



# Identity construction among exchange program participants

- How is identity constructed among exchange program participants in a context of development aid, volunteerism and poverty?

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## Summary

My main object in this thesis is to look at how participants of the Communication for Change exchange program perceive and construct their identities in a context of poverty, development aid and volunteerism. Communication for Change is a joint program by Norwegian Church Aid and Norway's YMCA/YWCA, and they claim that the participants will be challenged and changed during the exchange. In this thesis, I question whether the informants perceive their identity differently after their time in a developing country. Identity construction is a challenge for young adults, especially in our post-modern society. Their identity is influenced by social structures, such as culture and media, and many struggle to find their own voice in a time where everything and everyone's opinion is readily available. It has become very popular to go on a volunteer exchange in the global South. In recent years, organizations have created new programs in order to attract young adults, and it is interesting to look at how an exchange can influence the identity of young people.

I have done a qualitative study where I have used a semi-structured interview. The informants were strategically selected since I, due to time considerations, needed informants who were doing a four-month exchange. Through a subsequent analysis, I have made some interesting discoveries on how the identities of the informants are influenced by the exchange in a developing country. My most interesting find is that, to a large degree, the exchange does not seem to have influenced how the informants construct their identity. However, a common sentiment from the informants was that they expressed belief that they would utilize their experiences later in life, but they were unable to say to what degree. Also interesting to note is how the informants had three different motivations for going on the exchange; travel, helping others and learning. For many, the element of traveling was the most prominent, and it is therefore relevant to discuss how the exchange can be viewed as a mix of volunteering and tourism. I believe that the informants went on the exchange in order to experience a new and different part of the world as tourists, but also with a hope of being able to do something they would consider important.

Based on the interviews, I have looked at a set of theories on poverty, development aid and volunteering which I will present in this thesis. However, it is important to note that it is an empirical study first and foremost.

## **Acknowledgements**

I have long been interested in, and familiar with development work, and have been fascinated by the volunteer work done by organizations in the global South. In the fall of 2010, I traveled to Tanzania with high ambitions to work as a volunteer. I was certain that I would make a difference, but I was wrong. After the exchange I was confused about my role as a volunteer and the role that the West plays in the global South. This has affected how I have constructed my identity. This led me to apply to Religion, Society and Global Issues, which again led me to write this master thesis. I want to see how an exchange in the global South can influence the identity construction of young adults.

I want to thank Norwegian Church Aid and Norway's YMCA/YWCA, and particularly my ten informants whom have been open and generous in sharing their thoughts, opinions and experiences!

My supervisor, Kjetil Fretheim. Thank you for helping me along in the process! I admire the way you can sum up what I use two minutes explaining, into one sentence.

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I hope to contribute to a debate about the importance of exchange programs and the focus of these.

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# 1. Introduction

A vision without a task is boring.  
A task without a vision is awfully frustrating.  
A vision with a task can change the world.

James D. Wolfensohn

In our post- modern society, people, especially young people, find the question of identity to be a major existential challenge. Young people construct their own lives, making decisions either in agreement with or against society's norms. At the same time, their choices are influenced by social structures such as state and market; the latter including media, culture and industry (Edwardsen, 2009). It has become popular for young adults to take a "gap year" and work as volunteers in the global South, and both governments and industries think this form of exchange is a guaranteed way to promote cross- cultural understanding and tolerance (Hanley, 2012). Participation in such projects is connected to identity construction, and it is interesting to study what role such a year can have on young people's sense of self and identity. This thesis is based on interviews with participants of Communication for Change (CFC), an exchange program that encourages youth between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five to work for justice and peace, as well as exploring the global South. On Communication for Change's webpage you can read: "As a participant, you will learn about how the world works and meet people who work for justice and peace<sup>1</sup>" (CFC, 2014). In addition, CFC states it will challenge you as a leader and human being, and that you will take part in fighting for a just world. The program gives you access to grass root organizations and a unique insight into development works in the global South. Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), is together with Norway's YMCA/YWCA, the organizations in charge of the exchange program, and writes in their presentation of CFC that if you want to travel, this is the program for you ([www.kirkensnødhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnødhjelp.no)). Bryant L Myers, a professor of transformational development at Fuller Theological Seminary, says that: "Helping the poor is what we do"

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I have freely translated quotes from Norwegian to English. I have tried to translate them as close to the original meaning as possible.

(Myers 2011, p. 105). However, CFC is presented as a dual experience, both as helping the poor and fighting for a just world, but also to travel and learn more. Associate Professor Stephen Wearing at the University of Technology in Sydney thinks that instead of being called a volunteer, the term volunteer tourist should be applied to participants of these programs and exchanges seeing as most participants seek this dual experience; both a tourist and a volunteer.

The purpose of this thesis is to be a contribution to the understanding of how exchange program participants construct their identity while on the exchange. In order to do that, I have interviewed ten program participants before and after a four-month exchange in a country in the global South. Through a subsequent analysis, I have detected some interesting finds as to how the exchange program participants construct their identity, and I will account for three aspects that they face while on the exchange; poverty, development aid and volunteerism. The thesis has an empirical focus, where the main focus will be on the study and analysis of the interviews.

My hypothesis is that the experiences that this kind of exchange program brings the participants will have an impact on their self-perception and identity construction. My research question is the following; “How is identity constructed among exchange program participants in a context of development aid, volunteerism and poverty?”.

## **1.1 Outline of the thesis**

In the continuance of chapter 1, I will, in 1.2, account for some of the terms used in this thesis and present the definitions that I will use later. In 1.3, I will present Communication for Change, how it is structured and the organizations in charge of it. I have also included NCA’s and Norway’s YMCA/YWCA view on poverty, since that is one of the big challenges and reasons that they are present in the global South.

In chapter 2, I will present relevant theory that can give better insight and knowledge of the situation of which the informants are in. I have used a set of theories in order to get a fuller picture on the theoretical aspects that I will present. The chapter is divided into four parts, and it begins in 2.1 by tracing the thought of identity as something that is socially constructed, and that is influenced by society’s norms and structures. It also looks at the divide between “us”

and “them”, and how this can affect the process of identity construction. Chapter 2.2 then goes on to present the issue of poverty, which is the context of volunteer work and the reason for development aid. It will begin by looking at the origin of poverty and how it can be approached. The chapter then shifts to look at how poverty can be eradicated in 2.3, namely by development aid. Seeing as how volunteer workers are regarded as a form of development workers, chapter 2.4 will look at this. The main focus will be to look at whether volunteer workers should instead be coined as volunteer tourists due to the mixed expectations and wishes that they have.

Chapter 3 begins with the presentation of qualitative methods and semi-structured interviews, as this is the method applied in this thesis. I will present the considerations I have made in dealing with the material and the analysis. In chapter 4 and the following chapters, I will present the findings from the interviews. Chapter 4 is dedicated to how the informants construct their identity in light of poverty, while chapter 5 deals with development aid and chapter 6 talks about how the informants view volunteering before and after the exchange. Each of the chapters are divided into three parts, the two first dealing with the first and the second interview. The third and last part brings the discussion to how the informants have constructed their identity in light of the given topic. The 7<sup>th</sup> and final chapter, the findings from the three previous chapters will be summarized along with certain theoretical aspects from chapter 2. The aim in this chapter is to draw a conclusion for the thesis.

## **1.2 Definitions**

“Choosing a definition is not a question of a right or a wrong, but rather of how useful it is for a particular purpose and context” (Angelsen et al in Banik 2006, p.85). When stating definitions it is crucial to see them as approximate guides to reality, and not as definitive terms. The danger of using finished definitions is that they threaten to overlook the great diversity there is within the different terms (Appleby 2000, p.15).

Poverty used to be viewed as the lack of materialistic things, but is today mostly recognized as more than the absence of things (Myers 2011, p. 14). The United Nations distinguishes between two types of poverty; absolute and relative. Absolute poverty is defined as those living below \$1 a day and is the same regardless of country. It is when basic needs are not met, and economist Amartya Sen, who in 1998, won the Nobel Prize in economy for his

analysis of the problem of poverty, presents one way of defining a poverty line: “If there is starvation and hunger then, no matter what the relative picture looks like there clearly is poverty” (Sen (1983) in Banik 2006, p.12). The definition of absolute poverty is not concerned with inequality in society, the changing nature of social norms or issues concerning quality of life ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). Relative poverty is measured in relation to the society one lives in, if one cannot afford the general populations average consumption (UN 2009). Here, the poor are clearly differentiated from the non- poor with lack of opportunities and freedom. Poverty researcher, Peter Townsend, links relative poverty to inequality by looking at how it can result in people being unable to obtain and follow customary lifestyle and behavior as the rest of the society (Banik 2006, p. 12). Living in absolute poverty, or close to the absolute poverty line, also brings forth aspects of unfreedom such as limited possibilities connected to health, sanitation and education, in addition to not having money for food or drink (Fretheim 2008, p. 73). Today, it is commonly known that poverty cannot be measured by money only, but that other social aspects needs to be included; physical, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual. As an alternative to the absolute and relative definition of poverty, The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) have approached it by including three dimensions in the Human Development Index (HDI) which they find to be the most important to human development; the health of a population, its educational attainment and its material standard of living. More recently, they have also created the Human Poverty Index (HPI) which also include three variants; vulnerability to death at a relatively young age, deprivation of knowledge, and lack of decent living standards. Interestingly, this approach is developed in two forms; one for industrialized countries and one for developing countries. It also includes a fourth measure for industrialized countries; social exclusion indicated by unemployment (Allen et al 2000, p. 16).

Development aid can be viewed as an intentional effort to move away from poverty, whereas development work is the effort made to create this process. Development aid is often linked with modernization and Westernization, and is in most cases assistance given from a Western industrialized country to a developing country (Fretheim 2008, p. 28). In this thesis I will refer to development aid using the definition of official development assistance:

Official development assistance is, by *The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD), defined as: “Grants or loans [...] which are: (a) undertaken by the official sector; (b) with promotion or economic development and welfare as the

main objective; (c) at concessional financial terms [if a loan, having grant element (q.v.) of at least 25 per cent]” ([www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)).

However, I will also include a more holistic approach to development aid seeing as the development debate has changed, and is today far more complex than it was fifty years ago (Banik 2006, p. 29). Myers presents transformational development as opposed to development assistance, which in addition to financial aid, includes other aspects to development in human lives such as material, social, psychological and spiritual (Myers 2011, p. 3). When I refer to development aid, I will include human development, meaning development that: “prioritizes human well-being and aims at enlarging opportunities, freedoms and choices” (Banik 2006, p. 9). Furthermore, I will refer to aid given by both NGOs and government agencies. I use development aid as an expression for long-term aid, and not short term humanitarian relief. I use terms such as *developing country*, *the West*, *North* and *South* knowingly and well aware of the problems connected to defining terms such as these (Eriksen 2010, p. 318). However, I will use them since they are commonly used in other discussions of these topics.

Volunteerism can be viewed as the act of providing services at others for reduced or no cost.

UN defines it as:

Volunteerism is a powerful means of engaging people in tackling development challenges, and it can transform the pace and nature of development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation” ([www.unv.org](http://www.unv.org)).

A trip to a developing country has become a central aspect of the work as a volunteer, and people have varying motivations for choosing to do so. In this definition, the focus of volunteer work is that it can benefit both the volunteer and society at large. A tendency that is becoming more evident is the trend of volunteerism with blurred lines between tourism and charity work, where tourist activities are combined with volunteer work. Even though helping those in need may be the main goal, it is also about getting a greater travel experience. It can be understood as both an altruistic action, and as a unique form of tourism- a gift and merchandise. Communication for Change does not include the word *volunteer* in their presentation of the program or in their framework, but it is how most of the informants describe themselves, thus I will also use the term. However, it is relevant to discuss whether a

different term, volunteer tourist, should be applied to the participants due to the focus on both travel and altruism. I will come back to this in chapter 2.4.

Motivation can be defined as a reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way, and can be both a conscious or unconscious decision. Professor of psychology Edward Deci says that “To be motivated means *to be moved* to do something”, and it is typical to distinguish between intrinsic and extrinsic (Deci 2000, p. 54) (Fretheim 2008, p. 139). How motivated people are often depends on the action of where the motivation is directed, and the orientation of motivation looks at why people are motivated. Deci and Ryan “distinguish between different types of motivation based on different goals that give rise to an action” (Deci 2000, p. 55).

### **1.3 The organizations and Communication for Change**

Communication for Change is a collaboration between Norwegian Church Aid, Norway’s YMCA/YWCA and the FK Norway. The program starts with preparatory courses in Norway and in Kenya. Here, the participants become prepared for the year to come, they learn about global challenges and become familiar with the group they will work with the rest of the year. The preparatory courses include two camps in Norway, and a three weeks course in Kenya. As CFC participants, they are also offered to study Global Understanding 1 at the University College of Oslo and Akershus, which is included as part of the preparatory course. In September, the participants leave in pairs for one of NCA or Norway’s YMCA/YWCA partner organizations in Asia, Africa or Latin America for one semester. The informants this year were in Nicaragua, Brazil, Madagascar, Kenya and Tanzania. During the exchange, they get to participate in the organization's daily activities and projects. The participants return for the spring semester to attend Sunnmøre Folkehøgskole, where they do a lot of promotional work, information tours, leadership training and outdoor adventures around in Norway. The aim is to use the knowledge and inspiration the participants have acquired throughout the fall semester to do awareness- raising activities in Norway ([www.kfuk-kfum.no](http://www.kfuk-kfum.no)).

Norwegian Church Aid is a Christian, ecumenical diaconal organization owned by the Protestant Churches of Norway. It was established in 1947 as a response to help people in Germany and Austria after WWII. NCA has since expanded their work and is now present in over 30 countries across the world. NCA’s slogan is: “Together for a just world”, and they

work to eradicate poverty and injustice. NCA has three main working methods; emergency assistance, long-term development and advocacy. Their work is done without any intention of influencing people's religious beliefs and convictions. Norwegian Church Aid is a member of Act Alliance, which is one of the largest humanitarian alliances in the world ([www.kirkensnodhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no)). Norway's YMCA/YWCA is a Christian children and youth organization with around 19 000 members in Norway. It is part of the global YMCA and YWCA, which are the world's largest women's and youth organization. Together, the two movements are represented in 140 countries. Norway's YMCA/YWCA is a ecumenical, volunteer member organization and works in over 500 groups in Norway such as Boy Scouts and Ten Sing. The emphasis of NCA and Norway's YMCA/YWCA is on development aid, with 64.9 % of their work being aimed at long-term development aid. YMCA/YWCA and NCA do not work as missionaries or with a hope of transforming the people they meet, but instead as aid agencies with Christian values ([www.kirkensnodhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no)).

The theoretical perspectives of the poverty debate can be useful seen in conjunction with Communication for Change's representation of poverty and how the informants view poverty. The organizations affect the informant's impression of place, culture and community, as well as their view on poverty. "Poverty is violence against human dignity" ([www.kfuk-kfum-global.no](http://www.kfuk-kfum-global.no)), can be read on the web pages of YMCA/YWCA of Norway Global. YMCA/YWCA of Norway believes that the focus should be on poverty eradication, as opposed to politicians who are focused on poverty reduction. Meanwhile, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) views poverty as people lacking power to influence their situation and to access public property. NCA sees it as an important task to help the poor, and to challenge the rich and powerful to help the poor escape the unfreedom of poverty. This is what the program of Communication for Change invites the participants to be a part of ([www.kirkensnodhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no)).

## 2. Theory

In this chapter I will account for the theoretical aspect of the thesis. The chapter is divided into four parts: identity construction, poverty, development aid and volunteerism, since the purpose of the thesis is to look at how the informants view themselves in regards to, and in the context of, poverty, development aid and voluntarism. I am first going to give a brief introduction to the theory of identity construction. I will continue to study the issue that is poverty, and the solution that is development aid. Lastly, I will look at volunteerism as this has growing importance within development work.

### 2.1 Identity construction

The self is something which has a development;  
it is not initially there, at birth,  
but arises in the process of social experience and activity,  
that is, develops in the given individual  
as a result of his relations to that process  
as a whole and to other individuals within that process.

George Herbert Mead

According to the Aristotelian view on human development, people have a tendency to search for psychological growth and integration, thus viewing people as active. “Endowed with an innate striving to exercise and elaborate their interests, individuals tend naturally to seek challenges, to discover new perspectives, and to actively internalize and transform cultural practices” (Deci et al 2002, p. 3), meaning that people have to acquire their human identity and character through learning and participating in society. Identity is about people’s perception of who they are, and how they define themselves in terms of values, religion, language, customs, institutions, history and characteristics (Allen et al 2000, p. 501). This is a constant process and leads to one’s self-perception being in constant change, especially as life experience broadens. Critics of this theory assume that people do not inhabit an inner tendency or drive for growth and self-construction, and that personality is formed by “reinforcement histories and current contingencies” (Deci et al 2002, p. 4). However, the most popular and enduring theory is that of people as active, exploring people that are shaped by cultural and social conventions. These conventions are often taken for granted, so by studying and observing other cultures it is possible to learn something about ourselves (Eriksen 2010,

p. 45). People belong to groups such as families, ethnic groups, and institutions. This gives them a corporate identity, which again gives them a place in society (Hiebert 2008, p. 58). In a research done by Norwegian sociologist Stein Bråten, he suggests that people are people only when seeing themselves through others. People form their identity through reflection and by "reading" other people's feedback on who they are (Bråten in Eriksen, 2008, p. 44). "He who does not speak any foreign languages, knows nothing of his own" (Goethe in Eriksen 2008, p. 45). If this is the case, group identity is a social necessity if we are to become individuals (Eriksen 2008, p. 44).

When viewing people as socially created beings, it is also natural to look at the statuses and roles that people create in society. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Professor in Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo, says: "A status is a socially defined aspect of a person which defines a social relationship and entails certain rights and duties in relation to others" (Eriksen 2010, p. 53). A person has different statuses; sister, friend, volunteer and so on, and one is always composed of, and defined by these statuses. One can differ between ascribed and achieved statuses. Marianne Gullestad, a professor in social anthropology, has said that an overall composition of lifestyle has become a more prominent expression in the Western world. People create their identity through the telling of their lifestyle, thus being an achieved status, and an expressive identity (Gullestad 1989, p. 103). A role is the actual behavior within the limitations to different statuses; for example, people can behave differently in situations, such as volunteering and spending time with friends (Eriksen 2010, p. 54). People are, to a large degree, able to choose their actions within society, giving us a high sense of independency. However, there are often expectations related to statuses and to whom people are and should be. This leads people, especially young adults, to feel immense pressure.

Until the 1930s or 1940s, it was commonly believed that "racial differences", important genetic differences between human populations, existed. It has, however, later been shown that people have about 99,8% of human genes in common and that genetic variations are found just as much within ethnic or national groups as not, leaving "racial" variations less interesting. If we are to understand xenophobia and animosity between people, it is not enough to establish that we actually do have a lot in common. People often identify with people in the same "group", Eriksen, says that the study of race belongs to that of anthropology of power and ideology, and not to cultural variation (Eriksen 2010, p. 45-46). By belonging to a group, people will automatically differentiate between "us" and "them".

With the globalization process came the division between developed and underdeveloped countries, and the terms “us” and “them” were established in a very visible manner. Countries were placed in the two categories based on whether they were industrialized or in need of development aid. The countries that were placed in the negatively charged term underdeveloped country were separated from their cultural history and uniqueness, and all their conflicts and issues were held against the standard of the Western world (Tvedt 1990, p. 10-11). The influence of the West is obvious in many underdeveloped countries and its role as a guide and helper was established after the Second World War. Norwegian historian and researcher Terje Tvedt looks at what images of “them” that the “us” create. These images mark the self-perception of people in the West, as well as the politics (Tvedt 1990, p. 11). By being exposed to pictures of starving children, women carrying water, and war zones, the divide between “us” and “them” is being kept alive, and it continues to affect our self-perception in a globalized world.

What happens when the lines that were ones created between the West and the rest of the world are obscured and moved? Stereotypes are contributing to legitimize ethnic boundaries and strengthen group cohesion. Eriksen defines stereotypes as: “Simplistic descriptions of cultural traits in other groups which are conventionally believed to exist” (Eriksen 2010, p. 278). Stereotypes can affect people’s self- perception, as well as how people view others. However, the “us” and “them” is not as rigidly bound anymore due to various ethnic groups being present within one society and the ability for people to travel and experience other cultures: “People become aware of their culture when they stand at its boundaries: when they encounter other cultures, or when they become aware of other ways of doing things, or merely of contradictions to their own culture” (Anthony P. Cohen in Eriksen 2010, p. 275).

Is it possible to be different, but at the same time be equal? There are two answers to this; similarity or complementarity. Similarity is about erasing all differences as far as it is possible. Some development workers and volunteers choose to go “native”, trying to erase the differences that are between “us” and “them”. Are they over-identifying? Complementarity is about people complementing each other and making use of ones strengths (Eriksen 2008, p. 75). An interesting question to consider is whether we are becoming more alike or more different in today`s globalized world. It seems that as people are becoming more alike, they are trying harder to be different and stand out. This goes back to the pressure people have of

finding their unique identity, as Eriksen says that: “Globalization does not make us equal, but comparable” (Eriksen 2008, p. 83).

## 2.2 Poverty

No person, I think, ever saw a herd of buffalo,  
of which a few were fat and the great majority lean.

No person ever saw a flock of birds,  
of which two or three were swimming in grease,  
and the others all skin and bone.

Henry George, American political economist (1839-1897)

Money is to the West what kinship is to the Rest.

Marshall D. Sahlins

Poverty “is a degrading situation and possibly life threatening” (Fretheim 2008, p. 73), and it continues to be a characteristic feature today (Pradip Thomas in Serveas 2008, p. 33). The French declaration from 1789 stated that all men are born equal, valid at all times and in every place. At the same time, Western economy grew and created a divide between the poor and the new wealthy middle class, as well as the upper class. Despite decades of development work, poverty is ever more present and growing differences can be detected as 1.2 billion people continue to live in extreme poverty ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)) (Pradip Thomas in Servaes 2008, p. 33). Eradicating poverty and ensuring human development are international goals, as can be seen in the Millennium Development Goals that were set by the UN to reduce poverty and targets to eradicate all extreme poverty and hunger. In the following I will first look at the origin of poverty before I continue by looking at different perspectives on what poverty is.

### 2.2.1 Origin of poverty

Why is there so much poverty in the world? In order to fight poverty it is important to look at the origin of it ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)). In *In Search of Respect*, Bourgois presents the core of the debate on poverty origin. The theoretical debate consists of two contrasting perspectives that

he designates as structure versus agency. A structuralist perspective sees poverty as a consequence of social structures. Historical and economic factors such as oppression, racism, nationalization and market liberalism, is in a structural perspective, seen as overarching structures that are forced on the individual. Angelsen and Wunder present what they call “two major historical standpoints in the discussion about the causes of poverty” (Angelsen et al in Banik 2006, p. 79). The first being the “developmentalist position”, meaning poverty as a lack of economic advancement. The second standpoint is “class-based” which views poverty as uneven development and exploitation. However, there can be a problem of contextualizing the subject as a passive victim of historic changes. It can be argued that the individual must be seen as an active agent who makes his own choices, while at the same time the action must be viewed in light of structural changes (Bourgois, 2003). Associate Professor Kjetil Fretheim presents the issue of time as he talks about two aspects that can cause poverty. Fretheim argues that the related past and future is significant for how poverty is evaluated. When the past is taken into account it is relevant to look at whether or not poverty could have been evaded, either by a person’s own, or other peoples, actions. When considering the future, it is also important to assess whether it is a possibility to escape from the life of poverty (Fretheim 2008, p. 73-74). This can be linked to power and choice that people have.

Pradip Thomas has suggested that there are four approaches to understanding what poverty is, the first approach being poverty as a mindset that blames the poor for the situation they are in. The second approach is poverty as lack of resources meaning that people remain poor due to the lack of access to resources, usually being measured in economic or material terms. This is the most common approach today, and the answer to poverty with this approach is by food supplies, information and creation of employment opportunities and so on. This model makes the poor beneficiaries of the government, and they are “not given opportunities to use these resources in a meaningful manner and over a long term”. The third approach to poverty is that of poverty as lack of access. This approach focuses on people’s lack of knowledge or information about their rights. An important aspect of this approach is transparency and access to information and it suggests that people have to be aware of their rights. The fourth and last approach is lack of Human Rights. (Pradip Thomas in Servaes 2008, p. 33-37).

### 2.2.2 Perspectives on poverty

Poverty has often, as mentioned in the introduction, been defined as both absolute and relative. However, there are difficulties with these definitions, and therefore United Nations Development Program (UNDP) “took the initiative of proposing the use of supplementary social indicators aimed at better capturing crucial elements of poverty” (Banik 2006, p. 14), producing the Human Development Index (HDI). Together with the more recent Human Poverty Index (HPI), these indicators look at several variables. As a consequence, there is a lot of literature on the topic. In the acclaimed study, *Voices of the Poor*, the World Bank asked over forty thousand poor people in more than fifty countries what poverty is. The study says that poverty and the identity of poor can be divided into five dimensions. First, poverty is lack of food, both in terms of quality and quantity. Second, poverty has to do with lack of proper infrastructure and water. Third, poverty is about physiological dimensions such as powerlessness, shame and dependency. Fourth, the poor are worried about the actual opportunities education can give them. Fifth, and lastly, the poor emphasize how managing assets such as physical, human, social and environmental are more crucial than control (Banik 2006, p. 18). Robert Chambers, a development practitioner at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, talks about poverty as entanglement. He uses the household as a departure point and sees the poor as “being entangled in a “cluster of disadvantage”” (Myers 2011, p. 115). The dimensions that he mentions are material poverty, physical poverty, isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness and spiritual poverty.

Poverty is a complex concept, with inequality as one of the implications (Banik 2006, p. 11). The divide between people of economic wealth and those without it is obvious. When combining the income of the world’s five hundred richest, it is more than that of the world’s 416 million poorest inhabitants (Banik 2006, p. 10). Inequality can define the identity of people, both poor and non-poor. “Loss of hope, opportunity, and recognition mar the identity of the poor”. It is therefore important for the poor to be viewed as active agents able to influence their own life. The non-poor “they too suffer from a marred sense of identity and vocation, only in a different way than the poor experience” (Myers 2011, p. 15). Therefore it can be said that poverty can be viewed and defined based on people’s experiences, worldview and education. Bryant L. Myers also makes it a point to remember that the group referred to as poor are equal human beings, thus not allowing people to view them as helpless people that can be looked down on (Myers 2011, p. 105).

## 2.3 Development aid

Take up the White Man's burden  
Send forth the best ye breed  
Go, bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
To wait, in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild  
Your new-caught sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.

Rudyard Kipling, *White Man's Burden*, February 1899

Development and development aid are current topics today, and Tvedt calls development aid one of the most important phenomena in recent Norwegian history, as can be seen in the growing funds given to development aid (Tvedt 2009, p. 11). The inequality that became visible after 1789 and the industrial revolution, and still is today, is the context of development aid, and a growing number of organizations join the world of development aid with differing views on how to solve the problems (Tvedt 1990, p. 16). The belief is that development aid can help improve the conditions of the poor, and there is a moral imperative that something should be done (Banik 2006, p. 11) (Fretheim 2008, p. 19/71). Banik writes that "the immediate challenge is to contextualize the fight against poverty as a matter of global justice" (Banik 2006, p. 20). Due to the increased knowledge of the economic and social status in the world, the dilemma of knowing and acting is ever more present (Chambers 1997, p. 1). But what has been done so far, and what do we have to do in the future? In the following, I will look at the history of development aid, and current approaches to it. I will also look at Norwegian development aid.

### 2.3.1 History of development aid

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century there was little change in the wealth, health and population of the world. However, the industrialization process changed the trajectory of the economic history of the world, and the second half of the twentieth century has been called the era of development, tracing back to after the Second World War. In his inaugural speech in 1949, American President Harry Truman addressed the issue of development. He was certain that in order to create economic development and growth in underdeveloped countries,

and to save them from cultural and technical backwardness, the solution would be a rapid scientific- and industrial advancement (Haynes 2007, p. 2). The term development was not unfamiliar; however, it received a new meaning. Two thirds of the world was underdeveloped, and development meant escaping this. This left only a few of the countries in the West, the US in particular, as developed hegemonies that were setting the standards for the rest of the world (Allen 1992, p. 5). The development of the world was imbalanced, undoubtedly more beneficial for the West. The goal became to eradicate poverty in the global South, and the solution was development aid. The idea of the world as something that could be changed grew rapidly. The 1950s and 60s were called the golden years for state led development work. Western countries adopted the role of donors, determining what the former colonies, now the recipients, needed (Tolo 2011, p. 9). This was the mainstream thinking after the Second World War, and continued to be so until the 1990s when other realms and aspects, such as social development, were included into the definition of development (Myers 2011, p. 12).

As the twenty-first century emerged, a multi-dimensional view began shaping development thinking. It was no longer only the slow development of other countries that defined the goals of development work, but new issues that were brought forth, such as gender relations and the environment (Allen 2000, p. 9). Now, there is a greater focus on the holistic picture of human lives, and there has been a move from donor-recipient to partnerships, as well as a move from economical to human development, with the HDI considering conditions of life, rather than just economic factors.

Non- governmental organizations (NGO) have long existed, but since the 1980s there has been a continued growth in NGOs. Today between a fourth and a fifth of all development aid goes through these organizations, and they can be seen as significant actors in the development field together with governments (Fowler in Banik 2006, p. 251). NGOs organize their work differently than the state, and bring forth positive change by being smaller and more local than government organizations. In addition, NGOs often have better knowledge of the local context, and are often more flexible. However, it is valid to question the effect of NGOs compared to government organizations. Even though many NGOs have sought to keep a distance to governments to limit interdependence and tension, others seek to cooperate and see this as necessary for progress; the latter often being the case in Norway, which has led to it being referred to as “the Norwegian model” (Fretheim 2008, p. 94).

With the modern worldview came the separation of the spiritual and material realms, and religion was for a long time seen as a separate domain and was not included in development thinking (Haynes 2007, p. 54,68). “While there are various views regarding the best ways of achieving human development, there is an emerging consensus that religion’s developmental potential has long been under-utilized” (Haynes 2007, p. 7). Despite earlier convictions that religion was best kept separate from development, Huntington says that “[...] religion is central, perhaps *the* central, force that motivates and mobilizes people” (Huntington in Haynes 2007, p. 27). Haynes believes that the inclusion of religion can give “life metaphysical meaning and hope of well- being” (Haynes 2007, p. 62). Other thinkers, such as Amartya Sen, talk about how religious adherence can play an important role in shaping people’s identity and contribute to their well-being. This points back to the discoveries made in the study two of the dimensions in *Voices of the Poor*; the transcendent and religious aspect of life was emphasized as crucial for people’s well- being (Haynes 2007, p. 55). From the early 2000s, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development encouraged, the involvement of both secular and religious NGOs in development work. In 2005, Kathrine Marshall, a Senior World Bank figure, said NGOs and faith-based organizations are recognized by the Bank to have the same key concerns. The first move to human development is the alleviation of poverty, and Kathrine Marshall believes that is the main concern for both parties.

### 2.3.2 Norwegian Development Aid

“Norway is a “world champion” in development aid”, Tvedt has said (Tvedt 1990, p. 10). Norway is one of the most generous distributors of wealth when it comes to aid, and has been active in development aid for more than 50 years (Fretheim 2008, p.89). As part of the Millennium Project, The United Nations targets rich countries to commit 0.7% of their gross national product (GNP) as aid to poor countries ([www.unmilleniumproject.org](http://www.unmilleniumproject.org)). Even though many countries committed to the 0.7% target, Norway was in 2013 one out of only five countries that met the required amount, and is viewed as a generous donor among OECD countries (Fretheim 2008, p. 20) ([www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)). In 2013, Norway gave 32.8 billion Norwegian Kroners in development aid and emergency aid, and Norwegian organizations are present in over one hundred countries dealing with close to ten thousand different projects ([www.norad.no](http://www.norad.no)) (Tvedt 2006, p. 17). Former prime minister of Norway, Kjell Magne

Bondevik, said in 2000 that Norway has to aim to be a nation of peace and solidarity, and he emphasized that Norway should be proud to be viewed as a nation of charity and humanitarian work (Tvedt 2006, p. 17). Norwegian Development Aid is to a large degree popular among Norwegians, and also receives support from most political actors (Fretheim 2008, p. 95). However, it has been, and continues to be, a relevant topic that evokes strong opinions both on political and non-political arenas. The relevance of Norwegian aid and interference is discussed, as well as what Norway's approach to aid should be. Along with general approaches to development, I will discuss this in the following paragraph.

### *2.3.3 Various approaches to development work*

Helping other nations successfully overcome poverty is a big challenge, as evidenced by a number of attempts that have tried and failed (Calderisi 2007, p. 155). "Dictatorship and a defiance of economics have set Africa apart, but the consequences were obscured by decades of Western generosity" (Calderisi 2007, p. 153). People in the field of development aid have been skeptic to various forms of aid, and have questioned the role the West should have in development work in the global South: "Conservatives suggested that countries needed to find their own ways to prosperity and that outside help would distort priorities, discourage domestic savings, and create dependencies" (Calderisi 2007, p.159). Further criticism has included viewing aid as a way to impose imperialism and the capitalist system in the global South (Calderisi 2007, p. 160). Past experiences have showed that development aid works best where the government in the receiving country is on the right track (Calderisi 2007, p.160). Norad and Ministry of Norway's Foreign Aid think that the solution of poverty is having a well-functioning state (Fretheim 2007, p. 50). President of Mali, Amadou Toumani Touré, asked in 2001: "Why should one help a country that does not seem willing to help itself?" (Calderisi 2007, p. 162). If people in the global South are not involved in their own development, it makes it more difficult. "Repressive governments and uneducated populations are keeping the continent mired in tradition rather than open to dynamic forces" (Calderisi 2007, p.170). However, there are studies saying that people in the global South wish to be involved in the process of development work: "The rest of the world can contribute to liberating Africa. But Africans must take the most important steps" (Calderisi 2007, p.229). Communication as a key aspect, and an established process is well known, and Jan Servaes says: "Development programs cannot produce change without an ongoing, culturally and

socially relevant communication dialogue among development providers and clientele, and within the recipient group itself” (Servaes 2008, p.15). There are two crucial factors that often determine whether development projects are successful or not: communication and people’s involvement (Servaes 2008, p.27). If development happens outside the framework of intercultural communication, the likeliness of failure becomes bigger (Tolo 2011, p.9). By including “recipients” in the planning and execution of projects, as well as gaining their understanding, it ensures the crucial acceptance of the participating cultures.

Individuals in the global South have risen to the challenges they are confronted with, but their governments have not, and what is worse is how people’s talents have not been given a chance to prosper because of this (Calderisi 2007, p. 224). The approaches of development aid have to be changed due to previous ineffectiveness (Calderisi 2007, p. 163).

There are certain truisms such as “There have always been rich and poor” or “You can’t change human nature” that are used to explain the deep differences between people, socially and economically (Chambers 1997, p. 2). Norway, as well as many other countries, has made great efforts in development work to erase the differences that are present in today’s society, and so it is important to not trivialize the importance development aid has had since the 1960s; however, the world continues to be a place of inequality and it is crucial to think ahead to the future. The divide between nations and people seem to become greater and the challenges that we face today are severe. Why, after decades of working towards development, is poverty not yet eradicated? It is a valid question to ask who development aid is benefitting, the recipients or the donor? (Fretheim 2008, p. 87). Politicians, governments, and international organizations have different intentions and motives for doing development aid. It is a known fact that many think of Norwegian development aid to be largely governed humanitarian or moral motives compared to other countries (Fretheim 2008, p. 96). However, Norwegian Secretary of State, Børge Brende, has said that the intentions and motives are unimportant to focus on, and would rather focus on the results that are achieved. His focus is on education, and thinks that development is dependent on it. In addition, Brende wants to have a holistic foreign policy that also prioritizes trade, investments and work places: “Aid is not sustainable, but it can facilitate private investment, which will provide far greater value in a country” ([www.stortinget.no](http://www.stortinget.no)). The debate on intentions versus results of development aid, has led many to think that good intentions lead to negative results. A relevant discussion could, on the other hand, be whether there is capacity within development aid to utilize

actions that transform good intentions into good results (Fretheim 2007, p. 63). The intentions should be questioned, not overlooked. Former secretary general of NCA, Atle Sommerfeldt, finds he is skeptical to whether lack of reflection on development aid and its power can be blamed on good intentions (Fretheim 2007, p. 62).

“Foreign aid is an instrument of foreign policy” (Fretheim 2008, p. 79). Development aid is an important political and economic factor, and it has been critiqued for being self-serving. Development aid is often referred to as charity implying an asymmetrical relationship, in danger of posing as a way to cover up self-interests.

## **2.4 Volunteer work**

Be the change that you want to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

We are the world, we are the children.  
We are the ones who make a brighter day.  
So let's start giving.

Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie (USA for Africa)

As the world becomes more globalized, people are also becoming more independent. Individualism has become a trademark for the post-modern society, where people seek freedom from “universalism, totalism, altruism, traditionalism and socialism” (Renaut (1997) in Habermann 2007, p. 23). This has led to the question of whether people, especially young people, are adhering to the principle of “me first”, and a worry that the tie between the individual and society is weakened. However, there are empirical studies done that shows that young people today reflect more on moral issues than earlier, and there is also a growing number of organizations and people that work towards the field of development aid as volunteers (Habermann 2007, p. 23). Volunteering is not a new phenomenon, however, it has changed considerably over the past century as it is constantly forced to adapt to people's needs. Volunteering used to be directed at providing development aid, where altruism was a central motive. Since the 1990s there has been a growth in volunteer tourism, coined voluntourism, which is, similar to volunteerism, focused on altruistic actions, but combined

with the aspect of travel in the global South (Novelli 2005, p. 184). Associate Professor Stephen Wearing defines it as: “Those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing 2001, p. 1). Being a voluntourist is viewed as beneficial for the recipients, as well as the volunteer (TRAM 2008, p. 8). In the following, I will look at motivations for volunteer work and how being a volunteer is a border phenomenon between tourism and voluntarism. However, I will first look at the importance of being aware of the role and position you have as a volunteer before going on an exchange.

“Who are you?” This is an important question to ask, especially as a development worker or volunteer. “Every perspective creates its own pictures of the world” (Tvedt 1990, p. 9), and it is important to be aware of these understandings of reality so that it will not be a destructive force when working abroad. Robert Chambers mentions four areas of particular concern; conditioning, dominance, distance and denial. The first aspect is conditioning. It is tempting for volunteers and development workers to want to bring well- functioning areas of their own culture into other cultures. The second aspect that Chambers presents is dominance. Here, he discusses how cultures and individuals have a desire to be the dominant part. The third aspect is distance; Chambers points to the fact that many development workers operate from a distance, both geographically and psychologically. Volunteers relate to this differently, some creating such a distance between themselves and the locals, either intentionally or not, while some go “native”. The fourth and last aspect is denial: “When the real world of the poor conflicts with who we are or how we are trained or what we believe, the reaction is too often denial” (Chambers in Myers 2011, p. 107).

### 2.4.1 Motivation

Let us remember that the main purpose of American aid is not to help other nations  
but to help ourselves.

President Richard Nixon, 1968

As a contrast to development workers who are professional and paid, volunteers are often unpaid (Fretheim 2008, p. 33). The motivation volunteers have for giving of their time in a world where the term “time is money” is well established, is an interesting aspect to study (TRAM 2008, p. 32). Volunteers present a range of motivations; altruism, travel/adventure, personal growth and culture exchange/learning. Two motivations occur repeatedly in literature concerning both volunteers and volunteer tourists; altruism and travel/adventure (Wearing 2001, p. 70) (Raymond 2007 in TRAM 2008, p. 32). The first being emphasized as:

Participants in (volunteer tourism) are believed to be motivated by a sense of altruism. They wish to undertake a holiday with a difference which provides them with an opportunity for personal development, self-discovery and the chance to re-evaluate personal values, as well as to make a difference in the world and put something back into the natural or social environment (Coghlan 2006 in TRAM 2008, p. 33).

There is often a tension between self-serving and altruistic motivations, and Tvedt looks at the dual role that a volunteer often can have as both the “good Samaritan” helping the poor without getting anything in return, and also exercising power on the behalf of a powerful system, “by a domineering world view, and by a conquering civilization” (Tvedt 2006, p. 21). However, whether or not the volunteers have self-serving motives, it is important to consider whether volunteers view themselves as tourists. In the study done by Tourism Research and Marketing (TRAM 2008) there are empirical finds suggesting that volunteers are: “twice as likely as other tourists to reject the traditional tourist labels”, because they consider themselves more culturally and environmentally aware (TRAM 2008, p. 10) (Lorentzen 2000, p. 124).

#### *2.4.2 Voluntarism as a boundary phenomenon between aid and tourism*

Through Communication for Change, the participants will be able to partake in fighting for an unjust world and travel. Along with how the program presents itself and the participants' motivation for the exchange, it is interesting to study how the participants can be viewed as volunteer tourists, a middle ground between volunteers and regular tourists. The belief has been that international tourism among young people can promote tolerance, and contribute to the development of global citizenship. Mark Twain stated that: “[t]ravel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness” (Twain in Hanley et al 2012, p. 361-378). Even though some critics have been concerned with the dissatisfaction in host countries by having tourists there, volunteer tourism as a form of ethical tourism, is growing in popularity and has been presented in the literature as a form of alternative tourism that creates the kinds of meetings and understandings that encourage reaching mutual goals and respect (Wearing 2001). Many people think that it is important for future peace, cultural awareness and global understanding that people, especially young people, spend time abroad. However, new research suggests that it may be doing more harm than good in developing countries. Poorly arranged exchange programs and gap years are at risk of becoming a new form of colonialism (Stewart, 2014). Some authors worry about the inappropriate power relationship that this form of volunteerism can have, where the volunteer has more power than the host. Many volunteers think that they can contribute with their knowledge and believe that it is their responsibility to fix the lives and communities of people in the global South. Volunteers might have good intentions, but lack humility and knowledge which make them incapable to understand the culture and language of the host country. In addition, they might be unaware of what method of aid has been tried in the past, and forget that many locals have the required skills to help their communities. Others feel that the focus on volunteers having the right skills is not as important as having the right attitude, which can be described by willingness to learn, listen and challenge some of your assumptions. Others think that the aspect of self-development is what should be the focus and that if voluntourists are able to improve themselves that is what is of most importance ([www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au)). Sin (2009) argues that volunteer tourists are mainly motivated by the aspect of travel and other aspects related to the “self”, than being able to contribute (Sin 2009 in Burns 2012, p. 245).

Has welfare and globalization processes led to volunteer- and charity work becoming too commercialized? It has become a unique item on the tourist market and is one of the fastest

growing areas of the tourism industry, being an alternative to other tourist activities. This has led to a tougher fight between organizations in networking and marketing in order to enlist volunteers. The organizations are responsible for how they market the voluntary exchange, and to which degree the exchange has a tourist aspect. Many of the volunteer programs require their participants to pay a program fee. Communication for Change is no exception, and my impression is that they are selling a product and are, to some degree, using tourism to attract participants. The participants have certain expectations to the program, which can be characterized as a typical feature of the Western market perspective, one pays for a commodity and one expects good quality. Can voluntourism be called a commodity?

The competition to recruit participants to volunteer programs stems from an increased focus- and need for self-realization, stemming from better economy in many countries. Stephen Wearing has said that one reason why people travel is as a means to self-develop with gaining experiences that affects a person's values and impact their sense of identity (Wearing 2001, p. 87). It is a way for individuals to broaden their mind, to come away from the experience enriched in some ways, and to have new and different skills and understanding (Wearing 2001, p. 8). By being a volunteer tourist, people get to experience both traditional tourism, and a more authentic form of tourism, and they get access to the local sphere through community work. The fact that it is voluntary amplifies the altruistic and compassionate side of the action, and as volunteerism often is associated with relief efforts and development work in the global south, the title is given a heroic character.

Wearing describes voluntourism as sustainable tourism, and as an alternative to mass tourism. He sees it as a step away from the "observational" mass tourism, as it is more based on direct interaction with the locals. Wearing ascribes the role of volunteer tourists as an active, political actor that is opposed to mass tourism.

### **3. Methods**

In this chapter I will present the methods I have applied in the thesis, the choices I have made and the reasoning behind these choices. I wish to look at some of the methodological considerations related to the qualitative research method of an interview study. In this section I justify the procedure of the project and how I have proceeded during the gathering of data. Thereafter, I show how the data has been analyzed. I will present how I have ensured the validity and reliability of the project, and I will also discuss to what degree it can be generalized. Lastly, I will make some ethical reflections on the project. However, I will first look at the selection of informants.

#### **3.1 Selection**

The research question produced several criteria for the choosing of informants. They had to be part of an exchange program with focus on global challenges that would allow for two interviews. I was eager to find informants in the same age group, and at a certain point in their lives; the time between high school and university. Out of the ten informants, nine were female and one was male. In order to preserve the anonymity of the informants, they will be mentioned as “informant” and an assigned letter. In addition, I will refer to all ten informants as females. The selection of informants is not statistically representative, which was not my main emphasis. Through the interviews I was searching for their personal experiences, and not for the findings to be generalized. However, I still believe the findings to be useful, and I am hopeful that the thesis can bring further insight into the role of volunteers and how an exchange can play a role in the construction of identity (Fangen 2008, p. 16)

When learning about Communication for Change, I immediately recognized it as a potential target group seeing how the program focuses on international relations, as well as travel and adventure. I found it interesting that it was a joint program by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and Norway's YMCA/YMCU, and I wanted a Norwegian NGO because of Norway's position as a major actor in the world of development aid. Even if the informants are volunteers and not paid development workers, they still represent the organizations they travel with and they work with the projects that both organizations have in developing countries.

Initially I contacted the programs coordinator in Norway's YMCA/YWCA outlining the project, and received a positive reply. Together with the coordinator in NCA, he contacted twelve participants and informed them about who I was and my wish to interview them. After this, all contact was made directly with the informants per email or phone. Prior to the interviews I sent an email to the informants that contained a short presentation of the project, information on their rights related to their participation, as well as information about confidentiality and that the interview study was reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD)<sup>2</sup>. The informants, with the exception of two, replied favorably. One declined due to an unfounded fear of not being able to add anything to the interview process, and one declined without a reason. One of the informants participated in only the first interview, and was unable to meet after the exchange. I have, however, decided to include the first interview as she had thoughts and reflections worth commenting.

The first rounds of interviews were done in August 2013 and the second interview was in January 2014. All interviews took place at the University College of Oslo or in a conference room at a hotel in Downtown Oslo. The interviews were done over the span of a few days, seeing as the informants had a tight schedule. The average time of the interviews was forty-two minutes, the longest one hour and the shortest thirty- seven minutes. All, except for one, was held in Norwegian. The informant who spoke English preferred to do so. All the interviews were digitally recorded for later transcription. The informants were informed that they could withdraw from the interviews at any time, but due to the nature of the questions they did not sign a consent form.

After I finished data collection, I have not been in contact with the informants; however, I am under the impression that the informants appreciated the opportunity to speak with someone outside the program and reflect upon the questions asked in the interview. The American playwright, Tennessee Williams, has said that interviews have an advantage of being self-revelatory. "I must articulate my feelings and I may learn something about myself. It makes me more self-aware, [...]" (Tennessee Williams, ca 1982) (Brinkmann 2009, p. 28). When being interviewed, one goes through a form of self-disclosure, and people have to articulate ones thoughts and feelings. Therefore, an interview can be an indirect way of self-discovery

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Approved in a letter from NSD, fall 2013

(Brinkmann 2009, p. 28). Even though interviews have not always been a popular research method, response from my own interviews proved that many of the questions were ones they had not thought through and were challenged by. Many of the informants remembered their reflections around the questions from the first interview and could therefore see more clearly whether or not they had changed during their exchange. I will send the finished thesis to the coordinators of Communication for Change with a special invitation to read it.

The participants are active young adults. At the time of the first interview all, except for one eighteen year old, were nineteen years old. The informants have attended general studies in upper secondary education, and all of them were involved in sport-, church-, or political activities. All the participants have travelled quite a lot, and a majority has been to a development country in the global South prior to the exchange. Around half of the informants were Christian, but they all felt confident in standing behind the religious profiles of the organizations they travelled with.

### **3.2 Qualitative research**

In social scientific research, qualitative data is primarily based on text, sound and picture, and it emphasizes the interpretation of this material (Johannesen et al 2010, p. 99). In qualitative research, the spread, scope and frequency of the phenomena is not the most important aspect in the research. It is rather a focus to go more in depth and to look at the content and origin of a phenomena, as well as looking at the meaning the phenomena has for the informants and the society (Fangen 2010, p. 12). In order to analyze how the informants viewed their identity and their role as volunteers in a development country before and after the exchange, I will draw on the main material which is two semi- structured interviews.

#### *3.2.1 Interview*

An interview is a conversation with a certain structure and purpose, where knowledge is produced by interaction between interviewer and interviewee despite an asymmetrical relationship (Kvale 2009, p. 23pp). The goal of using qualitative research, and interview, is to capture the informants' perspective and their understanding of the world (Jette 2004, p. 11). Since the aim of the interviews was to understand and listen to the perspective of the informants, it was only semi-structured, which has the advantage of open questions and

follow-up questions that are not pre-determined (Fangen 2008, p. 16) (Kvale 2010, p. 53). This form puts greater demands on me as the interviewer throughout the interview, since I have to make choices about what should be further discussed and what might not be relevant information. I had prepared an interview guide; however I only used it as a point of departure, and I frequently changed the order and style of the questions. As an interviewer I was in charge, but I would attempt to have the interviewees participate in a large capacity. Therefore, I tried to make the interview as much as a regular conversation as possible. I picked up themes they themselves introduced and continued to talk about them. Often these were topics that I would touch upon later in the interview. Sometimes I felt it necessary to ask more questions on the same topic, either to understand better what they were trying to say or to get more opinions on the topic.

During the interviews, I was forced to structure the questions and answers while I tried my best to be open minded, responsive and show that I was interested. In this way, I wanted to avoid the informants thinking that I had hidden restrictions, or that they consciously or unconsciously were trying to satisfy me as interviewer by answering "what they thought I wanted to hear". I tried to ask one question at a time, often formulated as open ended questions such as "How did you experience..." or "Can you tell me something about...". This way I tried to get the informants immediate- and intuitive response without me as the researcher leading them to an answer.

Being a skilled interviewer requires great knowledge of the topic, as well as an ability to steer the interview in the direction which is of most interest for the project. Before the first round of interviews, I had little time to read theory and immerse myself in the topics, so I noticed a great difference when making the second interview guide. It was much easier to see a clear structure of topics that I had by now found theory on. I had an idea of theory prior to interviewing, but it became much clearer after doing the interviews as to what theory to focus on. And so I experienced that interviews can be useful for both parts (Brinkmann 2009, p. 35). I knew that the answers from the first interview would be very different from the answers I got in the second interview, mostly because of the experience they now had. The insight to the informants' reality and the personal contact with the informants made the interviews interesting and motivating. The American professor of anthropology James P. Spradley (1933-1982) put into words what he thought was an important gateway to interviews and observation in the field: "I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to

know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them” (Spradley 1979, p. 34). Based on this quote, I feel that the informants have been my teachers as they have helped me understand the world as they see it.

### *3.2.2 Situatedness*

Ahead of collecting the data, I noted my position and pre-understanding of the topic. According to Neumann & Neumann, it is important for the researcher to be aware of his or her own position in the field to be examined (Neumann, 2012). It is impossible to be neutral or objective to what is said in an interview, and one will always be colored by prior experiences and interprets new situations in light of this. That is why a visualization of presuppositions can be important to ensure that you are not only looking for what you hope to find, but strive to be open minded, and try to understand the utterances of the informants in light of their own understanding. Personally, I have reflected extensively on the subject of identity construction in connection with development aid and voluntarism. I have gone through different stages of reflection, and I felt that at the time of the interviews I was ready to be open to the opinion of others without the influence of my personal experiences.

### *3.2.3 Transcription and translation*

Transcription means to transform, and it is the translation from speech to written language. This process makes the interviews available to analysis (Kvale 2009, p. 186). During the interviews I recorded the conversations on a digital Dictaphone, in order to concentrate fully on the informants and the dynamic of the interview. I found it to be liberating to not have to take notes. After the interviews, I transcribed the recordings fully. Kvale points to transcription being a part of the process of analysis, because of the choices that has to be made about the way to transcribe it (Kvale 2009, p. 189). Should it be transcribed exactly the way the informants perform the statements, including the incomplete sentences, sounds and pauses that might occur, or should it be condensed to highlight the purpose of the statements. I wanted to keep the statements as close to the original as possible. However, oral expressions such as *Ehh*, *På en måte* (in a way) and *liksom* (like) are left out as they are usually not a part of the written language. In written text these expressions can easily create a distance to the reader, and I have interpreted them to be of no importance for the main line of narration. I

have omitted, or corrected, grammar mistakes, repetitions etc. that would only create a further distance to the reader. When I have selected quotes from the interviews, however, I've edited further, seeing as how I have translated them into English. I have tried to do this in a way that makes the quotes natural and accurate, and easy for the reader to understand, since the reader does not know the informants' method of expressing themselves. Where I have left out parts of the quote I have indicated this by using brackets and three dots, like this [...]. Also, when a quote includes details that pose a threat to the anonymity of the informants, I also use a bracket. The reason I did not edit while transcribing was that I wanted to avoid that my interpretations influencing the original data. The editing is therefore made only to clarify meaning for the reader. By doing the transcription, I got a closer proximity to the text. Thus, I was able to reflect further on several aspects of the interviews, and I better the ensured anonymity of the informants.

### **3.3 Analyzing the research material**

As a researcher, it is important to be close and true to the empirical data. This means that one should not ascribe informants opinions they might not have, or drag their reasoning to a point that you have no right to. It is their opinion, and a researcher should not color someone's personal thoughts and feelings. At the same time, one should assume a distance that allows you to see the data with a critical eye, where one examines whether there are underlying structures or processes that affect the informants' ability or opportunity to interpret their situation. It may also be that the researcher is influenced by structures that affect the ability to make free interpretations of the informants and the field. Fangen (2010) refers to Habermas when she recommends researchers to be critical to one's own understanding and also consider one's position to the field. It is critical to be able to criticize the background of which the participants base their act on, while you strive to understand why they make the choices they do, and that they act as they do because their background, situation and environment affects them and put restrictions on them (Fangen 2010, p. 223).

The coding begins already when working on the research question and hypothesis, and continues through the whole process. When gathering data one must make decisions and refinements based on preliminary analysis. This happens more or less consciously, and it creates constraints on which data you collect. Since I was to conduct interviews twice, I had a

good opportunity to change the interview guide, but my theoretical assumptions about the research topic will affect the entire process of analysis (Kvale, 1997) (Wibeck, 2010) After both interviews I began the coding of the transcribed interviews by looking for key words and categories. I created a color pattern for the different topics. Even though I moved forth with the coding in the same way after both interviews, the experience was very different. After the first interview it was more difficult to find the different categories. For the second interview, I had had several months to read literature and narrow my focus. That made it much easier to refine the interview guide, and later to code the material (Fretheim 2008, p. 53).

### **3.4 Validity, reliability and generalizing**

Validity can often be translated with credibility; reliability can be translated with trustworthiness and generalizability with transferability. Kvale refers to these three as “a scientific holy trinity” (Kvale 1996, p. 229).

#### *3.4.1 Validity*

A key criterion in research is validity, and it deals with the selection and the gathering of data. Validity is concerned with whether the research looks at what it is supposed to or not, and aims to include all relevant data (Everett 2012, p. 135). Fangen points to the importance of asking ourselves if we, through our choice of method, can map the phenomena we wish to look at, and if the findings reflect the reality and our aim with the project (Fangen 2010, p. 238). High validity involves credibility, meaning that the research is done in a trustworthy manner. Validity also shows whether the project is acknowledgeable, meaning if the interpretation is supported by other research (Kvale 2009, p. 254). In my project I have taken several steps to secure high validity in the gathered data. I entered the interview situation by making sure that I was there to listen to what they had to say and that they should feel free to say anything they wanted to. I also feel that since I have been a volunteer myself, I recognized several of their thoughts and feelings.

### *3.4.2 Reliability*

In all research it is important to look at the quality of the data, and reliability has to do with how dependable and consistent the data is (Kvale 2009, p. 250). If the data is not reliable, it will not be possible to use it to emphasize the research question or the rest of the thesis (Everett 2012, p. 135). Reliability is whether other researchers could enter the project and make findings that would make my findings valid or invalid, based on the same interviews. In simple terms, it is whether we can trust the results or not. It is possible for others to assess the findings and the interpretations if you explain in detail how you reached those conclusions and interpretations, by showing which quotes that you have based it on, and how these can be viewed in light of the theory that has been used (Fangen 2010, p. 251) (Kvale 2009, p. 250).

Some say that reliability should be replaced with confirmability, meaning that the findings in your research should be possible to be confirmed by other literature or similar studies. Kvale points to the fact that this can then lead to results only being reliable if everyone agrees (Kvale 1997, p. 115). This again hinders the development of new and independent data, and stands the risk of reproducing prior attitudes or theoretical concepts. In my research I have found literature and studies that emphasize my findings, but I have emphasized this order: first, I have made a “discovery” in my data; thereafter I have compared this with current theory.

### *3.4.3 Generalizability*

Generalizing is about whether the results can be transferred to other situations or interviewees, and what degree of transferability they have. If a finding can result in a more general theoretical understanding of a phenomenon, a high degree of transferability exists (Fangen, 2010, p. 255). There are advantages and disadvantages to the interview as a research method. One disadvantage is that the answers given in an interview are difficult to compare because the answers are given in a specific context. The interviewer and the interviewee put their mark on the interview, and it is unlikely that the same answers would be given in a different context and in a different language (Fretheim 2008, p. 53).

#### *3.4.4 Ethical reflections*

All research dealing with people include a high sense of ethical challenges and implications. There are four topics that are often discussed in ethical guidelines for researchers, and I have taken particular regard to these; informed consent, confidentiality of the informant, consequences for the informants, and my role as a researcher (Kvale 2009, p. 86). Through my interviews I have collected and processed personal data, gaining insight into the informants' private sphere. Long before contacting the participants, I wrote the interview guide and reported the interview to the NSD. All parties that would be affected by the project were given written information about it, where I accounted for the aim and methods. I gathered written or verbal confirmation from the interviewees, and emphasized that it was voluntary to participate and that they could withdraw from the interviews at any time. This was to make sure that the interviewees didn't experience any form of pressure or coercion (Kvale 1997, p. 67).

Confidentiality in research constitutes that no personal information is released which can reveal the identity of the interviewees (Kvale 1997, p. 68). In my project it was necessary to collect their email address and phone number in order to contact them for the interviews. In addition to this I got access to a lot of information that could be traced back to the interviewees, but only by people who know the interviewees. All contact information was kept in a password secure computer.

In this chapter it has been my intention to convey how I have conducted data collection and interpretation of this. I have explained the project's validity and reliability, and it is my wish that the reader can now go into the specific results and discussion of these, with a confidence that the findings are valid and reliable.

## 4. Poverty

Poverty is a global challenge, and Communication for Change looks for participants who are eager to be part of the fighting against poverty and inequality. In this chapter, I am going to present and discuss how the informants perceive poverty before and after the exchange, and how they view their role in the duality between rich and poor. Furthermore, I will look at how they construct their identity in light of these aspects.

### 4.1 Poverty: Before

On the question of how the informants perceive poverty, I detect a trend in their answers. They agree that poverty is the lack of basic needs such as money, shelter, education, food and water; however, most of the informants also mention that poverty can be so much more, as shown by informant F's answer:

That's a lack of something [...]. There are different degrees. There is extreme poverty where you lack the basics such as food and water and a place to stay. It's also relative poverty which can be found in Norway. They have food and water and a place to stay, but they do not necessarily have what the rest of the population has [...]. It depends on how you see it. If you are satisfied with little and to live simply, you are not necessarily poor, even if you do not have everything that the others have. While it is possible to be very wealthy and still be lonely.

It is obvious that informant F knows that poverty can be defined in various ways, mentioning both relative and extreme poverty, pointing towards the UN's definition. However, the informant only briefly mentions extreme or absolute poverty shortly, before she goes on to talk about relative poverty, comparing it with what she is familiar with from Norwegian society. All prior knowledge affects how the informants perceive poverty as can be seen by how they use Norway as an example. They compare poverty in the global South with what they think of as relative poverty in Norway. This is also what informant I does:

The general perception of poverty is that one does not have enough money, but I think that there are quite a few other ways to be poor. For example, I think that many Norwegians are poor because of their inability to enjoy the small things in life [...]. However, when it comes to economical poverty, it's not something to hide that people are poorer in Africa and Asia than we are in Norway.

Important to note here, is how informant I views Norwegians as wealthy, but unable to enjoy

the small things in life, implying that people in the global South are better at that, despite being materialistically poor. Also informant D uses Norway as an example: “But poverty can also be social or mental. You see countries like Norway. In terms of materialistic things, we have the most, but we suffer from depression and loneliness. So I think that it’s too simplistic. It’s completely misleading to only think of poverty as not having food or shelter”. When including informant A’s view on poverty as linked with happiness, it leads me to think that the informants think of materialistic poverty as something with little relevance for their exchange. Are they downplaying the challenges of this type of poverty? Informant D talks about this:

When I’ve seen videos and pictures of those in [country] and [country], and they have these parties and they’re dancing and there are lots of people, and never for a second do I think that they are unhappy. Cause you know, we can’t take our standards and bring them to them, and say: “Oh, you don’t have this, oh, you can’t be happy”. Because that is completely wrong.

Informant D points to people in the global South as having different standards than the West, and that our standards should not be used as a guideline. Informant D has a preconception of the Global South: people lack materialistic standards that are usually found in the West, but they are happy. This is, based on the interviews, the general perception among the informants, and is a big contrast to how they view Norwegians. This leads the informants to express a desire to be affected by how a person in the global South lives. Informant E says: “It is the reason I am leaving, to see that people are just as well off without money”. Informant B also wishes to be influenced by the attitudes in the global South: “[...] I want to experience those who are materially poor, but rich in other ways”. Is this to escape bad conscience? Or is it to help them realize that the materialistic aspects in life are not as important as our society might lead us to think? What informant B says, agrees with the last point of view: “I am sure I will come back and think that I don’t need all the newest”. When informant B was asked to expand on this, she says:

It’s my impression, in a way. I live in a bubble. People are doing so well, especially where I am from. The worst thing that can happen is someone living in an apartment instead of a house. And that is pretty extreme, I think. I really want to, for my own sake also, to get away from it, and maybe come back and appreciate it more. Because I know that I do appreciate it, but not as much as I will when I come back from a journey where I can see what I actually have.

Informant B talks about something that I found to be typical for all the informants. They wish

to be somehow changed during the exchange. In some ways, they think of their identity as “before and after”, appearing to be certain that they will perceive themselves differently after being volunteers in the global South. Informant B talks about gaining new insight that will make her more grateful for what she has, while informant I mentions bad conscience: “[...] I feel a little guilty about it. But at the same time there is not much I can do about it. I'm very fortunate to have the opportunities that I have, and that is why I might try to do it so that others might get it a little better”. Informant I seems to want to volunteer out of a sense of responsibility and try to give some to others that she is lucky enough to have.

Some of the informants found the thought of going on the exchange to be a little scary, as informant F says:

I think that it's going to be a little scary in a way because I know there are many things that I am accustomed to here that I take for granted, and that will not be there at all. At the same time, that is one of the reasons why I chose to join this program, to be able to see it from their perspective. And I want to know how it is. So there will be a lot of challenges, but it is kind of why I'm here.

To enter a new culture and get an understanding of how the locals live is a central goal for the informants. Visiting the poor and seeing how they live, is an opportunity that not many people have. Informant H says: “It is a good thing that a person from such a rich country can see and understand how people live in a country like that, and can include these experiences in later processes that can make things better”. The informant believes that this exchange will give her an insight into poverty that can later be used to fight inequality in the world. The general trend among the informants was that they viewed the exchange as something of importance, and a form of exotic poverty that the informants can observe, and later reflect on, and tell others about in Norway.

Coming from a Western culture, the informants are worried about how they are going to be perceived in the global South. Informant C says: “Since they see that I'm white and Western, maybe they expect me to make everything okay since I have money. I am not rich, but to them I am. Perhaps they might find it a little difficult or that I might find it a bit difficult”. The informant does not consider herself rich on a Norwegian scale, and is worried that others will think of her as wealthy, and she is afraid of the expectations that follow money. At the same time, it points back to the status as volunteers and the assumed expectations to this

(Eriksen, 2010). Most of the informants have previously visited a development country, and have therefore prior experiences with poverty. However, informant D admits that the contrast between rich and poor is not something that she has reflected much on. Nonetheless, she is clear on how she wishes to be perceived: “I think a lot about that I don't want to seem arrogant or very cocky. Cause I know that many people from what they call development countries see people from the West as very stuck up and cocky and you know, we know how to do things you don't. And I really want to shatter that prejudice”. The common opinion is that they want to be seen as equals, which is also how they view themselves. Informant D says: “I think that when you strip away everything on the surface, you know we're all people, it's the same. We all want; we all have the same basic needs. We want to feel appreciated [...]”. The informant knows of the immense materialistic differences in the world, so what is interesting to note, is how she decides to focus on the similarities between people. I again find it relevant to question whether the informants are able to reflect on materialistic poverty, and the consequences poverty can have on people's sense of self and identity.

#### **4.2 Poverty: After**

After the exchange, the informants were once again asked what poverty is. In the second interview, the informants talked about the complexity of it, and their inability to really grasp what poverty means. Informant A says:

It's something that has changed a bit now. I have not really learned much about poverty. Or, I've lived under lower conditions for a while, eating beans and rice three times a day and washed my body in a bucket of rainwater. I can wash my clothes by hand and stuff like that. I know a little more about what lower standard means, but I have no idea what poverty is because I have a safety net behind me so that if something were to happen I would be brought home at once. I have money on my savings account. I do not know the desperation that lies behind for many who are not able to do what they want [...]. My first encounter with poverty was trash and clutter, and I felt that it was one of the major problems. But when you get to know the culture better, you realize that this is not what the problem is for those who live under these conditions. What they want is to have the opportunity to follow their dreams. They grow up washing their clothes, which they are fine with; at least it is not a big problem. The problem, however, is that many cannot dream the way I do, and think that their dreams would be realized.

The informant is critical to what she actually knows about poverty, more so now after the exchange, due to her being from Norway. The informant, as well as the majority of people in

the West, are unable to grasp what poverty is since they will never know it themselves. Informant A realizes that she can never be quite like “them” because she is still a part of “us”. What is interesting to also note is how informant A has gone through a transformation as to how she defines poverty while on the exchange. In the beginning, she saw poverty as something that could easily be fixed by removing trash and cleaning up, but as she got to know the culture and the people she saw that the real problem was lack of options. Informant B also defined poverty as this, and felt that she was rich because of the options she has available, and not because of materialistic wealth. Amartya Sen said: “Poverty has to be measured in economic terms, such as BNP, as well as other forms. In its simplest form poverty is the lack of choice” (Tolo 2011, p.77). Informant I talks about how the lack of choice can affect people:

Poverty is very complex. [...] I also believe that if one lives in extreme poverty you have lost more than the materialistic aspects. I think you have so little self-respect that you feel worthless. I think many people fall into a dark hole and without getting out because everything feels hopeless. One does not see a light at the end of the tunnel.

Interesting to see is how the informant brings forth the self-perception of the poor. Meanwhile, several of the informants pointed out that people in the global South wants to change their own situation, thus being strong agents in a development perspective. Informant C says: “I feel that people do not choose to be poor and that they work hard to get out of it, but that it is a vicious circle”. At the same time, informant C disagrees with herself when telling stories about people she have met who live in the slum and who have said: “Yes, we are lazy and we are embarrassed about it. That's why we do not do anything about it”. In the study *Voices of the Poor*, the third dimension that is mentioned of what poverty is, is in fact psychological dimensions, such as shame (Banik, 2006).

As the informants did in the first interview, they again used Norway as an example when talking about what poverty is. The informants said that the people they met in the global South wanted more and were disappointed in their situation, but when compared to people in Norway they seemed happier. Informant C says: “I felt that those who have less are often happier and also more grateful for the things they have”. Informant E agrees and says: “I thought that was very interesting. Maybe people did not have enough food, a place to live or clothes, but they were happy with what they had anyways. People smiled just as much there”. The informant is aware that people are struggling, but chooses to focus on their happiness. In a way, I think that it was evident in the first interview that the informants had decided to focus

on how it is possible to be happy without materialistic goods, rather than how hard it is to live in extreme poverty. This is not to say that the informants were not affected by what they saw, but that it was not their main focus.

On the question of how the informants perceive themselves in the context of rich and poor, I noticed that their answers were dependent on which country they had been to. Some of the informants, such as informant D, were in a country where, as she describes it, everyone were poor: “The places we went to, I didn't see a huge difference. I would maybe see some big houses and some nice cars. But it wasn't so big. Everyone were poor, just someone a bit poorer. It sounds terrible, but it was what I saw [...]”. This led to many of the informants feeling rich as informant I talks about: “I have gained a new perspective as to what money is worth. When I am buying something, I think of how much I could have bought in [country]”. Here it is possible to detect a change from before and after, as the informants did not view themselves as rich in Norway before the exchange. Informant I now thinks that her money has more value because how much it is worth in her host country.

The vast differences between her own culture and that of the host country, led informant G to feel more distant to people in the global South:

It was really strange. They live in an entirely different way. They don't have the things that we are used to. But you quickly get used to it. At the same time, you always know it your subconscious that: “Okay, that is okay. You are only going to live like this for so and so long”. And that is a thought that is very different and foreign for them which they cannot understand. Because this is their life. This is how they have lived their entire lives.

While people in the global South do not know a different lifestyle, informant G is well aware of it and knows that after the exchange she will be going back to Norway and the materialistic comfort that brings. However, other informants experienced big contrasts internally in their host country, leading them to witness the very poorest and the richest. Informant J marks this difference as “extreme”: “[...]. You see the slum, and then in the background there are skyscrapers. Yes, I have seen it in pictures and I know that it exists, but it is different to see it yourself. And the fact that it is so obvious. I was not aware of that”. The informants were surprised by the differences they saw. They were aware of their existence before the exchange, but thought they would be more hidden or separate. Informant B, who in her first interview talked about her wish to escape the “Norwegian bubble”, was in a country where the social differences are visible and where the informant was torn between the two worlds:

We had some good friends who were really rich, so we had friends from different places. That was really cool. I felt that it was easy to recognize things when we were visiting the rich because they were used to, they had similar standards inside the houses. But it was more to just be there and realize that they have almost the same as what I have, and they are insanely rich here. And so many people have less and that is more normal. I saw that the standard of living that many people in Norway has is so high in other countries. And so the bubble came back. [...]. I felt that the culture shock was not as big because I feel that the people who were poor they kind of disappeared and then all that were left was the bubble.

The informant has become friends with poor- and rich people, and is happy to observe and participate in two different layers of society. However, it is important to note that the informant actively seeks out the familiar and safe environment that she recognizes from Norway. The informant is not successful in escaping the “Norwegian Bubble”, but she is clearly affected by the fact that normal standards in Norway are equivalent to upper class in her exchange country. This brings her to reconsider her wealth, seeing as this standard is something she takes for granted.

#### **4.3 Poverty and identity construction**

The informants chose to spend a year of their life going on an exchange to a developing country, and it is my impression that they were looking for something that would make them feel more complete. By being a part of Norwegian society, the informants have, to a large degree, the materialistic factors covered, such as education, health insurance and economical security. However, in the interviews it became apparent that the informants had a notion of people in the global South as happier and more content with life, despite being poor, something which seemed to be alluring to the informants. They expressed a wish to see whether it is possible to lead a good life without all the newest technological equipment or clothes, and they viewed the exchange as a chance to get away, get new impulses and to see other cultures. I wonder whether the informants are unable to actually reflect on the deep issues of materialistic poverty, or if they intentionally overlook it in order to not let it affect them? The informants define poverty as both absolute and relative, but it I found them to be more concerned with what these experiences mean to them and their own personal gain and benefits, rather than focusing more on absolute poverty. I believe a reason to be that they are in an age where they are making big decisions about their future; what to study, where to

study, and what they want to do with their life, and they wonder how the meeting with the global South and the poor will influence their identity construction. Many of the informants also expressed a wish for the exchange to influence them in a way that would make them appreciative of what they have in Norway. What I felt to be common for the informants was that the different standards between the West and the global South are set and not something that will change, but the differences can become smaller.

During the exchange, the informants have experienced poverty, but to varying degrees. Some have stayed in countries where “everyone” are poor, while others have been in countries where there are immense differences between the rich and the poor. Both experiences have led the informants to add to their definition of poverty, even though some of the informants expressed worry that they are unable to really understand poverty as they have not actually experienced it themselves. Prior to the exchange, the informants were eager to be portrayed as equals to people in the global South, but after the exchange most of them realize that it is unrealistic. The informants have seen that they have other opportunities, and now think of poverty as lack of options. The informants have seen how poor people are unable to choose many aspects of their lives, while they, and Norwegians in general, have unlimited choices and options in life. I believe that this experience can affect how the informants construct their identity, as they realize how different lives they lead compared to people in the global South. To some degree, I think that the distance they felt to the most of the people they met surprised them. On a different note, I did not detect much guilt for the money and security they automatically have because they are Norwegians. However, some of the informants expressed concerns as to how fast they had already fallen back into the “Norwegian bubble”. In addition, I found that the informants had a dual thinking regarding equality. They are concerned with being humble and want their role to be that of learners and observers. At the same time the informants talked about having more knowledge than people in the global South, and having a role as a teacher.

In regards to how the informants have constructed their identity in the context of poverty, my findings show that they are less changed than what Communication for Change hopes for when they ask for participants who can join in fighting inequality. The informants have throughout the exchange realized that they are leading vastly different lives than those in the global South, resulting in the inability to understand what poverty is. Therefore, it is interesting to view how the informants think to solve the issues of inequality and poverty, as

will be presented in the next chapter.

## 5. Development

In the following, I will present and discuss how the informants view development aid, before and after the exchange. I will also consider the suggestions for development aid that the informants present, and what role they believe Norway should have in development work. In addition, I will look at how the informants viewed the role people in the global South have in their own development process. In the end, I will reflect upon how development work and aid has affected the informants' construction of identity.

### 5.1 Development: Before

On the question of whether development is possible, the informants agree that it is achievable in all countries, but they are not optimistic about any changes happening in the near future. They did, however, emphasize the importance of trying. Informant D said:

I think that one person who dies of malnutrition is a person to many. The same goes for the opposite, if you are able to help one person that's good. I thought that because of Oscar Schindler. When he saved the people he saved he was just upset that he didn't save more. Trying is important. I don't know what the result is, but maybe I don't have to know, because I can't know. But trying is good either way.

Here, the informant points to the importance of intent versus result. The focus does not necessarily have to be on the results of development aid, but the intention behind the action. She emphasizes the aspect of trying and the importance of a joint effort, even if it is only by a few people. When talking further with informant D, she says this about development:

That's tricky, because we spent a three-hour lecture about what development means. And development is never a win-win situation. You can get so many consequences that are bad for some, but makes life better for someone else. So I believe in development, but you know, it's really situational. That is why I'm a huge nerd, a huge reader. I want to know things before we make a decision. You know, do this or do that. And you know how things have gone wrong, because people don't know enough about local culture or geography.

The informant stands by the importance of development, but she is also aware of the fact that it is a challenging topic and one that depends on a number of factors. Among them, she points to the importance of knowing the culture in a developing country before making any decision. This is the general trend among the informants, that it is crucial for donors to know the culture

of the recipients. The informants think of CFC as a good starting point for this, as can be seen from what informant E says: “Through CFC you get to know other cultures and you become more open”. The informants agree that the knowledge they acquire on the exchange is important for their continued work in development. Another factor that the informants bring forth is the importance of focusing on young people as the target group as development workers. Informant G says: “One should focus on the youth, because if you come to the elderly and ask: “Will it work?”, their attitude is not always so positive”. When asked why she thought this was, the informant answered:

Because it has not worked so far. We have not made it, yet. So I think it is important with an exchange program like this that you start to recruit youth early, because we are deciding how the future will be. That is why if we start with a positive attitude, people coming after us can continue with that. So it has a lot to do with attitude.

Informant G believes in building attitudes and that this is important for motivating younger people for development work. Informant I sees that things are slowly changing and that there is more interest for development aid in the global South: “[...] At least that is what I can see from young people and others around me that I initially would not think were that interested. So it is going in the right direction, but very slowly”. The increased interest in development aid can be a result of the growing number of people who travel, and the mix of travel and volunteer work in the global South that is becoming more popular. Organizations have adjusted to this trend by including the tourist aspect of the program, in order to attract more people.

### *5.1.1 Suggestions to development aid*

As previously mentioned, the informants have their doubts about development aid since it has yet to work after many years of trying. However, the informants have different suggestions as to what efficient and good development aid is. Informant G mentioned the importance of communication in the process of development aid, which is viewed as one out of two crucial factors of successful development aid (Servaes, 2008): “It is fine to build wells, but people might need other things as well. Through communication it is possible to figure out what you need the most”. This also points back to what the informants said about knowing the local culture, and how this is important in order for development aid to be successful. Informant B is certain that in order to escape poverty, education is necessary: “To teach people things is

the most important aid. Not to give them things, but that they learn how to do different things. So that they can develop their knowledge further”. Help to self- help is a known method in development aid, and one that many organizations use. The informant lays the responsibility of development on both the West and the global South, saying:

It sounds a little wrong to say we in the West, but yes. However, I think it goes both ways. I think we in the West could learn a lot from other cultures, in that we do not need as much as we have. I think that that is very important. Because we are certainly contributors to making the differences bigger. But I also think that we have knowledge that is necessary for people who have not gone to school.

Even though the informant thinks of the West as the ones with the most “book knowledge”, she is a little hesitant in making the distinction between “us” and “them”, not wanting to be viewed as the dominant part. She views the West and the global South as interrelated with a relationship that can be beneficial for both sides. Informant J, on the other hand, questions whether the West should be included in the process of development aid at all:

I think everybody knows what has to be done, but it has to be initiated. Who should do that? Are we to do everything for countries in Africa? They have to do something on their own as well. They have to make a decision, but if those in the government don’t have the societies best interests at heart, it will be difficult.

The aspect of assigning responsibilities is very interesting. Should the West interfere at all? Is it possible or desirable to stop further involvement in developing countries? Very few of the informants actually questioned the role of the West as a development actor in the global South, which I find to be interesting. There can be two explanations for this. The first being that they don’t know of another possibility than the West actually being present in the global South. The second explanation being that the informants feel that the global South would be unable to thrive and develop without the help from the West. Informant E, however, had a different point of view. She is unsure about “traditional aid”, saying: “I don’t think aid is the right way to go, necessarily. I think business, if it becomes more just. If there are other ways to help than just giving money, because they don’t always go where they should”. She believes that what has been done in development aid so far is ineffective, and that the focus should be turned to business.

Informant D talks about equal distribution as the best form of aid: “We always say that people are equal, but we don’t act. We don’t honor those words. I think that a step towards really

acting in a way that supports that statement would be in the right direction”. When I asked informant D how she believed this could change, she said: “There are many people who lead simple lives and do not have what they need, not food or water or things like that. I think that it is, that it should be at least, simple to fix if you look at the distribution of resources in the world”. Informant Ds comment about it being easy to distribute resources equally, can be an indicator as to how little the informants actually know about the field of development work. There are several factors that have to be included in development, and it is a complex issue. However, distribution is an important point in development, which can be seen by what informant B says:

A fact I once read about how much food the US throws away every day, said that it is enough to feed the whole world. You don’t think about it other than a little fun fact, but it actually is not funny. It is really serious. If you had thought about it and seen it, people would not go hungry because there are resources for there to be enough for everyone.

The fact that informant B refers to lack of resources as a “fun fact”, proves how difficult it can be for Westerners to understand what poverty entails. She also points to the importance of being physically and mentally present in the global South to better understand poverty. However, as was pointed out earlier, the informants have seen poverty, but were unable to grasp it due to their Norwegian background. This makes it interesting to look at the informant’s thoughts regarding Norway’s role in development aid.

### *5.1.2 Norway’s role in development work*

On the question of how the informants think that Norway should contribute in development aid, the first and foremost wish of the informants is that of Norway and Norwegians are good role models in the international community. As to what Norwegians have to do in order to promote development, informant B thinks that they have to work on their attitudes toward people in the global South:

They have to try to understand the differences, and realize that one cannot survive without each other. We are all people, and there is no difference between us. Except that our appearances are different, and we live in different places. But on the inside we are exactly alike. We have the same organs and the same functions. So it's no difference between us at all. It's just that some have been very fortunate when it comes to where we were born.

The informant thinks that there should not be any distinction between “us” and “them”, and that all prejudices should be erased, especially in today’s multicultural society. However, I find that the informant lacks some reflection on the deep-rooted images that are connected with factors such as the color of your skin and where people are born, and how this can mark peoples sense of self and identity. Informant B thinks that in order for people to easier accept the “others” and realize that we are not different, it is important to gain knowledge:

First of all they just have to know more. Because I think it is very easy to think that, the problems in the world that I don't contribute to them if I'm neutral. I don't have a responsibility. It's very easy to think that way. But that's not true, I think that step one is just to realize that you know every decision you make in your daily life affects someone else. It's said that we have 60 or 70 slaves working for each person in the West. So I think that step one is to just learn more about the facts you have like on a global level, and then change you know. Buy less, use less, and recycle.

The informant is eager for people to understand that their actions affect others, and that if people disclaim their responsibilities, leaving development only to governments and organizations, it will not be optimal. However, for many it is difficult to know what to do, but informant F says: “We have to start with the small things. And work up. I think that everyone can live more environmentally friendly because that is nearest to us, in a way. It is perhaps the easiest to change. Buy electrical cars, bike, and simple things like that”. This was the general trend among the informants when suggesting what concrete actions Norwegians can take. I believe this to be because of the distance they feel to other areas of concern such as hunger, famine and war. Being in Norway, those things are more difficult to relate to.

Another important element that the informants talk about is that money given development aid should not be forgotten as soon as it leaves Norway. It should be tracked in order to verify that it is spent on the intended purpose. Informant H expresses some concern: “I feel like Norway gives money without following where it ends up. Development is a process, and even if it does not always go in the right direction, it is a time consuming process. It has to be emphasized that it is a process and not a number”. There have been stories of development aid not being put to use and followed up correctly, for example wells and other equipment placed in the global South without a long-term plan and training of the locals, so they remain idle as a result of only considering the numbers, and not the whole process.

## 5.2 Development: After

On the question of how the informants had experienced development aid, they found it necessary to make a distinction between big and small development projects. Informant D says:

When I think of aid, I think of countries and the World Bank and the IMF. And those things, I didn't see any of that in [city]. But in terms of financial contribution, then yes. We were familiar with that because the [place] gets support from several sister organizations or schools. And I feel it is so important to see where the money goes. It could just disappear. You can feel so good about yourself raising 100 000 Norwegian kroner, but where does it go? In terms of aid, the person that is overseeing all the specifics you can't have a person that hasn't been to the place. It sounds like stupid in my mind. Just having someone to decide what goes where and why, and you have never been there. It needs more communication between receiver and giver.

The informant essentially talks about three different elements that she found to be relevant during her exchange. The first being the importance of knowing where development aid goes and how the money is handled. Are they in fact being used where they are supposed to? The second element that informant D brought up is how development actors should be familiar with the local culture and traditions before starting a project. The third and last element is that of communication. She thinks that people in the global South should be included in the process of development aid and be able to utter their opinion and actually be heard. Interesting to note is how all these elements were discussed by the informants in the first interview. Are they repeated because the informant wants to once again emphasize their importance, or is it because this is something that she feels has to be improved?

### 5.2.1 Suggestions to development aid

After having been in a developing country, it is interesting to see what the informants think of as good development, and what suggestions they have for continued development aid. Informant I says:

It has changed. I can see more why it is necessary [...]. At the same time, I can see both how it is helping, but also how it is not. If you had done it differently than what we do today... Because it is still a lot of corruption and more money are going out of the country than what comes in through aid. So development aid in the form of money is not the most important.

The informant sees that there is a need for development aid, but not as it is in its current form. She is critical to aid given in the shape of money, as was the general trend among the informants, more so after the exchange than before. Informant I thinks that a more effective aid should be implemented, as she has seen the complexity of the situation:

I have seen some of the challenges that we face in order to achieve development; it is on so many levels. It is both the political levels, but also lower levels all the way down to the poor. There is something on each level that has to be changed and improved in order for it to be just. So I may have seen more of the complexity in injustice and poverty.

Even though the informant does not know what the best development aid is, she realizes that development is not an easy-fix, despite what some of the informants implied in the first interview. It concerns all levels of society, bringing the informants to doubt their knowledge on the topic. Informant D says:

I don't know enough about it to state my opinion because it really depends on everything. How they measure and how they give and all this stuff. And how it is a political tool. And I think aid in itself in terms of money; I don't know enough about it to say anything. But in terms of doing work, like developmental work, I'm very critical. I think it is definitely beneficial, but to whom the most? We should check that better. So it really you have to do it on a case by case basis. You can't do the same thing everywhere.

The informant is critical of development aid as she questions who the biggest benefiter is. Is it the development workers and volunteers or is it the people in the global South? Nonetheless, informant D thinks that expanding people's choice is the right way to go:

The best type of aid is the one that expands people's options. So it's not only about who to marry but do I need to marry. Can I go to school instead? And then in terms of school; what to study. So the best kind of aid is making people more in control of their lives so they are able to improve it if they want to. That they have the options.

The aspect of options is interesting here. The informant has seen that it not a given that people can make their own decisions. Being a Norwegian, this is the element that informant D finds to be the most challenging to understand. So the informant, even if she is critical to development aid, sees that there are things that can, and should be, improved. Informant I connects peoples lack of choices with self- respect:

To help people help themselves. To get more self-respect, and think that “I can do something”. I think that many people, not struggle with, but think that they won’t be able to change things no matter what, so there is no point in doing anything with their lives. That they think: “I am from the slum and I will die in the slum”.

In order to be able to change anything, informant I believes that peoples outlook on life has to be changed first. By building up peoples self-esteem, informant I thinks that they will start to see hope, so that they fight for a better future.

In the interview before the exchange, many of the informants thought of education as important for development, but it is possible to see a change after the exchange. Informant I says: “People say that education is so important, but at the same time I think it is important to have work places when you are done in school”. Informant A agrees saying: “[...]. And one of the most important aspects that I see in development work is creating jobs. Unemployment is very high in the poor countries. It has to go down. Education is also important. And form of government”. Creating work possibilities aligns with the fourth dimension of the study done by the World Bank, where they ask the poor what they consider to be the biggest issues with poverty. The participants in the study say that the actual opportunities that education brings are important (Banik, 2008).

### *5.2.2 Who is responsible?*

The issue of who is responsible for development was raised by an informant in the interview held before the exchange. In addition to seeing what they now think of this, I will also be looking at whether the informants believe people in the global South are active in their own development process. When asked about this, informant B answers:

I feel that very few actually do that. I feel that many live the way they do, and that is how it is. There is corruption, and there is nothing to do about it. There are only a few people who know what to do. Because that is the thing, even if you want to, it is difficult to know how. I think a lot of people do not know how to make a difference so they decide to not do anything.

The informant portrays people in the global South as someone who has accepted how society is, and as passive citizens who are unable to change things. It is not their fault; it is just the way things are. Seeing as how expectations for aid to the West can influence how active

people are in their own development process, it was relevant to ask the informant how she had experienced this: “No, I wouldn’t say that because I have read of other cultures where people just sit and get a lot of development aid and think that to be the solution. But I didn’t feel that they talked about the West having to do that. I think it was more like a general powerlessness. They did not know what to do”. Wanting to change things in society, but not being able to, due to structural forces can be frustrating and lead to a feeling of powerlessness. As informant B, informant I also thinks that the feeling of not knowing what to do can stem from how society is build up:

In order for [...] to thrive, corruption has to be put an end to. I spoke with a man who lived in the slums and said that he wanted to be a politician, but he said that to be a politician be must be corrupt. His plan was to be corrupt, but as soon as he was elected President he would stop being corrupt. There is no wonder things do not work, when that it is the mindset most people have.

The person that informant I talked to has found a solution as to how he can get out of the slum and become a politician in order to influence society, albeit a wrong one seen from the perspective of the informant. The difficulty is when society is based on corruption. How can then people rise and make a change for themselves?

On the question of who is responsible for aid, Informant G says:

On the Stop Poverty tour we noticed that they have to take the biggest step, because they know what has to be done, and sometimes we felt “What can we do?”. But I don’t know their city like they do, so if you bring me your issues, fine, then I can sit down and make some suggestions, but I can’t come here, stay for one day and know what the problem is. And many people got that. Of course, they can get aid, but money won’t help if you don’t help teach them how they should be spent. But for the world to go round, the West cannot continue to live like they do. So it goes both ways.

Informant G gives the main responsibility to the receivers of aid, saying that the donors can offer expertise and money, but that the hard work has to be done by people in the global South. The informant brings forth the aspect of help to self- help, and the fact that the world will continue to be interrelated. However, what makes this challenging is that informant G expects people from the global South to bring forth their problems, when informant D says:

I think people that we met in the slums expected much, not only from the West, but from other big structural forces. Like their own government. But I don’t know how

much the 15, 16 and 17 year olds knew about what kind of affect other countries have on their country. I don't even know if they knew why there is water scarcity.

Informant D talks about youth the same age as her, but feels that they are on very different levels knowledge wise. Informant B says:

I think that they have their life, and that in Norway you have the opportunity to fly, and you have economy that allows people to do that often. But there, it is quite different. A lot of people have not been outside their state. I am guessing that a lot of people did not know where Europe was. The knowledge level is very different.

The challenge here is that the informants do not think that the youth in the global South know enough about their own situation to say what it is they actually need, or what it is that has to be fixed (Thomas in Serveas, 2008).

Interesting to study is how the informants view their own situation and themselves. Informant D says that this is something she had wondered about while on the exchange:

I have been thinking about that a lot. Like do they think to themselves: "One day I don't want to be one of the poorest people in the world?" I really have been wondering a lot about it. How they see themselves. I don't know. Like how do they feel when they see me come in to my room and my computer is up? How do they feel about not being able to go to school? Every day-things and their future. How do they see their future? I am thinking mostly about the youth. I don't know. I would really like to know. But even if I asked them I wouldn't get the truth.

The informant brings up many interesting aspects. She cannot understand the situation that the poor are in, and she is unsure as to how they view their own situation. She talks about the economical difference that are between herself and people in the global South, and how this is a contributor to creating larger gaps. People reflect their identity in the image of others, and when people in the global South see the materialistic things that the informants have, such as a laptop, it might cause them to realize that the world is unfair, and create a wanting for the things that they don't have and influence the way they perceive themselves and construct their identity. Informant I also talks about this:

I think many of them are, that most people think that things are all right. But there are many who see the rich West where they have everything and then think that that is what we should have here. But I feel that most people think that they are all right, and are satisfied with the way things were. But there are many who live from hand to mouth and who can't think ahead. They think of the money they make now that can pay for dinner

tomorrow. But then they appreciate the little things that I think have a lot to say for how happy you feel.

In many ways, this summarizes what the informants think of development aid and people in the global South. The inequality in the world lead people in to the work of development aid, trying to erase some of the differences. However, Westerners, such as informant I, are unable to understand poverty and its consequences thus leading them to focus on the way people in the global South appreciate things rather than their desperate need for food and water.

### **5.3 Development and identity construction**

As a Norwegian, it can be argued that development is a part of your identity. Norway is viewed as a peace promoter, and has been involved in development aid for many years. By being a participant of Communication for Change, it is to be expected that the informants have reflected more on the issue of development aid, and are more interested in learning about it. Before the exchange the informants were not very optimistic about the prospect of the world becoming developed, but they did emphasize the importance of trying. What is the best type of development aid, and who can answer this? Both before and after the exchange, the informants talked about the importance of knowing the culture of the recipients of aid. Here, I found the informants to be inconsistent. On the one hand, they seemed to think of people in the global South as the ones who know best how to help their own country escape poverty. On the other hand, the informants talked about themselves as the ones with the knowledge, seeing as how the donors don't have either education or knowledge to be able to tell what has to be done. However, I question how the informants can claim to know how to eradicate poverty and inequality, when they have no real idea what that actually means. One issue I found to be problematic, was how the informants simplify the challenges that people in the global South are facing. By saying that resources just need to be distributed more equally, they downplay the complexity of poverty. After the exchange, however, I could detect a growing awareness among the informants of how deep the issues run and on how layered the issues are. Quite a few of the informants had reflected upon this during their exchange, and afterwards.

The informants were divided in their thinking of how active people in the global South are in their own development process. Some had experiences suggesting that people were doing all that was in their power, while others felt that people had just succumbed to the circumstances.

The challenge is when society is so corrupt, that you have to be corrupt yourself in order to influence the decision makers. These factors made the informants feel more insecure about their actual abilities to change things, and so they went on to suggest small touches such as environmental actions. A reason for these suggestions can be that it is more tangible for the informants, and easier to understand. They have started to realize that corruption is so wide spread and how it influences society on different levels. Corruption is something, which the informants are unfamiliar with from Norway, making it harder to understand. However, it leads me to thinking that the program has some effect as to how the informants view the world. In regards to this, it is interesting to see what informant G says about traveling to the global South: “You teach, but at the same you are open to learn things yourself. It always goes both ways. Sometimes, when I think back, I feel that I have learned more than what I have taught”.

The informants talked about being equals to people in the global South, which is also contradictory to what they say about having more knowledge. The informants talked about how we are different and how we can learn from each other. When the informants were asked how people in the global South perceive themselves and their situation, they said that they had wondered about the same thing. Before the exchange, the informants uttered a wish for going to the global South and becoming influenced by their happiness, despite the materialistic poverty. However, some informants came back wondering whether or not people are as happy as Westerners perceive them? What are their dreams if they have any? By seeing how different they are, materialistically speaking, it is obvious that it affects how the informants view themselves. How the informants perceive the way of life in both the global South and Norway, makes them reflect more closely on how they want to live their lives.

## 6. Volunteer work

This chapter is divided into three parts: motivation, volunteering and identity construction. By studying the informants' motivation, I wish to see what inspires and motivates them for volunteer work, both before and after the exchange. Thereafter, I will be focusing on how the informants view their role as volunteers: how they wish to be perceived and how they were perceived. In the last part, I will look at how the informants construct their identity as volunteers.

### 6.1 Motivation: Before

The informants stated different motivations for the exchange, but three main categories could be detected: self-development, providing aid, and travel. This means that the informants had dual intentions, altruistic and self-interest, for going on the exchange. This is in accordance with what NCA writes about CFC on their web page: "Communication for Change is NCA's exchange program for young people who want to travel, learn and engage in the fight against poverty and injustice" ([www.kirkensnødhjelp.no](http://www.kirkensnødhjelp.no)).

The aspect of self-development is evident by how the informants emphasize their wish to learn about and experience new cultures. Informant B says: "I think I would like to do something that is helpful to others during my lifetime, and I think that it is a good place to start to see how others are". The informant is unsure as to what she wants to do later in life, but feels that learning about others, meaning people in the global South, and their situation is a relevant place for her to start. She thinks that the exchange will help her decide who she is and what she wants to do. Therefore, it can be argued that CFC and the exchange can play an important role in identity construction for its participants, due to the importance the informants attribute it. Informant B continues by saying: "I think that I angle my life in a certain direction by choosing this year", confirming that she views CFC as important for the choices she is going to make later in life. Also informant F says that this is a year of importance:

Ever since I was little, I have wanted to do something. I thought that when I grow up, I will do something that matters, not just sit in an office. And I have considered development work in a developing country, but I am not absolutely sure that that is what I want to do. In addition, I don't want to start studying right away, because I don't know what I want to study. So I think this year will be good in order to figure out what I want,

and who I am.

It is interesting to look at how the informants think of this year and this program as something that can, and will help them in defining who they are and what they should do with their lives. Many young people spend a year before going to college trying to do exactly this, and it is becoming increasingly popular to do so while being volunteers in the global South.

Informant A says that her motivation for participating is gaining new perspectives on things, and her hope is that: “It sounds a bit quasi, but that I will be changed in some ways. To bring with me the knowledge I get from seeing how other live in different countries into my life. Whether it will play a big or small role”. When asked what she hopes these experiences will contribute to, the informant says: “That I get a new perspective on things. Consumption, for example. The over-consumption that you can see here in the West. But first and foremost, just knowledge. What does a person who goes to bed hungry need? Is it food or a job?”. Informant A is unsure as to what degree the exchange will have an effect on her, but she is clear on the fact that she hopes to be noticeably changed. In addition, she wants to learn more about the situation of the poor, and hopes to be able to be inspired by it and bring it back with her to Norway. To better understand poverty, and the world in which we live in, seems to be a big part of the motivation for many of the informants. Informant D says: “I know so little about what poverty really is and why it exists. I know like the basics, but not more than what an average 18 year old knows. So I'd like to understand more about the root of the problems in order to do something about it”. The informant has some knowledge about poverty, from school and the media, but she is eager to learn more while in close proximity to it. The informant continues by talking about the choice she has made about not ignoring poverty, but doing something about it:

Well, I've had a few, what you can call defining moments in my life, where I realized that it's not the world in itself that is unfair, people are unfair. And it's not that we don't have enough for everyone, it's just that it's distributed unequally. And I knew that I couldn't live my safe nice life, and pretend that I don't know what's going on. And there were times when I just wanted to study and build up my career and have just this beautiful life in a huge apartment, you know? Because that was kind of the dream, but then I always came back to the thought: “That would be cool, I want that but I don't think it's okay that I pretend or don't try to change anything”.

Prior to the exchange, the informant debated whether she should get involved in development work, and how much responsibility she should assume for the inequality in the world. She ended up deciding that she has a need to know more about the world we live in, and the

reasons why there is inequality. When she was asked why she needs this experience, informant D says:

This reminds me of a moment in 9th grade where they taught us about the world trade system, how unfair it was. And I was just sitting there in class, thinking, people know about this? And it still exists, and you know, it blew my mind. I was just sitting there and it's here in the book. People know it's unfair... "What?". That's when I realized in order to change this you have to affect the decision makers and the decision makers are on top. And you have to educate yourself to get on top, or to get the people on top to listen to you to take you seriously. That's why I wanted that experience on the ground. Like, I've been there.

The informant understands that decisions are made and solutions are found on a global political, but she wants to have a hands-on experience to gain the background necessary for a future in development aid.

The second main motivation that I detected was altruistic intentions. Informant E says: "It sounds very cliché, but it is to save the world. I think that you can save the world by getting to know people or talk to people. To have a more peaceful world you have to...become friends". The informant goes on the exchange in hopes of changing the world by establishing friendships. Is it naïve to think that it is possible to change the world by becoming friends with people in the global South? Based on the informants comment, it can seem like she is lacking an overview of the situation of poverty; that it is more complex than what it might seem like. Informant B says: "I like to see how people develop, and being a part of making a difference. To teach, and see that they learn something and master it". She wants to make a difference by touching others with her presence and knowledge. Together with informant C who says: "I feel that if you help others you feel good about yourself as well", the informants are looking to make a change for others, but also for themselves. Their motivation is two-sided, saying that by helping others, they feel better about themselves.

The third, and last main motivation was traveling. Mutual for the informants was their expectation that traveling with an organization would be better than traveling alone. Informant B says: "It sounded very exciting, and I wanted to travel through an organization because I think that you are left with more if you do, other than traveling alone". Informant F talks about some of the advantages that you get by traveling through an organization: "It is one thing to travel to Africa as a tourist, but it is something else entirely to be there as long as

we are going to, and to be able to be a part of the society. It is not like we are going to save the world. It is more like we are going to learn and teach”. The informant is motivated by the thought of becoming immersed in to a culture in the global South, rather than just observing it. The informant continues by saying: “I want to learn and contribute, but at the same time travel. I love to travel, and I do it often. [...] I always want to go somewhere and see how it is there and experience it. And learn of course, in a way”. It is obvious that travel is the main motivation for informant F, but that she is also looking forward to learning and contributing. This is an interesting mix between volunteering and tourism, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

## **6.2 Motivation: After**

In the second interview, the informants had different perceptions as to how their motivation had been throughout their exchange. For the most part, however, the informants had been highly motivated and I could still detect the aspects of travel, self- development and helping out. However, there was one unforeseen factor that influenced some of the informant’s motivation. Informant J says: “For me, language was a challenge because there were so few who spoke English. So when I think of my motivation, I think about the language [...]”. This experience shows how important language is for establishing contact, and how, if there is a language barrier it can affect people’s motivation.

Before the exchange, many of the informants expressed a desire to help out, and change the world. However, many experienced that they were unable to help as much as they had expected to, which affected their motivation. Informant D says: “I felt like I was not doing so much. Honestly, many times I felt like I was doing nothing”. This left the informant questioning her presence in the global South, but at the same time she disagrees with herself later in the interview:

As I have spoken about earlier, I want to get into politics and I want to make a difference, but my motivation to go on exchange and the actual act of living in (...) was more like to get some basic knowledge. And I feel it has helped me a lot. I feel like motivation did help me a lot because it... And also studying development studies alongside and realizing no wonder so many development projects don’t work. Because they don’t get to know the people, they don’t get to know the problems. They don’t know what they need the most.

The informant wants to acquire some basic knowledge to use in future work, but it seems like she has had a secret wish to help out and do something helpful on the exchange. To me, it is obvious that the volunteers had high hopes of helping, even if they beforehand talked a lot about going there to learn. Informant C's motivation was also connected with the work she was able or unable to do there. In the beginning they had to work with things she knew little about, and she asked herself what she was doing there. "[...] but after a while I realized that it was more than that. [...] and then I realized that, I feel that if they see that we care, and there were many youth groups so if they see that we come from Europe and care then maybe they care more about the issues they have in their society". Even though the informant does not make a significant change while on the exchange, she has realized that her presence can affect and motivate people, especially young people in the global South. Therefore, even if it might not have turned out the way she thought, informant C feels that she has contributed. Informant I expresses some doubts as to how she felt the project helped her personal development:

In [city] everything was really well. But then we went on this StopPoverty tour, and all the participants from [country] and [country] came [...] to where we lived. And I felt like this is my house and my area, and then people whom I don't know come and tell me do other things than what I am used to, and it became a different environment. And I saw my friends walking around in the area, but I could not talk with them because there was always things that I had to do. I felt trapped in my own home. So the motivation went down when we were on that tour. It was a month. And I felt that it was tiresome and stressful to spend my time on that when I could do something that was good for me instead. But in hindsight, I can see that that was probably the month that we helped the most people. That we motivated and engaged people, rather than it only being helpful and positive for us.

The informant was initially concerned with her own self-development, and therefore critical to doing things she felt she did not foster this. However, it is possible to see how the informant has reflected on the situation, and in hindsight can see that by being involved in different work at different places, she got to help others.

The majority of the informants are motivated to continue on the journey that they have started on, as can be seen from what informant E says: "I still want to save the world, or travel and see more". She does not have a specific thing in mind that she wants to do, but is certain that she will do more of what she has done on the exchange. Informant G says:

I want to do more of this. I haven't figured out what I want to do, but I want to follow the [project], and I am looking forward to campaigning for Stop Poverty and get people engaged, and we have been there and seen that it is possible. Similar things have

happened in the past, we just have to stand together, and Norwegian youth is not the easiest to motivate, but I take it as a challenge.

As other informants mentioned earlier, also informant G thinks that the program has been a good starting point, and that what she has been doing is helpful for her and others.

### **6.3 Volunteer: Before**

As I now have looked at the informants motivation for volunteering, it is natural to look deeper at their expectations to what that entails, and later what the informants thought of being a volunteer.

The general consensus among the informants was that they could help others while on the exchange, at least to some degree. Informant I says: “To change the world, you don't have to change the whole world”. She has visited a development country before and says that: “It takes so little to make a persons day so much better. You just have to smile at them and then they go and smile the rest of the day”. This is a small gesture, but one that the informant is confident will make a huge impact on the people she meets. However, it can be said that the informant has unrealistic and simple expectations to the influence she has on people in the global South. Informant D says this of her role as a volunteer: “I don't think on a global scale, but I think that I might have changed someone's world. I am not stupid or arrogant in a way that I think I will come here and fix you and change your life. But simple things can have a huge impact”. When asked what things she hopes to contribute with, she says:

I hope, well I want to say make a difference, but that's so cliché. I want to teach, I want people to know that they matter. That's the role I want to fill. I want people to know that it doesn't have to be like this. I don't want to come like the western person coming to them: “okay I am going to teach you how to do everything”. I'm a really firm believer in the thought of communication in exchange. You teach me, I teach you. We learn from each other.

Informant D wants to take on a role where the aim is to tell people that they matter. At the same time, she is concerned with how she will be perceived and is eager to break down some of these prejudices. She does not want to appear like a dominant person from the West. However, by saying that she wants to tell people that there are other ways to live their lives than what they are doing now, it can appear like she is laying her standards on them, a way of life that she thinks is better.

Later on in the interview, informant D starts to doubt what it is she can contribute

[...] They have been telling us that you are going to make a difference even if you don't know it, and meet people who are going to remember you. Many times I say to myself; "What can I contribute with?". I am just going to maybe help out. Do some organizational work, play with the children. What is that going to do?

The informant raises a relevant question of what that help will actually be able to do. In addition, the informant mentions that "they", assuming this to be the organization that she is traveling with, thinks that she will be making a difference. This might lead the informant to feel a form of responsibility. Informant J, who was the only informant who mentioned that they are on the exchange through an organization, thinks of this responsibility as a positive thing:

I felt that I am fronting something. I work for NCA and is sent out by the Peace Corps and an organization. One feels the responsibility to be conscientious and to actually deliver something when you come all the way from Norway and are going to be down there. But it was not that it was a bad feeling at all. I really think that it is good to feel that you have a certain role. I think it is important to practice on that. But at the same time to be who you are.

The informant thinks that traveling with an organization behind you is positive in the way that it makes you try harder to make a difference for people in the global South. However, Informant A, expresses doubts in terms of what she can contribute during her exchange: "In a relationship you give and take, so maybe if I become good friends with someone my thoughts can affect that person, but that is very small in relation to save the world. I am very pessimistic about what I can add". She is skeptical as to what she can do for others, but can, however, see that it is relevant for her. Learning about other cultures and people can affect the identity construction of the informants since people mirror their own identity in others. Informant I says: "I think it is limited what I can contribute. I think I can make a person's day better, that can probably happen a few times, but I don't think that I will change the world in four months. But if I continue in this field, I might make a difference". The informant thinks that what she can provide with will likely happen in Norway after the exchange. However, she thinks this will also be a challenge: "To raise awareness about the situation in the world, it is difficult to understand without seeing it with their own eyes. But we have to try to talk about it in a way that makes people want to learn more about it". The informant points to what has already been discussed, that it is important for people to experience the global South

themselves, to better understand the challenges that they are facing. However, she takes it on herself to try to tell Norwegians about it in a way that can make them want to find out more for themselves.

Poverty is a difficult concept to grasp for Norwegians who have little to no precondition for understanding it. When people experience things they cannot explain or understand, the answer is often denial and trying to distance oneself. Most of the informants admitted in the first interview that they often turn the TV off when there are reports about poverty or natural catastrophes, and informant D said that one might not get immune to these topics, but one gets used to it. Informant A said: "I could wish that every time I saw someone in pain on TV, that it would affect me. I don't know. Too used to see it, I guess". While some feel motivated by these reports, informant F talks about the guilt she feels when watching it on TV, and then turning it off so that she can go and eat dinner. Informant I says: "I hope that I witness something that gives me a good idea as to how I can make a difference". She wants the youth in Norway to know more about the world, and she feels a responsibility to teach them and share her experiences. In conclusion, the informants view their role as volunteers as helpful to both Norwegians and people in the global South, but also helpful for their own personal development.

### *6.3.1 Will the exchange change you?*

Prior to the exchange, the informants are certain that the exchange will change them and agree that that is partly why they chose this program, but they seem uncertain as to how they will change. Informant F says:

To some degree. That is part of why I am here, to learn new things and maybe change my view or something. I don't think I will change drastically and be a totally different person when I get back, but I think I might have gotten insight into things I have never seen before and think differently on things, maybe.

She does not believe in any big changes happening, but that she might have gained some new perspectives on things. Informant D has some suggestions as to how she will be changed:

I think that the best thing you can do for yourself is to travel, to learn languages, and to learn how other people do things. In terms of how I see myself, how to improve

myself as a person. How I handle situations. How I do things. How I live my life. I think that is something I am going to bring with me forever.

She thinks that by observing how others lead their life, she will be affected. Most of the informants are certain that they will continue their work and studies in the direction of development aid, but they are uncertain in what form or where. Even those who don't think that they will work in development, such as Informant F, thinks of the exchange as beneficial: "Absolutely. I am not going to be a development worker, but the experience can be useful. Everyone should do it. In regards to how you meet people and how you communicate and understand each other". The informant thinks of the exchange as something of importance for life in general, and that these experiences can be useful in all situations where people interact.

#### **6.4 Volunteer: After**

When asked their opinion about volunteering, the informants agreed for the most part that it is positive. Informant C says: "I think that if people go to other countries to help out for free, it is really good. I think it is great that people do things like that for others". Interesting to note is how the informant sees volunteering as a gift that should be appreciated. The informant continues by saying: "It was fun. I felt like I was useful and experienced things. Many impressions, I can't really describe it. I would like to be a volunteer again". Informant C has had an experience of being able to help others as well as experiencing things for herself. When the informant was asked whether she thinks people in the global South were grateful for her presence, she says: "I feel that people sometimes are offended by it, but... And people who are against development don't like it, but I think that organizations always, or most likely always appreciate help that is free". From what informant C says, it seems like it is the organizations that appreciate people volunteering, and not people in the global South. This is interesting when combined with informant A's comment about her presence in the host country:

I think it is very good. But I don't think that it matters for development, but it matters for me personally that I acquire more knowledge about cultures and other specters. To put yourself in other cultures is always very good. Because it is a way to get an understanding of other cultures and people and religion. It helps us with integration, and that has everything to say.

Informant A thinks of volunteerism as important, but only for herself. From what informants C and A have said, it is the organizations and volunteers who benefit. This makes me wonder what the rest of the informants think. Informant B agrees that volunteerism is important for volunteers and says:

I think that it is very important. I felt personally that I learned a lot by having such a role, and being able to be with locals that showed me things I would never have seen on my own. And I learned so much from it. I met people with different attitudes and other activities. And it was very nice to be doing something entirely different and being part of another culture.

The informant has learned things from being in a different culture over a longer period of time. What the informant here talks about is a mix between tourism and volunteering. The informant has gotten deeper into the culture than what a regular tourist would, and accessed parts of the culture that would have been difficult to enter if she had traveled alone. Experiencing a new culture and traveling was one of the main motivations that the informants had, and informant I was happy with how it turned out:

I have many friends who have worked this semester and are now going to travel, but I think it is really nice to have been in one place. We have traveled some around, but it easily takes about three weeks to a month to get to know people and become friends, and think that these people I want to meet again. You do not become friends overnight. So that is why it has been nice to be in one place for a longer period of time, and actually get to know people and experience the culture in a different way than what you do if you only travel through for a week and you visit this and that place. And meet people for two minutes, in a way. So I am very happy with that and the other participants that I have connected with, and now I have friends all over the world. So I am happy with that.

The informant talks about the advantages that are by just staying in one place, and not traveling around. By doing so, she has made friends who she probably would not have met if it had not been for the length of her stay. However, the informants immersed themselves into the new culture to varying degrees. While some of the informants felt a distance due to the language and culture barriers, two of the informants who traveled together tried to immerse themselves as much as possible, by going “native”. Informant G said: “What made the biggest impression was that we became one of them”. Informant D also said that “They called us sisters, me and my travel partner, and we tried to blend in as much as we could, [...], and not be the outsiders. I think we did it pretty well”. A way of immersing themselves into the situation completely was, among other things, to distance themselves from the term “volunteer”. Informant G said:

I was not a volunteer. That was what differentiated us from the people who were volunteers there. I met many who were nice. But at the same time I met many who came there and complained about “I have paid so much, and then this is the food I get”. And that makes me “Look around you. You get the best food that they have”. Because they did. And that made it wrong that they then complained, and you know sort of what to expect because you have made the choice to be there. We only traveled as participants of CFC. And it was like, “but I am not a volunteer”. Because we were there, and were part of a project, and we were equal with the participants from the South. So if they were volunteers, we were volunteers. But they were not, and we were not. What we did was volunteer work, but that was not the reason why we came there. We came there to teach, but also to be taught.

What makes the informant so critical of volunteers? The informants achieve their goal of blending in, trying to disguise their difference by eating, sleeping and working alongside the locals. When asked their reason for doing what they did, informant D answered that they did it because of what they had seen:

How people come and go so easily at the [...] and how the children are. They get used to it and I remember thinking that not being sure about how I feel about people going in and out [...] They have volunteers that will come for a month and then leave, and so many people all the time, and for every person that comes they have to sing for them, they have to accommodate them, cook for them. And just thinking what kind of trust issues you are going to develop when you are older if you never, every time you get attached to someone they leave.

But you left.

Yes, that is what is the most painful, I think. Cause we wanted to get to know them as much as we could in the time there and we were being happy that they considered us one of them and that they would call us sisters and we could just hang out in the rooms with them. But when we left, that is when I really realized that we are leaving too [...].

Informant D realized after the exchange that it was impossible for them to be complete equals, for several reasons such as their materialistic differences and the opportunities that she has compared with the people she met in the global South. In a way, it did not help to distance herself from the term volunteer, because in practice what she did is the same as what the volunteers she described did. She left too. Was not calling herself a volunteer a way to justify herself and her actions? When I asked whose premises these relations were built on, informant D answered that it goes both ways, but that it of course was nice to feel included. “We did not want to feel like outsiders [...]”. Informant D and G had different perspectives

when they came back. While informant D expressed some regret for how they had dealt with the people they had gotten to know, informant G did not mention any such reflections. Informant I talked about the same issues when discussing the importance of volunteers. She thinks it depends on the goal people have:

In six months or a year there is a limit to how much you can do. And if you want to work at an orphanage for four months it takes some time to really get to know the kids. And then when you have gotten to know them, you leave. They have spent time and resources on getting to know a person they will never see again.

She goes on to say that in the longer run, it is better to have knowledge of different cultures and the fact that we are different, than having helped ten children at an orphanage for four months. That is why she feels CFC is a good program in the sense that it gives you increased understanding of cultures and the world. It is interesting to note how differently the informants view their role and effect as volunteers. The fact that informant D and G became like sisters with the locals, will impact how they view themselves and the role of volunteers later in life.

Most of the informants were not critical to being volunteers, but they were unhappy with the actual work they had been able to do. Many of the informants found it difficult when their altruistic intentions were not realized, and their actions did not meet their expectations. Informant F says:

Once we visited some poor families and they asked me: “What do you think we can do to get out of poverty and get enough money so that our children can go to school?”. And I had no clue. I did not know enough about their situation. And people say that if you have education you can get out of poverty, and that's true, but I have education and I did not have a clue. You need a specific knowledge. It was a little scary that they hoped to get an answer from me.

Here, she could have helped out, and would have, but she had “no clue” what advice to give. She did not feel qualified to give the answers this family was looking for, which made her feel uncomfortable. It is relevant to question whether the organizations that the informant traveled with, or the project they worked in the global South, asked too much of the informants? Informant F thinks that it would have been helpful with more specific knowledge about poverty and development aid prior to being a volunteer. When the informant was asked what she now thinks of as good development aid, she says:

It's really about asking what they need. For we cannot come from Norway and tell them how to do it. We don't know anything about the culture and it can go badly fast. They

know what they need and what we can help them with. I got to experience this up close, where I did not know what they could do to escape poverty.

But when they did not know either?

Then we have to cooperate!

This stands as an example of how easily volunteers can receive an expert status without having required knowledge or skills. Informant F found this difficult that she was expected to be able to answer and come up with a solution, but she ends up saying that we have to complement each other by using each other's strengths (Eriksen, 2008). Informant D wanted to contribute, but was unsure how: "You know that feeling when you are visiting someone's house, and they are working in the kitchen and you want to help but you don't want to do anything wrong? That is how I felt much of the time there. I want to, but how?". The informant felt helpless, but at the same time she understood that the exchange had a different meaning for her:

I feel like before I knew much about CFC, before I went on exchange, I thought that we were going to do big things. But after the exchange I realized that you can't do anything in three months. So I feel the reason I was there is more about what it will give me in the future. Not about what I can do here and now. More like a stepping-stone, a very valuable one, but not the final destination.

Here, the informant points to the expectation of how they were going to help out a lot while on the exchange, but also to how her view on the exchange developed. Informant A had a different experience on her exchange:

One place where we were about a month, I was the person coming from outside and who did not know the language and just followed what the others did, and did not contribute with anything. I often felt like I was in the way, while other places I was more the exotic person coming from a different country, and I was used more as a resource. We were in a meeting with teachers and I was able to tell them about the situation around education in Norway. And we had some discussions about schools with the teachers.

The informant felt that she could provide with some of her knowledge, but also she talks about how she immediately got a different status because of coming from a different country and being more "exotic". I asked which role the informant preferred, the one where she had to observe, or the one where she could contribute, and she said that it was definitely the latter.

However, many of the informants were able to appreciate what they were able to do, or how

the exchange turned out, like informant I who ended up spending all her time getting to know people: “I am okay with that now. If I had known it beforehand I might have thought of it as little, but it's really more than enough”. When looking at their answers, it is important to ask whether their expectations are unreasonable? I feel like what they say in the first interview is mainly about their intentions of learning and observing, but when that is what they do, they seem disappointed.

A danger of volunteer work is to bring areas of their own culture into other cultures (Myers, 2011). Informant E experienced this: “I was not there to look after anyone, I was there to learn. I was open and tried to digest all the impressions. But after a while I became a little annoyed; “Okay, if you only did this it would be so much better”. But it was not my place to do so”. The informant felt that it was not her role to say anything, but there were things that she thought of as better in Norway than in her host country. Informant D, who before the exchange wanted to tell people in the global South that there are other ways to live a life than how they are doing it, saw many things that, in her opinion, needed to be improved: “It sounds like I don't think anything is good, that is not true, but just small things like children in Norway get fruit every day”. However, the informants agreed that they had tried to adapt to the culture in the global South in the best possible way. But, as some of the informants brought up before the exchange, some felt that people in the global South carried prejudices of people in the West. Informant D said:

One of the most difficult things was keeping my calm in certain discussions. Just backing off and listening. I would hear things that would just piss me off. [...] I would get a rude comment or an accusation like: “You would not know because you're white” or “You would not know because you're from Norway.

Also informant G said that she was always aware of being a Westerner due to the attention she got for the color of her skin. She felt a little uncomfortable because of it, since she, especially when she got to know people, saw that the only difference was where they were born. “You feel a little silly. "You're white, you can do whatever you want" or “You are from Norway, you have money””. It became important for many of the informants to break these prejudices. Informant A wanted to do so by talking about the situation in Norway. She wanted to tell them about the Norwegian system, and that we also have to work to earn a living; “If for nothing else, I am sure that they by knowing this will break some prejudices, or not prejudices, but the standard type of white man”. Whether the informant managed to do so, is

impossible to know, but it was her hope and intention.

#### *6.4.1 Were you changed?*

Before the exchange, the informants said that they hoped to be changed in some way. Informant C said: “I think I was very different from how I am in Norway. I think I was more secure in myself. More outgoing. Got easily in contact with people. It might have to do with the Norwegian culture and it being more difficult to get in contact with people in Norway, [...]”. She also feels that this is something that she has brought with her back to Norway: “That I am maybe a bit more open and outgoing than I have been before”. Several of the informants feel more secure with their own identity after the exchange. They mention being more independent and confident. However, informant I talks about difficulties when coming back to Norway:

More open, perhaps more confident. But at the same time I notice that I am more uncertain now in a way. When I meet someone I think these are Norwegians and I need to behave in a certain way. But then I think “Why do you think like this?”. You can just be who you are. But there is still that barrier buried somewhere. I think that I must behave, talk and do things in a certain way because I'm in Norway. It's actually really ridiculous.

The informant feels like she is hindered to act the way she did in the global South, showing how the Norwegian cultural norms are basic for the informants thinking and behaving. Informant F, who in the first interview said that she joined CFC in order to challenge her views and learn new things, but who did not want to change while on the exchange, said in the second interview that: “I think I know myself a little better now, but at the same time I'm not the same person any more. So maybe I knew the person I was before, but there are new sides of me now that I don't know as well”. The informant asks herself who she now is, if she is no longer the person she used to be. In some ways, it can seem like informant F is experiencing a form of identity dilemma. Even though some people have a more conservative view on people's identity construction being finished at an early age, today, factors in our modern society point to people continuing to grow and develop their sense of self long after their teenage years (Deci et al, 2002). However, how open people are for change can have an affect on the process of identity construction. Informant J, who did not think she would change much during her exchange since it was only four months, did not feel changed when she got back. The fact that informant J does not feel like she is changed in any way might

have to do with her attitude before leaving. She was certain that she would not be changed, and this can have an impact on the fact that she thinks that she has not changed. However, it might also be that the informant is unable to reflect on whether any changes has occurred, or that it might be too soon for her to see any changes.

Even before they left, some of the informants looked forward to coming home and telling people about their experiences and travels, for example informant I:

I'm looking forward to come home. I have not left yet, but I'm excited to share what I have experienced [...], show photos to family and things like that, and to feel that I have been in [country]. Oh! I think it will be exciting. I think people will be interested in hearing about it, but I think I'm going to be very tired after a while that people ask, but I think it will be fun.

The informant had her mind half turned to Norway already before she left, and it was clear that one of her goals was to travel and be able to tell about her experiences when she came back. This can be similar to how people going on shorter vacations think. However, many of the informants realized when they came home that people were not that interested to hear about it, and that they were unable to understand what they had seen and done. Also informant F had looked forward to coming home, but felt like things had changed while being away: “It was a little different because I did not feel like I could move back home after the exchange. I feel like I need to move on, I cannot go back there. So it was both weird and nice”. The informant is, as mentioned above in the middle of constructing her new identity, making her think that she needs to move to a new place, to start a new chapter in life.

When asked what made the biggest impression during the exchange, informant F said that being out at night and seeing small children still on the streets and realizing that that is actually where they live. She said: “It is one thing to see it during the day, and then you go home and go to bed”. In comparison to this, I asked the informants how they experienced watching news reports about people living in absolute, or close to absolute, poverty. But as she discovered during the exchange, poverty does not disappear even if the TV is off, or if we are sleeping. In the second interview, some of the informants felt like nothing had changed as to how they react watching reports on TV. Others thought that they had changed some since they now knew more about poverty and the people behind it. Informant D was unsure how she would react. In one way, she felt like it would become more personal because what if it were the people she now knew. “On the other hand, maybe I put my walls up a little bit and

just accept the hard facts. I cannot do anything with that right now”. It can often be more difficult when it is seen on TV since we are used to be entertained by it, and therefore it can make it more distant. Informant E mentioned this: “When you get home you may choose to turn off the TV, so it becomes like a veil, you forget the reality there. I must try, or make sure I don’t”. Informant E realizes the difficulty of staying involved when again being a part of Norwegian society where so many things are fighting for people’s attention. She is, however, hopeful.

## **6.5 Volunteering and identity construction**

When looking at how the informants have constructed their identity by being volunteers, there are a number of factors that have to be considered. The first being how the informants feel that the exchange has had an effect on them, and the second being how they think they have, through the role as volunteers, affected people in the global South. Both of these aspects goes back to the motivation the informants had for the exchange. By being volunteers in the global South, the informants were able to get a unique insight into a different culture and way of life than what they know from Norway. What I found to be interesting was how many of the informants who saw the exchange as an advanced tourist experience. It was a way of getting closer to another culture that would have been much more difficult if they had been regular tourists. However, the informants applied different importance to this tourist and cultural experience, immersing themselves differently into the culture and their role as volunteers, also leading to different opinions as to how the exchange affected them. When viewing these differences, one important aspect is to look at how open they were for being changed. Their thoughts and reflections prior to the exchange are important for what happens during and after, and the consequences that follow.

Many of the informants hoped to be changed by the exchange, and many felt that they were when coming back. The informants thought that the exchange had helped them in knowing more what they wanted to do and who they wanted to be, even if they were unable to say exactly how. Some could tell that they were happier and more secure and independent, however, they admitted that it was difficult to enter back into the Norwegian culture, and not go back to the person they were before they left immediately. This led some of the informants to have a crisis of identity, because they are on the path of becoming their own self-constructed identity. How has being a volunteer in the global South led to these changes? It

can be argued that the informants would have questioned who they are no matter what they chose to spend the year doing. In some ways, it can seem like the year before continuing on to higher study is reserved for “finding out who you are”, and that the informants are just living up to these expectations. However, I do believe that an exchange in the Global South made the informants ask time- appropriate and important questions that they would not have done if they had stayed in Norway the whole year.

Other informants did not think of themselves as changed in any way. This again leads back to what their expectations were for the exchange. One of the informants mentioned that since it was only four months, it was unlikely that it would leave an impact. At the same time, some might have felt that the program aimed for bigger changes happening, than some of the informants felt was possible.

Before the exchange, a few of the informants mentioned helping others as their main motivation. However, after the exchange, the informants came back with mixed feelings as to what they had been able to do. Even the informants, who had not expressed helping others as a motivation, were a little disappointed by what little they had done. The informants dealt with this in various ways while on the exchange. Some of them accepted that they were not going to do make big changes, and were happy with what little they could do. Others simply moved their focus from wanting to help others, to rather seeing it as a good opportunity to get to know the culture and people better. No matter what they were able to do for others, the informants have new perspectives on the world and its inhabitants.

What is interesting in my findings is how people can interpret situations differently, as shown by the two informants who came back with very different opinions as to how they had helped people in the global South. They tried to be as equal as possible with the people there, their intention being to show that everyone are the same. However, as one of the informants came back after the exchange happy with how she had handled being a volunteer, and certain that what she had contributed positively, the other informant came back feeling that she had made things worse. The informant had realized that it is not possible to be complete equals, and that by establishing relationships with people in the global South for then to leave, is more destructive than helpful. However, the informants’ choice to invest so much of themselves in the culture and society, can and probably will lead them to try harder to stay in touch with both the specific people they met, but also development work in the global South in general.

Their identity construction will probably differ, as their reflection of the experiences varies so much.

## 7. Ending discussion

*How is identity constructed among exchange program participants in a context of development aid, volunteerism and poverty?*

In this thesis I have interviewed ten informants on how they have constructed their identity in a context of development aid, volunteerism and poverty. It has been my assumption that this exchange has an impact on their self-perception and identity construction.

There is a great rise in people working as volunteers, and it has become a trend among Norwegian young adults to travel to a country in the global South to do so. I believe that the popularity of these “gap- years” have to be viewed together with how people in today’s society are constantly searching for their identity. By going on the exchange, the informants have seen that there is a large world outside Norway, and that the “bubble” they may live in is not the norm. However, I question whether this experience has had an effect on their identity construction?

By interviewing the informants, I wanted to see whether the exchange had any effect on how they view poverty and development aid. In addition, I wanted to look at the motivation the informants had for going on an exchange in the global South.

Based on the interviews and the subsequent analysis of these, I have made some interesting discoveries. These have been presented and discussed in chapters 4.3, 5.3 and 6.5; however, I find it useful to talk about these points along with some concluding remarks.

The exchange will most likely be an experience that the informants will refer to their entire life, but they will have different opinions about the program, the exchange, the global South and the role they had as volunteers. During the exchange, the informants enter a culture they are unfamiliar with, something that makes them step out of their comfort zone and “Norwegian bubble”, which affect how they perceive themselves and construct their identity. However, it is interesting to note to what degree the informants involved themselves in the culture in the global South, and I could detect three different levels of involvement. Some of the informants tried to go “native”, seeking an exchange where they, in order to be able to understand the situation of the locals, had to behave like people in the global South as much as possible. For some, this experience is exciting because you get a true feeling of the life of the local if you eat and do the same as them. However, it can also make it more difficult after

the exchange. Here, I will use one of the informants as an example. In the beginning, she distanced herself from the term “volunteer” and did not want to be seen as anything but an equal to the people she met on the exchange; however, upon her return to Norway, she realized she had not been any different, and did not think that she had, just like the other volunteers she had met in the global South, made a difference. It is my impression that this has led to the informant viewing herself differently, seeing as how the image she had of herself as a volunteer, was shattered when she left. The informant thought that what happened while on the exchange would have felt like it mattered more, but she realized that she was very limited in her role.

Others went on the exchange and looked for locals similar to themselves, financially, whom they could become friends with. This is easy to do, seeing as how it is what the informants are familiar with, and what they think of as safe. As can be seen in the elements that Chambers (in Myers, 2011) present regarding the dangers and challenges of volunteering, distancing oneself psychologically is one of them. As the informants distanced themselves from the context of poverty, they chose to socialize with the rich, and not the poor. A reason might be that they had difficulties of understanding the situation of poverty and the consequences of it. By not understanding the problems of the poor, they were not able to help, and the answer for them became to take themselves out of the situation.

The third approach that I could detect was more of a tourist approach. The informants did not get too involved with the locals, but they were close enough to get a deeper insight into the culture than what they would have as regular tourists. Most of these informants returned to Norway pleased with the exchange, and eager to travel or volunteer more. This approach shows how the exchange for many was a mix of being a volunteer and a tourist. As theory shows, this is becoming an increasingly popular form of volunteering, and many organizations strive to fulfill both factors (Wearing, 2001).

UN defines volunteerism as something that can benefit both volunteers and people in the global South, but as volunteer tourism is growing one can question if this is true. Tvedt (1990) asks if the receivers of aid grateful for the help they get? Volunteers are generally only in the same area for a few months to a year. It is difficult to define how much of a difference they make and if it increases the understanding between the global South and the rest of the world. Should the West continue the development work they are now doing? Norwegian writer, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, said in the 1890s that the best foreign policy is to not have a foreign

policy (Tvedt, 2006). However, toward the end of the 1990s, politicians and the media declared Norway a nation of peace and as a humanitarian power, and helping the poor can be viewed as part of the Norwegian identity (Tvedt, 2006). Have we taken it too much upon ourselves to save the world? Here, I found the informants to be inconsistent. On the one hand, they seemed to think of people in the global South as the ones with the best potential to help their own country escape poverty. They emphasized that others can help, but that the developing countries have to take the biggest steps (Calderisi, 2007). In Serveas (2008) the success or failure of development projects are summed up by people's involvement and communication. The informants agreed, but were also tempted to tell people what to do. The informants talked about themselves as the ones with the knowledge, seeing as how the people in the global South don't have either education or money to be able to tell what has to be done. However, I question how the informants can claim to know how to eradicate poverty and inequality, when they have no real understanding of what it actually means.

The ministry of Norway's foreign aid thinks that a well-functioning state is important in order for aid to work. This is concurrent with the informants' question of how there can be progress if there is corruption in all layers of society? That is also why they say that they have seen some of the complexity to the issues at hand in developing countries.

The informants have an expectation of the exchange to be a dual experience of altruistic intentions and travel. This is also evident in the motivation the informants have for the exchange. There were three main categories that I could detect; self-development, helping others and travel. It was evident by what many of the informants said that the exchange had been a great way to travel, "getting under the skin" of cultures and people. However, as TRAM (2008) suggests, the informants are not likely to label themselves as tourists, seeing as how they consider themselves as more reflected on the issues of development aid and poverty than a regular tourist. Gullestad (1989) thinks that people in the West create their identity through the telling of their lifestyle. In light of this, volunteer tourism can be seen as a way to express identity. And by it being voluntary, it enhances the altruistic and the compassionate side of it.

As for their hope to being able to help others, and realizing their altruistic intentions, it is first important to look at what they think of poverty, how they define it and what they think can be done. As written about in chapter 2.2, poverty continues to be a huge challenge, and one that needs to be tackled. As we now know so much more about the situation in the world, it

becomes even more crucial to respond to poverty. In order to respond, however, it is crucial to understand poverty, and a way of understanding it, according to Thomas (in Serveas, 2008) is by looking at it as lack of access. The informants wish to view themselves as equals, but in the second interview, some of the informants mention people in the global South, especially young people, unable to understand their situation as they are lacking the proper information and knowledge. By doing this, the informants view themselves as superiors because they have more knowledge. Another approach to understanding poverty is the lack of Human Rights (Serveas, 2008). None of the informants used the term Human Rights, but after the exchange they talked about the lack of options people have. The interesting thing with this was how this was not a topic before the exchange, and how it is obvious that they learned about it, and observed it in the global South. Therefore, it is possible to talk about a change, both in how the informants view poverty, but also how they perceive themselves, as the informants talked about how they realized that they have many options.

Another interesting aspect is how the informants are defining poverty as both absolute and relative, but with the emphasis on the latter. The informants were most concerned with how non-poor also can have a marred identity (Myers, 2011), and that people in the West are lonely and unhappy, despite having money. This has an affect on how they perceive themselves, as many of the informants expressed a wish to be changed by the attitude of the people in the global South. It can be argued that the informants left with a preconceived opinion on what they would find, and found it.

It is fascinating to consider what their expectations to helping others. Most of the informants mentioned that they did not think that they would be helping everyone, but maybe a few. However, common for the informants was that they thought that a lot of the work would come after the exchange in Norway, and they thought the same when coming back from the exchange. I find this to be interesting, as I would have expected more of the informants coming back with added critical attitude to what anyone can do on exchanges like this. My findings show that the informants were motivated for the work they would be doing in the spring semester, and thought of it as important and relevant. In addition, the informants seemed interested in continued involvement in development work and organizations. However, I find it relevant to point to the importance of having a place to unleash their motivation and commitment. The volunteers who lose contact with other volunteers, as well as to development work, will more easily fall back into their old routine and role, and be less

likely to keep up their commitment to the ideal of eradicating poverty. By doing so, the exchange is most likely guaranteed to only matter to them. In a way, the exchange can be viewed as a teaser for the informants' construction of identity and lifestyle. For the informants who are able to stay in contact with each other and the world of development aid, for example through studies or organizational work, are more likely to see the exchange as useful, and also see that they have been changed by it.

There is so much focus on finding yourself in today's society, and by going on an exchange like CFC, there is an underlying expectation that participation will have an effect on how people construct their identity. People learn about who they are by being part of society, and by seeing themselves through others (Deci, 2002). Many of the informants said before the exchange that they hoped by going on the exchange, that they would know more about who they are, or who they should be. However, I have questioned whether it can be expected that the informants construct their identity on the exchange when they don't understand the context that they are in?

It can be argued, looking at both interviews that the informants had hoped to be changed to a larger degree than what they were. It is my impression that they believed they would know more about their future when they got back, that the exchange would in some ways have a clarifying affect, but what they realized was that they did not really know more at all. This is not to say that I do not think that the exchange is of importance for the informants, especially later in life as they can utilize their experiences.

### *Further research*

My findings are relevant because of the point of view they have. It is not the organizations, development workers or people who have previously been volunteers that talk, but rather the informants. As it is their opinions that are presented here, it is important to remember that they have not attended higher education or worked in development organizations, thus the expectations to their ability to reflect on their experience should be thereafter. Had they been interviewed a few years later, the answers would probably have been different, as other factors would have made an impact. However, that is what makes this thesis and the findings thought provoking, as it is the voices of the young adults who have just been on the exchange.

Because of the time limit of this thesis and the limited focus, I have not considered how the informants can mature in their reflections. I assume that they will, both by having attended “Folkehøgskole” and by having more time, reflected more on the issues of poverty, development aid, and volunteerism, and how these experiences have contributed to their identity construction. In this thesis, I questioned whether the informants understand the immense differences that are in the world. Even if they at this point, are unable to reflect on the consequences of poverty I think that changes can still happen. The informants are asking more questions, hinting to that they have not yet changed, but they are in the process of changing. Therefore, I think it would have been an interesting study to also interview them after being done with Communication for Change.

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## **Attachments**

Attachment 1: Interview guide 1

Attachment 2: Interview guide 2

Attachment 3: Information sheet to the informants

Attachment 4: Email to the programs coordinator of Norway's YMCA/YWCA

## Attachment 1

### *Interview guide 1*

Hva heter du? Hvor gammel er du? Hvilken utdannelse har du? (skoler) Hvor kommer du fra? Kjønn?

Kan du fortelle om deg selv? Hvem er du (tidligere erfaringer? Verv? Skole? Vært i et u-land før? Hvilken rolle fyller du?)?

Hva gjorde at du valgte nettopp CFC?

Hva er motivasjonen til å være med?(eventyrlyst, tradisjon, ambisjon)

Hvordan ser du på deg selv? (Selvforståelse). Hvilken rolle håper du at du kommer til å **ha**?

Du skal nå til Afrika i noen mnd. Hva drømmer du om? Hva tenker du om de månedene du skal være i et annet land?

Hva gleder du deg til? Hva gruer du deg til? Hvilke utfordringer blir tøffest? Hva blir enklest å håndtere? Hvor er du redd for å ikke være god nok?

Dersom situasjonen ikke blir som du forventer, hvordan tror du at du kommer til å håndtere det? Si at du er der for å bidra, tror du det er mulig? I så tilfelle, med hva?

Du er fra Norge og bor i Norge, men du skal nå til et fattig land. Hva tenker du om dette? Fattigdom? Hvem er fattige? Hvorfor er de fattige? Er vi rike? Er det håp for rettferdig verden? Utvikling i alle land? Hvordan tror du nordmenn generelt kan bidra?

Men hva tror du faktisk er mulig å endre på? Hva tenker du på som god utvikling?

I disse områdene dere skal besøke, har det vært konflikter. Hva tenker du at du kan gjøre med krig? Hva skal til for å få fred?

Religion. Du reiser ut med KN/ KFUK. Forstår du deg selv som kristen? Du kommer til å treffe mange kristne, men mange som ikke er det. Hva tenker du om det?

Tror du religion er en viktig faktor når det kommer til utvikling? Hvordan?

Hvor tror du all utvikling kommer til å ende? Når du ser en reportasje på TV om sultkatastrofer eller krig, hva tenker du?

Hvordan ser du for at det bli å komme hjem? Har holdning endret seg? Fyller du en annen rolle nå? Har du forandret verden litt? Ser du for deg at dette er noe du har nytte av videre i livet?

## Attachment 2

### Interview guide 2

#### Innledning:

- Hvordan har du hatt det? Hvordan har det vært å være i ...?

#### Bakgrunn:

- Hva tenker du nå om å ha valgt CfC? Er du glad du bruker et år på dette?
- Hvordan følte du deg forberedt? Hadde du nytte av tidligere erfaringer?

#### Identitet:

- Hvilken rolle fylte du?
- Hvordan opplevde du motivasjon der?
- Hva var det beste?
- Hva var viktigst for deg i løpet av oppholdet?
- Hva gjorde størst inntrykk?
- Hvordan opplevde du glede/sorg?
- Var det ting du ikke likte (gruet deg til?)?
- Hvilke utfordringer ble tøffest? Hva var enklest?
- Følte du at du ikke strakk til? Hvordan har du håndtert drømmer vs virkelighet?
  
- Hvordan har det vært å komme hjem?
- Hvordan ser du på deg selv nå?
- Hvordan føler du at din holdning til hva??? har endret seg?
- Hvordan opplever du motivasjonen for bistand nå?
- Hvilke drømmer sitter du med nå etter å ha vært der i så mange mnd?
- Hvordan tror du det nå blir å se TV- reportasjer om sultkatastrofer?
- Føler du deg mer uavhengig? Selvsikker?
- Har noe kommet innenfor din komfortsone som ikke var det før?

#### Interkulturell forståelse

- Hvordan ble du tatt imot? Kjente du på din egen fremmedhet?
- Lengtet du tilbake til egen kultur?
- Følte du at du viste forståelse? Var det vanskelig?
- Har du blitt bedre kjent med din kultur i møte med andre kulturer?
- Hvem er vi? Hvem er de? Did you see yourself as equal partners?
- Språk
- Venner?

#### Fred:

- Hvilke erfaringer gjorde du deg med fred og konflikt?
- Opplevde du ulike måter å tenke på?
- Er det håp for fred og en rettferdig verden? Føler du at du har forandret verden litt?
- Hvordan tenker du om religion i forhold til fred?

## Religion

- Hvordan opplevde du religion i løpet av oppholdet?
- Forstår du deg selv som kristen? (har det endret seg)
- Tror du religion er viktig for utvikling?

## Bistand

- Hvordan opplevde du din rolle som volontør? (begrenset?)
  - Hvordan tror du de opplevde at de hadde det? Egen livssituasjon?
  - Tar de selv steg mot utvikling?
  - Forventet de mye av vesten?
  - Var de glad for din tilstedeværelse?
  - Hvem sine premisser skjedde prosjektene eller arbeidet dere var med på?
- 
- Hvordan har du opplevd bistand?
  - Hva tenker du om volontører?
  - Følte du at du kunne bidra? På hvilken måte?
  - Hva ser du på som god bistand?
  - Har dette påvirket valg for hva du skal gjøre videre?
  - Hvilken rolle burde Norge ha i bistand?
  - Er det mulig å modernisere/ utvikle uten å vestliggjøre?

## Fattigdom

- Hvordan har du opplevd fattigdom?
- Hva er det?
- Hvordan opplevde du forskjellene mellom fattig og rik?
- Hvordan var det å komme fra et rikt land til et fattig land?
- Hva er lykke? Har det noe med fattigdom å gjøre?
- Føler du deg rik?

## Etikk

- Er det uetisk at vi tjener så mye?
- hjelpe noen eller hjelpe alle?

## Avslutning

- Ble det som du hadde tenkt?
- Hva har du lært?

## **Attachment 3**

### *Information sheet to the informants*

## **Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet**

”Intercultural communication and social change. Self-perception and identity construction among exchange programme participants”

### **Bakgrunn og formål**

Jeg er masterstudent i Religion, Society and Global Issues ved Menighetsfakultetet i Oslo og holder nå på med den avsluttende masteroppgaven. Temaet for oppgaven er ”Intercultural communication and social change. Self-perception and identity construction among exchange programme participants”. Jeg er interessert i å finne ut om det, gjennom deltakelse på Communication for Change, skjer holdningsendring i forhold til fattigdom, bistand og egen rolle og identitet.

### **Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?**

Jeg ønsker å studere dette ved å intervju 10-15 personer i alderen 18-25 år. Spørsmålene vil dreie seg om hvorfor du søkte på programmet, hva du tror det kommer til å bringe med av erfaringer, og hva du tenker om din rolle i utvekslingsprogrammet. Jeg ønsker så å intervju deg etter endt utenlandsopphold hvor jeg stiller spørsmål med tanke på de erfaringer du nå har. Dette kan for eksempel være hvordan du nå ser på din rolle, eller hvordan du nå ser på fattigdom.

Jeg vil bruke båndopptaker og ta notater mens vi snakker sammen. Intervjuet vil ta omtrent en time, og vi blir sammen enige om tid og sted. Det er frivillig å være med og du har mulighet til å trekke deg når som helst underveis, uten å måtte begrunne dette nærmere.

### **Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?**

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt, og det er bare min veileder og meg selv som har denne informasjonen. Opplysningene vil bli behandlet konfidensielt, og ingen enkeltpersoner vil kunne gjenkjennes i den ferdige oppgaven. Ved endt prosjekt vil all konfidensiell data bli slettet.

### **Frivillig deltakelse**

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg vil alle innsamlede data om deg bli anonymisert.

Hvis det er noe du lurer på kan du ringe meg på [...], eller sende en e-post til[...]. Du kan også kontakte min veileder Kjetil Fretheim ved Menighetsfakultet på telefonnummer [...]. Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

## Attachment 4

*Email to the programs coordinator of Norway's YMCA/YWCA*

Hei!

Jeg er masterstudent i Religion, Society and Global Issues ved Menighetsfakultetet i Oslo, og skal til høsten begynne på masteroppgaven. Temaet for oppgaven er "Intercultural communication and social change. Self perception and identity construction among exchange programme participants". Jeg er blant annet interessert i å finne ut om et utenlandsopphold kan påvirke ens identitet, og i tilfelle hvordan. Min hypotese er at ungdom vil komme tilbake til Norge med et nytt syn på landet de har vært i, og et nytt syn på deres egen og Norges rolle og posisjon i verden.

For å finne ut av dette, ønsker jeg å intervju 15-20 personer av ungdommene som deltar på Communication for Change. Jeg ønsker å intervju de 1 time før utreise, og en time etter at de er kommet hjem. Jeg har ikke bestemt meg for om jeg vil intervju de separat eller i smågrupper.

Eksempel på spørsmål kan være:

- Hva er motivet ditt for å være med på Communication for Change?
- Hvordan ser du på din rolle i det du skal være med på?
- Hva vil du møte?
- Kan du bidra med forandring?

Jeg håper dette høres interessant ut, og at jeg kan få lov til å "låne" noen av deltakerne!

Mvh,

...

Veileder:

Kjetil Fretheim