is my cat. My dead cat, Weeva, a black cat sitting with her front legs tucked under her body purring and what I call blow kisses to me. She is slowly blinking her eyes, something we used to do as a love signal. She is purring. Then next to her is this Maori woman, she is a little chubby, she's got black hair and rich brown eyes. She has a blue and white flower print dress on. She is sitting cross legged and is smoking a joint, blowing in and out. She is giggling and turns to me and I hear her say, "We are here for you little sister, whenever you are ready." I recognise this Maori woman as a spirit that I call Mere, a spirit who I have met years before.

She spoke about the changes that brought her NDE into her life.

The whole concept of success changed for me, as in money, clients, and teaching jobs. I found myself not looking out so much anymore. The NDE made me realize that I was spiritually poor. I was a different person after my NDE. It made me treasure my body. Also began to build up in my spirituality. Socially, I became more of an introvert, stopped being a party animal. Emotionally, I began to highly value silence and stillness. Everyday life is in a new frame. I am not afraid of death / dying anymore.

Further, she observed,

There is something pressed upon me that I really need to use or share, or is it just to wake me up as one little person on the planet? I think it helped me to find actually, in connection with the spirit or the divine as it's totally unique, and I don't need to join a spiritual or religious group to have a legitimate real connection. I kind of knew that before but it was in an arrogant way. The NDE helped me to see just very quietly and deeply, that this was as important as breathing. I am sure many people are saying similar things.

Actually, I don't believe so much in endings any more. Well, there are endings, but they are not the end. That opens up the whole question: what is life? What does it mean to be alive? And what is death? What does it mean to be dead? Just look around, actually there are quite a few people in a body who are living like they are dead.

About how she related her CD and NDE, she observed,

Well, there are no firm lines [laughing], I believe I am a moving line in life. I am not a fixed hexagram. There is something fixed though, and I want to unfix the grief part so to speak. So for me, my childhood dream gives sort of a background template for, I hope, great hope, and uplifting messages for now I can deal with shit life is putting in front of me, hopefully, hopefully. And, that my life is actually, that might sound really weird, more than my physical body. Something in me will not die, when my physical body dies. Something in me wants to die. I just know this.

Participant 1 Data Analysis

Mapping P1's CD. Looking at the basic structure of the CD, I find P1 ready to paint the wall. In her dream, she was on her own. She was about to paint with fresh white paint over the wall. In the dream, she identified herself as the painter, seemed close to her knowing, and was linked with her primary identity. For the secondary / unknown or incomplete parts, the dream told me that she was dipping the oversized roller into the paint, but had not quite begun to paint, being full of anticipation.

Channels. The dream was mainly experienced within the visual channel, in viewing the unfolding of the dream and its visual description. The movement channel was indicated through dipping the big roller into the paint.

Level. The CD dream belonged to a mysterious realm. P1 found herself in the dreaming realm / dreamland. I looked next into her NDE with the same structured enquiry.

Mapping P1's NDE. The surgery was about to begin, to remove a large tumour on P1's pancreas. This procedure was a big and dangerous undertaking, and P1 knew that it could have a fatal outcome. Life's canvas was about to reveal its bigness just as death and the unknown revealed itself in her NDE. In her OBE, she was able to watch the unfolding of her surgery in great detail, which was primary to her. Spirit friends "Mere" and "Weeva" the cat were important messengers, conveying a deep friendship and love for P1. I see this process in the secondary more unknown realm.

Channels. P1 perceived her new world through multiple intense channel experiences. Having seen her surgical team, the machines and devices, the colourful stained green scrubs soaked in blood, her black cat and the spirit friend in her flower print dress as well as herself, these belonged to the visual channel. Further, she noticed that she was

floating in the air up in the corner, as well as observing the surgical team like a dance while being operated on, and her blood flowing onto the scrubs, which belonged to the movement channel. Her dead cat and spirit friend conveyed messages to her which she could hear, as well as the purring of the cat, perceived all through the auditory channel. The messages conveyed by her cat and spirit friend left P1 with a sense of love and deep friendship, which resided within the proprioceptive and relationship channels.

Levels. The NDE had its beginning in the dreaming realm that was unfolding her new reality of heightened perceptions and dream figures as described above. It unfolded further into the essence level. The atmosphere within the NDE seemed to have a deep and essential quality for P1. She was touched to the core of experiencing herself as feeling complete and becoming one who leaves all duality behind, where whatever you do or do not do is fine.

P1 commonalities and hypothesis. Here, I drew on commonalities, as in patterns seen, and components related between the NDE and CD that showed up in the above analysis. Based upon that analysis, my hypothesis was that there may be connections between the experiences, and they may complement each other.

More specifically, I compared selected channel experiences within the NDE and CD. The NDE presented P1 with full, rich, and deep experiences that allowed her to be fully awake and present through all the channels: visual, movement, proprioceptive, auditory, and relationship. An acute awareness came alive in sensing and experiencing her dreaming surroundings, as well as what was going on while being operated down below while not being directly attached to her body herself. In contrast, her CD seemed to hold symbolic values with limited channel experiences, more as a symbolic container where the dream

symbols such as the dirty canvas, and her painting in anticipation were not explored or unfolded in channels within the dream. Here my hypothesis is, that the gunk and shit on the big wall from her CD links to the tumour in her NDE.

Looking at the dreaming levels, the CD remains in dream land as it was. The beginning of P1's NDE also was in dreamland, yet her OBE provided P1 with a new level of reality, wherein she experienced a deep feeling quality in the essence level with her spirit friend and her cat. Here, my hypothesis was that her NDE provided a way to dream her CD further. The very deep feeling aspects, heightened sense of awareness, and assurance given by her two spirits within the NDE allowed P1 to start her new painting with life once more, as she emerged from her dying process in a new beginning. This was reflected in her CD where she created her blank canvas, started over, obliterated the shit, dropped CR, and began again. Relating with her spirit friends, experienced in the relationship channel, brought love and connection to P1, reflecting an ease of interaction with people who care for her in the spirit world as well as in CR.

Reflection. With both her NDE and CD, dream-like experiences gave insights to the participant, contributed to bring changes on a deeper level, and were part of an ongoing individuation process. To me, the most astonishing part was the loss of fear of death within her NDE, and the personal changes that came along with it.

Participant 2 Data

P2 Childhood Dream. This was her report.

My CD occurred when I was about 6 or 7-years-old. The dream was a nightmare that I was in a roller coaster, and in the roller coaster, the point of view is me being in the roller coaster. So I was both in a seat and watching it from a distance, from the side. The sense in both realms was of being terrified. I was so scared. It was going so fast I didn't know what would happen. I thought I am going to die. There is no one here, there wasn't anybody else in the roller coaster, it was just me. There was no one to

help me, and so I realised that I had to help myself. So in the dream what I did, and I do it now for you, in the dream I knew I was asleep, something in me knew I was asleep and the only way to stop it was to wake up. So, I would put my hands here and I would force my eyelids open. When I forced my eyelids open in the dream time, I woke up in my bed. So, it was kind of an almost dream within a dream, in that I woke myself up from the dream. This happened, I don't know, five or six times this particular dream happened.

P2 began to work with her CD as an adult in her 50s. She said,

Using the CD and early memory as the ground for inner work at various stages of my journey has helped me see unifying themes and feel that I have a framework within which my awareness can grow.

Working with her CD allowed her to build a connection with how her life was unfolding.

Telling big experiences that people have in their life connects them to another way of thinking about themselves and their life. I think it's important. That mythological connection brings you back home in a really deep way, and maybe not for everybody. I think when the blueprint comes up, the energies can move forward, and perhaps one does not need to stay stuck in a pattern for the rest of their life.

P2's NDE. When P2 was around 6-years-old, she fell down a flight of stairs, and described the scene this way.

I was upstairs in our home and must have done something to upset my mother because she began chasing me. I was focused on running away and kept going through the kitchen where the door to the basement was open. I tumbled down the steps and landed on the floor. My head hit the ground and I remember stickiness—perhaps blood—where my head and face struck the floor.

I lost consciousness because the next thing I realized was that I was hovering above my body. I remember feeling frightened because I could see my body on the floor and my mother running down the steps screaming. She looked very frightened. Then I felt a presence near me radiating love and reassurance and telling me that everything was going to be OK. The words / feelings were transmitted to me telepathically and I could sense that I was being held by the mythical figure of Pan. Once I was calm, this figure helped me slip back into my body. After that I just remember pain in my head and other proprioceptive sensations such as pressure and stickiness. I must have lost consciousness again because I don't remember what happened after that.

Based on conversations I had later with my mom, she must have taken me to the hospital for treatment. I have a scar on my forehead and when I asked about it, her explanations were always quite vague. Later as an adult she once made a

derogatory comment that the doctors were concerned enough that they asked her whether she had hit me and intimated child abuse. Given the spirit of the times (late 1950s) this was not a normal question, so my presentation must have been pretty bad.

P2's comments offered a glimpse of how she viewed her NDE and a common shared place between her NDE and her CD.

I believe it set the stage and made for an easier path for out of body experiences I had later in life, and set me on a path toward a more spiritual orientation in life. On an unconscious level, it gave me a feeling of being held in some way when I felt I didn't fit in or experienced other very difficult experiences. When I began working with this material more consciously and then retrieved my early childhood memory, I felt a deep sense of resonance between them. This began to unfold and deepen the mythic dimensions of my life. It further ignited a passion in me to learn and develop tools for myself and to help others interested in going deeper into their spiritual and psychological core.

Further, she observed,

It's given me direct knowledge that consensus reality and physical experience is only one dimension of awareness. I know that we also have other frequencies of knowing that are entwined with our regular consciousness and we can tap into them to enrich our experience of life. I have become comfortable with exploring these subtler dimensions of the personal and larger fields and helping others to do the same.

Participant 2 Data Analysis

Mapping P2's CD. Having looked at the basic structure of the CD, I found P2 on a wild rollercoaster ride, where all was out of control and thus, secondary to her in the dream. Waking herself up from the dream, while in the dream, was actually taking control of the nightmarish situation that was known and primary for her.

Channels. The scene unfolding in the dream suggested the visual channel. The moving of the roller coaster fell within the movement channel. Her fear was in the proprioceptive channel.

Level. The dream resides in dreamland. Its mystery does as well. I looked next into her NDE with the same structured enquiry.

Mapping P2's NDE. Prior to P2's NDE, she was chased around the kitchen table by her mother. Being chased was more primary to P2 and being the chaser was less known and secondary. As she fell down the stairs, she noticed herself also watching her own accident scene as it unfolded. She realised that she was hovering above her body. Then she sensed a presence beside her that was radiating love and reassurance as well as the figure Pan who was holding her lovingly. Both of those dream figures were further away from her identity, mysterious and more secondary for her.

Channels. P2 perceived her NDE through multiple channels. She viewed her own body lying on the floor, saw her mother coming down the stairs, and saw the figure Pan, all in the visual channel. Feeling held by Pan and her sense of hovering in the air occurred in the movement channel. Hearing the loving presence and Pan talking to her as if in a telepathic transmission were in the auditory channel. The sensing of love, reassurance, and the feeling of being held by Pan belong to the proprioceptive as well as relationship channels.

Levels. The NDE unfolded within the dream level initially, and continued into the essence level. There P2 experienced feeling loved and held by both a presence and Pan. While being loved within the essence level, P2 lost all her fear, and was able to return her body safely.

P2 commonalities and hypothesis. Here, I drew on commonalities, as in patterns seen, and components related between the NDE and CD that showed up in the above analysis. Based on that analysis, my hypothesis was that there may be connections between the experiences, and they may complement each other.

More specifically, I compared selected channel experiences within the NDE and CD. I found that the NDE contained nearly the full range of channel experiences (e.g., visual,

movement, auditory, proprioceptive, and relationship). This allowed P2 to see, feel, move, hear, and relate to her dream figures (i.e., Pan and the loving presence). Even though she was hovering above her body, she was also present with what was happening below, watched her mother come down the stairs, and saw her own body lying on the ground. In contrast, her CD held fewer channel experiences: visual, as in the scene with the rollercoaster; movement, as the ride on the rollercoaster was fast and unstoppable; and proprioceptive, when she felt scared. The NDE added information from the auditory channel wherein P2 was able to hear / perceive the loving and guiding messages from the loving presence and Pan. In her NDE, the relationship channel was very important as she felt related to with love and ease in moving between dreamland and consensus reality. This was missing in her CD, as there she was on her own. In both her CD and NDE were strong and similar movement experiences: falling.

My hypothesis was that her NDE further unfolded her CD through the relationship channel. The loving presence and Pan conveyed important messages to P2, whereas in her CD, she was on her own with no one to be or talk with, unable to stop the rollercoaster, and felt frightened.

Looking at the dreaming levels, the CD remained in dreamland. Her NDE began in dreamland as well. Then, her OBE offered a new world where she perceived the figure Pan and the loving presence close to the essence level.

In P2's NDE and CD, I found aspects in common. The rollercoaster ride and its wild energy in the CD reminded me of P2's NDE, where she was being chased around the table first before tumbling down the stairs.

Another connection I see between her CD and NDE were two ways of waking herself up. In her CD, she opened her eyelids while still in the dream in order to end her nightmare.

In her NDE, the figure Pan provided help in returning to her body in a loving and supporting way. Both ways offered wisdom that guided P2 back to CR. My hypothesis was that Pan, through his loving presence, provided a safe and reassuring passage back into her body in her NDE.

Reflection. The NDE showed an aspect of the continuum of unfolding of her CD, as it revealed essential aspects of being loved, held, and deeply cared for that allowed her to be at ease with what was unfolding for her during her lifetime. The way I saw P2's CD and NDE, along with her reflections, led me to think that both her NDE and CD not only showed simple connections. They also provided important information that allowed P2 to feel guided and spiritually nourished in her ongoing individuation process.

Participant 3 Data

P3 Childhood Dream. This was her report.

I was 2 or 3-years-old, living in the house I grew up in. The house was on a hill and it had a long front yard leading down to the street. I was walking down the hill to go to my next door neighbour's to play. As I was going down the front yard, I saw a car parked in front of the neighbour's house. This was unusual because cars rarely parked on our street. After playing at my friends, as I started walking back to my house, I noticed that the car was still there. Suddenly somebody came from behind me and pulled my ski jacket hood down over my face so I couldn't see, and then dragged me backwards down the hill toward the car. And that's when I woke up. I was scared in the dream but I didn't scream or yell because the nature of the neighbourhood was such that nobody was around and houses were far apart so no one would have heard me if I screamed.

P3 began to explore her CD through processwork concepts, when she was in her 40s.

Working with my CD over the years has enriched my life in many ways. I love seeing how the meaning of the dream has shifted and evolved over the years. The impacts have been subtle but strong.

P3 NDE. When P3 was between 12 and 13-years-old, she fell out of a tree.

I was about 12 / 13-years-old playing a hide and seek game with my friends outside. I had climbed about 12 feet up a pine tree in their yard, and laid flat on the branches

so I would be hard to see from the ground. I scouted forward just a little bit to try to get a better position, and then I heard this crack and I realised the branch had broken, and then I had this experience that only lasted a couple seconds or so between the time I started falling and the time I landed. I thought, “Wow, is this it? Am I going to be dead when I reach the ground?” I don’t remember if I saw specific events but I clearly felt a sort of quick life review. In this very short time my 12 years flashed in front of me. I landed flat on my back and the wind was knocked out of me and I couldn’t breathe for a minute, and then I was OK, but I bit my tongue really bad so I couldn’t talk, and I twisted my ankle. I used two crutches for a few days, but I was OK. But what I do remember is the strangeness of on the one hand thinking, “Wow, I could have died,” and on the other hand being with my friends with life going on as normal. It felt like a really profound experience but I don’t think I talked much about this with my friends. We just sat together on their lawn waiting for my mom to come pick me up. Of course, my mom was relieved I wasn’t badly hurt.

About her close to death experience, P3 said,

I felt close to the possibility of death and very much in the hands of Fate or God. . . . Death can come at any moment, or accidents can happen that can drastically change our lives. But my NDE did not have any profound impact on me that I am aware of. It felt sort of like little rite of passage.

Further, she reported,

As a kid and throughout my whole life, I had some sort of natural ease I guess, with knowing and experiencing this felt connection to this bigger spirit or something that could not be affected at all by certain circumstances. So, in other words when something was really scary or maddening or horrible happened, I still felt like “Oh, yeah, things happen, but they never can change the feeling of, wow, and feeling alive and the force inside me.” So that to me has been always with me in life. . . .

From the age of 2 years throughout my growing up years, I would do that little exercise as follows (I would go into this kind of altered state), where I would kind of get this feeling behind my nose or third eye, sort of tingly feeling, and I would see myself as sort of separate from my embodied CR self. And I would repeat over and over like trying to grasp the fact that I exist. So in my little mind, I would over and over say, “I am, I am. I am me. I am [name]. I am, here I am.” You know, it was like a little trance that I would go into. This feels pretty central to who I am, as long as I can remember.

Participant 3 Data Analysis

Mapping P3’s CD. Looking at the basic structure of the CD, I found P3 in the midst of a potential abduction. The scene initially seemed to be familiar to her and primary to her

identity. She was aware of her physical surroundings and her neighbourhood, returning from visiting a friend. She also seemed to know that there was no point in screaming, as no one would hear her, which was also primary in the dream. Most secondary in her dream was the mysterious figure who came from behind and pulled the dreamer's hood over her face.

Channels. In the CD, P3 found herself walking down the street and back up to her house, which indicates the movement channel. The surroundings and her house in the dream matched the one she grew up with, and were perceived visually. Sensing the unusually parked car in front of her friend's place, as well as feeling scared while under the hood indicate the proprioceptive channel.

Level. The dream was an unfolding mystery. It belonged to the dreaming realm / dreamland.

Mapping P3's NDE. Prior to P3's accident, a game of hide and seek was underway. P3 tried to hide herself from her friends. She climbed up a tree and scouted forward along the branch. The scene unfolded in her neighbourhood while being together with friends, and was known and primary to her identity. While falling out of the tree, P3 experienced her life review, brief as it was. She landed flat on her back and the wind was knocked out of her. Both the fall with its life review and her landing with the wind being knocked out seemed more mysterious and secondary, as in dropping out of her known or CR world.

Channels. Prior and post her NDE, there was a lot of movement. The cracking branch was likely heard by others (auditory channel). Description of the setting suggests the visual channel as does the hide and seek game. During the NDE, her life passed by as if in a vision (visual channel). There was a feeling of being out-of-the-ordinary that came from her fall and NDE, and that indicates the proprioceptive channel.



Figure 3. Shadowwoman, by Anonymous.

Level. The NDE unfolded briefly during her fall from the tree. While falling, it occurred to P3 that she could die. This thought remained in dreamland and then entered into the essence level, when her life review began, and left P3 with a profound experience.

P3 commonalities and hypothesis. Here again, I drew on commonalities, as in patterns seen, and components related between the NDE and CD that showed up in the above analysis. I suspect that there may be connections between the experiences, and they may complement each other.

Her NDE as well as her CD took place in a familiar setting. In both her CD and NDE, she played with friends. As in her CD, she did not call out for help, because in her NDE she was unable to do so.

Prior to P3's accident, a game of hide and seek was underway, as she hid up in the tree. Looking at her CD, a mysterious somebody hid P3 with her own hood, so that she could not see. The quality of being hidden and now hiding herself was in her CD and prior to her NDE. The difference here was that she was hiding herself not to be seen by her friends, where as in her CD someone else did it for her. I hypothesized that the qualities of being hidden in the dream and falling from the tree and being knocked windless indicated being knocked out of a primary way of being.

Reflection. Having the hood pulled over her head definitely invited a secondary state of mind. It was the familiarity and knowledge of her surroundings that did not allow her to scream, or ask for help or raise alarm about her situation. No help, no friends—being deep inside—this was the secondary process and also showed up in her NDE.

P3 termed her NDE a symbolic rite of passage. Despite the seriousness of her accident, there seemed to be a playful easy part. There seemed to be an acceptance of her

accident, as well as in her CD. P3 spoke of feeling at ease and aware of being connected to a larger spirit, unaffected by usual circumstances. It might be that surrendering to the most difficult situations allowed her to become an observer and cultivate detachment from it all. Because she does not get too hooked by everyday activities and dramas, she was able to bring ease about things as a gift. Thus, she was able to access dreaming beyond CR to be useful to herself and others. I am also thinking about a form of spirituality, being in touch with the greatness of life and death. She can access this in the form of her own “Wowism,” with its detachment and observing nature that also works in meditation with breathing (breath that has been knocked out while hitting the ground in her NDE). For her, those experiences were reminders that anything can happen at any time, that death can come at any moment, or that accidents can happen that may drastically change our lives.



Figure 4. No Tide, by Anonymous.

Considering My Own CD and NDE, Analysis

Mapping CD. In my CD (reported in Chapter 1), I identified myself as wandering through the forest, enjoying nature, seeing the light filtering through the leaves, observing the brook bubbling along, and felt that all was beautiful, and perfect in harmony. This scene was primary, familiar, known to me, and I named it my primary identity in the dream. My sensing let me know that something was not quite right. I began to feel uneasy and felt there was something following or stalking me. The scene unfolded, and I did not know what to do / feel at first. This state of being was far from what I identified with. It was uncomfortable and further away from my awareness in being my normal happy self in the dream, and therefore became secondary to my identity.

Channels. The dream description of nature and seeing the bear were in the visual channel and occupied. I also was meandering along and then running and the bear chasing me, indicated the movement channel, which was also occupied. The sensing of danger was in the proprioceptive channel.

Level. The dream resides in Dreamland. Its dream figures also reside there.

Reflection. All parts in the dream can be regarded as dream figures. Here is the forest with its growth, nature as something that I feel I belong to. One can say that it seems essential to my happiness and wellbeing.

Cities, houses, cars, trains, or any other man-made structures are missing in the dream. I am curious how I feel about those missing parts. I asked myself, where is my home? From what I know in my everyday life, I feel most at home in nature.

There was no path that I followed in the dream. I seemed to know where I was going . . . or not? It just was not important to me to follow a path or go in any specific direction.

There were no other human beings in the dream. This did not seem to be of any concern. There was no sense of loneliness or longing for anything else. All was as it was meant to be.

Sensing something unknown that later I perceived as a threat to my being was present. I also could have been just purely surprised by this bear appearing out of nowhere, but I knew something was not right while in the dream. Sometimes in my everyday life, I can sense that something is not quite as it should be, as a warning or a kind of premonition of a situation prior to its unfolding.

The bear is the least known dream figure. I asked myself, “What does this bear want from me?” I felt in danger, as it was a life threatening situation I was in. “Does he want to attack or eat me? Has he got big teeth, claws?” I cannot actually hear him, nor can I recall him making any noises. Equally, I do not seem to speak in the dream, there are no thoughts, sounds, or words exchanged. Before he can catch me, I wake up from my dream. But before I wake up, I trip over a log that lies across the ground.

Mapping NDE. My NDE is reported in Chapter 1. Prior to my accident, I was in a boat with friends going down a river (movement channel). The surroundings in nature strongly resembled natural features (visual channel) in my CD. However, prior to my NDE, I was with friends and my brother. The scene changed when I fell (movement channel) out of the boat and got separated, finding myself alone on the bottom of the river, alone as in the CD. The churning waters (movement) and the big boulder seemed to resemble the bear in

the CD, that something big was about to get me. Symbolically speaking, the bear was holding me equally and firmly down on the bottom of the river. Could it be that the CD was dreamed further, in me actually being caught by the bear? There was definitely no escape. I was also thinking of the big boulder that tripped up the boat as like the log that tripped me up in the CD.

While becoming resigned to the fact that I was going to die, there was a transformation happening. It was not just any resignation, but one in the form of connecting with a spiritual aspect that I sought in the act of prayer. This put me in touch with an unspeakable feeling of being at home and at one, unconditionally loved and guided. I felt whole and complete, and all was absolutely fine (proprioceptive channel). It was a bit like in the CD, being at home in nature in the forest. Yet, this dream-like blissful state was something that I had never experienced before in my life. As I neared the end of my life review (visual channel), a big surge or wave picked me up and transported me back to the surface.

Being picked up by this strong and powerful wave reminded me of the bear energy from my CD, and it saved my life. The urgency of picking up my own power in my life may be a matter of life and death. Becoming my powerful self within my individuation process as pointed out by my CD and NDE is an ongoing process. Yes, there was bliss in my NDE. There was also a big bear power that can do amazing things, and although still secondary for me, it is becoming more known.

Channels. The NDE had its beginnings with the proprioceptive channel as in feeling pinned down and sensing the dire situation while drowning, holding my breath, and feeling the burning in my throat at first. I was sitting firmly on the bottom of the river, which

equally suggests the proprioceptive channel occupied. I very much identified myself with this situation, yet as the NDE progressed, I became not aware of that part, as if I became detached from my physical predicament and prospect of drowning.

Levels. My physical body remained in CR as in drowning. Yet in dreamland, a new reality was unfolding together with a new-found sense of wholeness.

Reflection. My dreambody seemed to be detached from my physical body. Further, it seemed that my immortal body began to show itself to me, a part in me that I knew could not die, and was little concerned about my impending physical death. It is difficult to describe this transformation. I feel it was not anything that I was doing with will and intent, but rather happened to me as a natural transformative stage. Here my channels were all present. I could see, hear, feel, and relate verbally yet without speaking.

In hindsight and post-NDE, I became very aware that there was more to life than my human existence. I also remember that I began to have a strong voice in talking for marginalised groups in the world, in particular the poor countries, and saw people's many sides, becoming very empathetic. I would often explain to my friends and peers why things are the way they are, being less judgemental, I guess. Also the sense of "there is more to life than we see". I remember that my thinking and feeling went against mainstream ideas. I often felt isolated.



Figure 5. Beachdance, by Anonymous.

Chapter 6: Reflections and Conclusion

My reflections are presented in this chapter, and given context by relevant literature. Limitations of this study are also noted as well as suggestions for future research. The chapter ends with my conclusion.

CD and NDE, Commonalities and Discoveries

P1's CD myth presented the beginning of getting rid of gunk and shit on her canvas (in CR), as with difficulties and obstacles in her life. Her CD myth further revealed itself in her NDE, with specific messages through her spirit friends with the essence of unconditional love, and encouraged her to find a new way of being and relating in everyday life.

For P2, first was the feeling of fear, then the loving presence. In her CD, she was able to wake herself up from her nightmare. Her fear within her NDE was held and soothed by the loving presence and Pan. Once she was calm, Pan helped her to go back into her body. For P2, here is the myth of love as well as being able to travel between realities.

P3 was invited out of her primary process and into her internal world. This showed up in both her CD and NDE. In her CD, she was invited to go deeply inside, hood over her head. Prior to her NDE, P3 was up in a tree. The NDE followed after the crack of the branch breaking until she landed on the ground. For P3, dropping out of consensus reality relationships and exploring deep inner states were tangible in her experiences.

For me, it was the big bear that helped me to get back to unfinished business, allowing me to see and experience the world with fresh eyes. The energy of the bear figure from my CD also was active in my NDE, serving as a guide in disguise (the powerful wave) who delivered me to death's door, so that I could receive the most astounding and beautiful experience, and then brought me back to life. The big bear was indeed a powerful figure in

my life that allowed me to become and feel my bigger Self. The hidden treasure of the big bear can also haunt me until I pick up its energy. When I do so, I am able to feel less the victim of something big happening to me or get tripped up by it. Rather, I can enjoy the bigness in becoming myself. I see this as a life-long journey and work with my CD as a blueprint that also showed up in my NDE.

Looking at Participants' Data

At this point, I have looked only at participants' data from interviews and questionnaire responses. I have not worked directly with the participants on their respective CD and NDE. Rather, I have supported the participants in finding their own meaning in their experiences. Thus, I have not unfolded dream figures nor asked for associations or amplified or deepened their experiences as would be usual in dreamwork. That would definitely be an area for future research.

Messages conveyed in NDEs. For two of my participants, P1 and P2, some mythical figures and / or spirits appeared and conveyed messages for the experiencer. Both of these participants were solo in their CDs. The purpose of the figures in their NDEs seemed to be that of messengers and provided them with a sense of love and assurance. For P3, the memory of her brief life review while falling out of the tree offered a glimpse of her past life, rather than being a direct message to her.

Why focus on channels? The significance for my research of describing the channel structures is that channels provide clear avenues for how the NDE and CD may inform us. For the CD, fewer channels are mentioned in the data. For the NDE, all channels are present.

More specifically, I wondered how the world was perceived in the CD and the NDE. The CD was primarily in the visual channel. There it was, and that is what we can see. In

fact, no words were spoken within the respective CDs. In all of the CDs were moving objects / parts, as in running away, or being dragged away, or on the rollercoaster, or rolling over the wall with a paint roller. Thus, one may say that the visual and movement channels were evident in all of the CDs.

For the NDE, a heightened state of awareness was perceived through various channels, and each channel seemed to be amplified and perhaps extended, though no one could feel their bodies as such. In a CD one does not feel their own body either. From my own experience, I found that unless we bring the CD back to life, entering and letting the experiences through channels unfold, the CD could remain in memory mainly as an image.

Within the NDEs of my participants and myself, there seemed to be a completeness and wellness in every sense that differentiated it from any other dream-like state, a state that was transformative and lasting beyond the experience itself. Concurrent connection with our immortal body and physical body gave the person awareness in all channels.

Findings in Context

The literature review in Chapter 2 served to not only define the terms CD and NDE, it also gave me deeper insight into both their importance and holding of personal, psychological, and spiritual aspects and information. Considering my findings, I consulted the literature again.

Dreams. C.G. Jung, in *Man and His Symbols* (1964), wrote,

Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend. This is one reason, why all religions employ symbolic language or images. But this conscious use of symbols is only one aspect of a psychological fact of great importance: Man also produces symbols unconsciously and spontaneously, in form of dreams. (p. 6)

M. L. von Franz (1964) said,

The powerful forces of the unconscious most certainly appear not only in clinical material but also in the mythological, religious, artistic and all the other cultural activities by which man expresses himself. Obviously, if all men have common inherited patterns of emotional and mental behaviour (which Jung called the archetypes), it is only to be expected that we shall find their products (symbolic fantasies, thoughts and actions) in practically every field of human activity. (p. 378)

The CDs and NDEs of my participants and my own reflect the accuracy of these observations. As I looked from dream to symbol, I felt my view expand in depth and breadth. Looking at and working with symbolic material allowed me a bigger view of relationships amongst the CDs and NDEs of my data.

NDE. Pim van Lommel (2010) observed,

In the past these [NDE] experiences were often known under different names, such as visions or mystical, religious, or enlightenment experiences. In antiquity, they were referred to as journeys to the underworld. Throughout history there have been many different views on death, but across all times and cultures, people have been convinced that the human essence, usually known as the soul, lives on after death as found in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alongside quotations from ancient Egypt, Greece and the Roman Empire. (p. 81)

The NDE has been named a mystical experience worldwide (Pim van Lommel, 2010). I sought for more information about the symbolic value of a NDE, and I was unsuccessful. The reason may lie in the experience itself. The NDE and its inherent symbols manifest as a complete in all senses experience. My own NDE supports this view. In fact, perhaps one becomes one with all that is in the NDE. Once returning back to earthly life, the person with a near-death experience tries to explain the unexplainable, and may use metaphors or symbols to give weight and meaning to what happened in the NDE.

The NDE with its mythical content suggested the following questions: Where does it (life and the universe) all begin? Is there an ending? Who was directing life's drama and beyond? Is the very symbolic inheritance in all human experiences present in a NDE, so that one might unfold and gain meaning from it all?

The NDE may also present itself as an assault to the person who had a near-death experience and needed to be integrated over time. Pim van Lommel (2010) noted,

NDE is both an existential crisis and an intense learning experience. People are transformed by the glimpse of a dimension where time and space play no role, where past and future can be viewed, where they feel complete and healed, and where infinite wisdom and unconditional love can be experienced. After a NDE, people realize that everything and everybody are connected, that every thought has an impact on oneself and others and that our consciousness survives physical death. The thought, that everything is non-locally connected changes both scientific theories and our image of humankind and the world. (p. xix)

Another person with a near-death experience stated, “I now see, since my NDE, that I am only the brush, my life experiences are the paint, my life is the painting, and the world is the studio with love as the subject” (as cited in Ring, 2000, p. 48).

Summary. To some degree, my findings allow me to say, “Yes,” there are connections between the CD and NDE, seemingly randomly organised in themselves, revealing the mythical aspects within the CD and NDE, and begging to be looked at and worked with further to make the unconscious conscious, for one’s personal and collective benefit. As Carl Gustav Jung (n.d.) said, “Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

Discoveries

My data held a broad variety of NDEs, from those more commonly recorded in the literature (P1 and P2) to a psychological NDE (P3) that I have not come across before. The actual experiences were personal and relevant to the experiencers’ stage of life, whether being an adult or child. The actual NDE experience showed one or more elements (i.e., an OBE, life review, spirits, a loving presence, or field of endless compassion). The feeling aspect of the NDE was outstanding and left a life-long imprint. The CD equally revealed patterns and knowledge about the dreamers’ personal lives, and provided them with valuable

information. Mapping the structure with channels, I was able to gain information as to how the experiencer felt their NDE, as in a heightened visual, hearing, and feeling state, and discovered movements that were not bound to their physical body. It seemed that all of the channels that had shown in a NDE were not subject to their actual bodies. An important finding is that the NDE does dream forward the CD. It takes the dream to another level, to the essence level. The NDE is happening in the essence level/ and it has all the channels of the experience in it, whereas the CD needs to be unfolded to get to the essence level.

Exploring this topic is of value. At the essence level all channels are present. There is no polarity. Polarities are only in the CR and Dreamland levels. In the essence level there is detachment. That is also a finding. In the NDE we are detached, we are watching things happening and are not emotionally invested. In a CD we are emotionally invested and often polarized.

Limitations

I acknowledge my personal bias as I have experienced a NDE myself, and may have preconceived ideas of how a NDE feels or what it should look like, based on my own work with my NDE as well as my CD, both separately and together over the last several years. Potentially, this could have influenced my research in this paper as in having preconceived ideas as to how to work with and integrate both experiences into life, perhaps stifling my curiosity and drawing links directly from my own experiences. However, I have sought to keep both my mainstream and processwork lenses open.

Because my participants were very few in number, therefore, my results offer a limited view. It is a beginning and introduction for further investigations around NDEs and their respective CDs. My findings can in no way be generalized, given the small scale of the

study, nor can they be applied to other persons with CD and / or NDE, as this is a first inquiry into unknown territory and further investigation around CD and NDE is needed. I have addressed only a few of the NDE researchers, and the field is steadily growing.

Other limitations include lack of investigation about suicide attempts and its NDE, as well as the 1% to 15% of terrifying NDEs. The broader area of death and dying studies is beyond the scope of this pilot study, and also holds merit for further research.

Some of my participants have had multiple NDEs, and this prompts my interest in researching the overall structure within their respective NDEs. In this project, I have focused on the one NDE that a participant chose, and I am aware that there are others.

My study has been conducted on a small scale, meaning with three participants and myself. All participants have knowledge about themselves and also processwork. All participants have also worked on their respective CD and NDE within and outside of therapy and processwork over many years. All participants are interested in personal growth and development. With that said, it would be of interest to look at persons who have done little work on their CD and NDE, in order to look at them with a fresh perspective. It would also be of interest to look more cross culturally, to see how people work and see their own CD and NDE from different countries / cultures and backgrounds.

All of my participants' NDEs were experienced many years back, and some of them date from their childhood. Yet it seems that the essence of a NDE remains throughout life. I am wondering how it would be to actually look at a NDE soon after its occurrence, and together with their CD, conduct a research study.

I personally have not worked in depth or over a longer period of time with my participants on their CD and NDE, in order to follow the process as it unfolded. I have relied

primarily upon their existing knowledge of their CDs and NDEs. My chosen role in this research was that of working with data that I gathered through a questionnaire and interviews, rather than seeking novel ways of being with participants and their CDs and NDEs. Thus, pragmatically my analysis is limited, not having worked with my participants and their respective CD and NDE. This research is definitely in preliminary form, and it would benefit from further exploration of their dreaming experiences.

All of my participants were adults. For further studies, I suggest looking at children, adolescents, and perhaps older people as that might give a wider idea about how processes are unfolding with CD and NDE, perhaps seeing different stages within an individuation process.

Because this was a pilot study, meaning that I found minimal literature about CD and NDE being considered together, I relied primarily upon my own knowledge and small amount of data gathered. Further extensive research would be needed to give statistical significance to my own findings, requiring a broader demographic base of participants as well as an increase in quantity. Further research of symbols, myths, and archetypes, as well as other phenomena around NDE and how the CD itself may be related to a NDE, could be valuable.

I have not addressed the sceptical responses to a NDE. Some say that a NDE is induced by lack of oxygen within the brain, and that only the brain can produce the NDE, rather than seeing the consciousness within the unconscious. Others say that a NDE belongs to fantasy, rather than standing on its own, separate from brain or physical activity as such.

I have not looked at the possible changes that might have been caused by a NDE within a CD, and have termed it more as an ongoing process with integration in one's life. I can imagine that a NDE as a child or even as a baby might influence the formation of a CD.

Suggestions for Further Research

It would be interesting to see how a CD and NDE evolve, which would require an extensive study. The research would look into the lives of a child, adolescent, and adult prior to a NDE, during and post-NDE, in conjunction with the CD, to observe parallels and / or commonalities with possible changes that might occur in working with both experiences.

What would it be like to actually conduct an interview with children, looking at their CD and NDE regarding age of occurrence? Perhaps, to then track them as they go through adolescence, and further on as adults, as a longitudinal study.

As my participants, including myself, have experienced NDE between 10 and 50 years ago, how would it be, if shortly after a NDE together with the CD, a similar study could be conducted? I imagine that certain details from the NDE are forgotten or become of less relevance to the experiencer over time. What might patterns be, if any?

For some of my participants, NDE had occurred before or close to their CD. The question arises, has the NDE influenced in any way their CD, and what implications, if any, that has for the CD? Had the NDE possibly become part of the CD, and in what way, if so?

Another possibility could be to explore with participants who experienced a NDE, know their CD or life myth, and are in the dying process (e.g., as in their actual physical form dying), to see if the CD showed itself within their NDE and now is in their dying process, if there might be a pattern, and if they relate to each other? I imagine that if parallels would show up within all of them, this would support my current research.

What value and interconnectedness, if any, have CD and NDE within native tribes / indigenous cultures in various parts of the world? Is there a difference East to West?

What are the implications of a CD and NDE, if not known to the experiencer, as a conscious admission to oneself? Do a CD and NDE have their own lives unconsciously, and if not integrated, in what way do a CD and NDE affect a person? I am thinking here of processwork and its ideas around long term, recurring, or chronic illnesses, relationship patterns, or general body symptoms, or mental health issues.

Initial Questions Revisited

When I began this project, these were some of the questions alive for me in the background. I touch briefly upon them, as I expect that everyone has her or his own ideas and thinking which I deeply welcome. My observations are my attempt at responding to feelings and concepts that have formed themselves as a shared field within the world's cultures, religions, spiritual paths, and philosophies, all curious and wondering who I am / we are.

Are all people experiencing such phenomena when approaching one's own death?

To me, this question belongs to the mysterious realm with death itself. Yet, as we hear and feel about the encounters with death and the beyond, we get a sense of what it is like to encounter a NDE, and are invited to ponder the idea that we all one day may have such experience and an extreme heightened awareness that shines through the unconscious, as the unconscious is unfolding further and showing itself. Who knows where we will end up, and if there is an end to our lives without our bodies? For me, I believe that the messages and encounters with the beyond, conveyed through the shared experiences of my participants and

myself, show a little something that everyone can embrace and feel as an exciting and wonderful part of the unknown that has been shining through for everyone in this world.

Could the main difference between a NDE and actual death be that the person with a NDE is able to come back and share the experience with the world as we know it? It feels that this question also belongs to what I call the Great Mystery. I cannot answer it as I do not know what lies beyond a NDE nor a final departure from my body. Whatever we as persons who have had a near-death experience have experienced, together with the CD, are tools given that allow us to grow and share in unique and individual ways with the world around us as part of the individuation process. That process, in turn, allows the unconscious to be known and enrich us, making us whole.

Is a NDE our own fate or a right that comes with birth? I would like to extend this question to, *Is a NDE and CD our fate or a right that comes with birth?* I do not know where this question comes from. Deep down, something in me says that fate is something that I am not in control of and that is why I call it fate. I have some rights somewhere and can insist or expect something from simply being born into this world. Perhaps the fate that shows itself with a NDE indicates that I have a right to experience it, as with the dying process. Fate evokes the opposite of being in control. To be born and to die seem to be our fate, for sure. What lies in-between birth and death is my fate, too, as the unconscious knocks on my door through illnesses, body symptoms, relationship problems, accidents, death and dying, with patterns that can be disturbing and repetitive. To me, the CD and NDE with their patterns and insights, mysterious as they seem, show me how my life is unfolding, and within the unfolding is my choice, in that I can follow nature and its wisdom. Processwork has allowed me to actually see the NDE as my fate and privilege granted by virtue of birth, which evokes

seeking the meaning within it all, becoming the observer while also seeking answers to the mystery within a CD and NDE.

Is there life beyond death? As described by my participants, life beyond their physical existence seems to continue in some form. While writing this project, I gave myself the answer: of course, there is life after death. I do not have to seek anyone to verify or give me proof about my personal knowing. This very thought freed me to focus on the unfolding and mystery of a CD and NDE, allowing me with curiosity to proceed with my investigations.

Where is the beginning or end of life as such? I do not know. I do know that I was born in a human body and live life through my human structures, and will also die within my human body and its structures. This gives me a clarity and certainty that I will encounter further changes to my life that will challenge my ego and smaller self in letting go of all I have known and identified with.

As for where I began and will end . . . it seems to me that perhaps an organic and fluid process will unfold when dying, and that the actual question sinks back into the unknown, as if I had never asked. It is a mystery.

Who am I and what is the source of all existence? These questions have been formulated, asked, and pondered throughout time in various cultures. Surely they belong to the very archetypes within the universe and its mystery.

Contribution to Processwork

My contribution to processwork is extending a known concept (mapping the process) into new territory in looking at both CD and NDE as dreams and working with them from that framework. I suggest that the importance of working on the CD lies in seeing it the

continuous process that has influence on one's life which may include the dying process, extending into the beyond as shown in the NDE. Further, by bringing in a view that connects the CD and NDE as both being dreaming realms that are deeply related with each other and to a person's personal life myth with its patterns, this final project opens up a discussion around one's personal myth in form of the CD, and how it relates to a NDE, and vice versa.

Conclusion

All of the participants were impacted by both their CD and NDE, and made their own connections that brought them more in contact with their life myth. From this subjective perspective, as well as from my results, I say yes. My research is still in process and further inquiry is needed before coming up with any theory regarding connections between CD and NDE. For me, this research grew out of curiosity as to where the CD fits with a NDE and vice versa. From my research to date, the CD and NDE work as a pair and because of repetitive themes, in part complementing each other, show a deeply intertwined and mysterious connection with each other that left a profound impact on the dreamers. I feel that both the CD and NDE were part of the individuation process for the experiencer, and required ongoing integration in order to fully access their meaning for the person in everyday life. It can be an upside down journey that might call for radical changes in some ways as well. For most of us, the NDE cannot be discovered slowly or with intent in the moment. The CD is usually discovered much later in life and can be consciously integrated in one's life, perhaps bit by bit.

The CD and NDE present us with mysterious contents that at first seem strange, foreign, and unknown to the dreamer. Through unfolding these dream-like experiences with

their symbols and contents, deep and personal meaning can be uncovered that accompanies the dreamer through a lifetime, and perhaps even into the beyond.

Within a NDE, its very essence is something that can be barely named, and asks the reader to feel the states that are described by those who have had a near-death experience. Their depth and very essence seem to lie within names / states, such as God, Nature, the Tao that cannot be said, Pure and Unconditional love, Light, as well as the Dreammaker (Arnold Mindell, 2001). The names are important and give information that needs to be accessed in order to become whole. Even more so, it needs to be felt in order to bring meaning back to us in human life.

The source of our existence and its mysterious ways seems to show up in our CD and NDE as well as in all of our dream-like experiences felt in everyday life. Our body, mind, and soul are moved through a deeper dreaming that wants us to wake up in a very personal and intimate way. I feel that the CD and NDE are showing themselves like a blueprint that can guide, support, and lead us into becoming whole, including our shadowy less liked parts that may present mighty challenges. For everyone, not only we who have had a near-death experience, the core and essence that are often experienced through a NDE belong to everyone, and we do not have to wait to die, to get to know it. Within a CD and NDE, as well as the way our lives are constructed and unfolding, the comfortable, blissful states as well the disturbances and challenges that arise throughout our lives are its traces.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Email

Hi dear community,

My name is Christa Strotz. I am a MAPW 3 student here in Portland and currently working on my Final Research Project, with the theme: “Childhood Dream, Near-Death Experience and/or Dying Process,” what role, if any, has the childhood dream of a person and how does it manifest?

With that, I am looking for people to share their childhood dream and Near-Death Experience (NDE) or their dying path with me as part of my research project.

I myself have been working for many years with people, adults and children, who have gone through their dying process, finding myself in various roles, such as a nurse, neighbour, and friend, back in Switzerland and New Zealand. It is an honour and privilege to have shared those precious times with them all.

Sometime through my PW studies, I have been deeply touched and somewhat got hooked on the idea, by looking and perhaps linking a Near-Death experience and/or the dying process in itself with the early childhood dream. I had a Near-Death Experience myself when I was 16 years of age, which has revealed my path in walking and being with the dying and death which has become a beacon of light in my life.

If you feel touched or pulled in sharing your “experience” and childhood dream with me, please write to me personally at my email address. Also, perhaps you know someone in your personal community or family or have friends, who would be interested in sharing?

I so appreciate you reading this, your spirit, and all you are.

Sending love, Christa

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Consent Form: Childhood Dream and Near-Death Experience: An Investigation Into Unknown Territory as Encountered Within a Near-Death Experience and a Childhood Dream

This research project is undertaken as part of my final project for the Master of Arts degree in Process Work, at the Process Work Institute in Portland, OR.

Participation in this research involves completion of a questionnaire and an interview with me, wherein you share your Childhood Dream (CD) and Near-Death Experience (NDE).

All of the above information collected during my research, including videos, transcripts of sessions and interview notes, will be treated with respect and confidentiality, shared only with my supervisor, and disposed of once processed by me. In written reports of the research, anonymity will be protected by changing names and withholding other identifying information as much as possible.

If the research paper gets published at a later stage, the same care and confidentiality, meaning withholding any possible recognition for you as a person, will be maintained.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to not answer questions, end your participation, or withdraw from the research project at any time. Your refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect how you are treated in any way.

If you would like to discuss this research further, please contact Christa Strotz, email, or my supervisor Suzette Payne, telephone or email. If you have any inquiries regarding the conduct of this research please contact The Ethics Committee, telephone number: 503-223-8188.

Research Title: Childhood Dream and Near-Death Experience

I....., consent to participate in the research conducted by Christa Strotz, as it has been described to me.

I understand that the data collected will be used for research purposes only as outlined in the information sheet, and I consent for the data to be used in that manner.

I understand that the exercise used in this study is not to be in general use before the completion of this study.

Signed Date

Appendix C: Questionnaire

Questionnaire for CD and NDE Experiencer

NDE = Near-Death Experience

CD = Childhood Dream

- 1 What age and phase in life were you, when your NDE occurred?
- 2 What age and phase in life did you discover your CD?
- 3 Were you able to share / discuss your CD and NDE with anyone?
- 4 Can you describe briefly (as in CR stage setting), what happened before NDE, during NDE, and after your return from NDE, in consensus reality terms?
- 5 What effect / meaning/integration, if at all, has your NDE had in your life (physical, psychological, spiritual, social, emotional, or any other)?
- 6 What use and / or value, if any, has your NDE had for you?
- 7 What use and / or value, if any, has your CD had for you?
- 8 Have you noticed any change(s) in your life after your NDE? If so, can you briefly describe them? This question might tie in with NDE integration.

Appendix D: Raw Data From Questionnaires and Interviews

Participant 1 Questionnaire Responses

1 What age and phase in life were you, when NDE occurred? I was in my late 40s when I experienced my 5th NDE. I just completed my psychotherapy training at the time. I had cancer, and needed surgery.

2 What age, phase in life did you discover your CD? The concept of the CD came with processwork when I was in my mid-30s, while also studying for my somatic psychotherapy diploma.

3 Were you able to share / discuss your NDE and CD with anyone? I didn't talk about my NDE with anyone for a while except my partner. And then I worked on it in therapy. It began to be a whole quest, finding the meaning in the NDEs. I have worked with my CD for a while, and will do so for the rest of my life. It is magical looking into the blueprint for the journey in this life.

4 Can you describe briefly (as in CR stage setting), what happened before NDE, during NDE, and after your return from NDE into consensus reality? I had surgery because of my cancer. I made my will prior to it, as there was a possibility of death. I prepared myself more psychologically. I had a dream the night before which told me that "all will be fine." Also prior to my surgery, I had a horrible exam experience. During the NDE, the most outstanding part was the encounter with my spirit friend and my dead cat. After the surgery, when I came back into my body, there was a lot of calamity happening, as crisis unfolded. I also was allergic to pain relief at the time.

5 What effect / meaning / integration, if at all, has your NDE had in your life (physical, psychological, spiritual, social, emotional or any other)? The whole concept of

success changed for me, as in money, clients, and teaching jobs. I found myself not looking out so much anymore. The NDE made me realize that I was spiritually poor. I was a different person after my NDE. It made me treasure my body. Also began to build up in my spirituality. Socially, I became more of an introvert, stopped being a party animal. Emotionally, I began to highly value silence and stillness.

6 *What use / value if any, has your NDE had for you?* Everyday life is in a new frame. I am not afraid of death / dying anymore.

7 *What use / value if any, has your CD had for you?* My CD is a doorway and blueprint for my soul's journey. I use it a lot in life and professionally. It is a baseline to create a template for oneself. The CD shows basic dynamics in life to work with.

8 *Have you noticed any change/s in your life after your NDE? If so, can you briefly describe them? This question might tie in with NDE integration.* There is something pressed upon me that I really need to use or share, or is it just to wake me up as one little person on the planet? I think it helped me to find actually, in connection with the spirit or the divine as it's totally unique, and I don't need to join a spiritual or religious group to have a legitimate real connection. I kind of knew that before but it was in an arrogant way. The NDE helped me to see just very quietly and deeply, that this was as important as breathing. I am sure many people are saying similar things.

Interview Data From Participant 1

CS. When you were out of your body, you said that your hearing was very present, your vision was present, you could see everything but you didn't feel your body.

P1. I wasn't in my body. There was clearly nothing to me. But I could see my cat and Mere. They had bodies. But I wasn't really aware, that I didn't have a body until I thought about it later. But I was present. I was me. I was sentient, I was there.

CS. Within those feelings you had out of the body, was that different than when you were in the body? Did you have any other sensations? You said you did see the spirits nearby. How would you describe the way you felt / perceived all that went on? How was it for you?

P1. Oh, this is a wonderful question. [Long pause with deep feelings] It was like being in this most amazing place. There was this endless field of love and compassion. It was like being in a place where, whatever you do or don't do is fine. And in a place where, there seems to be no sense of hard lines. You know, looking back intellectually I can see, oh, that was an out of body experience, I was between life and death, but in that experience there is no sense of that whatsoever. Yes, I am looking down at my body, but it's dispassionate, it sounds strange, but actually there is a warmth, but it's a dispassionate warmth. I was absolutely not surprised, that my cat and Mere were there. A kind of endless field or atmosphere of lovingness and compassion, actually beyond any polarities we might say now. Yes, it was very nice and I can see why people don't want to come back. That wasn't a question for me. I'm thinking now about it all, that once I got the message from my Mere, that she will be there when I die, to help me over to wherever I am going, which I had a sense of a river. I didn't see white or have a tunnel experience. It was this definitely delicious feeling.

After this NDE, I was in a plane with a very close friend, when suddenly the plane dropped down. We were told that the plane was confronted with another plane, being on the

same flight path, and they had to drop immediately. Had no fear what so ever, and was able to remain unbelievably calm. I knew things were going to be alright!

CS. How would you link your NDE to your CD, if at all (literally or metaphorically, energy wise)?

P1. That's a brilliant question. I think for me, I understand the bones of my childhood dream are about, that I can recreate a new life, a new me. Whether as I create a new meaning in my life, or a radically change my direction in my life. A number of times in my life, I have taken a left or right angle turn, and at different times, I have focused on the different parts of my CD (the paint, the roller). Like in the beginning when I started working on my CD, I felt a little oppressed, like cleaning other people's mess, and at the time, which was the time when I came to this community, I really did feel that way. So in the past, when I worked on my CD, I also worked a lot in my CR life as a therapist and activist, and found myself working in particular around difficult subjects and abuse, that I have encountered myself as a child and adult.

CS. Well, how do the NDE and CD link now?

P1. Actually, I don't believe so much in endings any more. Well, there are endings, but they are not the end. That opens up the whole question: what is life? What does it mean to be alive? And what is death? What does it mean to be dead? Just look around, actually there are quite a few people in a body who are living like they are dead.

CS. So perhaps, if we would be living more in our childhood dream, and be more aware around us, and perhaps more curious, that could also be of more help to become more alive and whole while we are alive?

P1. Yes, that actually makes me also more holistic, because the beginning of birth and death of the physical body no longer are the measures of aliveness for me. I am actually not any more afraid of dying, but I am afraid of how I am dying. Death is no longer a passive backdoor when shit hits the fan. That is not acceptable anymore.

Participant 2 Questionnaire Responses

1 What age and phase in life were you, when NDE occurred? Around 5 or 6-years-old.

2 What age, phase in life did you discover your CD? Though the dream (nightmare) occurred with some frequency between ages 5-7, I did not discover and begin the work with the dream until I was an adult— about 7 years ago in my mid-50s. My childhood memory came to me in my early 50s as a sense (proprioceptive) memory via EMDR.

3 Were you able to share / discuss your NDE and CD with anyone? No, not at the time they occurred.

4 Can you describe briefly (as in CR stage setting), what happened before NDE, during NDE, and after your return from NDE into consensus reality? (See above report of NDE.)

5 What effect / meaning / integration, if at all, has your NDE had in your life (physical, psychological, spiritual, social, emotional or any other)? I believe it set the stage and made for an easier path for out of body experiences I had later in life and set me on a path toward a more spiritual orientation in life. On an unconscious level it gave me a feeling of being held in some way when I felt I didn't fit in or experienced other very difficult experiences. When I began working with this material more consciously and then retrieved my early childhood memory, I felt a deep sense of resonance between them. This began to

unfold and deepen the mythic dimensions of my life. It further ignited a passion in me to learn and develop tools for myself and to help others interested in going deeper into their spiritual and psychological core.

6 *What use / value if any, has your NDE had for you?* It's given me direct knowledge that consensus reality and physical experience is only one dimension of awareness. I know that we also have other frequencies of knowing that are entwined with our regular consciousness and we can tap into them to enrich our experience of life. I have become comfortable with exploring these subtler dimensions of the personal and larger fields and helping others to do the same.

7 *What use / value if any, has your CD had for you?* Using the CD and early memory as the ground for inner work at various stages of my journey has helped me see unifying themes and feel that I have a framework within which my awareness can grow.

8 *Have you noticed any change/s in your life after your NDE? If so, can you briefly describe them? This question might tie in with NDE integration.* At the time of the NDE, no, I didn't notice anything because I didn't remember it then. In retrospect, I do feel that it was part of an awakening process to the deeper spiritual aspects of life and more importantly for me, integrating that spiritual element with CR.

Interview Data From Participant 2

CS. The following account includes an OBE. I am not sure though, if it was a NDE. Theoretically, it could be a NDE, if the prompt for the experience appeared as if in a life threatening / psychological way, that might have triggered a NDE within her night dream. I have not personally heard about this possibility, and I do not want to rule it out. It was a very significant dream-like experience that contains parts of a NDE, and has been life changing

for the experiencer. In her account, she also mentioned that the feeling of Pan's presence and the sense of "all will be fine" came to her as within her NDE. To me, it sounds like parts from her NDE are continued in the following account.

P2. There was one more thing, that I can tell you, and I don't know where you would classify it . . . in a way it's not a classic NDE, but it's the experience that I remember the most about, I mean I remember it really, really clearly. So in that way it's mine, rather than somehow these other experiences are mine too, but don't remember them as me, you know, kind of like a sense memory, yes, a memory that I remember that was so very hazy, and maybe because I was young, I don't know, but this happened when I was 13-years-old.

I remember waking up early in the morning, I was in my bedroom, and I remember coming awake and wondering, "Where am I? What's going on?" I realised that I was wrapped around the filament of the light bulb that was above my bed. Yeah, and I didn't look down to look at myself, I think I had enough of that. I didn't want to see that. But I clearly remember being, realising that I am wrapped around the light bulb. What am I doing around a light bulb?

Then in the next instant I was probably about three or four blocks away from my house, and I was up in the air, and I was looking down at a car that had crashed into a telephone pole. Next to the car was a young man. He was probably around 16-years-old, and he was just looking down at the crash. I looked inside and his body was in the car, his spirit was standing outside of the car, and he didn't know what was happening. Somehow, I knew that my role was to go up to him and tell him what happened, and just stay with him. Because he was very confused and it was almost like, that Pan had stayed with me, and said everything was going to be OK, somehow I was continuing that.

So I went down and I stood next to his, not physical body but his spirit, and I told him, “Look, you have died, and you have been in an accident,” and how I knew all of this, I don’t know. “I am here to stay with you, I know your grandmother is coming, and she will be here in just a few moments, and I am here with you until she comes.” He said, “Oh, thank you,” and he said, “I just don’t know what happened.” Then the next thing I knew, I felt another presence and I knew it was his grandmother. I said, “Oh, your grandmother is here, it’s time for you to go with her,” and I handed him over as it were to his granny, and they were gone.

It was if I was being sucked back up into my bedroom at the house, and I came back through the light bulb. I don’t know why, but I came back through the light bulb.

CS. It seems the light bulb is important?

P2. Yeah, I know the light bulb was very important, it was also warm, and warmth and light are big things in my life. I remember I woke up and said, “Wow, was that like a dream, like what kind of dream was that?” I never had a dream like that before. I didn’t have anybody to talk to about it. I mean my parents really didn’t, you know, nobody talked about things like that. I was already I thought a little strange, and I kind of didn’t want to. . . . I said, “No, I know that happened but I don’t know, what could it have been?” One or 2 days later, there was an article in the newspaper about a young man that had died. It was right, I mean, it was the CR confirmation of what had happened. So, I knew from that point, that I was somehow going to work with death and dying, or people that have crossed over.

I have in my other work, worked with people who have crossed over, and try to allay their fears and calm them, and tell them it’s going to be OK or kind of you know, soothe their confusion, tell them what to expect and that kind of thing. I think there is more of that to

come. It just hasn't been formalised yet. Just in terms, I remember a couple of years ago, I got a psychic reading, and I said to the psychic that I think I have a strong pull to work with people who were dead or dying. She said, "Yes, you will, but not for a few years. There is a lot for you to learn in that area."

It took me a long time to take in those experiences. I mean basically it took me my whole life, to take those experiences in. I think that happens a lot with people. Although I think there is more space around it now, and I think there are more people that have had NDE and who talk about it, and write about it, so it's not so hidden . . . not so strange.

It seems clear now, but not at the time, that it's certainly part of the shamanic path that I have been walking, not in the traditional way, where you are either hit by lightning or the shaman is your father or something like that, but the idea that knocks you into this traumatic experience, that's forceful, that knocks you into a relationship with the unseen world [here is the knock, that came with falling down the stairs and hitting her head on the ground]. So, I think about that, from that experience, and I think that when I work with people who are awakening to their own connection to the unseen world, the fact that I have walked that a little bit makes them . . . there is something that they actually can relate with a little bit. They can say, oh, here is someone that can understand what I am talking about, and not judge me. So it's been very helpful in that way as well.

It's now more primary to be over there, looking at the field . . . and what you can't see. I am more at home and familiar with that world, although I am also more familiar now with the mainstream world.

Connection with CD, ECM, and NDE. Our conversation continued, as P2 wondered, “Was the energy going down the stairs and being afraid as I tumbled down, a lot like the energy of the park ride?”

CS. What was so scary again in the dream? You were on your own?

P2. Well, I was on my own but it was going so fast, it was going so fast and I seemed to be out of control. That was like, I couldn’t stop it or slow it down, so the only thing I could do was to wake myself up. So, I woke myself up, and I have been waking myself up ever since. (laughter)

CS. It’s kind of going together with what you just said, about whatever you are waking up, but being in human form. Having these two things, like having those two polarities, one is the spiritual realm or the non body realm, and the other one is the body, and how they both seem to be needed, in a way.

P2. Yes, needed and also the thread of the sense that of being loved and held, and the warmth. So, you know, that was very present for me in the memory and then what ever those spirits that showed up when I fell down the stairs and the warmth that stood really out to me. I mean that was the same feeling sense and kind of the same when I was 13 when I helped this other one. I never really thought about this before, going through the coil of the light, that seemed to be a passage way that I needed to go through. Both ways, I went out through the light through the coil and then I came back through the coil and then back into the body. So, it’s some kind of threshold space for me.

CS. If I may say that going through the coil, and riding on the roller coaster, and tumbling down the stairs . . . I don’t know if you see it that way . . .

P2. Yes, I think that’s right.

CS. Have you been working on the childhood dream and your NDE also?

P2. No, I don't think I have ever worked on the NDE. I mean I worked on it in therapy and I did EMDR, which wasn't really meaning making, it was more trying to heal something that is disturbing.

P2. Telling big experiences that people have in their life I think connects them to another way of thinking about themselves and their life. I think it's important. That mythological connection I think brings you back home in a really deep way, and maybe not for everybody. I think when the blueprint comes up, the energies can move forward, and perhaps one does not need to stay stuck in a pattern for the rest of their life.

Participant 3 Questionnaire Responses

1 *What age and phase in life were you, when NDE occurred?* I was 3 when I fell into the lake. I am unusual in that besides the memory of the NDE I have quite a handful of memories from when I was very young (ages 1-3). I had a strong metacommunicator from an early age. I was about 12-13 when I fell out of the tree. At that time, I was dealing with disillusionment with the world and humanity and was just entering a period of smoking lots of pot. The big wave experience was also when I was 13-14, still in the phase mentioned above.

2 *What age, phase in life did you discover your CD?* I did not really think about my CD until I was in my early 40s when I heard about them as a "thing" via processwork.

3 *Were you able to share / discuss your NDE and CD with anyone?* I'm sure I talked with friends about my experiences when I was 12-14, but not in any psychological context. Just struck by the fact that I could have died had things gone slightly differently.

4 Can you describe briefly (as in CR stage setting), what happened before NDE, during NDE, and after your return from NDE into consensus reality? I remember very little about before or after my fall into the lake at age 3 except I have a vague image of lying on the dock after the swimmer saved me. I remember sitting on my friend's lawn after I fell out of the tree waiting for my mom to pick me up and feeling sort of happy that something big had happened to me and that I was not seriously hurt. I remember being afraid to go back in ocean after being hit by the big wave. But don't recall any details except I know I talked with my friend about how scary it was and how lucky we were.

5 What effect / meaning / integration, if at all, has your NDE had in your life (physical, psychological, spiritual, social, emotional or any other)? All of those experiences were reminders that anything can happen at any time, that death can come at any moment, or accidents can happen that can drastically change our lives. But my NDEs did not have any profound impact on me that I am aware of. They felt sort of like little rites of passage.

6 What use / value if any, has your NDE had for you? See above as to question 5.

7 What use / value if any, has your CD had for you? Working with my CD over the years has enriched my life in many ways. I love seeing how the meaning of the dream has shifted and evolved over the years. The impacts have been subtle but strong.

8 Have you noticed any change/s in your life after your NDE? If so, can you briefly describe them? This question might tie in with NDE integration. No—not aware of anything more than what I have already said.

Interview Data From Participant 3

CS. I am curious to hear that it happened twice, the drowning?

P3. Yeah, and interestingly one of my recurring dreams for years, for 30 or 40 years is of big waves coming and crashing into the land and me worrying if I would be able to escape or survive. I have had that dream a lot.

CS. Did the childhood dream happen before the drowning experience or after?

P3. I am not sure! I want to share something around my very young age. It seems I have quite a lot of early memories, being 2 or 3. But one of them around 2 years, I would go into this kind of altered state, where I would kind of get this feeling behind my nose or third eye, sort of tingly feeling, and I would see myself as sort of separate from my embodied CR self. And I would repeat over and over like trying to grasp the fact that I exist. So in my little mind, I would over and over say, "I am, I am. I am me. I am [name]. I am, here I am." You know, it was like a little trance that I would go into. It was the sense of really knowing that I was much more than just my embodied self. So, throughout my growing up years I would do that little exercise because it took me into this other perspective, I guess. This feels pretty central to who I am, as long as I can remember.

CS. Do you think it's like a memory, or had a sense that you existed before and now you are in this body? When you said your bigger self?

P3. It was a sense not necessarily about existing before in a body, but definitely that my essence would be something that was not limited to life on earth.

CS. So when you grew up, when you got older into adult life, did that shape you in anyway?

P3. Totally, yes very central. As a kid and throughout my whole life, I had some sort of natural ease I guess, with knowing and experiencing this felt connection to this bigger spirit or something that could not be affected at all by certain circumstances. So, in other

words when something was really scary or maddening or horrible happened, I still felt like “Oh, yeah, things happen, but they never can change the feeling of, wow, and feeling alive and the force inside me.” So that to me has been always with me in life. It’s been both great and I am grateful, but it also, I had to work a lot because it’s sometimes . . . I haven’t run into many people who articulate when I share that . . . I don’t hear many people who say, “Oh, yeah, that’s, I know exactly what you mean.” Most people are like, “Oh, ah, oh” So it made me feel a little weird I guess, and also afraid of seeming insensitive when terrifying, terrible things happen to people. I do and can feel empathy, but at some level I also am not . . . you know what I mean

CS. Yes, it’s not the end of the world or everything. This could be also seen as an assurance with the deeper knowing you have I am really curious also, because when you were drowning, the way you were talking about the drowning, that you can remember that you didn’t panic, and that you were more interested in the actual experience. I am wondering about it. How you describe it now and when you actually had the experience and how it is unfolding . . . but I don’t know if you are connecting this or not . . . ?

P3. Yes, I do, totally. What you just said is a strong part of my experience and has been, and I am interested in all the way things happen. I am just more interested and curious about things than being devastated by them. Not to say that I can’t experience great anger or sadness or happiness but feel underneath all that is this like sort of observer, it’s like, “Wow, that’s interesting.” When I was giving birth, I have one child, and during labour, I just kept saying all the time, “Wow, wow, wow,” because the power of the contraction, it was so painful and so intense unlike anything I have experienced before, it was just like “Wow” . . . what else can you say than just “Wow.”

In recent years, I have a friend who I sometimes facilitate workshops and retreats with, he is a Zen teacher, and he was talking about Buddhist precepts. I was kind of playfully arguing about them because I didn't like his precepts, saying, "What do you mean life is suffering? . . . No" Anyway, what my precept would be is just, "Wow" . . . so I decided to start this religion and I called it "Wowism." I think I was a Wowist from an early age.

CS. Yeah, yeah, I mean, to me, it's what a treasure that I get to know you personally. I am thinking of people who are dying or who are very sick I don't know what you do, I didn't ask you actually what kind of job you are holding or have done in the past . . . but what a treasure to be with people with wow experiences or any extreme state or altered states.

P3. Yeah, for work, I do massage and bodywork (cranio sacral) and processwork and facilitate retreats for people, and I also have been a hospice volunteer for about 10 years . . . and I love that work.

P3 also spoke of hospice visit to a dying person who decided to go with dying with dignity. On her third visit, she massaged the woman's head, and had this strong sense that her own dead mother was sitting on the bed and holding this woman's hand. It reminded her of an earlier time, where she and her mother were flying in an aeroplane and were sitting next to a woman who was petrified of flying, and her mother would hold this woman's hand for the whole flight. "So, I was just sensing that my mum would hold the woman's hand here for her next flight / trip."