EMPATHY AND INTERCULTURAL

UNDERSTANDING IN THE CONTEXT OF

INTERNATIONAL LONG-TERM VOLUNTEERING

Master's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

First-hand experiences in foreign culture have been suggested as a powerful way to enhance intercultural empathy, whereas empathy itself has been addressed as a path to mutual understanding and peace among cultures. Due to its great implications, the concept of empathy has previously been widely researched in psychology, philosophy, and sociology, but in the context of international volunteering, it has merely been noted among outcomes.

Accordingly, the present study placed emphasis on empathy in the context of international volunteering aiming to increase in-depth understanding on the matter. More specifically, it was of interest to identify 1) what aspects of empathy emerge meaningful in volunteers' talk and 2) what the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy is like.

For data gathering purposes, 13 young adults who participated in international volunteering programs through Maailmanvaihto ry, the national branch of the international organization ICYE, were interviewed. The group of participants had spent 5-12 months in Asia, Africa, or Latin America during the years 2010-2013. Relying on principals of grounded theory analysis, the interviews were transcribed and simultaneously analyzed. In practice, in the process of analyzing, the data was coded for recurring themes and topics.

The results of the present study supported the previous notion that positive intergroup contact may act to enhance empathy development and intercultural understanding as the informants most often talked about increased understanding, new perspectives, identification with immigrants, and openness towards civic actions after their return. The influential power of intergroup contact was found to lie in challenging experiences and intergroup friendships. It was further noted that empathy should not be treated merely as an outcome of intergroup contact. Instead, aspects of empathy seemed to act as motivators for participating in the program in the first place. This initial empathy, however, appeared to be temporarily challenged due to intergroup contact, which was manifested as negative emotions and difficulties to understand representatives of other cultures. Sometimes intergroup contact also seemed to evoke prejudice and negative stereotyping of outgroups. In addition, notably many participants reported decrease of forms of empathy towards representatives of their own culture. In the discussion chapter, it was further suggested that the challenges and acquisition of empathy might have been related to cross-cultural adaptation processes.

The results provide beneficial information for Maailmanvaihto ry -ICYE Finland and to actors responsible of similar activities. Understanding of empathy in intercultural contexts may turn out beneficial in future planning of exchange programs and trainings that prepare and support participants before, during, and after stay abroad.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Aikaisemman tutkimuksen perusteella ensi käden kokemukset vieraasta kulttuurista edistävät kulttuurienvälisen empatian kehitystä. Empatian kehityksen tavoittelua taas on perusteltu sen yhteydellä kulttuurienväliseen ymmärrykseen ja rauhaan. Empatiaa on aiemmin tutkittu paljon psykologian, filosofian ja sosiologian tieteenaloilla, mutta kansainvälisen vapaaehtoistyön kontekstissa sitä ei ole aiemmin asetettu keskiöön.

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli lisätä ymmärrystä empatiasta kansainvälisen vapaaehtoistyön kontekstissa. Tarkoituksena oli selvittää 1) mitkä empatian osa-alueet nousevat esiin vapaaehtoisten puheesta ja 2) kuinka empatia ja kulttuurienväliset kohtaamiset ovat yhteydessä toisiinsa.

Tutkimusaineisto koostui 13 kansainväliseen vapaaehtoistyöohjelmaan osallistuneen suomalaisen laadullisista haastatteluista. Haastateltavien vapaaehtoistyöjaksojen pituudet vaihtelivat 5-12 kuukauden välillä, ja kohdemaat sijaitsivat Afrikassa, Aasiassa tai Etelä-Amerikassa. Analyysivaiheessa aineisto käytiin systemaattisesti läpi etsien aineistossa toistuvia teemoja ja kategorioita.

Tutkimuksen tulokset tukivat aikaisempaa löydöstä, jonka mukaan positiivinen ryhmien välinen kontakti saattaa edistää empatian kehitystä ja kulttuurienvälistä ymmärrystä. Haastatteluista kävi ilmi, että ymmärtäminen, uudet näkökulmat, maahanmuuttajiin samaistuminen sekä avoimuus kansalaistoimintaa kohtaan lisääntyivät vapaaehtoistyöjakson ansiosta. Ryhmien välisen kontaktin todettiin olevan merkittävää, koska se mahdollistaa ryhmien välisten ystävyyksien kehittymisen ja asettaa yksilön uusien haasteiden eteen. Lisäksi huomattiin, että empatiaa ei voi luonnehtia ainoastaan ryhmien välisen kontaktin seurauksena vaan olemassa olevat empatian osa-alueet myös motivoivat haastateltavia osallistumaan vapaaehtoistyöohjelmaan. Ryhmien välisen kontaktin seurauksena tämä lähtökohtainen empatia kuitenkin usein väliaikaisesti horjui, mikä ilmeni negatiivisina tunnereaktioina sekä vaikeuksina ymmärtää muiden kulttuurien edustajia. Enemmistö haastateltavista ratkaisi nämä haasteet positiivisesti, mutta joidenkin kohdalla ryhmien välinen kontakti myös aiheutti ennakkoluuloja ja negatiivisia stereotypioita. Lisäksi kävi ilmi, että huomattavan monen haastateltavan empatia oman kulttuurin edustajia kohtaan horjui vapaaehtoistyöjakson seurauksena. Keskusteluosassa huomattiin, että empatian kehitys saattaa olla kytköksissä kulttuuriin sopeutumisen vaiheisiin ja prosesseihin.

Tutkimuksen tulokset tuottivat tärkeää tietoa Maailmanvaihto ry:lle sekä muille toimijoille, jotka ovat vastuussa samankaltaisten ohjelmien koordinoimisesta. Empatian merkityksen ymmärtäminen kulttuurienvälisissä konteksteissa voi olla hyödyllistä tulevaisuuden vaihto-ohjelmia ja vapaaehtoistyöntekijöiden valmennuksia suunnitellessa.

Asiasanat – Keywords Empatia, ryhmien välinen kontakti, kansainvälinen vapaaehtoistyö
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1 INTRODUCTION

In today's world, encounters between representatives of different cultures are constantly increasing due to globalization, growing immigration, work-related sojourning, and varying types of study exchange programs, to name but a few. The increasing intercultural encounters, however, tend not to appear completely without challenges. "Humans' confrontation with difference too often results in violence and conflict" (Calloway-Thomas, 2010, p. 2) resulting from lack of understanding and caring, the two essentialities often limited to people similar to oneself (Hoffman, 2000).

Extending empathy across cultures or developing *intercultural empathy* has been promoted as a potential counter-force for the natural human tendencies for conflict, lack of understanding dissimilarity, and prejudice against others (Burneau, 2000; Boler, 1997; Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Zhu, 2011). Empathy has been argued to be a "bridge between differences" (Boler, 1997, p. 255), a road to peace (Burneau, 2000), and a stimulant for societal participation and justice (Boler, 1997; DeTurk, 2001; Rios, Trent, & Castañeda, 2003). The route to enhanced empathic ability, however, remains somewhat ambiguous. Scholars have suggested different educational activities such as perspective taking exercises (Rios et al., 2003), role-play (DeTurk, 2001), and exposure to other people's stories (Boler, 1997) as tools for inducing empathy, but the effects of these educational interventions have occasionally been noted to lack permanence and extension (Boler, 1997).

According to the classical contact hypothesis, one of the potential ways to reduce prejudice and discrimination and conversely, to induce empathy is intergroup contact (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998). In general, researchers have recently turned their gaze to first-hand experiences in foreign cultures as potential ways to enhance learning and personal growth. International volunteering, for example, has been stated as a gateway to international awareness and social capital (McBride, Lough, & Sherraden, 2010), increased cross-cultural competence, international understanding, and civic participation (Lough, McBride, & Sherraden, 2009; Sherraden, Lough, & Mcbride, 2008). Empathy, too, has been mentioned among possible outcomes of international volunteering (Kiely, 2004; Iannone, Procter, & Skrypnyk, 2010), but in this context, emphasis has not often been placed on in-depth examination of empathy. Research looking at outcomes of international volunteering or stay abroad has, thus, remained somewhat separate from actual empathy literature, excluding a few exceptions that have concentrated on empathy in the context of short-term stay abroad (Hansen, 2010; Marx & Pray, 2011).

Basing on the notions made above that empathy may facilitate intercultural encounters and that intergroup contact may possibly induce empathy, the present study sets to explore empathy in the context of international volunteering, pursuing to combine traditional empathy literature and studies concentrating on outcomes of intergroup contact and stay abroad. More closely, the present study aims to produce in-depth understanding of empathy in the context of international volunteering organized by Maailmanvaihto ry, the local branch of the international organization of ICYE

(International Cultural Youth Exchange). By conducting an in-depth exploration of empathy, the present study seeks to discover how such an ambiguous concept and phenomenon may be manifested in people's talk, perceptions, and examples. In addition, the goal of the present study is to explore whether a volunteering period abroad can actually contribute to development of intercultural empathy. In this way, the present study will hopefully produce beneficial information for the organization of Maailmanvaihto ry itself, for other actors responsible for arranging similar international exchange programs, and for all exchange students, sojourners, and immigrants interested in the role of empathy in contexts of intergroup contact in foreign cultures.

For the purposes of the present study, investigating empathy in this specific context is perceived to be particularly interesting since the organization of Maailmanvaihto ry bases its actions on the belief that international volunteering offers the participants with opportunities for personal learning and developing intercultural understanding. These goals of the volunteering exchange programs are further manifested below in the mission statement composed by the ICYE (2014).

ICYE Mission Statement

- To provide challenging intercultural learning experiences for young people.
- To promote their social and personal development through international volunteer programs.
- To promote intercultural understanding, equality of opportunity, tolerance and peace among people in the world. (ICYE, 2014)

To achieve these goals, the activities of Maailmanvaihto ry - ICYE Finland are held small-scale, which, in practice, means that they yearly send and receive 30-40 volunteers (Maailmanvaihto ry, 2014). ICYE's goal of achieving intercultural understanding greatly overlaps with the meanings of intercultural empathy as will later be explained in the course of the present study. This gives more reason to believe that the relationship between empathy and international volunteering is worth a closer examination. It should be noted, however, that even though international volunteering serves as a context for the present study, the research interest is not on the actual voluntary work activities. Rather, the focus is on intergroup contact in contexts of sojourning in foreign cultures and their possible influences on people's perceptions of empathy.

The theoretical background of the present study is combined from previous conceptualizations of empathy, the acknowledged links between empathy and intergroup contact, and more closely, the established relationships between intergroup contact through stay abroad and empathy development. These topics will be unravelled in chapter 2. In chapter 3, the methods and participants are described and the selection of these particular methods and participants will be justified. Chapter 4 will further turn to present the results obtained from 13 qualitative interviews, and in chapter 5, the data will be discussed in the light of previous research. Finally, in chapter 6, the main findings of the present study will be summarised, criticism for the present study will be presented, and possible future research will be suggested.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The present literature review will discuss the intriguing and complex concept of empathy aiming to create an understanding of what empathy actually is, what challenges intercultural environments might pose to it, and what factors may contribute to its development. Starting from the 19th century, empathy has been conceptualized and theorized across numerous fields of research such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and more lately, education and communication, which makes summarizing of previous research a challenging task. For this reason, the present study examines conceptualizations of empathy across disciplines but will mainly set focus on empathy literature discussing the concept in relation to intergroup contact or intercultural contexts in a way or another. The literature review will begin with a brief history of the concept of empathy.

The present chapter is divided into two main parts. Firstly, different ways to define empathy, including original and more contemporary definitions, will be presented in order to determine the most suitable definition for the purposes of the present study. More specifically, it will be of interest to identify what aspects empathy consists of and what influences intercultural context has on empathy. Secondly, an important focus in the literature review is to examine the questions of whether empathy can be developed and what factors contribute to the development process. In this part, viewpoints exploring the possible stages of empathy, relationship of intergroup contact and

empathy, as well as the relationship between interventions of stay abroad and empathy are introduced. Finally, at the end of the literature review, the most note-worthy points will briefly be summarized, with an aim to clarify why empathy across cultures is indeed worth pursuing and researching.

2.1 The concept of empathy

2.1.1 Etymology of the concept of empathy

Empathy can best be understood by first examining the roots of the concept since looking at the etymology of the concept facilitates comprehension of the conceptual web and confusion that exists around empathy today (Levy, 1997). Understanding etymology is perhaps even necessary in defining an appropriate approach to empathy. Originally, the word empathy is a translation from a German concept *Einfühlung* that was first utilized in the field of aesthetics in the 19th century (Duan & Hill, 1996; Barnes & Thagard, 1997; Levy, 1997; Verducci, 2000). In aesthetics, Einfühlung was first used by Vischer having the meaning of "projecting of feeling self into an object", typically into a piece of art (Verducci, 2000, p. 67). Later the meaning of Einfühlung went through significant changes as it was extended to include interpersonal relations (Barnes & Thagard, 1997; Verducci, 2000). Lipps similar to Vischer first saw Einfühlung as "imitating the object and imaginatively projecting oneself into the object" (Barnes & Thagard, 1997, p. 3) but later advanced the theory and

stated that people also react to each other by Einfühlung (Barnes & Thagard, 1997; Duan & Hill, 1996).

Looking at development of the concept reveals at least two types of problems. Firstly, the meaning of empathy has greatly evolved since its origins; it originally referred to projecting of a feeling into an object or a person (Barnes & Thagard, 1997; Duan & Hill, 1996; Verducci, 2000) while it today often includes both affective reacting and complex cognitive processing (Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Gerdes, Segal, & Lietz, 2010). Secondly, examining the history of the concept draws attention to a translation issue. It is noted by Barnes and Thagard (1997) that Einfühlung quite literally and correctly translated means "feeling into" but that sometimes it has also been translated as "feeling with" (p. 3). Feeling with in German refers to *Mitfühlung*, which in turn can be translated as sympathy (Barnes & Thagard, 1997). Thus, confusions today about the difference between empathy and sympathy are probably at least partly due to the difficulties in the translation phase.

For the purposes of the present paper, it is important not to confuse empathy and sympathy. Following etymological explanations, the differences between empathy and sympathy seem somewhat clear and logical. As direct translations from German suggest, sympathy can be seen as sharing a feeling irrespective of cognitive processing (Barnes & Thagard, 1997), an example of which can be contagious laughter or cry (Verducci, 2000). Empathy or Einfühlung, in turn, is characterized by cognitive processing and understanding of another person that does not rely on experiencing the exact same feeling

oneself (Barnes & Thagard, 1997). In contemporary conceptualizations, authors generally agree on the idea that empathy consist of both emotional and cognitive processes as will become apparent in the following chapters.

2.1.2 Definitions and dimensions of empathy

One of the central questions rising from the literature is whether empathy is a trait, a skill, or a relational state (DeTurk, 2001). Different approaches have fundamentally different assumptions concerning change and development, which creates problematic contradictions around the concept of empathy (Duan & Hill, 1996). Often it is at least partly discussed as a "biological capacity of the human species" (Thompson, 2001, p. 3), whereas in intercultural literature it is rather seen as a competency (Deardorff, 2006; Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009). Contemporary approaches typically offer a solution to the contradiction as empathy is perceived as a capacity that everyone possesses since birth but that can develop depending on the experiences one faces during one's life (Hoffman, 2000; Thompson, 2001). Nevertheless, the capacity of empathy is naturally stated to have limitations as one's empathetic concern is often suggested to only reach people who are similar to oneself or who one has close relations with (Hoffman, 2000).

Recent research therefore seems to agree about the nature of empathy as a skill-like entity since it is perceived as something that can develop or as something that is affected by the experiences that an individual

faces (Bennett, 1979; Boler, 1997; DeTurk, 2001; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Levy, 1997; Marx & Pray, 2011; Wang et al., 2003). In other words, these authors agree on the power of interventions in developing and influencing empathy. In relation to this, DeTurk (2001) points out that the development of empathy, however, is not straightforward in nature. On the contrary, she draws attention to the relational and context-dependent quality of empathy. The present study, relying on these notions, takes the stance that empathy can be influenced by different experiences and interventions that appear in life but that it may, nevertheless, remain context-dependent.

Actual definitions of empathy include the following. Gerdes et al. (2010) have suggested that "empathy is an automatic, affective reaction and a cluster of cognitive abilities" (p. 2338). Empathy further has been described as "the ability to treat someone as they would wish to be treated" (Olson & Kroeger, 2001, p. 118), "a basic social emotion" (Boler, 1997, p. 255), and "the ability to see others from their points of view" (Chen & Starosta, 1998, p. 248). A rather comprehensive definition has been formulated by Calloway-Thomas (2010), a communication scholar specialized in culture, who states that "empathy is the ability imaginatively to enter into and participate in the world of the cultural other cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally" (p. 8). As the definition of empathy by Calloway-Thomas seems to acknowledge the multidimensional nature of empathy, it shall, definition-wise, be utilized as the principal guidance for the present study.

Examining previous literature therefore reveals that certain phenomena repeatedly appear in relation to empathy. These phenomena are emotional processes, cognitive processes, and other-regarding behavior. For the purposes of increased clarity, these phenomena will be from now on referred to as dimensions of empathy. Having the analysis in mind, locating empathy in people's talk might be a challenging task, but with the help of acquiring an in-depth understanding of these dimensions composing empathy, capturing of it should be possible. On that account, unravelling the following three dimensions of emotional empathy, cognitive empathy, and behavioral empathy will later be utilized for the purpose of performing the analysis. Even though the dimensions are here broken down to separate entities, it should be remembered that empathy in reality is first and foremost a continuous interplay between the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, following the definition by Calloway-Thomas (2010) introduced above.

The first dimension of empathy can be stated to be *emotional empathy* (Calloway-Thomas, 2010), which is also sometimes referred to as *affective empathy* (Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013). Emotional empathy is often argued to be intuitive and responsive in nature (Burneau, 2000; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Gerdes et al., 2010; Hoffman, 2000; Levy, 1997; Stephan & Finlay, 1999), which indicates that emotional empathy precisely occurs in relation to other people, as a response to other people (Wang et al., 2003). A biological base for the phenomenon of emotional empathy or affective sharing has been found in mirror neurons that enable one to response to other people's

emotions (Decety & Jackson, 2004; Decety & Moriguchi, 2007). Characteristic of emotional empathy, however, is that one does not simply emotionally react to others' emotions; instead, emotional empathy also includes an ability to regulate these responsive emotions (Decety & Jackson, 2004; Decety & Moriguchi, 2007).

Empathic emotions have further been differently categorized and labelled. Thompson (2001), for example, draws attention to the distinction between contagious emotion sharing and more refined value feelings, among which are emotions such as compassion, sympathy, and concern. Stephan and Finlay (1999), in turn, have identified two categories for empathic feelings: parallel feelings and reactive feelings. Among acknowledged positive reactive emotions are compassion and concern towards the other, whereas examples of negative reactive feelings may be distress, anxiety, threat, and revulsion (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). According to Stephan and Finlay (1999), parallel feelings, for their part, may include parallel joy or parallel resentment, for example.

In relation to negative emotions, it is pointed out that, particularly in the absence of respect, they may have negative consequences for empathy such as condescending and patronizing attitudes (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Some authors have further argued that all congruent and reactive emotions should not even be discussed in relation to empathy since they actually signal opposite phenomena (Coplan & Goldie, 2011). Despite the existing discrepancies in discussing empathic emotions, care, compassion, sympathy,

and concern are consistently referred to as empathic emotions in previous literature (Burneau, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Thompson, 2001). Accordingly, these emotions will be treated as indicators of emotional empathy for the purposes of the present study.

The second fundamental dimension of empathy identified by many researchers is *cognitive empathy* (Burneau, 2000; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Thompson, 2001; Wang et al., 2003). Thompson (2001) suggests that cognitive empathy is the next step following biological empathy, beyond contagious emotion. More specifically, it is often defined as a process of imagining another person's perspective or cognitively taking a role of another person (Burneau, 2000; Howe, 2013; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). In the process of cognitive empathy, one becomes "aware of another person's internal states, that is, his thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and inceptions" (Hoffman, 2000, p. 29).

This process of perspective taking can further be described as a challenge to understanding (Rios et al., 2003), but on the other hand, as producing understanding (DeTurk, 2001; Howe, 2013; Thompson, 2001). Some scholars have suggested that a self-other differentiation is grounding to this perspective taking ability (Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Howe, 2013). Cognitive empathy therefore seems to be characterized by awareness of different realities and perspectives and an understanding of those different perspectives and realities. For these reasons, cognitive empathy is suggested to be a separate process from that of emotional empathy (Howe,

2013; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Depending on the case, these processes of emotional empathy and cognitive empathy may or may not be congruent (Burneau, 2000).

Two cognitive strategies have further been proposed to underlie the process of taking an imaginative shift in perspective: imagining self in other's position and imagining the other in his/her position (Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Stotland, 1969, as cited in Batson et al., 2003). As the names of the strategies imply, when utilizing the self-oriented imagine-self perspective, one pictures oneself in another person's situation and imagines how oneself might feel, whereas, when utilizing the other-oriented imagine-other perspective, one seeks to imagine how the other person possibly feels (Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Stotland, 1969, as cited in Batson et al., 2003). To this respect, Coplan and Goldie (2011) suggest that imagining oneself in another's situation might have rather negative consequences such as feelings of distress and general misunderstanding of the other. This self-oriented imagine-self perspective is described similarly to what Bennett (1998) perceives as sympathy, which has earlier been pointed out to rather refer to contagious emotions (Barnes & Thagard, 1997; Veducci, 2000). By contrast, imagining how another person might feel or think has been suggested as the key to empathy (Batson et al., 2003; Bennett, 1998; Coplan & Goldie, 2011).

Somewhere between emotional and cognitive empathy, authors indicate *identification* as a characteristics of empathy (Burneau, 2000; Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Marx & Pray, 2011; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Previous

research further notes that the degree of empathic identification varies (Batson et al., 2003; Boler, 1997; Marx & Pray, 2011). In relation to amount of identification authors have again labelled empathy differently. Mainly, the categorizations aim to draw attention to the idea that empathy can either be genuine (Marx & Pray, 2011) and pure (Batson et al., 2003) or, on the other hand, false (Marx & Pray, 2011) and passive (Boler, 1997). Despite these alternative concepts around empathic identification, the researches seem to agree on the matter that in passive or false empathy merely a shallow identification to the other takes place whereas in pure empathy, the experienced identification is more comprehensive and other-oriented in nature (Boler, 1997; Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Marx & Pray, 2011).

The third dimension of empathy is suggested to be *behavioral empathy* (Calloway-Thomas, 2010) or *communicative empathy* (Howe, 2013; Rasoal, Eklund, & Hansen, 2011; Wang et al., 2003). Scholars have therefore referred to the third dimension of empathy with slightly different terms, but their descriptions appear similar to the extent that they are here treated as one dimension. In relation to behavioral empathy, it has been suggested that an empathic person, due to being able to understand and imagine the perspective of the other and caring for the other, alters his/her behavior taking the other person into consideration (Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Zhu, 2011). A part of this behavioral alteration resulting from empathic thinking and feeling is also communication such as alteration of words, for example (Wang et al., 2003).

In other words, empathy is not merely a combination of cognitive perspective taking and empathic emotions; instead, the understanding deriving from those two dimensions of empathy can be manifested in the form of considerate actions and word choices (Howe, 2013; Rasoal et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2003). In the case of stay abroad in a different culture this might mean temporarily abandoning one's own cultural behaviors such as ways of greeting, addressing, and eating, and acquiring and carrying out those of the current host culture instead (Kim, 2001). Now after defining empathy as "the ability imaginatively to enter into and participate in the world of the cultural other cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally" (Calloway-Thomas, 2010, p. 8) and unravelling the meaning of the dimensions composing empathy, the focus of interest will next shift to the special case of empathy in intercultural contexts.

2.1.3 Empathy in intercultural contexts

As the focus of the present study is on empathy in intercultural contexts, it is necessary to examine how the nature of empathy in intercultural contexts differs from empathy in other contexts. It has been noted that due to the difficulty to have accurate perceptions across cultures, intercultural contexts pose a challenge to empathy when issues of othering and prejudice stand in the way (DeTurk, 2001; Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013). In general, empathy towards similar people to oneself has been noted to be more effortless (Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013). Conversely, it may therefore be assumed that the greater the difference in cultural background, the greater the challenge of

empathy. At the same time, empathy across cultures can have highly positive consequences such as social responsibility (Boler, 1997), motivation to help outgroups (Batson, Chang, Ryan, & Rowland, 2002), and positive attitudes towards outgroups (Batson et al., 2002; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Consequently, the following chapters explicate how intercultural contexts create a challenge to empathy, and on the other hand, why empathy should be pursued despite the challenge.

Ways to relate to others and to difference are a central matter when discussing empathy. It has been articulated that people have a natural tendency to construct the world as self and other (Thompson, 2001) or as ingroups and outgroups (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). In relation to ingroups and outgroups, it has further been stated that people often tend to diminish the value of the other, for example, by reducing others to stereotypes of the group they represent (Hoffman, 2000; Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2004). Holliday et al. (2004) clarify that humans tend to perceive the world in the form of cultural others, which is often combined with processes of stereotyping and prejudice. More specifically, in cases of such culturisms members of different culture might be reduced to items or physical attributes that are seen to represent the culture in question (Holliday et al., 2004).

Possibly the heaviest form of culturisms or otherization is derogation of outgroups (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Derogation of outgroups can, for example, be manifested in relation to possible suffering of outgroup

members, which might be explained as their own fault or as a consequence of the perceived traits of the outgroup (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Since understanding of different perspectives is an essential characteristic of empathy (DeTurk, 2001; Howe, 2013; Thompson, 2001), it can be seen as a type of counter-force to othering, stereotyping, and derogation of outgroups, aka in this context, members of other cultural groups. In other words, development of empathy may be a path away from othering, prejudice, and derogation.

A few concepts that address empathy particularly in intercultural contexts have previously been introduced. Among these concepts are *cultural empathy* (Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Howe, 2013), *ethnocultural empathy* (Rasoal et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2003), and *intercultural empathy* (Zhu, 2011). Intercultural empathy, more closely, can be defined as "placing oneself into the cultural background of the target language and being able to effectively communicate one's understanding of that world" (Zhu, 2011, p. 116). Ethnocultural empathy, in turn, has been described as "feeling, understanding, and caring about what someone from another culture feels, understands, and cares about" (Rasoal et al., 2011, p. 8) together with communicating that understanding through one's actions (Rasoal et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2003). As can be seen, these two definitions addressing empathy in intercultural contexts appear rather similar with each other, as well as with the descriptions of empathy presented in chapter 2.1.2. Accordingly, it is here concluded that intercultural empathy differs from classical empathy merely in terms of context, which may be assumed to be more challenging due to greater

dissimilarity. In the present study, the term intercultural empathy shall therefore be utilized whenever empathy is discussed in intercultural contexts.

As intercultural empathy has often been stated to be characterized by understanding, awareness, and intercultural sensitivity (Bennett, 1998; Deardorff, 2006; Zhu, 2011), there is reason to believe that pursuing of it is beneficial for intercultural encounters. Empathy, more closely, has been stated to promote a more sensitive and ethnorelative climate for communication between cultures (Bennett, 1979, 1998; Deardorff, 2006). Ethnorelativism, in turn, stands for "being comfortable with many standards and customs and to having an ability to adapt behavior and judgement to a variety of interpersonal settings" (Bennett, 1998, p. 26). Thus, intercultural empathy can be seen as a counter-force for the noted human tendencies of stereotyping and prejudice (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Holliday et al., 2004; Olson & Kroeger, 2001) leading to greater understanding and ethnorelative climate (Bennett, 1998; Deardorff, 2006). In the following chapter, the focus will shift to the developmental nature of empathy, in relation to which it will be suggested that empathy does not only facilitate intergroup communication; instead, empathy may also be enhanced through intergroup contact.

2.2 Development of empathy

To overcome the challenges of empathy in intercultural contexts, many researchers suggest interventions as the means of inducing, developing, and

expanding the naturally existing capacity of empathy (Boler, 1997; DeTurk, 2001; Hoffman, 2000; Marx & Pray, 2011; Rios et al., 2003; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). In the present chapter, the focus is on how and through what stages intercultural empathy possibly develops and how intergroup contact and stay abroad as interventions may contribute to this development.

2.2.1 Stages of empathy development

Scholars have attempted to clarify the course of empathy development by establishing stages or steps of empathy (Bennett, 1998; Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Batson et al., 1997; Batson et al., 2002; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Some of these speculated steps will be discussed here in order to increase understanding of the developmental nature of empathy. As will become apparent below, the suggested stages seem to lack consensus. To clarify the relationships between the existing ideas in relation to development, the present chapter aims to map commonalities and divergences in the suggested developmental stages.

Stages of empathy development have been established by Depraz (2001), for example, according to whom empathy proceeds from "passive association of my live body with your lived body" to "an imaginative self-transposal", through recalling similar experiences, to enabling "an interpretative understanding", and finally, to "ethical responsibility" (as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010, p. 13; as cited in Thompson, 2001, p. 17). Bennett

(1998), in turn, has proposed a slightly different sequence. According to him, the steps of empathy development include "assuming difference, knowing self, suspending self, allowing guided imagination, allowing empathic experience, and re-establishing self (Bennett, 1998, p. 209-212).

Empathy in relation to attitude change has been suggested to occur in four steps: "adopting the perspective of the needy individual", "empathic feelings", "valuing the welfare of the individual reflected as positive attitudes towards the outgroup" (Batson et al., 1997, p. 106), and "motivation to help the outgroup" (Batson et al., 2002, p. 1657). Moreover, Stephan and Finlay (1999) have suggested that imagining perspectives enables realization of similarities and tackling the initial feelings of threat that results in more positive attitudes towards the outgroup. Alternatively, they propose that emerging feelings of injustice overcome pre-existing prejudice enabling more positive attitudes towards the outgroup (Stephan & Finlay, 1999).

The stages introduced above seem to assume initially negative attitudes towards outgroups (see Batson et al., 1997; Stephan & Finlay, 1999) and assumption of fundamental difference (see Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Stephan & Finlay, 1999) as a starting point. They all further acknowledge imagining perspectives as one of the crucial phases (Batson et al., 1997; Bennett, 1998; Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Stephan & Finlay, 1999), indicating that it is an important factor in the developmental process irrespective of the stage at which it occurs. This is further in line with the definitions of empathy that perceive perspective

taking ability as one of the most significant parts of cognitive empathy (see Burneau, 2000; Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013; Stephan & Finlay, 1999).

The sequences of the processes, however, are not agreed on. Firstly, Depraz (2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010) argues that realization of similarity is fundamental to perspective taking ability, whereas Stephan and Finlay (1999) present imagining perspectives as a prerequisite for experiencing similarity. Bennett (1998), conversely, has a different view to the matter as he perceives assuming difference as a condition for empathy development. Bennett's approach is supported by Coplan and Goldie (2011) who see differentiation between self and other as grounding to the process of perspective taking. Secondly, according to Batson et al. (1997, 2002), perspective taking allows empathic feelings, whereas following Stephan and Finlay (1999) empathic emotions initially emerge, evoking perspective taking. Looking at previous literature therefore reveals that the sequences of empathy development lack consensus. Consequently, for the purposes of the present study, it might be more suitable to treat the processes as intertwined rather than strictly sequential.

Despite the obscurities within the suggested stages of empathy, the authors seem to share a consistent idea of the so-called final stage of empathy. Empathy at its highest stage is proposed to stimulate the desire to help others (Batson et al., 2002), ethical responsibility (Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010), moral action (Boler, 1997; Batson et al., 2003; DeTurk, 2001; Hoffman, 2000), and advocacy orientation (Rios et al., 2003).

In relation to this, this type of moral action is noted to arise particularly in asymmetrical contexts where one is in an advantaged position and the other is in a disadvantaged position (Batson et al., 2003). With respect to this notion, previous empathy research has often been interested in empathy in socially asymmetrical situations, that is, majorities' empathy towards minorities or relatively wealthy people's empathy towards relatively poor people. Examining the definitions of empathy, however, does not give reason to believe that only one-way empathy should be pursued. Instead, two-way empathy would more significantly contribute to mutual understanding between cultures, as suggested by Burneau (2000).

In the past literature, it has been acknowledged that intergroup contact or, more specifically, stay abroad may offer the required stimuli for renegotiation of worldviews and imagining other perspectives (Pettigrew, 1998). This may eventually induce development of intercultural empathy, and consequently, a will to help members of other cultural groups (Batson et al., 2002). The roles of intergroup contact and stay abroad in terms of empathy development will, accordingly, be the focus of the following chapters.

2.2.2 Intergroup contact

The classical contact hypothesis formed by Allport (1979) suggests that intergroup contact has positive effects on intergroup relations. Among these positive effects are phenomena such as decrease of negative stereotyping,

prejudice, and discrimination, which are further noted to be accompanied by intergroup empathy (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). As empathy has previously been suggested to represent the opposite end for phenomena such as prejudice and othering (DeTurk, 2001; Burneau, 2000), it may be drawn that the contact hypothesis supports the idea that intergroup contact provides an opportunity for both prejudice reduction and empathy induction.

However, according to the hypothesis, intergroup contact lessens prejudice and discrimination and evokes empathy only if the quality of contact is more or less optimal (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998). Allport (1979) clarifies that in order for intergroup contact to have positive consequences, the contact situation has to meet certain criteria, that is, equal group status, common goals, cooperation, and authority support. Other authors have similarly specified conditions for intergroup contact by stating that namely positive intergroup contact can decrease prejudice (Swart, Hewstone, Christ, & Voci, 2011), and that intergroup contact can result in more positive attitudes towards a larger outgroup if the member of the outgroup is perceived as typical of that group (Brown, Eller, Leeds, & Stace, 2007).

Close cross-group friendship, in particular, might qualify as such an optimal intergroup contact that is likely to have positive consequences on one's empathizing skills (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Swart et al., 2011). According to Pettigrew and Tropp (2008), in the process of establishing intergroup friendships, positive emotions towards the individual arise, which

reduces initial anxiety and might in the long run result in generalization of empathy for a larger outgroup. Others have similarly concluded that connecting with an outgroup member acts as a key factor in empathic transformation (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004). In relation to this, Iannone et al. (2010) suggest that the effects of positive relationships with outgroup members may be significant to the extent that they result in overall satisfaction, overcoming the influence of challenging or negative intergroup contact. Based on previous research, affective ties therefore seem to be one of the major ways how intergroup contact evokes or enforces empathy.

Moreover, the process of how intergroup contact influences empathy development should be addressed. Encountering of outgroup members has been noted to provide an opportunity to learn about the outgroup, which again might result in renegotiation of earlier perceptions (Pettigrew, 1998). This renegotiating may result in abandoning false pre-existing stereotypes, decrease in anxiety and prejudice, and conversely, increase of empathy (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). In other words, intergroup contact may provide people with a chance for "larger repertoire of cultural schemas" (Endicott, Bock, & Narvaez, 2003, p. 415), enhancing diversified understanding. With respect to adopting new cultural schemas, intergroup contact may also provoke behavioral alteration (Pettigrew, 1998).

Finally, despite the acknowledged potential of intergroup contact for evoking and enforcing empathy, in the absence of optimal conditions and affective ties in particular, intergroup contact may also have negative

consequences such as strengthening of prejudice (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). It has been suggested that "superficial contact may leave things worse than before" (Allport, 1979, p. 264). More closely, intergroup contact has sometimes been found to result in ingroup embracement, reinforcement of stereotypes, and downgrading of outgroups (Marx & Pray, 2011).

Examination of earlier research about the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy therefore seems to highlight two main factors through which intergroup contact can act in favor of empathy development. These two factors are *affective ties* that become possible as a consequence of intergroup contact (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Pettigrew, 1998; Swart et al., 2011) and *an opportunity to learn about the outgroup*, and thus, to redefine pre-existing perceptions (Endicott et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1998). Drawing connections to previous chapters, it may be assumed that establishing of affective ties addresses the emotional dimension of empathy, whereas learning about the outgroup offers a chance for developing cognitive perspective taking. As stay abroad provides inevitable exposure to intergroup contact, the next chapter turns to explore how empathy has been discussed in previous research looking at effects of stay abroad.

2.2.3 Experience abroad

First-hand experiences abroad have been argued as potentially the most efficient way to move towards empathy and ethnorelativism (DeTurk, 2001). In general, outcomes of stay abroad and international volunteering have extensively been researched during the past decades (Endicott et al., 2003; Hansen, 2010; Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Levy, 2000; Lough et al., 2009; Marx & Pray, 2011; McBride et al., 2010; Sherraden et al., 2008; Williams, 2005). Majority of them, however, have focused on learning outcomes or intercultural skills in a wider sense (see Endicott et al., 2003; Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Levy, 2000; McBride et al., 2010; Sherraden et al., 2008; Stephenson, 1999; Williams, 2005), only mentioning empathy or learning results similar to it. In the following chapters, these encountered links and previous notions of empathy will be emphasized due to the focus of the present study even though empathy was not thoroughly discussed in many of these studies in question. Previously, merely few have set explicit focus on empathy in a similar context (see Hansen, 2010; Marx & Pray, 2011), and they have further discussed empathy only based on short-term stay abroad. Thus, the present chapter will concentrate on mapping how empathy has previously been touched upon in relation to stay abroad.

The length of the time spent abroad as well as the target culture have been noted to be significant in terms of the learning processes that may or may not take place (Endicott et al., 2003; Hansen, 2010; McBride et al., 2010). Endicott et al. (2003) and McBride et al. (2010) similarly argue that the longer

the stay abroad is, the thorough the immersion and the more significant the influences on one's personal transformation will be. This is further supported by Hansen (2010) who concluded that a period of 10 weeks spent abroad was insufficient for initiating significant empathic transformation. Opposite results have, however, been found as Marx and Pray (2011) state that even a short-term experience such as three weeks can have notable influences on promoting intercultural empathy.

Other factors than length of stay abroad may therefore play a role. In his study, Hansen (2010) suggests that lack of increase in students' ethnocultural empathy might result from similarity of one's home culture and host culture and lack of challenges during one's stay abroad. There is, hence, reason to believe that particularly target cultures that are sufficiently different from one's home culture have the power to initiate significant renegotiation processes. In the present research setting, the participants stayed in cultures relatively different from their own from 6 to 12 months, which following Hansen (2010), Endicott et al. (2003), and McBride et al. (2010) might serve as sufficient conditions for empathic transformation.

Accordingly, it has been noted that it is specifically the challenges faced abroad that may result in renegotiation and acquiring of new perspectives, and thus, developing increased intercultural empathy (Kiely, 2004; Marx & Pray, 2011). Marx and Pray (2011) have clarified that *cultural* and *linguistic turbulence* may be among the challenges that contribute to increased empathy. For example, experiences of discrimination (Marx & Pray,

2011) and obvious foreignness (Stephenson, 1999) have been noted among the challenges that one might encounter during stay abroad. In addition, sojourners have been acknowledged to face challenges due to learning about discrimination (Iannone et al., 2010) and experimental dissonance as a result of getting in touch with poverty (Kiely, 2004). These notions are in line with Burneau (2000) who suggests that the road to empathy is not always easy: "empathy can overload one's information system, requires courage, energy, and hard work" (p. 461).

According to previous studies, one of the outcomes of stay abroad may be increased empathy for minorities, in particular (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Marx & Pray, 2011). Based on their study, Marx and Pray (2011) have noted that as a result of stay abroad empathy towards immigrants and victims of racial discrimination increased together with arising respect for immigrants' rights. Similarly, Iannone et al. (2010) have pointed out that empathy towards disadvantaged groups and foreigners in one's home country was greater after stay abroad. Kiely (2004), following the same line, has suggested that a stay in Nicaragua led to increased identification with the poor.

Thus, suggested reasons for increased intercultural empathy have included similar experiences and learning about others' experiences such as poverty. Marx and Pray (2011), more closely, have suggested that as a result of cultural and linguistic turbulence, students developed empathy for immigrants perceived to struggle with similar challenges. Marx and Pray's (2011) results support the previous notion that realization of similarity might be essential in

developing empathy (Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Another route to increased intercultural empathy and care has been argued to be either relationships with locals or first-hand learning about poverty (Kiely, 2004). In the same way, in the chapter discussing intergroup contact, it was concluded that empathy may be enhanced through cross-group friendships (Pettigrew, 1998; Swart et al., 2011) and learning about outgroups (Endicott et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1998).

In a similar way that intergroup contact was earlier acknowledged to sometimes result in increased prejudice (Allport, 1979), stay abroad has been noted to occasionally result in less favorable consequences, too. Marx and Pray (2011) have traced occurrences of false empathy in the form of superficial identification, feeling bad for the other culture together with strengthening of stereotypes, and perceptions of one's own culture as superior (Marx & Pray, 2011). Stay abroad, in addition, has been noted to cause questioning and criticizing one's original cultural values, increased cynicism, and realism (Kiely, 2004). The relationship between stay abroad and empathy development therefore appears to be anything but straightforward. Possible increase of empathy has been noted among outcomes of stay abroad, but achievement of it may not be treated as self-evident.

2.3 Summary

The purpose of the previous chapters was to shed light on what phenomena and concepts are frequently mentioned when discussing empathy. Furthermore, the aim was to create a base for understanding the multidimensional nature of empathy and to underline the possible benefits arising from acquisition of intercultural empathy. In short, empathy was noted to typically be challenged in intercultural contexts (see DeTurk, 2001; Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013), whereas acquisition of it was pointed out as a potential path away from prejudice, stereotyping, and lack of understanding, which have been noted to shadow intercultural encounters (see Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Howe, 2013; Rasoal et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2003; Zhu, 2011).

The three main dimensions of empathy that arose from the literature review were emotional processes, cognitive processes, and other-regarding behavior (see Calloway-Thomas, 2010). Closer examination of these dimensions led to the conclusion that emotions of compassion, concern and caring, cognitions of understanding, perspective taking, identification, and altering behavior can be treated as indicators of empathy in the analysis to come. Conversely, the phenomena opposite to empathy such as prejudice, lack of understanding, and derogation of others may be treated as signals of lack of empathy.

Moreover, it was discovered that empathy can be developed through intergroup contact and stay abroad since they provide an opportunity

for intergroup friendships, acquiring new knowledge, and challenging experiences (see Marx & Pray, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998). Among stages of empathy development, realization of similarity and perspective taking were acknowledged as significant (see Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Ideally, development of empathy was stated to have great consequences such as positive attitudes towards outgroups and motivation to help outgroups (see Batson et al., 2003). Understanding of these factors related to empathy development will be useful for the purposes of the analysis, as will more closely be explained in chapter 3 discussing the methods of the present study.

Overall, examination of previous research gave reason to believe that the present study deals with a significant topic. It further revealed that even though empathy has widely been studied in the fields of psychology and philosophy, it has merely few times been focused on in the context of stay abroad (see Hansen, 2010; Marx & Pray, 2011). Accordingly, the present study places focus on empathy in the context of Finns volunteering outside Europe. In the following chapter, the discussion will shift to explicate the research questions, methods, and analytical procedure through which the matter is approached in the present study.

3 METHOD

The present study began with the notion that empathy has been conceptualized and theorized across multiple fields of research. Similarly, previous research has lacked a clear consensus of how the essence of empathy could best be captured. The attempts to measure and investigate empathy include several quantitative scales and questionnaires (Batson et al., 2003; Davis, 1980; Hansen, 2010; Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009; Wang et al., 2003), perspective taking activities (Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Rios et al., 2003; Vescio et al., 2003), and some personal journals (Marx & Pray, 2011). The present study aims to add to the palette by gathering interview data. By conducting and analysing interviews, the goal further is to produce more in-depth understanding of empathy in the specific context of international volunteering. This will, in practice, be done by indicating links between people's talk and theoretical approaches to empathy.

3.1 Research questions

To meet the aim of increasing in-depth understanding of empathy in the context of international volunteering, two research questions that reflect the focuses of the present study were formulated. Both of these questions will be more closely explained and justified below. The actual research questions are the following:

RQ1: What aspects of empathy do emerge meaningful in volunteers' talk?

RQ2: What is the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy like in context of international volunteering?

RQ1, "What aspects of empathy do emerge meaningful in volunteers' talk?", is a grounding question to the present study. With the help of this question, the aim is to examine what dimensions and signs of empathy, or lack of them, can be identified in the data. Following the definitions and dimensions of empathy presented in chapter 2, empathy, as it appears in RQ1, can be broken down to cognitive understanding and perspective taking (see Burneau, 2000; Hoffman, 2000; Rios et al., 2003; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Thompson, 2001), emotions of caring, compassion, and concern (see Burneau, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Thompson, 2001), other-regarding behavior (see Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Chen & Starosta, 1998), identification with the other (Boler, 1997; Burneau, 2000; Marx & Pray, 2011), and motivation to help outgroups (Batson et al., 2002). Conversely, RQ1 includes the possibility that aspects of empathy do not appear in the volunteers talk. Opposites of empathy such as prejudice, derogation of others (see Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998; Holliday et al., 2004), lack of understanding, and unwillingness to help others can be treated as signals of lack of empathy. Thus, RQ1 can, on one hand, be answered by identifying signs of the dimensions of empathy and, on the other hand, by tracing signs of the opposite phenomena of empathy.

RQ2, "What is the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy like in context of international volunteering?", addresses the other major focus of the present study. Whereas RQ1 concentrates on identifying the forms of empathy and forms of lack of it, RQ2 focuses on unravelling the relationship between the volunteers' intergroup experiences and the forms of empathy identified. As it became apparent in chapter 2, a relationship between intergroup contact and empathy (see Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998), and more closely stay abroad, has previously been indicated (see Hansen, 2010; Marx & Pray, 2011). Empathy has rather often been mentioned among other outcomes of stay abroad (see Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004), but merely few have conducted a thorough examination of empathy in context of stay abroad (see Hansen, 2010; Marx & Pray, 2011). Accordingly, RQ2 places emphasis on the relationship between the dimensions of empathy and intergroup contact in particular, including the notion that quality of intergroup contact may be crucial in terms of empathy development (see Pettigrew, 1998; Swart et al., 2011). Moreover, as Maailmanvaihto ry appears to expect that international volunteering has positive learning results, RQ2 will address the issue of possible *development* of intercultural empathy as a result of international volunteering.

Through answering these questions the present study therefore aims to contribute to the field of intercultural communication by producing information about how empathy and its relationship to intergroup contact may be manifested in people's talk in the context of international volunteering. In other words, by examining the context of Finns volunteering abroad, the

present study seeks to produce new information about the specific context, hoping to build links between people's stories and perceptions and theoretical approaches to empathy. The next chapter turns to explain why the specific non-governmental organization, Maailmanvaihto ry- ICYE Finland, was chosen as the context for researching empathy in-depth.

3.2 Participants and the context

International volunteering as a context and the specific organization of Maailmanvaihto ry – ICYE Finland were chosen due to the following matters. The researcher was first acquainted with Maailmanvaihto ry during summer 2012 when she completed a study-related internship in the given non-governmental organization. In their mission statement, ICYE sets goals firstly, "to provide challenging intercultural learning experiences for young people", secondly, "to promote their social and personal development through international volunteer programmes", and finally, "to promote intercultural understanding, equality of opportunity, tolerance, and peace among people in the world" (International Cultural Youth Exchange [ICYE], 2014). Getting acquainted with the activities of Maailmanvaihto ry and the purposeful motives of their actions during the internship initiated personal interest in whether sojourning in another culture could indeed have such significant influences on one's personal development and understanding of others. Later on, the focus of the present study was placed on empathy in the context of intercultural volunteering since examining the nature of empathy revealed that the concept

in its multifaceted quality consists of much what is listed above in the mission statement of ICYE. As it was noted earlier, empathy is characterized by understanding of others (DeTurk, 2001; Howe, 2013; Thompson, 2001), can perhaps be achieved through challenging experiences and personal development (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Marx & Pray, 2011), and is ultimately suggested as "the bridge between differences" (Boler, 1997, p. 255) and a road to peace (Burneau, 2000).

Placing focus on volunteer work as a context was further supported by the factor that the participants of ICYE programs both work and live with local people, which exposes them to a possibility for in-depth intergroup contact with the representatives of the local culture. This is essential since positive intergroup contact such as cross-group friendship has been suggested to be significant in terms of empathy acquisition (Allport, 1979; Marx & Pray, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998; Swart et al., 2011). In addition, volunteering as a context appeared to be special since empathy might be found among possible motivations for participating in the international volunteering program in the first place.

In qualitative research, "the idea is to purposefully select sites and participants that will best help to understand the matter" (Creswell, 2003, p. 185). Accordingly, for data gathering purposes, 13 young Finnish adults who had participated in a long-term volunteering program coordinated by Maailmanvaihto ry were interviewed. The researcher first approached the secretary general of Maailmanvaihto ry – ICYE Finland in the spring 2013,

who agreed to assist the researcher by forwarding the letter of consent to previous volunteers of Maailmanvaihto ry. The letter of consent was sent by e-mail at three different occasions during the spring and summer of 2013, until a sufficient amount of former volunteers replied to the researcher. The data gathering took place between June 2013 and September 2013 when the researcher travelled to meet the interviewees in five different cities or towns in Finland. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish, in the interviewees' native tongue, and recorded for later analysis. For the purposes of the representation of the results, the interviews were partly translated to English.

The participants of the present study mainly volunteered in different types of social projects such as at schools or in orphanages in Africa, Asia, or South-America for 5-12 months during the years 2010-2013. The interviewees included 11 females and 2 males, and their ages varied between 19 and 36 at the time of volunteering. Roughly half of the participants had studied or worked abroad for 2 months or longer before, but they did not have experience of living in Africa, Asia, or South-America. The following table will explicate the informants' gender, country of volunteering, duration of volunteering, and whether they had prior experience of stay abroad. In the table, merely exchanges and internships that had lasted at least for two months are acknowledged as "prior experience abroad". Thus, if a person had spent holidays abroad, it is indicated as "none" in the table. No further personal information is given about the interviewees in order to protect their anonymity.

Table 1.				
Interviewee	Gender	Country of volunteering	Duration of stay abroad	Prior experience abroad
Volunteer 1	Female	Nepal	5 months	Moved to Finland as a child
Volunteer 2	Female	Ghana	6 months	Work abroad
Volunteer 3	Female	Nigeria	5 months	Study abroad
Volunteer 4	Female	Ghana	6 months	None
Volunteer 5	Female	Costa Rica	9 months	Study abroad
Volunteer 6	Female	Nepal	10 months	None
Volunteer 7	Female	Ghana	6 months	Work abroad
Volunteer 8	Female	Colombia	12 months	None
Volunteer 9	Male	Nepal	12 months	Work abroad
Volunteer 10	Female	Bolivia	12 months	Study abroad
Volunteer 11	Male	Ghana	6 months	None
Volunteer 12	Female	Peru	12 months	None
Volunteer 13	Female	Costa Rica	12 months	None

3.3 Qualitative interview

Qualitative interviewing has been suggested as an ideal method for researching topics in depth (Reinard, 2008), and accordingly, it was chosen as the data gathering method for the present study, too. Previous research on empathy has often been conducted by quantitative methods such as questionnaires and scales (Batson et al., 2002; Batson et al., 2003; Davis, 1980; Hansen, 2010). Based on the definitions of empathy, however, it is a combination of individual's emotional, cognitive, and behavioral processes in relation to other people (Calloway-Thomas, 2010), which gave reason to believe that in-depth understanding of empathy could best be captured relying on qualitative

interview as a data gathering method. Previous studies looking at learning and transformation processes as a result of stay abroad have also been conducted by qualitative methods (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004), which perhaps further supports the present choice of method.

In conducting the interviews, the aim was to provide the participants with a relaxed conversation-like environment where they could freely share their personal views, as is typical of qualitative interviewing (Reinard, 2008). Applying principals of grounded theory, the interviews did not follow a completely identical pattern. Instead, specifying questions were added in the course of the interviews, the questions were not always asked in the same order, and the exact wording of them varied. This type of flexibility has been stated to give room for spontaneously occurring stories of the interviewees (Warren, 2002) and to keep the researcher close to the data (Charmaz, 2002; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012).

The interview questions were formulated relying on the understanding of empathy that was established in chapter 2. Some pre-existing empathy questionnaires and scales were also scanned in the process of defining direction for the interviews. The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (Wang et al., 2003) and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980, 1983), for example, appeared among previous empathy scales that have often been referred to. Both of these scales aim to map thoughts and feelings in relation to difference. More closely, the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy is built around four categories: empathic feeling and expression, empathic perspective taking, acceptance of

cultural difference, and empathic awareness (Wang et al., 2003). The Interpersonal Reactivity Index, in turn, consists of the categories of perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy (Davis, 1980, 1983). Previous questionnaires concerning empathy similarly have explored people's attitudes, responses, reactions, and feelings in relation to difference (Batson et al., 2002). Thus, it can be seen that the themes are similar with each other and, for the most part, also coincide with the definitions and dimensions of empathy introduced in chapter 2. This gave support for formulating the interview questions accordingly.

Even though previous questionnaires and scales represented themselves as valid support for theme building, they could not be utilized as such since the questions and statements in them were too specific for the purposes of qualitative interviewing. Statements included in the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy such as "It is easy for me to understand what it would feel like to be a person of another racial or ethnic background other than my own." or "I don't understand why people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds enjoy wearing traditional clothing." (Wang et al., 2003, p. 225) appear somewhat suggestive. For purposes of qualitative interviewing, open-ended questions have been suggested as more suitable (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Ruusuvuori, Nikander, & Hyvärinen, 2010). Accordingly, the goal was to maintain the wording of the questions as far from allusive as possible and to give the participants an opportunity to speak about matters specifically significant for them. In order not to suggest answers within the questions, the actual word empathy was also not explicitly used. Prior to the actual

interviews, a pilot interview was conducted and pre-analyzed in order to test the functionality of the order and formulation of the questions. The pilot interview revealed no major problems, and the questions were at that point retained as they were.

The interviews were divided into perceptions before, during, and after to subtly guide the participants to talk about possible change or personal development. Chronological organization of the questions was further utilized to facilitate comparison of pre-existing and possibly renegotiated views. Questions concerning time before the volunteering period such as "Why did you want to do voluntary work abroad?" were presented to explore the underlying motivations for participating in the program. Participants were also asked about their expectations in relation to their target culture in order to map possible positive or negative preconceptions and attitudes.

In discussing the time abroad, the emphasis was on encounters with the new culture and its representatives. By asking questions such as "How would you describe encounters with the local people?", "Did you make friends?", and "Was it easy to understand the habits and rules of the new culture?", the purpose was to find out how the informants experienced, explained, reacted to, identified with, and understood difference. Simultaneously, it was of interest to learn about the quality of the intergroup contacts within the new culture and their relation to the dimensions of empathy. In the section concentrating on the perceptions after return, the goal was to discover what the participants had learned and whether the intervention

affected their relation to difference, self-development, or motivation for social action. The full interview frame can be found in appendix 1.

The number of interviews was not defined beforehand; instead, interviews were carreived on until a perceived theoretical saturation point was reached. A theoretical saturation point is reached when gathering new data would not provide the researcher with new observations or when it would not change the theoretical model built based on the data (Reinard, 2008; Ruusuvuori et al., 2010; Silverman, 2006). It is noted, however, that in human sciences a saturation point might not ever really be achieved since every single individual would always bring something new to the data (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010). Thus, in practice, reaching the saturation point in an interview study is more a subjective decision made by the researcher, "a feeling of familiarity and repetition of similarities and differences" in the data (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010, p. 354). Accordingly, in the context of the present study, data gathering was perceived to be complete after 13 interviews and a pilot interview. At this point, reoccurrence of similar themes as well as exceptions to the general opinions in the data could clearly be identified.

3.4 Analytical procedure

Principals of grounded theory analysis were utilized in the analytical procedure of the present study since it has been stated to well match the goals of qualitative interviewing (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012). Some of the most

foundational ideas of grounded theory are simultaneous data collection and analysis (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012) and constant comparison of newly occurring categories with the initially established categories (Reinard, 2008). These notions about analytic procedure appear to be reflective of reality where simultaneous analysis might be inevitable whether it is planned or not, which gave reason to believe that relying on principals of grounded theory is justified. In the present research context, analysing the data also started simultaneously with transcribing the interviews, while interviewing was still in process, and the analysis occurred in multiple, sometimes overlapping phases.

Analysing the data included the following occasionally overlapping phases that reflect the phases of coding identified in relation to grounded theory. While transcribing, the interviews were first listened through several times. Second, the transcripts were read and coded for recurring themes and topics. Simultaneously, notes and ideas of the interconnections were written in the margins. Following grounded theory terminology, these processes can be counted as open coding since their purpose was to define loose categories and recurring topics in the data (Creswell, 2003, 2008). After open coding and initial note-writing, the amount of recurrences of each code identified in the data was calculated in each interview. This systematic re-examination of the codes, or axial coding (Creswell, 2003, 2008), then enabled mapping similar topics together and placing them under suitable headings, aka categories. This type of systematic coding of the data was further conducted in order to maximise the validity of the present study (see Ruusuvuori et al., 2010).

As the recurring codes were noted to either be related to time before, during, or after the stay abroad, the codes were divided in chronological categories, that is, in "motivations and anticipation of contact", "experiences of different cultures", and "outcomes of volunteering". In other words, the recurring codes were strongly noted to reflect the structure of the interview. Finally, evidence of more theoretically oriented coding, aka selective coding (Creswell, 2003, 2008), can be found in chapter 5 where the results are discussed under the three following titles: "the challenge of intercultural empathy", "the relationship between stay abroad and intercultural empathy", and "development of intercultural empathy".

The established categories therefore were not pre-set; in grounded theory, analysing the data is not strictly bound to initially set categories (Charmaz, 2002). The theme empathy, however, was used as a *theoretical lens* to guide the study (see Creswell, 2003). Not acknowledging theory in the early phases of research has been suggested as naive and a possible weakness for grounded theory analysis (Reinard, 2008; Silverman, 2006), which is why it was seen as a good idea to utilize earlier studies of empathy and intergroup contact as a guiding theoretical lens. Thus, even though the present study did not set any hypothesis, the research interest was in the specific topic of empathy in the context of international volunteering from the beginning.

The subjective nature of category-building and coding should further be addressed. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is always interpretive to some extent (Creswell, 2003; Lichtman, 2011), which

was also the case in the present study. This might have affected the different phases of coding, and the codes could have been classified, labelled, and calculated in slightly different ways, too. The present study defined a *turn* of talk as a unit of coding. In practice, this means that if a code was repeated three times in a row within a turn, it was only calculated as one in the phase of axial coding. A change of a turn was defined as a change of a speaker or a change of a subject. If many codes appeared within a turn, however, they were all acknowledged. Codes, in turn, were identified based on recurrence of meaning and explicit repetition of keywords, following techniques of category-building that have been utilized in previous communication research (see Owen, 1984).

As a result of coding and recoding the data, the following categories and codes were identified (see Table 2). They, in other words, reflect the themes and topics that were most often discussed by the 13 interviewees. The right column shows the frequency of each code across the interviews, and the left column indicates the number of interviews in which the code in question occurred. Displaying the frequency of the recurrence of the codes in this way has been noted to add to the transparency and validity of research (Ruusuvuori et al., 2010). Consequently, the codes presented in table 2 were also utilized to give structure for the result chapter, to which the present study will next turn.

Table 2.		
Category	Coded term	Frequency: Interviews/ Total
Motivations and anticipation of contact	Openness	12/16
	Helping	10/12
	Blank mind	6/8
	Stereotypes	10/13
	Positive image	12/21
	Concern	9/13
Experiences of different cultures	Being different	13/42
	Challenge of making friends	9/20
	'Like family'	9/18
	Negative incidents	7/21
	Behavior easy	12/23
	Emotion	12/58
	Reflections on poverty	9/18
	Challenges of understanding	11/49
Outcomes of volunteering	New self	13/24
	Diversified views / new perspectives	10/30
	Identification with immigrants	9/13
	Openness to civic action / responsibility	11/18
	Barriers for civic action	7/8
	Prejudice	3/8
	Realism /cynicism	7/8

4 RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings acquired from the 13 interviews. After various phases of coding the data, the present chapter was formulated to reflect the themes and topics that were most often addressed by the informants. The subtitles are therefore partly equivalent to the coded terms presented in table 2, but some topics with fewer recurrences were gathered under new headings. Chronological order that naturally occurred in the data was perceived reader-friendly and for this reason utilized in the presentation of the results, too. Accordingly, the three main categories are "motivations and anticipation of contact", "experiences of different cultures", and "outcomes of volunteering".

As the word empathy was never mentioned in the interview questions, it was hardly explicitly addressed in the volunteers' talk either. For this reason, bearing the theoretical background presented in chapter 2 in mind is recommendable when reading the chapter at hand. In order to facilitate this, connections between the dimensions of empathy and interview data will briefly be explicated at the beginning of each sub-chapter. This should offer direction for identifying manifestations of empathy in the volunteers' talk.

The purpose of the present chapter is to provide a comprehensive overview of the interview data, and therefore views and topics less descriptive of the data will also be given some visibility. To achieve as rich a description as possible, multiple extracts of the data will be provided to illustrate the topics. This is done as a profound description and illustrations of the data are

noted to increase validity of research (Creswell, 2003). These extracts presented within the present chapter are translations from Finnish to English, which should be kept in mind reading the extracts. In the translations, preservation of both the contents and style of the answers was pursued. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that some part of the originality may have been lost in the process of translation. The original Finnish quotes can be found in appendix 2, and thus, speakers of Finnish have the possibility to view pieces of the volunteers' talk in the form that was originally produced by them. In the present chapter, the informants will be referred to as V1, V2, V3, and so forth, V being an abbreviation of the word volunteer and the number indicating which volunteer is in question (see Table 1).

4.1 Motivations and anticipation of contact

The topics that the informants most often addressed concerning their thoughts prior to the volunteering period were interest and openness for different culture and motivation to help other people and the world. Mostly, the informants held positive preconceptions of their future target cultures, but sometimes the preconceptions were also slightly stereotypical, generalizing, or prejudiced. The anticipations of contact further included concerns about possible disease and dangerousness of the target country. In chapter 2, it was concluded that positive outgroup attitudes can be related to intercultural empathy (Batson et al., 2002; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Vescio et al., 2003; Stephan & Finlay, 1999), which, by contrast, suggests that negative

outgroup attitudes and prejudice may be treated as signs of lack of empathy. Motivation to help and ethical responsibility, in turn, were suggested as possible characteristics of the "final stage of empathy" (Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010). These notions might be useful reading the following chapters where the ideas presented above shall be developed.

4.1.1 Openness for different cultures

Prior to stay abroad, the informants typically had a positive and open attitude towards different cultures and different ways of life. Many of the informants fought not to have too many pre-formed ideas of their target culture since they wanted to enter the new culture with an open mind. The positive attitude towards different cultures was further indicated by an urge to experience new things and engage in an adventure. Two of the informants even explicated that they wanted to go "far, to a most different place" (V7) or to "a least Western place" (V10). Curiousness towards difference seemed to be, in fact, one of the two main reasons for wanting to participate in the international volunteering program in the first place. In the following extract, descriptive of the data, V10 talks about her reasons for wanting to volunteer in Bolivia.

> *V10: I wanted to experience something completely new that I haven't experienced before and to get an experience of being in another side of the world (…) you get to know the habits and the country in a whole different way when you work there for longer (…) and it is the most different of the South-American countries as the others are more Western.* (1)

The informants generally had a particularly positive attitude towards the culture they were planning to enter, which often sealed their personal choice of the country. Often the informants did not know much about the specific country, and they, consequently, rather had a pre-constructed positive image about the continent. People were expected to be friendly, welcoming, and relaxed, whereas the places were expected to be rather calm, safe, and beautiful in terms of nature. Expectations concerning Africa and African people, for example, included somewhat romanticized expressions such as "fascinating", "the most authentic", "mama Africa", and "being able to enjoy life" (V11). Sometimes the positive images were based on perceived familiarity of the continent, but more often they derived from videos or stories told by people who had already visited the countries in question.

4.1.2 Generalizations, concerns, and prejudice

As noted above, the informants were generally open towards different cultures and held positive preconceptions of their target cultures. The preconceptions, however, occasionally were somewhat generalizing, stereotypical, or prejudiced, too. Many of the informants, for example, stereotypically expected different perceptions of schedules and punctuality. The informants particularly going to Latin America were expecting a so-called "mañana-culture". In general, the most common preconception among the informants was that people in their future target cultures would be friendly, hospitable, and out-going. Another commonly shared preconception was expected poverty and lack

of development in the target countries. V1, for example, expected Nepal to be "something like our summer cabin in Russia in the 90's". V10's anticipations concerning Bolivian culture and people were again typical of the data, which is demonstrated in the extract below.

> *V10: I assumed that they are very open and it might be easy to get along and get to know people (...) you could imagine that they are easily approachable people and I had also thought that everything does not necessarily work like in Finland that people might be late and stuff (...) I thought that I have to get used to the different way of life.* (2)

On the other hand, quite a few participants perceived their future target country as somewhat dangerous, and many were concerned about health-related threads. Unsafety and crime were preconceptions identified by many, and consequently, V6, V10, and V12, for example, were worried about moving alone or getting robbed in the streets. V6 further explicated that she was quite afraid and, accordingly, prepared herself to the possibility that "I might return home as handicapped". More closely, the informants who volunteered in African countries often named disease such as malaria as their main concern.

Furthermore, a few of the informants held somewhat negative preconceptions of the representatives of the different culture that can be interpreted as a degree of prejudice. V2, for example, perceived Ghanaians as somewhat naïve, whereas V3 further suggested that "Nigerians have a certain reputation, as known, that they are not necessarily very honest people". V12 similarly reported that prior to her stay in Peru she perceived the gender roles as somewhat "old-fashioned" and Peruvian men as "invasive". It should be noted, however, that in many of the cases of these generalizations, the

informants were aware of them. An example of awareness of stereotyping and generalized views is displayed below, after which the present chapter turns to introduce the identified motivation of will to help.

> *V5: I knew barely nothing of the country (...) I thought that it is tropical and green and all exotic fruits and animals and stuff. I knew a few people, of course I cannot define the whole nation based on that but I thought they'd be very relaxed and happy and careless (...) I generalized the whole Latin America (...) Latin music and a lot of dance and spicy food and stuff based on Mexico. (3)*

4.1.3 Will to help

All interviewees, except for one, expressed some sort of will to help others as one of their main motivations for participating in the volunteering program, alongside with the interest towards different cultures. The majority of the informants therefore expressed a similar two-folded motivation that led to their decision to volunteer. Volunteering was perceived as a "fair, good deed" (V8) and as "unselfish" (V6), which is why it was seen to be a good idea. Some of the informants further explained that they wanted to help through volunteering since "we have everything here [in Finland]" (V1, V3). The following extract by V6 illustrates how a will to help together with an interest in different culture and a desire for self-development motivated her to participate in the volunteering program.

> *V6: In year 2004 or 2005 I already spoke about it that I would like to go somewhere to participate in development cooperation or to a developing country (...) maybe then it was a will to help or an image about it (...) but one of the reason was that I wanted away from Finland (...) it wasn't about saving the world but about helping but I realized that I wanted to get into the culture and it was important for me to get in to the culture and with*

> *Maailmanvaihto it was possible to live in a family so you got really*
> *close to the culture (…) for myself getting into the culture was more*
> *important.* (4)

Some informants overtly spoke about wanting to help people or to work with people. In other words, some informants were more specific about wanting to help people at the level of an individual. V13, for example, specified that she hoped to work with children in an orphanage. A part of the interviewees, however, were more ambitious in their urges to help and seemed to feel a certain responsibility towards the whole world. V2 and V5, for example, stated that they wanted to give their personal contribution to the world, whereas V3 and V6 were motivated to be involved in development work. The next chapter will turn to shed light on how the expectations and motivations described above coincided with the reality faced during the informants' stay abroad.

4.2 Experiences of different cultures

Firstly, the purpose of this sub-chapter is to describe the nature and quality of intergroup contact between the informants and local people of their target countries. Exploring the topic appears important since earlier in chapter 2 it was noted that quality of intergroup contact is essential in terms of the consequences, which may further include empathy (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998). Secondly, the aim is to clarify how the informants related to and talked about the different cultural ways they encountered since relations to "the other" can offer insights to empathy (see Hoffman, 2000; Holliday et al., 2004;

Thompson, 2001). The seven topics that arose from the data were being different, difficulty of making friends, being like family, negative incidents, challenges of understanding, altering behavior, and emotional rollercoaster. The first four topics (being different, difficulty of making friends, being like family, and negative incidents) place focus on the nature and quality of intergroup contact experienced by the volunteers, whereas the rest of the topics (challenges of understanding, altering behavior, and emotional rollercoaster) can be linked to the three dimensions of empathy introduced in chapter 2: cognitive empathy, behavioral empathy, and emotional empathy.

4.2.1 Being different

The majority of the informants repeatedly addressed the topic of "standing out from the crowd". The informants reported that they were constantly approached by the local people due to their different outlooks. Merely one of the informants, V5, clearly stated that she experienced to have "blended in well in Costa Rica". Standing out from the crowd was therefore a phenomenon experienced by the majority of the informants. The local people were told to shout in the street, initiate small-talk, offer help, and ask for favors. The extract by V12 describes well how and where the informants where approached and how the many approaches were mainly explained with positive terms.

> *V12: There you felt different every time you went outside when people stared at you and whistled and might shout something but it was never anything negative. It was safe because I knew that they don't shout anything mean to me (...) they were just interested and they wanted to show that they notice that I am not Peruvian.* (5)

Even though the informants often explained the many approaches with positive terms, they, nevertheless, appeared to be a source of irritation, frustration, anxiety, and difficulty. The way of approaching was often seen as somewhat rude and intrusive, and in that way, as an unpleasant feature of the culture in question. Some such as V11 simply stated that "I didn't like it", and V3 added that "it was irritating when adults also did it as they should realize that other people should not be disturbed". Thus, the reactions related to the ways of approaching were contradictory as the example below from Ghana shows.

> *V2: First I was like 'hey everyone', waving at everyone (...).and then it changed and I thought that 'this is not my thing and I don't want to (...) every third person yells at me 'hey white one where are you going' and I'm like 'it's none of your business' (...) you try to pretend that you don't hear anything and put the volume in your mp3 up and you are like 'don't talk to me'(...) it doesn't come naturally...you constantly have to work and concentrate on not losing your mind.* (6)

The nature of attention was described as special and as something "what it must be like for celebrities" (V2, V11). Some of the informants reported that different outlooks occasionally also led to privileged treatment such as an encouragement to skip the line in a hospital (V2) or children carrying bags for the volunteers (V7), which, in these cases, caused the informants a "bad conscience". There were, however, a few informants who told to have partly enjoyed the attention and low threshold of approaching another person. V7, for example, identified the way of approaching and making small talk as something she perhaps liked the most about Ghana. Similarly, V8 learned to enjoy the special attention she received in Colombia, as is demonstrated below.

V8: At the beginning I got a lot of attention and it was all new so it felt a bit scary and for example when people shouted in the streets and made a lot of contact but it was because of the language and because I didn't know the culture yet and that felt really anxious and scary sometimes (...) at the end I actually learned to enjoy the attention (...) when I came back to Finland I missed it a bit (...) when everyone asked you where you are from and how come your eyes are so lovely and your hair is lovely so you like it somehow but it was sometimes distressing and sometimes nice to be different. (7)

Due to the many approaches, making acquaintances was also perceived to be rather effortless and common. All informants reported to have made a number of acquaintances during their stay abroad. V2, among others, explained that "everyone wanted to be friends with a white person" and that consequently, "it was easy to skip small talk and start talking about subjects more in-depth". Making friends and other in-depth contacts, however, was generally perceived much more challenging, which will be the focus of the following chapter.

4.2.2 Difficulty of making friends

The informants often talked about hindrances and barriers for making genuine friends and establishing in-depth relationships. The previous sub-chapter dealt with informants' experiences of multiple approaches and special attention due to their outstanding appearance. For the same reason, many of the informants felt that it was difficult to build deeper relationships with the local people. The informants somewhat often had a feeling that the local people were not interested in them for their personalities as much as they were in their differing

outlooks. V7, for example, noted that "you don't know whether they really want to be your friends or something else or what they really think". In other words, the informants were sometimes concerned that the locals might have dishonest motives and that their positions in the encounters may be somewhat unequal, as the extract by V11 indicates.

> *V11: In principal it was easy to get to know people but finding people with whom you really click and with whom you are in equal positions somehow, finding that kind of people was much harder because there were a lot of people who would like to be your friends but then it felt a bit difficult. (...) just the unequal position that people come to ask you whether you can get them a visa and a flight ticket when they see you in the street as their second question and they cannot understand why you couldn't do that so it was a bit difficult but you learned to handle the discussions (...) it wasn't the only challenge but it was quite a big one trying to hang in there when almost always somebody wants something else from you than your time or presence. (8)*

Dissimilar backgrounds in terms of education and knowledge were another matter that was perceived as a hindrance for friendship development by a few informants. Not having the same level of education or general knowledge was seen to prevent intergroup contact from reaching an in-depth level. V3, for example, explained that absence of shared educational background significantly complicated her relationship building in Nigeria. By contrast, she was more easily able to befriend with people with similar backgrounds to her own.

> *V3: It might sound bad but the people who had been in schools a bit more (...) who were better educated, with them it was possible to be in the same level in conversations and to reach a deeper level and you didn't have to explain things that are self-evident for us but it's only because they don't have exposure to the information that we have. I'm not saying that anyone would be stupid (...) friendship with people like that is more difficult to achieve because they don't have the same level in knowledge. (9)*

Some of the informants, in turn, suggested that their intergroup contacts remained superficial due to the culture in specific. Some of the volunteers that stayed in Latin America, for example, explained that the people were more superficial in nature, which was a hindrance for making intergroup friends (V5, V12). Another cultural problem that was identified as barrier for establishing friendships was differing gender roles. V1, for example, explained that "it was difficult to befriend with Nepalese women since they stayed at home and with Nepalese men since men and women cannot typically be friends in Nepal".

Even though majority of the informants perceived making friends with the locals somewhat challenging, there were also informants such as V10 and V4 who did not mention any major obstacles. Instead, V10, for example, had a sensation of having done well in the intergroup friendship sector. These informants merely reported practical problems such as difficulties with the language at the beginning of stay abroad. Consequently, the focus of the next chapter will be on the positive intergroup contact experiences that the majority of the informants despite the challenges had.

4.2.3 'Being like family'

As noted above, despite of some challenges in terms of intercultural encounters, many of the informants generally described their intercultural encounters with highly positive terms such as warm, hospitable, and welcoming. V4 told that "elderly people in Ghana were amazingly warm",

whereas V12 reported to have felt to be "loved by the children who made her feel like home" in Peru. V6 and V8 also perceived the people as very supportive and warm, which made their stay comfortable. V7 and V9 similarly reported to have felt extremely welcome due to the friendly behavior of the representatives of their target cultures. In the same way, V13 was highly impressed by the friendliness of people in Costa Rica, as can be seen in the example below.

> *V13: The whole family came to meet me there [at the airport] and (…) we went home and ate and talked and it was so warm somehow (…) the hospitality and genuineness of the people and the warmth is unbelievable (…) when I went to see my workplace for the first time I remember being a little nervous but one of my colleagues came to meet us and he just smiled and said that it is so nice that we have come and at that moment I knew that I am all right and it will be wonderful for sure and such lovely colleagues and I felt welcome. (…) From that on the relations just got deeper and we became a tight group in the workplace (…) it felt like another family to me and I got to know their own families and visited them and the friendships just got deeper and became very significant during the volunteering period and afterwards.* (10)

A few of the informants explicitly described some of their relationships as extremely close by comparing some of their intergroup contacts to "family", similarly to V13 in the extract above. V7, for example, explained that her host mother in Ghana was so lovely that "it was like having my own mom present", whereas V12 had experienced to have had "two new families" during her stay in Peru. Many informants therefore established very positive in-depth intergroup contacts or friendships during their stay abroad.

Not all informants, however, had such extremely positive intergroup experiences with local people. They all reported to have made a few local friends, but not all were positive in their descriptions to the same extent

as the informants above. Quite many informants, on the contrary, noted the irreplaceable value of peer volunteers for them. V4 described the other volunteers as "an unbelievable support network", whereas V1 was of the opinion that the significance of other volunteers in Nepal was so great for her that "it would be unnatural not to mention them". As contrast to the positive intergroup contact experiences presented above, some of the negative incidents that the informants reported shall next be introduced.

4.2.4 Negative incidents

Despite the generally positive descriptions of intergroup contact, almost all the informants had some negative intergroup contact experiences, too. These included not getting along with host families or co-workers or unpleasant encounters in the streets due to being different. V5, for example, felt somewhat lonely in her host family, V7 perceived her host father as "deceitful, mendacious, and greedy", and V6 had differences of opinion with her temporary employee. Often the negative intergroup encounters were reported in cases of absence of care or trust. In these cases, the informants felt that their employees or host families did not care about them or that they were not trustworthy. In the instances of negative encounters, the informants most often referred to individual cases or persons, as in the extract below.

> *V4: He [the head of the orphanage] lied so much and I thought*
> *they were quite twisted and they weren't interested in the children*
> *and how they are, they were only interested in money (...) that was*
> *quite hard sometimes.* (11)

Occasionally, unpleasant incidents were, however, attributed to the culture in question. V8, for example, had experienced an incident of gossiping in Colombia, in relation to which she stated that "that is where the culture went too far". V12, in turn, had a few incidents of Peruvian people agreeing to meet her but cancelling the meeting very late or not coming at all. Consequently, V12 concluded that it was "the classic thing", and that "it seemed to be common there [in Peru]" as becomes apparent in the abstract below.

> *V12: In the gym I got to know a woman (...) [she] gave me her e-mail and phone number (...) and we agreed to meet on Sunday. We didn't agree on a time or place as it's not usually done but then the classic thing happened that I contacted her in the morning and asked where we could meet and she said that the day is not good for her no explanations no apologies (...) it seemed to be very common that people make promises (...) even people you consider to be your friends might stand you off like that and it happened to us many times with my host mother, Maria's host daughter who was our friend there and the host brother that they just didn't show up.* (12)

In fact, there were two informants, V3 and V12, who shared notably more difficult intergroup encounters than the rest of the informants. V12 faced challenges in intergroup encounters with her host mother, colleague, friends, and random acquaintances, whereas V3 reported to have encountered problems with people in her host family, the local ICYE office, and at money exchange office, to name but a few. One of the negative incidents that V3 faced was when her host family asked her to move out without giving her a reason; a part of this negative incident is displayed below.

> *V3: Apparently things weren't going well because one day he told me that I have to leave and I couldn't think of anything why I should've left but I don't know maybe he was a bit of an asshole and then the panic hit me. (...) He lied to me to my face (...) I asked him again to tell me the real reason (...) 'yea yea we need the room', so it was such behavior that you wouldn't expect from an adult (...) it was just incomprehensible.* (13)

Contrary to the examples of negative incidents displayed in the above chapters, many of the informants did not report any specific negative intergroup experiences, except for the contradictory approaches due to being different that were already addressed in 4.2.1. Many of the informants, however, occasionally experienced misunderstandings or confusion in relation to cultural differences during their volunteering period, to which the results will next turn.

4.2.5 Challenges of understanding

In the data, it was common that the informants faced challenges of understanding different ways of viewing, valuing, and behaving. The lack of understanding varied from "wondering" to "incomprehensible" differences and finally, to degrees of derogation. The informants also talked about "imagining other perspectives" and "identifying" with the other, the meanings of which seemed to overlap with "understanding". This sub-chapter aims to map when the informants experienced challenges in terms of understanding, and on the other hand, when they experienced sensations of understanding.

It appeared that the informants faced challenges of understanding when values occurred very different from their own. V5 summarized the matter by saying that "sometimes people have quite different views and you just cannot look from the other perspective". V2, for her part, reported that the

Ghanaian people simply surprised her over and over again and that they were always able to "exceed the expectation of what is peculiar". V11, who also volunteered in Ghana, was perhaps one of the people who struggled the most with value differences, as it appears in the extract below. The difficulties of understanding that he told to have faced resulted in negative emotional reactions, which was typical of the data in general. In the following example, challenges of understanding result in somewhat derogating thoughts, as V11 ends up speculating whether Ghanaians are "stupid".

> *V11: No no no (...) it wasn't always easy [to understand] because they don't believe in development in the same way (...) I had quite rough self-examination crises (...) the hardest thing was the self-hatred when your own values are contradictory to how you experience things everyday so I often had a feeling that Ghanaians are stupid somehow and they don't get how the things could be done (...) and then I felt that I cannot think like that cause all people are equal and for example in the orphanage they replaced toilet paper with pages from their school books. It was like you are poor people to begin with and this education might be your chance to change things (...) I had quite many feelings of frustration. (14)*

Often the value differences that were perceived difficult to understand dealt with issues of equality or physical violence. "Western equality seemed to be rooted deep" in many of the volunteers, as V6 formulated the matter. V1 identified it as "the hardest thing that in Nepal women's place was among other women and men's place was higher" whereas V4 stated that she could not quite understand the traditional hierarchical order in the orphanage where no one could argue with the boss nor the "use of spanking as a method for bringing up children". V10, in turn, struggled to understand the arranged marriages in Nepal since they seemed to be "more about sadness than joy". V2's perception of universal equality had further been shaken when some

Ghanaian people had suggested that "they couldn't survive without white people", as can be seen in the next extract.

> *V2: We ended up discussing differences between black and white and he explains that they wouldn't survive without white people (...) because white people even invented the bicycle that he is riding (...) and that he couldn't work without white people and that God has given white people bigger brain (...) and we try to explain that it's not thanks to us he's working (...) we were just shaking our heads that this doesn't make any sense and we just thought how we could make these people believe that they are as good as us when they think like that themselves. (15)*

Other repeated challenges in terms of understanding were different time perception and social culture. Firstly, V6 referred to time perception as "the first and only crash" that she encountered during her time in Nepal. V12 further wondered "why on earth" people in Peru did not manage time "more efficiently". At least V2, V6, and V12 reported challenges of understanding together with feelings of frustration as a consequence of being "stood up" or people being late. Secondly, many of the informants who had been to Latin America shared challenges of understanding in relation to the social culture. The culture was perceived to be overly dramatic by V5 and V8, who compared life in Costa Rica and Colombia to "soap opera". V12, in turn, suggested that her host mother in Peru was superficial in a way. These features of the social culture in Latin America evoked contradictory reactions; they were occasionally disliked but mainly seen as harmless. In the extract below, V8 balances between understanding and not understanding and between reasoning and feeling uncomfortable.

> *V8: It was very difficult for me when people there in Colombia sometimes gossip so much. It is where I didn't understand the culture at all (...) it was so hilarious (...) the mother of the family worked in their store all day long and the customers always told her what they saw around and they created a horrible hullabaloo*

behind my back (...) that I and Juan would have an affair which was so not true (...) the amount of gossiping was completely incomprehensible (...) that would never happen in Finland (...) about that I felt very uncomfortable. (16)

Moreover, a few of the informants argued that understanding people that suffer from extreme poverty is impossible since their experiences are very far from their own experiences. V1, for example, suggested that "one cannot identify with what is going on in those children's minds when they have experienced such things" as she talked about children in her orphanage, and V8 was also of the opinion that Finland and Colombia are so different that "one cannot even imagine". Only one of the informants, V12, reported an opposite view by stating that she was easily able to identify with the poor in Peru, whereas the world of the rich was beyond her understanding. The extract below, however, demonstrates the more often made point regarding the challenge of understanding in relation to extreme poverty.

V6: It's like you cannot understand it how it would be like to live if you only had a bag (…) what is human life like (…) if in Finland someone lives with social welfare, it's so far from not having shoes. (17)

The informants sometimes speculated that their challenges of understanding more often derived from emotional reacting rather than inability to reason. Accordingly, on one hand, understanding was seen as an ability to rationalize and give reasons for different behavior, whereas on the other hand, it was perceived as feeling in accordance about something. V9, for example, stated that "he was able to understand but some things just did not feel right". V6, in the same way, had noted that she sometimes reacted to difference with a negative emotion but that through processing she was able to understand the

reasons behind an action. The example below by V8 shows how "emotional understanding" and reasoning sometimes might have contradicted.

> *V8: Yea it was easy to understand (…) I understood when I reasoned that they are now late because it is their culture but I can't say that it wouldn't have made me mad. Many times I lost my nerves and inside I was like 'why like this, not like this' but for real I understood when I just thought to myself 'patience'.* (18)

Even though the majority of the informants faced some challenges in terms of understanding the ways of the different cultures, repeated sensations of similarity and increased understanding were also reported. At least V9 and V10 agreed with V4's statement that "you can live in a different culture but life is still the same". V8, in addition, experienced to really understand the Colombian way of living, despite the fact that she also reported occasional challenges of understanding. V13, similarly to V8, strongly felt that she acquired a mutual understanding with people in Costa Rica. These sensations of understanding will more closely be described in 4.3 where the focus is on outcomes of volunteering. All in all, despite the occasional challenges of understanding, the majority of the informants found it easy to adopt new cultural habits, as will be explicated in the next chapters.

4.2.6 Altering behavior

The informants often perceived it as rather easy to alter behavior in regards with the host culture. Rituals and rules related to feasts, eating habits, religion, greeting, and dressing were among the matters that were indicated as easy to adopt or adapt to. V6, for example, told that she often participated in prayers

and songs in Nepal, whereas V9 had without a problem adopted the Nepalese habit of merely eating by hands. V10 similarly was of the opinion that Bolivian habits such as praying before eating, kissing on the cheeks, and formal addressing were easy to adjust to. V4 and V11, in turn, pointed out that it took some time to learn that the left hand is held as impure in Ghana but eventually they adopted the rule. In general, the informants seemed to easily alter their behavior in regards with the habits that they respected, understood, or were fond of. V5, for example, quickly got used to the habit of running late from schedules since she only perceived it to be "nicer and more relaxed". V6, in turn, explicated that she was able to adjust her behavior out of respect towards the Nepalese culture. In the following extract, V7 further talks about the easiness of learning Ghanaian cultural habits.

> *V7: My approach was to go into the culture and trying to act like they do and we were being laughed at sometimes like 'why are you eating like we do' or something but in a well-wishing way. When you go to a different country I think it is a good thing to find out how everything works and to go along with it if it feels ok (...) I am quite adaptable and it happened quite automatically and fast especially as I lived in a host family the culture became really close.* (19)

Not all informants, however, perceived adopting habits of the host culture merely easy. The matters that were a source of difficulty in terms of behavioral adaptation were often in relation to the matters that the informants had difficulty of understanding. V2's observation about adapting describes the occasional difficulty of adapting to different culture: "one would have thought that in six months one would have adjusted a bit and could anticipate behavior but no". V4 also noted that "it wasn't always easy" and that it took her a few months to get used to the habits in Ghana such as "talking all the time".

Matters such as being late or "not keeping promises" (V12), having to ask for permission (V1), and extensive expressions of feelings (V8) were also identified as difficult to adjust to. V1 felt that it was "weird" when she had to ask for a permission of the employer if she wanted to leave the orphanage, and V8 told that the constant kissing and hugging in Colombia made her feel "insecure of whether she had to hug someone or whether she could just leave". In addition, different time perception caused some initial challenges for behavioral alteration as well as it did for understanding, which will be manifested in the following extract. After the extract, the focus will shift on how the experiences of different culture explored here were related to emotions.

> *V10: You always had to think about it when you were going to meet a Bolivian for a coffee for example that they can be an hour late that you can always take something to do in the cafe something to read or a computer or something but you get used to everything. At the beginning it was like 'oh my god where are they' because the Finnish way is so punctual but you got used to that and it's nothing as you know that it is their habit.* (20)

4.2.7 Emotional rollercoaster

In relation to the experiences of different cultures described above, that is, being different, difficulties of making friends, 'being like family', challenges of understanding, and altering behavior, a number of emotional reactions were identified in the data. Overall, many of the informants summarized their time abroad as an "emotional rollercoaster". V12, for example, noted that her "scale of emotions during the year was unbelievable, from an extreme to another". V4 further clarified the emotional extremes that she had experienced by telling that

"she was left with such a warm feeling of the elderly people" but that "sometimes she was about to lose her nerves". V2 similarly explicated that she "loved it and hated it and loved it again", indicating strong emotional variations.

At the other end of the emotional rollercoaster therefore were highly positive emotions. The positive emotions such as liking and enjoying oneself were typically identified in relation to positive intergroup contact experiences. As it became apparent in chapter 4.2, many of the informants had had very positive experiences with the local people and referred to some of them as family. V8, for example, explained that she experienced "wonderful feelings of love and community" during her stay in Colombia. In general, socialness and relaxedness were often identified as cultural features that were much appreciated by the informants. V3, for example, enjoyed the habit of greeting neighbors in the street in Nigeria in a similar way that V2 and V7 liked "the non-existent threshold of approaching another person" in Ghana.

By contrast, many informants sometimes reacted to different cultural ways with emotions of irritation, frustration, and anxiety. Some informants such as V11 reported to have gone through extremely negative emotions such as "self-hatred" and "feeling like shit" because of the deep value contradictions that he faced during his stay in Ghana. Typically the feelings of frustration and irritation were indeed related to the different cultural ways that the informants did not specifically like or that they struggled to understand. These features of culture included matters such as the way of approaching in

the streets, difference in time perception, and equality perceptions. The extract from V6's interview illustrates well how the informants sometimes reacted with rather negative emotions.

> *V6: It was kind of funny to notice the irritation in me. There was a funny moment when I was walking on the road to the village and a motorcycle drove by and the driver turned to look at me and I was like damn do you have to turn and stare at me and he pulled over in front of me and I just kept walking (...) and the man asked if I need a ride somewhere (...) but my thoughts were horrible (...) and he just wanted to offer help when there was 35 degrees and it was a beautiful thought (...) then I just noticed how I think too long ahead and of course it is important to give the encounter a chance.* (21)

In addition, facing poverty and varying living conditions occasionally evoked emotional reactions. V12 encapsulated her emotional reactions by saying that "it felt unfair and distressing", whereas V4 felt powerless and sceptic about change. V3, in turn, told to have felt sad as "Nigeria is such a rough country where the society doesn't serve anyone". Consequently, V3 told to have encouraged the people she cared about to leave the country. Not all informants, however, reacted to poverty with emotions; instead, V1, for example, stated that "I didn't feel like anything (…) because if I process it, I get distressed and I feel like shit". V9, similarly, noted that "you couldn't live there [Nepal] if you felt too much empathy". In the example below, V8, in turn, tells how establishing relationships with the local poorer people strengthened her emotions of distress.

> *V8: The feelings are contradictory that of course you feel bad for them and it feels unfair (...) I became angry because the children don't have anything and they are happy for little things and enjoy life and we roll around in abundance here and complain so it made me sad and sometimes angry (...) you should relate empathically but you cannot take responsibility for it but I thought about those things a lot (...) I had a deeper relationship with some of the kids (...) when you see where the children come from and it feels bad through that.* (22)

In sum, the informants went through a series of emotions that typically appeared in relation to the encounters with the representatives of different cultures. Negative emotions of anxiety, frustration, and distress appeared in relation to "standing out from the crowd", difficulty of making friends, challenges in understanding, and facing poverty. By contrast, positive emotions of care, compassion, and general enjoyment arose as the informants were able to establish in-depth relationships, as they experienced sensations of understanding, shared similarity, and as they learned to act according to new rules. Often the initially faced challenges were therefore related to the acquired learning. Accordingly, perceived outcomes of stay abroad will be the focus of the next chapter.

4.3 Outcomes of volunteering

In the present chapter, the concentration is on introducing the perceived outcomes of the volunteering experiences. In other words, the following outcomes are something that the informants themselves thought to have learned or how they thought to have changed due to the volunteering experiences abroad. Among the perceived outcomes of the intervention were renegotiated views about self, the world, immigrants in Finland, and civic activity. In general, many informants were extremely impressed by the experience and perceived it to be significant in terms of their current self, views, and actions. As can be remembered from chapter 2, perspective taking, cognitive flexibility,

identification with outgroups, and ethical responsibility have all been pointed out as indicators of empathy (see Boler, 1997; Burneau, 2000; Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Hoffman, 2000; Marx & Pray, 2011; Rios et al., 2003; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Thompson, 2001). Conversely, inability to imagine other perspectives, absence of identification with others or willingness to help may be interpreted as clues for lack of empathy. All in all, renegotiation of pre-existing views has previously been indicated as typical for the process of empathy induction (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), signs of which seemed to be numerous in the data, as will be demonstrated in the chapters below.

4.3.1 New self

The informants often experienced to have learned a great deal or to have changed due to the experience of volunteering abroad. Some of them spoke with extreme terms, such as V8, who told that "the experience revolutionized my whole life, who I am, and what I want do" in life. V5 similarly stated that "I am almost a different person than a year ago" and that "I feel 100 per cent good about myself". Most often the informants identified improved self-confidence and a sort of "I can make it anywhere"-feeling as results of the intervention, as can be seen in the extract below.

> *V7: It was totally one of the most important and greatest experiences of my life. If I hadn't been there, I couldn't even imagine what I would be doing now and I would probably have a different a grasp of life and I wouldn't be so brave and interested in foreigners (…) and I don't have any unnecessary walls around me anymore so I go to new situations and meet new people with my*

eyes open (…) I am so grateful that I had the chance to do it and Ghana is the best. If I meet people from Ghana or hear that someone is going there, I'm so joyful. (23)

Another change in self, identified by approximately half of the informants, was a more relaxed attitude to life. The informants explained the acquired relaxed attitude by the difficulties that they had faced during the stay abroad or by the fact it was a part of local culture that they learned to like. V12, for example, told that she is more relaxed now since "it was quite difficult sometimes" in Peru. V5, in turn, made the point that she currently feels more relaxed "probably because the people were so relaxed there [in Costa Rica]". Below V10 explains how she learned to live more spontaneously due to the time she spent in Bolivia.

> *V10: Before I had my calendar and I was making schedules all the time (…) in Bolivia you don't do anything with a calendar because all the plans are made during the same day so you learn to live in the moment more and you think that you can be more spontaneous and everything doesn't have to be planned that if some plan doesn't work you can come up with a plan b and it is not the end of the world (…) I became a person that is more flexible and who lives and plans more in the moment (…) that was very nice I think.* (24)

Another change that the informants often acknowledged about themselves was a certain gratefulness of their own situation. In other words, seeing different types of circumstances had led to appreciation of one's own situation and conditions in Finland. V1, for example, overtly stated that she "tries to be less picky and rather grateful", and V3 similarly explained that she is "more grateful and humble than before". The next chapters will continue to explicate how the informants' perceptions were reformulated in a holistic way due to the international volunteering experience.

4.3.2 Renegotiated views and recognized perspectives

The informants commonly stated that they had acquired new ways of thinking and renegotiated some of the pre-existing ones. A few of the informants perceived the change in their thinking as rather holistic. V8, for example, said that "I think differently about everything" and that "I am able to place myself in another person's position in everything". V9 similarly stated that "I constantly realize new things" due to the stay in Nepal, whereas V5 explained that the intervention had awoken new interest in matters such as consumer choices and environmental matters. In the extract below, V12 also talks about having acquired new perspectives or "shades" to her thinking.

> *V12: I think [differently] about quite a lot of things (…) for example child labor. This sounds bad but before I had a very black-and-white view that all child labor is bad but now that I have seen that it is part of the Peruvian culture and that the whole family participates in earning the living and many children see it as playing (…) and they are very proud when they can participate but of course if it is very burdensome or if it is in the way of going to school it is bad (…) [but] I don't see that as that bad anyway so somehow I have obtained new shades to my thinking. (25)*

For some of the informants, stay abroad did not merely shape their perceptions about themselves and views on the world; instead, many renegotiated their views related to other "Westerners" or Finnish people. The generally shared idea among these informants seemed to be that most Finns lack certain understanding that they could perhaps acquire by spending a similar period in a foreign culture. For example, V7 suggested that many people in Finland "look at the world from a tiny hole" and that they should become aware of the matter that "there are people who think differently than

your friends". It was therefore often suggested that people in Finland lack appreciation of their situation and may complain without a proper reason. In the following extract, V3 expresses quite strong feelings of frustration resulting from her renegotiated perceptions of other Finns.

> *V3: I feel sorry for people who go there in the streets and they are so dressed up and they are so important (...) they live on a surface layer (...) exposure to such circumstances [Nigeria] would do good for every Finn (...) we have reached a point where we just have to get a boob job and inject Botox to the lips (...) people say that they have in-depth thoughts and that they want to help but nothing happens (...) here people complain, and I understand (...) but people complain about such small things and I'm like 'you should've seen that thing there and you'd be more quiet' (...) they should get another perspective for how well things actually are here. (26)*

Moreover, among the renegotiated views were increased realism, cynicism, and "not knowing anything" (V12). V7, for example, told that she learned that "you cannot trust every person you meet", whereas V2 speculated that she became somewhat cynical towards the world since she felt that "it is such a long way and I don't know where we should aim at". V4, in turn, noted that she sometimes felt "powerless" in front of the "cycle of poverty". Despite these experienced feelings of powerlessness, for the majority, the renegotiation processes also resulted in a more positive relation to immigrants in Finland, as will be shown next.

4.3.3 Relation to immigrants in Finland

Clear majority of the informants reported that after their experience they have been able to somehow better identify with immigrants in Finland and that they

can now better understand immigrants' situation. V9, for example, stated that he understands how it feels to be as a foreigner in a country, and V2 further specified that she is able to understand what it is like when "everyday life is full of challenges". Many other informants clarified that they are able to identify with being different or being an outsider in a new environment. V10, for instance, explicated that she learned to understand "how it feels when people stare at you and stuff". Similarly, V8 had occasional experiences of being an outsider, which seemed to have resulted in identification with people in similar situations.

> *V8: After the experience I can identify much better [with immigrants] and I thought about it quite many times when we were having lunch and fifteen teachers laugh and talk and I don't understand anything and then you started thinking that it is not easy for immigrants (...) I think it is so unfair that in Finland people have the attitude towards immigrants that 'they don't even speak Finnish let's not talk to him' and I was admired (...) and people were curious (...) and I can identify with how it feels to be out (...) and [what] it might feel like good or bad treatment for me at least.* (27)

Even though many of the informants thought that they can better identify with immigrants after their experience of living in a different culture, limits to the identification were acknowledged. In fact, V4, V7, and V13 all made a similar observation that they cannot identify with refugees since their situation is very different from their own situation. V4 specified that refugees "have their own problems", and V7 noted that she was abroad only for 6 months whereas refugees often plan to stay. V13 further added that she is not able to identify with refugees in Finland since she is not able to imagine their "pain".

According to quite a few informants, the sense of increased understanding towards immigrants had, however, been manifested as a lower threshold of approaching people with foreign backgrounds in Finland and as a desire to make foreigners feel welcome. V1, for example, stated that she would gladly "have to do with immigrants so much" and that in her opinion, "everything should be done for them to feel like home". For some, the reason for wanting to be friendly with immigrants was that they had been treated in a friendly manner during their stay abroad, an example of which is displayed below.

> *V7: And encountering foreigners here, it is like there [in Ghana] they were so friendly and if I asked for advice or directions, the person might just walk me there even though he had other plans. I felt grateful and I thought that when I'm in Finland I'll try to pay back somehow and I have tried to be really friendly and notice foreigners and take them into consideration.* (28)

By contrast, occasional prejudice towards foreign people in Finland could also be identified in the data. V3, for example, stated that "representatives of certain cultures don't want to integrate, want to get money, and make big families". In the same way, V3 described the representatives of her volunteering country with rather negative terms as she stated that people in Nigeria "are a little twisted, some of them" and that "some will try to take advantage of you". Accordingly, V3 did not report to identify with immigrants in Finland. Overall, the informants, however, talked very positively about immigrants in Finland, which indicates that the case of V3 is an exception in the data. Some other informants also showed signs of prejudice, but in a slightly different way, as is demonstrated in the extract below. After the

extract, the focus will shift on the final outcome of volunteering: openness towards civic action.

> *V2: She [her friend] asked me 'did you become a bit racist there'(…) if you think about racism, it's not only negative but it's about prejudice in a way (…) so I think I became like that (…) racist thinking doesn't mean that you think negatively about foreigners but that you are prejudiced towards them but they can in principal be positive [and] that I have (…) I see that differently now somehow than before the trip (…) 'that's a dark-skinned person, it's easy to approach them or they easily approach others' (…) so I became a racist.* (29)

4.3.4 Openness towards civic action

The informants often reported a positive attitude and an interest in participating in the society or in the activities of different non-governmental organizations as a result of stay abroad. For example, V10 told that she would gladly participate in activities where she meets people from different backgrounds, whereas V13 thought that she might volunteer in a children's home. For all informants, the positive attitude had not led to any concrete changes, but quite a few informants had also taken actions on the matter. V2, for example, told that she has done social work and encouraged other people to do the same. V4 and V7 further reported that they had been involved in the activities of Maailmanvaihto ry, and V4 had also signed up for volunteering with immigrant women and children. Below, V11 talks about his future plans that seem to speak for openness towards civic actions and global considerations.

> *V11: I am going to activate myself and apply for Taksvärkki ry or something (…) I think I am going to act strongly (…) I am going to work with developmental questions more or less (…) I would like to write my thesis from within a developing country (…) I would like to act in a way that world economy would be more equal and that*

> *people would have more chances to influence their lives (...) and global value chains.* (30)

Many informants therefore expressed interest in civic activities, but practical barriers were also identified. Roughly half of the informants concluded that they had not really contributed in the form of civic activities. Commonly, lack of time and unwillingness to commit due to studies, work, or family were identified as reasons for not having participated in civic actions. V2 further made the observation that returning home to everyday routines easily makes one forget the abroad discovered intentions. Thus, the many outcomes of volunteering included renegotiating various pre-existing views, but the renegotiations were not always realized in actions.

4.4. Summary

The present chapter gave the floor to the voices of the interviewees by presenting themes and topics that were repeatedly and most frequently discussed by the interviewees themselves. The results were divided to motivations and anticipation of contact, experiences of different cultures, and outcomes of volunteering. The most often discussed motivations and anticipations of contact were initial interest and openness towards the target cultures and a will to help or "contribute to the world". The informants had somewhat stereotypical views about their target cultures, but they were often aware of their stereotypical views or fought not to have them. Merely few informants reported slightly prejudiced or negative stereotypes.

In relation to experiences of different cultures, the informants often talked about challenges of understanding due to differences in equality perceptions and cultural differences such as differing time perception. Many also experienced to have "stood out from the crowd", which complicated establishing in-depth friendships with the local people. Challenges of understanding, experiences of being different, and occasional negative encounters with the locals often resulted in rather negative emotions of anxiety, distress, and frustration. On the other hand, most informants managed to establish in-depth relationships with the locals and many ended up with sensations of shared similarity and understanding the local culture. Furthermore, learning new cultural habits was generally perceived as easy. These experiences resulted in positive emotions of liking, enjoyment, and compassion for the locals. Facing poverty during the time abroad, in turn, varyingly resulted in compassion and care, distress, or neutral reasoning.

Finally, the experiences abroad resulted in renegotiated views in terms of self, other Finns, the world, foreigners in Finland, and civic actions. In practice, these outcomes of the intervention included increased openness and relaxedness, new perspectives, identification with foreigners in Finland, and a motivation to participate in civic actions. By contrast, among the reported outcomes were also realism, cynicism, and decreased understanding of representatives of one's original culture. The motivation to participate in civic actions was further somewhat often hindered by everyday life. Next, the

present study will turn to unfold these phenomena in the light of previous research on empathy, intergroup contact, and cultural sojourning.

5 DISCUSSION

The present chapter will focus on unravelling how empathy emerged in the informants' talk and how the emergences of empathy were linked to intergroup contact. As the previous chapter gave the floor to the voices of the volunteers, the present chapter shifts the focus to a more theoretical level, attempting to point out links between the present data and previous notions of empathy. The following chapters will further speculate possible explanations behind the phenomena that appeared in the volunteers' talk, seeking support from previous research looking at contexts of intercultural sojourning. The answers to the research questions of the present study will appear intertwined in the discussion and should therefore be kept in mind reading the chapter at hand. The research questions, initially introduced in chapter 3.1, were the following:

RQ1: What aspects of empathy do emerge meaningful in volunteers' talk?

RQ2: What is the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy like in context of international volunteering?

More closely, the three objects of interest in the discussion will be the identified challenging nature of intercultural empathy, the relationship between empathy and intergroup contact, and finally, development of intercultural empathy. These three themes are interconnected and heavily overlap; the challenges occur due to intergroup contact, which further makes it a characteristic of the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy. Development of intercultural empathy, in turn, may follow this challenge posed by intergroup contact. Despite the noted overlaps, the three themes will here be

discussed in separate sections in order to individually give emphasis to each of the topics. Throughout the chapter, the three themes are further discussed in relation to other phenomena that may be relevant in contexts of intercultural volunteering. The topics arising from the volunteers' talk will be reflected in the light of phenomena that have been found to appear in contexts of cross-cultural adaptation, for example, since their possible influence cannot be ignored. Accordingly, it will be suggested that cross-cultural adaptation processes and phases of intercultural empathy may interact.

Even though the present chapter extends to offer possible relations and explanations to the phenomena appearing in the volunteers' talk, it is important to bear in mind that the following discussion is based on the perceptions that the interviewees chose to share with the interviewer. Moreover, the discussion relies on the subjective analysis made by the researcher, which is based on these shared perceptions of the volunteers. Accordingly, the purpose of the present chapter is to discuss *possibilities* in terms of relations and explanations that seem relevant in the context of empathy and intercultural volunteering. The purpose is not to make claims about existing phenomena, to offer straightforward correlations, or to cover all possible explanations. The discussion will begin by looking at the aspect of challenge that arose from the majority of the interviews, proceeding to examine the relationship between empathy and intergroup contact, and finally, advancing to address the issue of possible development of intercultural empathy.

5.1 The challenge of intercultural empathy

The results of the present study seem to support the previous notion that intercultural context poses a challenge to empathy (Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013; Calloway-Thomas, 2010; DeTurk, 2001). As became apparent in chapter 4, the informants quite often tended to struggle to understand some of the different cultural values and behaviors, despite their initially positive attitudes and will to help others. Since challenges seemed to be one of the most discussed topics in the data, it is here brought forth as a characteristic describing empathy in the context of international volunteering. This sub-chapter will therefore unravel the topic of challenge of empathy in the context of intercultural volunteering, firstly, by looking at the nature of the challenges that occurred during the volunteering periods and by discussing possible reasons behind these challenges. Secondly, towards the end of the chapter, the discussion moves to point out when and how the challenges were overcome, simultaneously suggesting possible explanations for why the challenges might have been overcome.

5.1.1 Exploring the challenges

Typically, as the challenges of understanding occurred, the informants were not able to see from another point of view, which is agreed to be a grounding characteristic of empathy (Burneau, 2000; Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Hoffman, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). In this way, the

results showed consistency with the notion made by Rios et al. (2003) that perspective taking process might be a challenge for understanding, at least in the context of international volunteering. As understanding different ways has further been referred to as a synonym for empathy (DeTurk, 2001; Howe, 2013; Thompson, 2001), it can be suggested that the faced challenges in terms understanding indicate faced challenges regarding intercultural empathy. In the data, these challenges of understanding were particularly typical during the initial phases of stay abroad. Many informants told that they had difficulties at first but that they learned to handle the differences as time went on. Next, the discussion will turn to look at possible reasons for why understanding and imagining other perspectives might be challenged in contexts of cross-cultural sojourning, particularly during the initial phases.

In previous literature looking at cross-cultural adaptation, it has often been noted that psychological and sociocultural adjustment is the most difficult during the initial phases of sojourning (Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998). During these phases sojourners might suffer from high *anxiety* (Gudykunst, 2003), *cognitive fatigue* (Winkelman, 1994), *cognitive dissonance* (Stephan & Finlay, 1999), and *acculturative stress* (Berry, Poortinga, Breugelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011) as they find themselves in a different cultural environment where their pre-existing cognitive and behavioral schemas prove inoperative. All these phenomena introduced above might hinder the ability to see from another perspective. Some of these phenomena together with negative emotions and hostile attitude towards the new culture may also be seen as symptoms of *culture shock* (Gaw, 2000; Ward et al., 1998;

Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Winkelman, 1994). Thus, it appears possible that initial challenges of understanding and empathy that were identified in the data might have actually been related to cross-cultural adjustment processes. These ideas shall be developed below.

As noted above, one of the possible explanations behind challenges of empathy might be high anxiety that typically occurs in different cultural environments (Gudykunst, 2003). In general, the process of adjusting to a new culture has been stated to be stressful in nature (Berry et al., 2011; Kim, 2001; Ward et al., 1998; Ward et al., 2001), and accordingly, negative emotional reactions such as anxiety and frustration have been suggested as possible consequences of this type of acculturative stress (Berry et al., 2011). Gudykunst (2003) has further proposed that when anxiety is very high, people might start relying on a so-called automatic pilot, which means that they interpret different cultural behaviors merely according to their own value systems, ignoring possible existence of alternative ways to view the world.

In the data, anxiety was often mentioned in relation to being different and in relation to different ways to handle time, for example. In these occasions, the informants seemed to feel that they were treated intrusively or with dishonesty, which might be a sign of interpreting the different behaviors relying on their own cultural frame of reference and ignoring other possible ways to view making contact and time. Relation to proxemics and time, in turn, have been noted among some of the major differences that might exist between different cultures (Hall, 1981), which may explain why they could have been

possible sources of anxiety for the informants of the present study, and thus, of inability to empathically see from another perspective.

Overall, in the data, the challenges of understanding different cultural ways seemed to be accompanied by a series of negative emotions such as irritation, anxiety, and frustration that have been negatively linked with empathy (Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Above anxiety was already noted as a typical reaction in intercultural contexts (Gudykunst, 2003), and together with symptoms such as frustration and hostility, the phenomenon indeed resembles symptoms of culture shock (see Gaw, 2000; Ward et al., 1998; Ward et al., 2001; Winkelman, 1994). These negative emotions occasionally occurred together with prejudice and derogation of others that have further been identified as clues of lack of empathy (see Hoffman, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). In this context, however, they can perhaps also be interpreted as culture shock-related hostility. Thus, it seems that in the whirls of culture shock, intercultural contexts might pose a challenge to intercultural empathy as these appearing negative ways to relate to the other may stand in the way of empathic perspective taking.

Another possible explanation underlying the challenges of understanding and empathy might be cognitive dissonance. In the volunteers' talk, the challenges in understanding were typical in the presence of notable value differences, for example, in relation to different views on equality and usage of physical punishment, which sometimes led to experienced inner conflicts between self and the environment. Encountering significant value

differences has been stated to possibly result in cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1985), creating a disturbing contradiction between one's initial value system and the new value system. In the data, physical violence towards children was stated as something that could never be understood even though it had to be tolerated. Previously, it has been suggested that empathy is more challenging when fundamental differences occur (Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013; Olson & Kroeger, 2001), which therefore seemed to be the case in the present data, too. Thus, cognitive dissonance might be among explanations why empathy may become challenged in intercultural contexts.

In relation to challenges of understanding different value systems, cognitive fatigue has also been stated to play a role (Winkelman, 1994). Winkelman (1994) has noted that in the presence of notable differences in values and behaviors, aka in the presence of notable *cultural distance* (Ward et al., 2001), one might end up with cognitive fatigue. Cognitive fatigue in the context of intercultural sojourning refers to the overload of new information and attempts to understand the surrounding environment; these are both processes that do not require any effort when one is surrounded by one's initial culture (Winkelman, 1994). Some of the informants indeed seemed to have experienced that cultural distance exists as they described the other culture as extremely different or unpredictable. In the presence of deep-rooted value differences and different ways to behave, the informants therefore might have faced cognitive fatigue, which again might be among factors explaining the challenging nature of intercultural empathy.

All in all, in the limits of the present study, it remains a speculation what roles each of these phenomenon might have played in the experiences of the volunteers. It can, however, be noted that the identified challenges in terms of understanding and empathy might have had something to do with the interplay of acculturative stress, cognitive fatigue, and cognitive dissonance that in the whirls of culture shock might result in negative emotional reactions and interpretation of different cultural ways with an automatic pilot, leaving no room for empathic understanding or perspective taking. Moreover, the signs of challenges of empathy identified in the chapters above act to answer RQ1 by indicating what opposite aspects of empathy emerged in the volunteers' talk.

The chapters above were built around the idea that empathy and understanding may become challenged in the whirls of culture shock during the initial phases of cross-cultural adjustment. Intertwined in the concept of challenge is the idea of overcoming it; in addition, being challenged might be seen as somewhat negative, whereas overcoming a challenge may be seen as positive. In the present study, inability to understand is also, for the most part, treated as lack of empathy and thus, a type of deficiency that should be overcome. Occasionally, as the informants discussed not understanding violence or maltreatment of children, for example, the setting seemed controversy. It raised the question whether empathy, aka understanding of different habits, should always be pursued. Physical violence towards children, for example, is prohibited in the United Nation's declaration of human rights

(United Nations [UN], 2014), which suggests that all different habits may not merely be treated as cultural. In these instances, it may specifically be lack of understanding that encourages civic action such as protecting children's rights, whereas understanding of that different behavior may merely encourage passiveness. Previously, civic action and responsibility have been pointed out as indicators of high empathy (Boler, 1997; Batson et al., 2003; DeTurk, 2001; Hoffman, 2000), reminding us that understanding alone does not equal empathy. This might be an interesting contradiction to speculate further, but it shall here, nevertheless, be left as a side note, letting the discussion move forward to look at overcoming the challenges.

5.1.2 Overcoming the challenges

As it has become apparent above, the informants somewhat often talked about challenges that they had faced during their stay abroad, but typically they also felt to have overcome many of the challenges. In other words, indicators of empathy could also be identified in the volunteers' talk, which is what the discussion will now turn to. The negative emotions often seemed to be an initial reaction that was followed by talk of regulating these emotions with the support of cognitive perspective taking and reasoning. In other words, the informants were able to come up with possible explanations for different ways to behave despite of the inner feeling of something being wrong. According to earlier research, this may be a sign of sophisticated empathy through imagine-other perspective (see Bennett, 1998; Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Stottland, 1969,

as cited in Batson et al., 2003), cognitive perspective taking ability (see Burneau, 2000; Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Chen & Starosta, 1998; Hoffman, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Zhu, 2011), and empathic emotion regulation (see Decety & Jackson, 2004; Decety & Moriguchi, 2007). To answer RQ1, these cognitive abilities may be treated as aspects of empathy that emerged in the volunteers' talk.

Some of the features of cognitive empathy that the participants identified to have achieved at least partly seem to go hand in hand with some of the cognitive processes related to *acculturation* (see Kim, 2001; Ward et al., 2001). Acculturation, in its entirety, refers to affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes that one undergoes in the process of adjusting to a new culture (Kim, 2001; Ward et al., 2001). Acceptance of new ways together with cognitive flexibility have been noted to be particularly important in the process of acculturation (Winkelman, 1994), signaling that cognitive empathy might play a role in acculturation. Gudykunst (2003) similarly talks about *mindfulness* in intercultural contexts, by which he means creating new categories and becoming aware of new perspectives. Mindfulness is further suggested as a route away from anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunts, 2003). The characterization of mindfulness, too, resembles descriptions of cognitive empathy as can be remembered from chapter 2 (see Burneau, 2000; Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Thus, it appears that empathic perspective taking might play a noteworthy role in the processes of adjusting to a new culture.

In addition to developing cognitive abilities, acquiring new habits and rituals related to greeting, dressing, and eating was generally perceived as easy by the informants. This is in line with previous suggestions that adjusting behavior is often more effortless than adjusting cognitive schemas, for example (Berry et al., 2011; Kim, 2001). Other-regarding behavior has earlier been identified as a significant dimension of empathy (Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Olson & Kroeger, 2001; Zhu, 2011) and as a possible result of renegotiation stemming from intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998). Following other scholars, some of these alterations in behavior such as alteration of greeting habits could also be labelled as communicative empathy (Howe, 2013; Rasoal et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2003). In order to answer RQ1, features of behavioral empathy often emerged in the volunteers' talk.

From the perspective of cross-cultural adaptation, the alterations of behavior that the volunteers reported could also be seen as *behavioral acculturation* (Ward et al., 2001). Altering behavior or behavioral acculturation have further been associated with ethnorelativism that has been described to be manifested through acceptance of new cultural patterns and alteration of one's initial behavioral patterns (Bennett, 1998; Olson & Kroeger, 2001). These notions strengthen the possible relation between empathy and acculturation processes. Altering behavior could therefore simultaneously be seen as a sign of empathic alteration of habits, behavioral acculturation, or an ethnorelative way to view the world. Despite of the perspective, the alteration of behavior that the informants reported perhaps signals an underlying ability to imagine and accept different perspectives.

Reasons underlying overcoming the challenges might be numerous, but only few will be suggested here. Firstly, some of the matters such as cognitive dissonance and acculturative stress identified as causes of challenges might lead to the explanations of overcoming the challenges, too. People have been noted to have a natural tendency to solve cognitive dissonance as it occurs (Festinger, 1985) and, similarly, to reduce stress (Kim, 2001). These might be some of the reason why the informants perhaps engaged in processing the encountered differences, searching for new ways to interpret the world around them. Secondly, many informants of the present study explicitly stated that they wanted to learn the local habits and to "go native" in that sense. In this way, many of the informants of the present study perhaps were relying on *assimilation* as their strategy of adjusting to the new environment, meaning that they were willing to "abandon" their own cultural ways and to adopt new ones (Berry et al., 2011). Personal attributes may further have influenced this willingness to "go native". In addition, simple respect and positive attitude towards others that many of the informants initially told to have had might have promoted alteration of behavior and attempts to understand the new cultural environment.

In relations to the manifestations of empathy identified in the volunteers' talk above, it should, however, be noted that even though many of the volunteers experienced to have acquired an understanding of the other culture, it is not certain that they in reality did so. According to Gudykunst (2003), sojourners might in the presence of low anxiety become overly

confident of their understanding of the host culture, when they typically do not question whether their assumptions of the other culture are accurate. In other words, the sensations of understanding that the informants reported may have sometimes been influenced by false confidence and illusions of understanding. Relying on previous literature on empathy, these possible instances of illusions of understanding might also signal false empathy (Boler, 1997) or superficial identification (Marx & Pray, 2011). These observations should perhaps be kept in mind concerning the results of the present study, too.

All in all, the discussion above drew attention to the possible relation of acculturation processes and empathy: both in terms of the faced challenges and acquisition of empathy. In this sub-chapter, it already emerged that intergroup contact seemed to have a two-folded effect on the volunteers. Intergroup contact was both noted to pose challenges and to possibly play a role in acquisition of empathy. The next section will turn to discuss these ideas related to the relationship of intergroup contact and empathy in more detail, specifically providing answers for RQ2.

5.2 The relationship between stay abroad and intercultural empathy

Intergroup contact has previously been noted to promote intercultural empathy through intergroup friendships (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Pettigrew, 1998; Swart et al., 2011) and renegotiation or pre-existing perceptions and worldviews (Endicott et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

Interestingly, making local friends and facing cultural challenges have also been recognized as important sources of learning in cross-cultural adjustment literature (Kim, 2001; Ward et al., 2001). This might further support the here suggested relation between cross-cultural adaptation processes and development of intercultural empathy. In the present data, the informants both established in-depth intergroup friendships and engaged in renegotiating pre-existing worldviews, indicating that they were exposed to conditions enabling empathy development.

Drawing straightforward connections between "channels" and acquisition of empathy seems challenging based on the present data. Connections between both challenges and empathy and in-depth relationships and empathy were identified, but based on the present interview data, clear specification of what experiences led to what changes might, however, remain a speculation. As the two major ways in which intergroup contact is noted to promote empathy, however, seem to be consistent both in previous literature and the present data, the present chapter will be divided accordingly. The two main focuses of the present chapter shall be "empathy through intergroup friendships" and "empathy through challenging intergroup contact". By discussing these topics, the goal is to speculate ways how intergroup contact might have influenced either acquisition of empathy or evanescence of empathy in the data. As all the influences of contact identified in the data could not directly be placed under these categories, the sub-chapter will be ended with "other influences of intergroup contact".

5.2.1 Empathy through intergroup friendships

In the data, the informants who described some of the local people as "family" and reported to have established in-depth relationships felt generally positive about the experience. These volunteers also reported acquirement of new perspectives and positive attitudes towards the local people of their volunteering country as well as towards immigrants in Finland. The findings of the present study therefore seem to be consistent with the previously made notion that positive intergroup experiences, particularly intergroup friendships, and intergroup empathy are related (Allport, 1979; Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Marx & Pray, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998; Swart et al., 2011). Next, the discussion will turn to explore why intergroup friendships might be beneficial for acquisition of empathy.

Firstly, it might be that establishing intergroup friendships allowed the informants to learn about the new culture through a new friend who acted as an inside guide to new perspectives. In relation to cross-cultural adaptation, Kim (2001) has argued that communication with the hosts is highly important as it enables a development of more precise understanding of how the host culture functions. Similarly, Ward et al. (2001) have noted that relations with the locals enable *cultural learning*, which they, in turn, point out one of the two major vehicles facilitating acculturation and cultural adjustment. These cross-cultural adaptation perspectives seem to be in line with previous empathy research within which intergroup friendships have also been

suggested to enable learning about outgroups and to further promote empathy (Endicott et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1998).

In the data, the informants explicitly suggested that they learned from the people, and that the representatives of different cultures made them see differently. Thus, through making local friends, understanding the different mindsets might have become possible and learning new behaviors easier. Building on these learning perspectives (see Endicott et al., 2003; Kim, 2001; Pettigrew, 1998; Ward et al., 2001), it might perhaps be suggested that acquiring intercultural empathy, in practice, refers to learning new cultural information from a reliable source, such as a friend. In other words, intercultural empathy might not be so much about imagination as sometimes suggested before (Bennett, 1979, 1998); instead, empathy might actually be about extending one's initial frame of reference through acquiring new knowledge.

Secondly, intergroup friendships may be powerful due to affection as has previously been suggested (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Pettigrew, 1998; Swart et al., 2011). When one gets attached to another person and begins to like the person, the opinions of that person may achieve more weight, after which receiving cultural information from that person might also become facilitated. At least one of the informants of the present data overtly stated that getting to know the local people made her care more, showing that empathic care might indeed be possible as a result of affection to a new intergroup friend (see Kiely, 2004). In addition, influences of affection might be behind another

phenomenon, too. For the volunteers with experiences of highly positive contact and friendships, the faced challenges of understanding or instances of negative intergroup contact did not seem to affect much. Many features of empathy could be detected in their talk even though they also reported to have faced challenges of understanding and incidents of negative intergroup contact. A similar effect of affection has been recognized before as Iannone et al. (2010) have suggested that connecting with an outgroup member may lead to overall satisfaction, overpowering the influence of negative intergroup contact.

In relation to quality of intergroup contact, it should be remembered that not all of the informants ended up with merely positive descriptions of outgroups or a sense of greater understanding. Conversely, in some of the volunteers' talk, negative incidents, prejudice, derogation, and negative descriptions of outgroups were also identified. In previous literature, it has similarly been noted that intergroup contact may have negative consequences in the absence of optimal conditions (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998), when the contact is negatively characterized (Marx & Pray, 2011; Swart et al., 2011). Relying on previous research, these negative descriptions of outgroups identified in the data may also be treated as indicators of absence of empathy (see Hoffman, 2000; Holliday et al., 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Thus, to answer RQ2, it should be noted that intergroup contact may also result in opposite phenomena to empathy such as negative attitudes, prejudice, and derogation of outgroups.

Interestingly, these volunteers with more negative descriptions also reported to have made local friends during their stay abroad. It therefore appears that lack of empathy cannot merely be explained by lack of intergroup friends. Perhaps the easiest possible explanation for this would be that the intergroup friendships of these volunteers were not as in-depth as they presented them to be. Another possible explanation is that the encounters with the representatives of the host culture might have appeared in a negative light as the informants have failed to acquire alternative perspectives. As proposed in 5.1, at least at the beginning, this might have been a result of rejecting the new culture as a consequence of culture shock (see Gaw, 2000; Ward et al., 1998; Ward et al., 2001; Winkelman, 1994).

In the long run, the explanations can, for example, be searched within personal strategies of acculturation. For instance, *separation* has been described as a strategy of acculturation that is characterized by rejecting the new culture and embracing one's own culture (Berry et al., 2011). Thus, sometimes the challenges of understanding, followed by negative descriptions of outgroups, might have also occurred due to personal reluctance towards acquiring new cultural ways. On the other hand, it should be noted that the informants of the present study faced different circumstances and that sometimes circumstances might have been simply more challenging. Some volunteers, for example, talked about the impossibility of being in equal positions with the local people, which is why the contacts may have remained superficial and descriptions of outgroups somewhat negative. This notion is supported by Allport (1979), according to whom, intergroup contact has

positive consequences only when certain conditions such as equal group status are met. As dominating negative descriptions, however, were in the minority in the data, the discussion will next turn to look at how some degree of negative or challenging intergroup contact could also be seen as a source of learning and growth.

5.2.2 Empathy through challenges

In chapter 5.1, plenty of focus was already placed on discussing the challenging nature of intercultural empathy. Here the issue of challenge is addressed from a slightly different perspective. In the data, intergroup contact could sometimes be seen as producing challenges, which might have eventually provoked empathy. Thus, intergroup contact perhaps did not merely temporarily endanger empathy as it was suggested in 5.1. Instead, intergroup contact might have had the potential to strengthen or induce intercultural empathy. Many of the informants of the present study talked about how they learned from the difficulties faced and how the challenges made them become aware of different perspectives. The notions made by the informants appeared to be similar to what has previously been suggested in studies looking at empathy. According to these studies, cultural "crashes" or challenges initiate renegotiation processes that, in turn, may be resolved as induction of empathy (Hansen, 2010; Marx & Pray, 2011).

In 5.1 it was suggested that empathy might temporarily be challenged in the whirls of culture shock. Following the notions above, culture shock might also be suggested as a beneficiary stage on the way towards greater intercultural empathy, and not merely as a passing obstacle. Cross-cultural adaptation, in general, has indeed been proposed to be both stressful and growth-producing (Kim, 2001), which perhaps is the secret of empathy development, too. Intergroup contact might pose one with challenges that do not occur in one's home culture. After overcoming the challenges, the informants often reported a sense of being stronger, more relaxed, and more aware of different ways to view the world. Ward et al. (2001) have further explained the phenomenon; according to them, stress drives people to develop new coping strategies in order to manage in the new environment. In the search for these new coping strategies, one might engage in exploring and acquiring different perspectives, which could further explain why facing challenges may actually result in empathic perspective taking.

Interestingly, as a result of these challenging intergroup contact experiences, the informants often reported increased empathy in the form of perceived identification and understanding towards immigrants in Finland. The informants clarified to identify with immigrants since they were assumed to struggle with cultural and linguistic challenges. In relation to this, the informants told to have faced similar challenges during their stay abroad, indicating that the informants specifically developed empathy towards other groups with similar experiences to theirs. Previously, Marx and Pray (2011), in the same way, have found that experiences of being in the minority and being

discriminated against evoked empathy for immigrants and unfairness of racial discrimination.

The informants, however, told not to understand or to identify with all immigrants that face challenges. Many, on the contrary, expressed that they could not imagine how it is to live as a refugee or in extreme poverty since those situations were seen as very different from their own. These identified limits to identification are supported by the notion that recalling similar experiences (see Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010) or experiencing some extent of shared similarity (see Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Hoffman, 2000; Howe, 2013; Stephan & Finlay, 1999) might be a pre-condition to empathy. At the same time, these identified limits suggest that imagine-other ability (see Coplan & Goldie, 2011; Stotland, 1969, as cited in Batson et al., 2002) might not be an infinite resource; instead, it might be that imagine-other ability never really extends to reach people with completely different life experiences.

In sum, to answer RQ2, it arose from the data that intergroup contact may stimulate intercultural empathy 1) through intergroup friendships and cultural learning towards the new cultural group and 2) through facing challenges towards other groups who are perceived to deal with similar challenges. Before moving on to the interesting issue of development of intercultural empathy, the following chapters shall address another possible consequence of intergroup contact that was detected in a number of the answers: lack of empathy towards representatives of one's original culture.

5.2.3 Other influences of intergroup contact

Even though intergroup contact may have acted to evoke empathy for some outgroups, it might have also endangered empathy towards representatives of one's original culture, aka other Finns. Many of the informants showed signs of lack of empathy towards other Finns as they talked about lack of understanding, decreased identification, and negative emotions such as anger and frustration. These results had similar features with those of Kiely (2004), who has previously noted that living in a notably poor country may result in questioning of one's initial cultural values. This interesting phenomenon of rejecting one's initial values as a consequence of intercultural contact has also been addressed in literature looking at cross-cultural adjustment processes, which might offer explanations for the case of the informants of the present study, too.

If examined carefully, the volunteers' reactions towards other Finns after the volunteering period clearly resemble symptoms of culture shock that was earlier introduced in 5.1. In previous literature looking at cross-cultural adaptation, this phenomenon has specifically been labelled as *reverse culture shock* (Gaw, 2000). It has been explained that during reverse culture shock, individuals may go through similar symptoms than in culture shock, that is, anxiety, frustration, and rejection of new cultural values (Gaw, 2000), which in this case refer to one's original cultural values. Similarly to culture shock, reverse shock has been stated to occur rather soon after return, following initial euphoria (Gaw, 2000).

Thus, in the case of the newly returned volunteers, reverse culture shock might partly explain the negatively-toned descriptions of other Finns. As the informants spent 6-12 months abroad, they have had time to both *deculturate*, aka to unlearn some of their initial cultural habits, and to acculturate to the extent that transition back to Finnish culture might have no longer been smooth (see Kim, 2001). Facing the challenges upon entering a "new" environment might have placed the informants in a situation where their newly renegotiated values have been in contradiction with the environment, particularly if they have strongly assimilated (see Berry et al., 2011). These processes related to reverse culture shock might therefore underlie some of the occurrences of lack of empathy towards other Finns identified in the data.

In the case of the volunteers that had returned two or three years before the interview, reverse culture shock, however, does not extend to explain the negatively-toned descriptions of other Finns. In these cases, the effects of intercultural sojourning appear as somewhat permanent. Accordingly, the notion that intercultural volunteering might possibly stimulate change leads to the final topic in the discussion chapter: development of intercultural empathy. Even though effects of intergroup contact did not always entail signs of acquisition of empathy, the international volunteering experience without exception seemed to stimulate some degree of transformation in the informants. Whether and to what extent this transformation entailed development of intercultural empathy will be what the discussion next turns to.

5.3 Development of intercultural empathy

In the chapters above, it was already suggested that intergroup contact may initially challenge empathy but that in the long run it might stimulate some degree of increase in intercultural empathy through learning from those challenges and from intergroup friends. In other words, the present data appears to support the previously made assumption that empathy most probably is prone to change and development (Bennett, 1998; Boler, 1997; DeTurk, 2001; Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Hoffman, 2000; Marx & Pray, 2011; Rios et al., 2003; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). The purpose of the following chapters will be to discuss the nature of the possible development of intercultural empathy that was traced in the present data. Many of the phenomena appearing in the present chapter were already introduced in 5.1 or 5.2, which is why the present chapter acts as a sort of closing summary that binds the two previous sections together, placing emphasis on the perspective of development. The present chapter will proceed from discussing the stages of empathy development to address the idea of transformation that was often highlighted in the volunteers' talk.

In previous literature, prejudice has often been suggested as a starting point for intergroup contact (Brown et al., 2007; DeTurk, 2001; Hoffman, 2000; Holliday et al., 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), which often did not seem to be the case in the present data. Apart from positive stereotyping and rare initial prejudice, the informants' descriptions of motivation were characterized by openness towards outgroups and interest in

different cultures, which have been noted to appear in the presence of empathy (Batson et al., 2003; Stephan & Finlay; 1999). Moreover, the informants identified motivation to help outgroups or "contribute the world" as one of the most significant reasons for participating in the international volunteering program in the first place. Ethical responsibility (Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010), motivation to help outgroups (Batson et al., 2002), and advocating justice (Rios et al., 2003) have previously been identified as characteristics of the highest stage of empathy. Following these definitions, it can therefore be suggested that many of the informants of the present study might have already been at somewhat high stage of empathy prior to their volunteering period. Accordingly, it may also be proposed that development of empathy cannot merely be seen as a consequence of intergroup contact as it might already precede intergroup contact. Evaluating the genuineness of this pre-existing empathy, however, remains difficult. Previously, it was noted that perceptions of one's understanding of others may sometimes be false or superficial (see Boler, 1997; Gudykunst, 2003; Marx & Pray, 2011), which occasionally might have been the case concerning the informants' pre-existing positive attitudes and will to help, too.

Based on the results of the present study, intergroup contact might expose initial empathy to new renegotiation, which suggests that the sequence of the stages of empathy development proposed by Depraz (2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010) may not be fixed. As a consequence of intergroup contact, the assumed initial intergroup empathy was at least temporarily endangered as challenges of understanding, derogation, and prejudice occurred

in the data. As it has previously somewhat often been suggested that prejudice precedes intergroup contact (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), the results of the present study provided a slightly different perspective to the matter by drawing attention to the possibility that intergroup contact may also act to endanger initial empathy.

The challenge of intercultural empathy was earlier speculated to be related to culture shock and phases of cross-cultural adaptation. More closely, it was suggested that initial empathy might become endangered in the whirls of culture shock, and similarly the newly achieved empathy may be challenged anew upon return, if reverse culture shock occurs. It has been noted that in contexts of cross-cultural sojourning, one may typically regress in phases, and fluctuate in a stress and growth disequilibrium (Kim, 2001). If phases of cross-cultural adaptation processes and development of intercultural empathy indeed are intertwined, it might be that these temporary regressions and progressions in relation to adaptation are reflected in the stages of empathy development established by Depraz (2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010), too.

As noted in 5.1, for the majority, the renegotiation processes eventually seemed to result in perceived increase of understanding, openness towards immigrants in Finland, motivation to help, and motivation to participate in civic actions. This was further pointed out to support the earlier findings that intergroup contact and stay abroad may act to enforce empathy (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Marx & Pray, 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). According to Boler (1997), particularly an experienced responsibility

for civic action is a sign of pure or genuine empathy, which indicates that despite the temporary endangerment of empathy, most informants might have ended up with somewhat high levels of empathy. Some of the informants emphasized that their will to participate in civic actions has been stronger after the international volunteering experience and that they have also initiated more contact with foreigners. Thus, relying on the volunteers' talk, it may be proposed that, for many, intergroup contact experiences eventually strengthened some aspects of intercultural empathy.

Based on the present data, it cannot, however, be said that intergroup contact directly induces development of intercultural empathy. As it was already noted in 5.2, features of intercultural empathy did not dominate in all volunteers' talk. By contrast, renegotiations were sometimes resolved as increased prejudice and cynicism towards a specific outgroup, other outgroups, or towards other Finns. Sometimes these indicators of lack of empathy further appeared in the talk of the same volunteers who also showed signs of empathy, indicating that the matter is not straightforward. It therefore seems that intergroup contact alone does not guarantee positive consequences in terms of development of intercultural empathy. On the contrary, circumstances and multiple individual ways to react and relate to new challenges probably have an influence. Among these personal approaches might be acculturation strategies, as was suggested earlier in 5.1 and 5.2. Nevertheless, what can be said based on the data is that the informants without exception talked about some type of transformation as a result of stay abroad. The topic of transformation was especially visible in chapter 4.3 where outcomes of volunteering such as

renegotiation in terms of self, others, values, and worldviews were reported. Accordingly, the issue of transformation shall next be discussed.

In research concentrating on cultural sojourning, some sort of transformation or change is almost without exception addressed. Cultural sojourning has been described as a major life event that changes the person engaged in it (Ward et al., 2001). This idea was clearly shared among the participants of the present study as well. Kim (2001) has further proposed that inner transformation occurs in contexts of intercultural sojourning due to acculturation and deculturation. As noted before, by acculturation and deculturation, Kim (2001) means that one has to learn new cultural ways in order to cope in the new environment and to make room for these new cognitive schemas and behavioral practices, one then has to unlearn some of the old cultural ways. These notions might provide one with a better understanding of empathic transformation, too, as will be explicated in the following chapter.

Kim (2001) suggests that consequences of acculturation may result in development of *intercultural personhood*, which refers to a holistic transformation following cross-cultural adaptation processes. Interestingly, if Kim's concept of intercultural personhood is carefully examined, the description of intercultural personhood appears as rather empathic. Intercultural personhood is suggested to be open, tolerant of different people, understanding of human differences, and "thinking, feeling, and acting beyond the boundaries of any single culture" (Kim, 2001, p. 233). Thus, the power of

international volunteering as possibly evoking intercultural empathy might not simply lie in intergroup contact. Instead, as the processes of acculturation, learning and unlearning, questioning one's initial values, feelings, and behaviors might become inevitable in cultural sojourning, development of intercultural empathy may consequently arise.

In conclusion, in the present chapter, it has been suggested that intercultural empathy development may at least partly be intertwined with the processes related to cross-cultural adaptation. It might therefore be that intercultural empathy regresses in the presence of high levels of stress, anxiety, and cognitive dissonance that typically appear at the beginning of cultural sojourning (Berry et al., 2011; Gudykunst, 2003; Ward et al., 2001). Conversely, settling into the new environment, engaging in processes of acculturation and deculturation, learning through intergroup friendships and through challenges possibly enables conditions where intercultural empathy and acquiring of new perspectives may flourish.

Development of intercultural empathy as a result of intergroup contact, however, may be dependent on each person's individual acculturation strategies, in addition to the quality of contact. If the encountered challenges, anxiety, stress, and cognitive dissonance are managed in a successful, mindful way, results may include development of intercultural empathy, among other transformation processes. Thus, intergroup contact together with the processes of acculturation may in the best case scenario stimulate intercultural empathy. On the other hand, it might be that pre-existing empathic abilities actually

facilitate cross-cultural adaptation processes to begin with. This is a notion that raises interesting questions concerning the relationship between adaptation processes and intercultural empathy. Do empathic people more easily adapt and overcome challenges or do acculturation processes stimulate empathy in people? Based on the present study, it may be said that intergroup contact in the context of intercultural volunteering stimulates some degree of transformation that is partly empathic. The details of the relationship between cross-cultural adaptation processes and intercultural empathy, however, will be left for future research to discover.

6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to increase in-depth understanding of the intriguing relationship between intercultural empathy and intergroup contact in the context of Finns volunteering outside Europe by indicating links between people's talk and theoretical approaches to empathy. More specifically, the object of the study was to find out "What aspects of empathy do emerge meaningful in volunteers' talk?" (RQ1) and "What is the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy like in context of international volunteering?" (RQ2). The study was motivated, firstly, by ICYE's goal for volunteering, which is "to promote increased peace and intercultural understanding" (ICYE, 2014), and secondly, by the notion that intergroup contact in context of stay abroad may act to enhance empathic abilities (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Wang et al., 2003). For data gathering purposes, 13 qualitative interviews were conducted. The interviews were further transcribed, partly translated, and systematically coded for the purposes of the analysis.

To conclude the study, the present chapter will, firstly, review the main findings and their implications, secondly, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the present study, and finally, suggest directions for future research. Establishing standards for evaluating the quality of qualitative research has in the past turned out more challenging than setting standards for quantitative research (Lichtman, 2011). Instead of objectivity and generalizability, reflexivity together with transparency have been suggested as indicators of reliable qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2008;

Lichtman, 2011; Ruusuvuori et al., 2010). Accordingly, truthful reflection and evaluation of the present research project shall be pursued in the following chapters.

6.1 Main findings and their implications

The informants without exception talked about some degree of transformation as a consequence of the international volunteering experience. The transformation, more closely, often included aspects of empathy such as a sense of increased understanding, awareness of different perspectives, identification with immigrants, and openness towards civic actions. In this way, the results of the present study were consistent with the previous notion that intergroup contact may act to enhance empathy development and intercultural understanding (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Marx & Pray, 2011; Pettigrew, 1998; Wang et al., 2003) Interestingly, indicators of increase of empathy were traced in relation to outgroups that were perceived to struggle with similar challenges than what the informants themselves had struggled with during their stay abroad. Previously, it has, in the same way, been found that challenges faced abroad might result in empathy towards minorities in one's home country (Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Marx & Pray, 2011), and that recalling similar experiences might be a grounding condition to empathy (Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Stephan & Finlay, 1999).

Moreover, it was suggested that intergroup contact most probably influenced through two channels. Firstly, it created challenges for the informants, which encouraged them to explore new perspectives and ways to view the world. Many of the informants explained that the challenging situations made them see differently. This finding is supported by earlier research, according to which intergroup contact evokes renegotiation of worldviews, and thus, empathy (Endicott et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1998). Secondly, the informants often talked about the importance of their ties with the local people in learning new cultural habits and ways to view the world. In other words, friendships with the locals perhaps provided the informants with an opportunity for developing cultural understanding, and empathy through that (see Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Swart et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the results of the present study drew attention to some phenomena that have been given relatively little attention in previous empathy research. Firstly, it was noted that prejudice and negative stereotyping may not necessarily precede intergroup contact even though that has rather often been assumed in previous research (Holliday et al., 2004; Pettigrew, 1998; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). On the contrary, many of the informants of the present study already reported dominatingly positive attitudes and will to help outgroup members prior to the volunteering periods. Secondly, it was suggested that intergroup contact may possibly endanger initial empathy. Despite the initially positive attitudes and will to help, quite a few of the informants also engaged in negative descriptions of outgroups, struggled to understand the local people,

and reported negative emotions in relation to them. Thus, it was concluded that that the stages of empathy (see Batson et al., 2003; Depraz, 2001, as cited in Calloway-Thomas, 2010; Stephan & Finlay, 1999) may be prone to fluctuation to the extent that once acquired empathy may not guarantee maintenance of it, a possibility which has not often been addressed in previous research. In previous literature, it has been noted though that negative intergroup contact may have negative consequences (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew, 1998; Swart et al., 2011). Finally, it was found that relatively many of the informants seemed to struggle to understand and identify with representatives of their original culture after the stay abroad. In other words, empathy towards other Finns was challenged. Previously, merely few have presented similar "side effects" to empathic transformation (see Kiely, 2004).

A closer analysis of empathy in the context of international volunteering further gave reason to believe that emergences of empathy may be related to processes of cross-cultural adaptation. Firstly, it was noted that the challenges of understanding and negative reactive emotions might actually be explained by culture shock. Secondly, it was pointed out that acquisition of empathy might appear hand in hand with acculturation, aka new cultural learning and perspective exploring (see Kim, 2001), with the help of which one may overcome some of the challenges as well. This cultural learning, in turn, may become facilitated through intergroup friendships. Finally, it was speculated that one's personal acculturation strategies may have an influence on empathy acquisition. For example, separation might explain some of negative description of outgroups, whereas assimilation together with reverse

culture shock may account for some of the identified lack of empathy towards other Finns. In the limits of the present study, creating connections between empathy acquisition and cross-cultural adaptation processes, however, remained a speculation. Some of the connections seemed logical, considering the context, but no strong conclusions could be drawn concerning the possible relationship between intercultural empathy and cross-cultural adaptation processes.

Nevertheless, the results of the present study provided useful in-depth information of empathy in the specific context of Finns volunteering outside Europe particularly for Maailmanvaihto ry – ICYE Finland. For their activities, the results were mainly encouraging as majority of the participants talked about increased sense of understanding of others, identification with immigrants in Finland, and motivation to participate in civic activities as a consequence of the experience. On the other hand, the results also raised awareness of the challenging nature of the international volunteering experience and possible opposite consequences of international volunteering such as prejudice and cynicism. For Maailmanvaihto ry – ICYE Finland, awareness of all possible consequences seems without question important since that awareness and information can be benefitted from in planning the volunteering programs, preparing the volunteers for their journeys, and supporting them during and after the volunteering period.

All in all, the present study raised awareness of empathy in intercultural contexts, from which many actors may benefit. Organizations

similar to Maailmanvaihto ry arranging international volunteering programs, educational actors sending students abroad, and employers responsible for their employees' long-term sojourning as well as the volunteers, students, and sojourners themselves may find understanding of empathy in intercultural contexts useful. The notion of perspective taking facilitating intercultural understanding (DeTurk, 2001; Howe, 2013; Thompson; Wang et al., 2003), supported by the present results, might be a particularly worthwhile observation that can be utilized by educators in intercultural trainings and by sojourners to appropriately orient themselves for intercultural encounters and cross-cultural adaptation processes. In addition, as societies are facing increasing immigration and spreading globalization, offering intercultural empathy training for people who do not leave their homes might be of even greater importance. Accordingly, the many significant implications of understanding of empathy in intercultural contexts call for the attention of researchers in the field of intercultural communication where empathy until now has often been treated as a competency among others (see Deardorff, 2006; Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009).

6.2 Evaluation of the study

Even though the present study produced results that might be valuable for the non-governmental organization of Maailmanvaihto ry and for similar actors in the field, the results are based on 13 people's individual experiences and cannot directly be applied to predict future volunteers' experiences, even in the

context of Maailmanvaihto ry. The present study drew attention to the relationship between empathy and international volunteering, but the descriptions of the relationship sometimes lacked accuracy. An example of such an inaccuracy is that even though majority of the informants seemed to have learned from challenging intergroup contacts, for some, the challenges resulted in cynicism and negative descriptions of outgroups. It was suggested that this might have happened due to dominating negative intergroup contact or individual acculturation strategies, for example, but clarifying of such relationships remained a speculation. The aim of the study, however, was not to specify causal relationships; rather, the goal was to examine how empathy may be manifested in people's talk in the context of stay abroad and these specific individuals, following the principals of qualitative research (see Creswell, 2003).

This goal, in turn, was met rather well. The result chapter provided the reader with a comprehensive overview of the informants' experiences that included a number of references to occurrences of empathy, in other words, to cognitive processes, emotions, and behaviors in relation to others. The results were further illustrated with an extensive amount of extracts from the interviews, which made the description rather rich, adding to the validity of the research (see Creswell, 2003). In addition, results counter to the general line were also given visibility in chapter 4. According to Creswell's (2007) "validation strategies" of qualitative research, this accounts as *negative case analysis* that should increase the transparency of research.

In relation to this, qualitative interview was perceived to be a successful data gathering method for building links between people's talk, experiences, and examples and theoretical approaches to empathy. This notion is supported by the previous suggestion that qualitative interview is an effective tool for capturing people's perceptions and thoughts (Reinard, 2008). The conclusion was drawn since majority of the interviewees seemed to be comfortable in the interview situation, talked freely about their experiences, and often spontaneously introduced some of the topics in the interview before they were actually inquired about them. This also gives reason to believe that the design of the interview questions generally provided a functioning frame for discussing experiences meaningful for the interviewees. The informants often reflected upon their own answers and shared detailed examples and stories. Based on these factors, the choice of data gathering method seemed to be appropriate for the purposes of the present study.

In terms of the weaknesses of the data gathering method, it was noted that the formulation of the questions might have affected the interviewees' responses to some extent. Even though the word empathy was not explicitly mentioned in the interviews, understanding of its dimensions played a role in formulating the questions. For example, a question such as "After the experience, can you identify with immigrants in Finland?" might have suggested that identification is recommended, which is why the formulation of the questions perhaps could have been slightly more neutral. To compensate for this weakness, however, the interviewees were always asked to give reasons for their answers, which most likely eliminated the option of

simply answering "yes" or "no" according to the assumed "right answer". The examples and explanations of the answers, in addition, were given more emphasis in the analysis than the statements of "yes" or "no".

Another related limitation of the present study is its reliance on self-assessment. The results, accordingly, rely on what the informants chose to share with the interviewer. With respect to this, it has been pointed out that self-presentation might reflect people's ideal self-images that they are happy to communicate to others (Batson, 1987). It is therefore possible that positive experiences and learning results were emphasized in the results of the present study as well. Moreover, the results might merely reflect the reality of the informants. This means that a sensation of increased understanding of others might be an illusion in an individual's mind that has little to do with the realities of others' minds.

Relying on self-assessment might have been particularly risky since the present study also addressed the issue of development and approached it by collecting a cross sample. The informants' prior, during, and post perceptions therefore might have been intertwined and confused with each other. The informants may have shared perceptions "as they like to remember them", in a similar way as was suggested in the chapter above. With respect to this, however, it should be noted that individual's own experience of change and growth might also provide significant information on the matter. The validity of self-report methods is further supported by the notion that social

reality can be seen to consist of people's subjective perceptions (Creswell, 2008; Silverman, 2006).

Turning to a different matter, one of the most challenging part of the present research project turned out to be categorization of the data in the analysis phase. Sometimes the limits between the established categories were fading and some of the answers could simultaneously have fit more than one category. The decision was made that a coding unit, a turn, can contain several codes, and therefore coding of the data might produce slightly differently formed results if it were conducted by another researcher. Ideally, coding of the data would be completed by at least two researchers to confirm emergence of the same categories (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2008; Reinard, 2008), but within limits of a study-related research project, this unfortunately was not possible.

Subjective formulation and interpretation of categories might therefore be seen as a limitation for the present study, but on the other hand, it can also be seen as a possibility for in-depth interpretation (Lichtman, 2011). Moreover, the limitation of subjectivity of interpretation was perhaps compensated by giving the floor to the voices of the volunteers in the result chapter. Multiple extracts from the interview data were included since detailed description of the results has been argued to positively contribute to the accuracy and validity of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). The detailed description of the data together with multiple extracts further gave the reader the freedom to either agree or disagree with the conclusions and suggestions made by the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

Another challenge that was faced in conducting the research project was related to the theoretical background. In the process of going through previous empathy literature, it was discovered that the existing conceptualizations of empathy are numerous. Accordingly, merely a fraction of the previous conceptualizations could actually be involved in chapter 2, which is why the present study is limited to an understanding of empathy based on chosen conceptualizations in the fields of psychology, philosophy, sociology, and communication, largely neglecting some approaches to empathy such as neuroscience and clinical psychology to name but a few. Despite this challenge, the present study managed to map and organize previous conceptualizations of empathy and to create an understanding of what empathy consists of and how it can be manifested in intercultural contexts. In the present study, attention was further drawn to empathy as a central concept in intercultural contexts.

Finally, the research setting of the present study seemed to reproduce a pattern that can be identified in earlier studies looking at empathy (see Marx & Pray, 2011) or other learning as a consequence of intergroup contact (see Iannone et al., 2010; Kiely, 2004). This pattern refers to looking at one-sided empathy: majority's empathy towards minorities, Western people's empathy towards non-Western people, or rich people's empathy towards poor people. Following these notions, it appears that empathy between the lines is perceived as something that merely a certain group of people may "afford" to pursue. Previous research for the most part seems to lack studies of minorities'

empathy towards majorities such as refugees' empathy towards the hosts even though they are also exposed to intergroup contact and thus, to a possibility for developing intercultural empathy. In the present research design, the objects of interest were surely in the minority during their stay abroad but the research design, nevertheless, repeated the idea of sending rather wealthy people to live in somewhat poorer countries for learning purposes. Thus, the present study ended up repeating a rather popular research design.

6.3 Directions for future research

The results of the present study encourage empathy research to be conducted through qualitative interview in the future as it was found to enable capturing of people's in-depth perceptions and insights. In the future, however, attention should be paid in the formulation of the interview questions in order not to direct answers by any means. Perhaps a functioning interview frame could only consist of themes such as "anticipation of contact", "encounters with locals", and "outcomes of volunteering" to give even more emphasis on the talk and spontaneous ideas of the interviewees. In ideal research settings, qualitative interviews could further be complemented with other data gathering methods such as personal journals and perspective taking exercises. This type of *triangulation* of research methods would further add to the validity of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2008). In addition, it could possibly reduce the influence of ideal self-presentation that was earlier noted to be among possible limitations of the present study.

The present study gave support to earlier notions that intergroup contact may enforce intercultural empathy, but on the other hand, it was found that intergroup contact may also set initial empathy in danger. As the results were not straightforward, more research on the developmental nature of empathy and the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy is needed in the future. For the purposes of addressing the aspect of development, longitudinal data gathering might be appropriate since gathering data prior, during, and after an intervention would most likely produce more accurate information about changes in empathy. In addition, in future research looking at intergroup contact and empathy, including perspective taking instructions might be interesting. The effect of perspective taking instructions has already been researched in artificial settings in psychology (Batson et al., 2002), but perhaps they could be more purposefully included in prior trainings of volunteers, exchange students, and sojourners as well, and then consequently examined for their effectiveness.

To add some variety to research designs, research layout should perhaps in the future be turned around and floor given to the voices of minorities. Among interesting objects for future research would be refugees' empathy towards their new hosts, for example. Even better, more accurate information about empathy and intergroup contact could possibly be attained by researching mutual empathy, that is, both parties' perceptions of their own understanding and the other's understanding. Both foreigners in a new culture and representatives of the host culture could be inquired about intercultural

encounters between them. Research on mutual empathy could greatly contribute to the field by providing information on whether people's perceived understanding of others is accurate.

Most importantly, looking at empathy specifically in the context of cross-cultural adaptation might be a noteworthy topic for future research. Perhaps the most interesting questions to address were already raised in 5.3: Do empathic people more easily adapt and overcome challenges or do acculturation processes stimulate empathy in people? The results of the present study gave reason to believe that cross-cultural experiences might indeed stimulate transformation that is partly empathic, but the effects of individual characteristics on the processes remained unclear. It was speculated that personal strategies of acculturation might have an impact on whether one's transformation is empathic or not. Thus, in the future, when empathy is examined in contexts of intercultural sojourning, the influences of individual differences in terms of cross-cultural adaptation strategies should perhaps be taken into account.

In conclusion, much is yet to be done if a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between intergroup contact and empathy development is to be acquired. In order to move towards this objective, more longitudinal studies should be conducted and mutuality of empathy and empathy's role in cross-cultural adaptation should be included in the research designs. With respect to the field of intercultural communication, instead of treating empathy as a factor among others, it should in the future, due to its all-

encompassing nature and potentially grand implications for mutual intercultural understanding, more often be placed in the center and given the emphasis it clearly calls for.

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APPENDIX 1: The interview frame in English

A. Background information

- Name

- Gender

- The target country of volunteering

- The length of volunteering period

- Possible previous experience of long-term stay abroad

B. Motivations and anticipations of contact

1. Why did you want to participate in an international volunteering program?

2. Why did you ended up participating through Maailmanvaihto- ICYE Finland?

3. How did you choose your target country?

4. What kind of expectations did you have in terms of the country, people and culture?

5. Did you have any concerns related to the journey?

6. How would you describe your background in terms of intercultural activities or friendships?

C. Experiences of different culture

7. How would you describe your encounters with the local people?

8. How would you describe your volunteering workplace and colleagues?

9. Did you make local friends? Was it easy to get to know people?

10. Were the encounters ever challenging and when were they easy?

11. Was it easy for you to adopt the habits of the culture? When was it easy and why?

12. Was it ever challenging? What was challenging and why?

13. Were you able to understand the habits of the different culture?

14. How did it feel like to be foreigner in a country?

15. How did you manage with the language?

16. How would you describe the country in terms of its living conditions? What thoughts did it raise?

D. Outcomes of volunteering

17. What did you learn from the experience?

18. Do you think differently about something after the experience? Does that realize in your actions somehow?

19. After the experience, can you identify with immigrants in Finland?

20. After your return, have you participated in civic activities or organizations?

21. Would you volunteer again in the future and why?

22. Is it a good idea to participate in an international volunteering program, in your opinion?

APPENDIX 2: The original quotations in Finnish

1) *Halusin kokee ihan jotain uutta mitä mä en oo aikasemmin kokenut eli saada semmosen kokemuksen siitä että oon ihan toisel puolel maapalloo (...) oppii tuntemaan ne tavat ja koko maan ihan toisel taval ku sä oot siel pidemmän aikaa töissä (...) se poikkee eniten kaikista noista etelä-amerikan maista että ne muut on enemmän länsimaalasempii.*

2) *Mä oletin että ne ihmiset on ainakin hyvin sellasia avoimia ja mä aattelin että voisko olla helppo tulla toimeen ja tutustua (...) ajattelin että vois kuvitella että ois niin ku helposti lähestyttävii ihmisiä ja myöskin mä olin ajatellu et siellä välttämättä kaikki ei toimi niin ku suomessa että ihmiset on myöhässä (...) ajattelin et siel täytyy myöskin tottua siihen toisenlaiseen elämän tyyliin.*

3) *En mä oikeestaan tienny costa ricasta mitään (...) et aattelin et siel on tosi trooppista ja vihreetä ja sitte just kaikkee eksoottisia hedelmiä ja eläimiä ja muuta ja ihmisistähän mä nyt pari tunsin, eihän nyt tietenkään sen perusteella voi ajatella koko kansaa mutta tota tosi semmosia rentoja ja ilosia ja huolettomia (...) yleistin koko latinalaisen amerikan et varmaan just musiikki latinomusiikkia ja paljon tanssia ja tulista ja ruokaa ja tämmöstä meksikon perusteella.*

4) *Vuonna ehkä 2004 tai 2005 mä jo puhuin siitä ja tota et mä haluisin lähtee jonnekin ja just kehitysyhteityöhön tai kehitysmaakohteisiin (...) ehkä niin ku sillon oli semmonen joku et auttamisen halu tai sellai et mielikuva siitä (...) mut varmaan yks oli se et että halus pois suomesta ja (...) niin ku ei nyt ehkä maailmanpelastamist mutta auttamista, mut sit siellä mä tajusin sen et mä halusin kyl siihen kulttuuriin ja mulle oli tärkeet se et ku maailmanvaihdollaki pääsee asumaan ihan perheessä et pääsi tosi lähelle sitä kulttuurii (...) oman itsen kannalta se kulttuuriin sisään meneminen oli tärkeempi.*

5) *Kylhän siellä jatkuvasti tuns olevansa erilainen ku nokkansa pisti ulos ovesta niin ihmiset tuijotti ja vihelteli ja saatto huutaa jotain mut ei koskaan mitään negatiivista et se oli silleen kuitenki turvallista kun ties et ei ne niin kun niin ku huutelee mulle mitään ilkeetä (...) ne oli kiinnostuneita ja halus osottaa sen et hei huomaan et et ole perulainen.*

6) *Et sitte ku olit ensin ollu sillein et heii moi vaan kaikki ja jokaiselle vilkutellu ni sit se et sit se kääntyy taas siihen (...) et mä en halua (...) ni silti joka kolmas ihminen siellä kadulla aamulla kuuen aikaan käy huutaan et heiii että white one where are youn going sellai et ei kuulu sulle (...) ja sit sitä yrittää vaan olla silleen et en mä kuule mitään et en mä kuule mitään et nää napit on nyt tai yrittää laittaa vähän kovemmalle et älkää puhuko mulle et eihän ei se sit kuitenkaan tuu*

luonnostaan ja sit et sit töitä pitää sit tehä kuitenkin koko ajan tai jotenkin keskittyä siihen ettei aivan menetä hermojaan.

7) *Aluks niin ku sitä huomioo tuli tosi paljon ja kaikki oli ihan uutta niin se tuntu niin ku vähän pelottavalta ja just esimerkiks se et siel ihmiset huuteli niin ku kaduilla ja tuli niin ku ottaa kontaktia mut sekin johtu siit kielest ja ku ei tuntenu niit tapoja et silleen se tuntu oikeesti välillä niin ku pelottavalta ja ahdistavaltaki (...) loppuaika oliki silleen et mä opin oikeestaan nauttimaan siit huomiosta (...) et niin ku tuli suomeen ni sitä melkein vähän kaipas (...) sit ku kaikki kyseli koko ajan et mistä sä oot ja miten sulla on noin ihanat silmät ja ihanat hiukset ja voi voi niin ku kyl siit jotenki silti tykkää kuitenki mut et se tuntu niin ku välillä ahdistavalta ja välillä tosi kivalta olla erilainen.*

8) *Oli siis periaatteessa ihmisiin tutustuminen [helppoa] mut sit semmosten ihmisten löytäminen kenen kanssa sulla jotenkin synkkaa ja kenen kaa sä oot silleen jotenkin tasa-arvoses asemassa ni semmosten ihmisten löytäminen oli mun mielestä paljon hankalampaa ku ois siel niin ku hirveesti semmosii ihmisii jotka haluis olla sun kavereita mut sit se tuntuu vähän vaikeelta. (...) vaan se eriarvonen niin ku asema et just se et ihmiset tulee kysyy et voit sä hommaa mulle viisumin ja lentolipun silleen näkee kadulla et hei ja sit toinen kysymys et ja sit ne ei niin ku voi käsittää et mikset sä vois hommata sitä lentolippuu ja viisumii et se oli se oli vähän vaikeeta mutta kyl niitkin sit oppi niin ku käsitteleen niit niit keskuteluita (...) ei se ollu ainut haaste mut se oli aika niin ku ehkä*

aika iso haaste aina just yrittää jotenkin luovii siin välissä et niin ku et yleensä kuitenkin joku haluu sult jotain niin ku muutakin kun sun aikaa tai niin ku läsnäoloo.

9) *Tää niin ku ehkä kuulostaa pahasti sanotult mut ne ketkä oli päässy vähän enemmän käymään kouluja (...) et ne oli kouluttautuneempia ihmisiä ni niitten kans pysty olla enemmän samal tasolla niin ku keskustelussa mennä johonkin syvemmällä levelille eikä tarvinnu selittää jotain sellasta mikä on meille itsestään selvyyttä vaan sen takia et koska niil ei oo sitä niin kun exposure sille tiedolle mikä meil on. En sano tosiaankaan et kukaan ois tyhmä. (...) Sellasten ihmisten kaa ystävyys on niin ku vaikeemmin saavutettavissa koska ei oo silleen samanlaisel tietotasolla.*

10) *Se meiän perhe oli tullu sinne [lentokentälle] vastaan ja (...) me mentiin sinne kotiin ja kaikki esitteli ja annettiin ruokaa ja puhuttiin ja kysyttiin miten on menny ja oli niin semmonen jotenki lämmin [ilmapiiri] (...) siis se vieraanvarasuus ja se ihmisten välittömyys ja niin ku tämmönen lämpö ni se on jotain ihan uskomatonta (...) ja sit me mentiin sinne [työpaikalle] ja sit siin tuli yks työkavereista tuli siihen vastaan mulle ja se oli hymyili vaan ja puhu kauheen et onpa kiva et te ootte tullu ja mulle sillä sekunnilla se oli ihan satavarma et ei mul oo mitään hätää ja tulee kauheen ihanaa olemaan varmasti ja tosi ihania työkaveita ja että tervetullu olo (...) vaan syveni siit välit ja (...) se tuntu et se ois ollu niin ku tavallaan mun toinen perhe siellä ja mä*

tutustuin sit niiden omiin perheisiin ja niin kun kävin kotona kylässä ja niin et ystävyyssuhteet vaan sillein syveni ja niist tuli ihan todella tosi merkittäviä sen koko vapaaehtoistyöjakson aikana ja sit edelleen.

11) *Se [orpokodin johtaja] valehteli niin paljon ja oli mun mielestä niin ku kiero ja ei niit kiinnostanu ne lapset ja miten ne voi että niitä kiinnosti raha (...) se oli se oli aika niin ku tavallaan niin ku niin ku rankkaaki välillä.*

12) *Siellä kuntosalilla mä törmäsin yhteen naiseen (...) ja sitten [hän] anto mulle tota sähköpostiosotteensa ja puhelinnumeronsa (...) ja sit me sovittiin että nähdään sunnuntaina ja aikaa ei lyöty lukkoon eikä paikkaa siellä ei yleensä oo tapana lyödä sitä lukkoon ja mutta sitten kävi sillä tavalla klassisesti että otin sillon aamulla siihen naiseen yhteyttä et hei et missä me nähtäis ja millon niin sano et hälle ei käy tänään ei mitään selityksiä ei pahotteluja (...) se tuntu olevan todella tavallista et ihmiset lupailee (...) semmosetkin ihmiset joita voi itse pitää ystävänä saattaa tehä tommosia ohareita ja meillekin kävi sitä monesti mun sen host motherin kanssa sitten hannan isäntäperheen tyttären kanssa joka oli kuitenkin meiän kaveri siellä ja sitten isäntäperheen pojan kanssa että ne vaan ei ilmestyny paikalle.*

13) *Ilmeisesti asiat ei sujunu hyvin koska hän sit sano yks päivä et mun pitää lähtee pois eikä mun mielest ollu mitään miks mun ois pitäny lähtee mut täs en mä tiedä ehkä hän oli vähän kusipää eli sillon sillon*

mull tuli tuli sellanen niin ku paniikki (...) se valehteli mulle ihan päin naamaa (...) mä kysyin hänelt vielä kahden kesken et et niin ku sano nyt mulle niin ku oikee syy (...) et joo joo et kyl me niin ku ihan oikeesti tarvitaan se huone et et tällast niin ku todella veemäist käytöstä mitä ei niin ku aikuiselt ihmiseltä oleta saavansa (...) se oli siis se oli vaan ihan käsittämätöntä.

14) *Ei ei ei (...) se ei ollu aina ihan iisii [ymmärtää] koska tuntu et ne ei niin ku samal taval niil ei oo sitä samanlaist kehitysuskoo (...) sit mulla oli sellasii niin ku aika stydei välil semmosii niin ku itsetutkiskelukriisei (...) ehkä kaikista rankint se semmonen tietty itseinho siit et niin ku et ku omat arvot on ristiriidassa sen kans miten niin ku päivittäin kokee asioita et mul oli aika usein semmonen fiilis et ghanalaiset on jotenkin tyhmiä et miks ne ei tajuu et näit asioit vois tehä näin (...) iteltään tulee semmonen olo et sä voi ajatella noin et niin ku kaikki ihmiset on saman arvosii ja silleen et siellä esimerkiks siellä meidän lastenkodissaku jengi ei käyttäny vessapaperii niin sit ne saatto vaan repästä koulukirjast palasen ja mennä silleen vessaan sen kaa ja se oli silleen et ku te ootte jo valmiiks köyhii ihmisii ni miks te ette niin ku tai silleen tää koulutus nyt ois ehkä teille jotenkin tsänssi muuttaa teiän omia asioita (...) turhautumisen tunteita aika paljon.*

15) *Ajauduttiin keskustelemaan mustien ja valkoisten erosta ja hän selittää ihan siitä että ku ei me pärjätä ilman valkosia ihmisiä et valkoset ihmiset keksi tän polkupyöränki millä mä ajan (...) hän ei pystyis*

tekemään edes töitä jos ei valkosia ihmisiä olis olemassa et jumala on antanu valkosille ihmisille suuremmat aivot (…) me yritetään selittää siinä että (…) ethän sä eihän se oo meiän ansiota et sä teet töitä nyt (…) siis me just pyöriteltiin päätä et ei täs on niin ku mitään järkee et miten me saadaan nää ihmiset niin ku uskomaan et ne on yhtä hyviä ku me kun ne itse niin ku ajattelee noin.

16) *Siel oli tosi vaikeeta siel kolumbias mulle niin ku välil se et ihmiset juoruilee niin paljon et se oli kans mis se kulttuuri tuli mulla todella lujaa yli (…) et se oli huvittavaa (…) se perheenäiti joka on siinä niitten kaupan kassalla päivät pitkät ja kaikki asiakkaat tietenkin kertoo sille mitä ne näkee tuolla kylillä ni sit niin ku tuli ihan hirvee haloo mun selän takana (…) että mulla ja sillä juan davidilla on suhde ja sit se ei todellakaan ollu totta (…) niin ku se juoruilun määrä oli niinku ihan käsittämätöntä (…) ei suomessa tätä niin ku tapahtuis (…) et siitä tuli tosi kelju olo.*

17) *Sitä ei voi ymmärtää et millast siel ois niin ku elää silleen et sul on niin ku joku reppu (…) Minkälaista ihmiselämä on? (…) jos nyt suomes joku joutuu elää sosiaalitoimiston tuella ni se on niin kaukana siitä et sul ei oo kenkii.*

18) *Joo oli mun helppo ymmärtää (…) kyl mä niin ku ymmärsin ne aina järellä tai silleen kun mä aloin miettii järjellä niin ku et joo näin ne nyt*

on niin paljon myöhässä taas koska se on vaan niitten kulttuuri mut kyl en mä voi sanoo etteikö se ois suututtanu mua et kyl mä monesti hermostuin ja olin niin ku sisällä niin ku sisältä niin ku ihan silleen et miks näin niin ku et ei näin mut sit niin ku kyllä mä sit niin ku oikeesti ymmärsin sen et sit mä vaan et no niin nyt malttia.

19) *Mulle oli aika semmonen niin kun lähestymistapa että mennään siihen kulttuuriin ja koitetaan niin ku toimia tosi paljon samalla tavalla kun nekin ja niin kun sillain että meille välillä myös naurettiin et mitä te nyt syötte tollein samalla lailla ku me tai jotain mutta siis hyväntahtosesti ei siinä mitään ja mä kyllä mun mielestä se on kyllä ihan hyvä juttu että ku menee johonkin maahan ni aina vähitäänkin ottaa selvää et miten siellä toimitaan ja sitten menee myös siihen mukaan jos niin ku jos se tuntuu ihan ookoolta (…) mä oon aika sopeutuvainen ni kyllä se niin ku aika nopeesti tapahtu tai silleen niin ku automaattisesti että varsinkin ku asu perheessä ni se tuli tosi lähelle se kulttuuri.*

20) *Täyty aina miettii et jos sä tapaat bolivialaisen ni meet kahville vaikka ni voit olla tunninki myöhässä että et sit voi sitten aina piti ottaa jotain tekemistä sinne kahvilaan että jotain mitä lukee tai tietokone tai muuta että sit tota noin ei siin mitään kaikkeen tottuu että aluks se oli vaan sillee et suomalaisten tapa on niin täsmällinen ni se tuntu että 'apua missä ne oikeesti viipyy' mut kyl siihenki sit tottu ja eikä se mitään ku tietää et se on se tapa.*

21) *Se oli silleen niin ku hauska huomata silleen se ärtymys itessä ja sit oli sellanen hauska hetki et ku mä kävelin mun kylätietä ja sit tuli toi moottoripyörä ajoi ohi ja sit se oli miesajaja ja sitten se käänty kattoo mua ja mä olin vähän silleen et tarviiks sun kääntyy mua tuijottaan vielä ja sit se pysähty siihen mun eteen ja sit mä vaan niin ku kävelin silleen (...) ni sit se mies kysy et haluuks mä tulla kyytiin et tarviiks mä kyytii johonkii (...) mut mun ajatukset on hirveitä (...) ja sit kuitenkin toinen haluu vaan kysyy et että ku on se 35 astetta hellettä ni et oikeesti hirveen kaunis ajatus (...) ni sillon niin ku huomas sitten sen että et ei ne et ite aattelee jo niin paljon pidemmälle et tietenkin on tärkeetä antaa sille kohtaamiselle tilaisuus.*

22) *Ne on aika ristiriitasii tunteita et totta kai sul on niin ku paha mieli niitten puolesta ja tulee vähän sellanen et tää on niin epäoikeudenmukasta (...) tuli vähän sellanen suuttumus että näil lapsil ei oo niin ku mitään ja ne on niin onnellisii näist pienist asioista, nauttii elämästä ja me pyöriskellään täällä yltäkylläisyydessä ja valitetaan niin siit tuli niin ku tuli surulliseks ja välillä vihaseks (...) että pitäs vaan niin ku silleen suhtautua empaattisesti mutta ei sitä voi ottaa niin kun kontolleen mut tuli kyllä siellä mietittyy paljon noit asioita (...) varsinkin joidenkin lasten kaa tuli vähän syvempi suhde (...) ku näki et mistä nää niin ku tulee nää lapset ja se oli vähän et voi vitsi et sit se tuntu pahalta niin ku sitä kautta.*

23) *Se on ollu mulle ihan ehkä no ainaki nyt yks mun elämän todellakin tärkeimmistä ja suurimmista kokemuksista jos mä en olis ollu siellä niin en ees voi kuvitella että mitä mää nyt tekisin ja mulla olis varmaa vähän erilainen ote elämään ja tai että mä en olis yhtään niin reipas ja kiinnostunu ehkä ulkomaalaisista (...) mulla jotenki ei oo sellasia turhia niin ku muureja estämässä etteikö menis niin ku silmät auki uusiin tilanteisiin kohti uusia ihmisiä (...) mä oon kyllä tosi tosi kiitollinen että oli mahollisuus tehä se juttu ja ghana on ihan paras ja aina nykyään jos mä nään ghanalaisii tai jos mä kuulen että joku suomalainen menee ghanaan niin mä oon ihan ratkiriemukas.*

24) *Aikasemmin oli sillä tavalla et mulla oli se mun kalenteri ja koko ajan mä aikataulutin (...) Boliviassa sillä kalenterilla sä et tee mitään kun kaikki sovitaan saman päivän aikana mitä sä tuut tekemään et siinä oppi myöskin sen et elää vähän enemmän hetkessä ja siinä että ja myöskin miettii sitä että voi olla spontaanimpi kaikki ei tarvii olla suunniteltua et jos joku suunnitelma ei meekään nii vois olla tehään b suunnitelma et ei nyt kaikki maailma ei kaadu siihen (...) mä oon ite tullu enemmän joustavaks ihmiseks ja semmoseks että tai et suunnittelee ja elää hetkessä ehkä enemmän (...) se mikä mun mielestä oli tosi kiva juttu itse asias.*

25) *Ajattelen aika monistakin asioista [eri tavalla] (...) esimerkiks toi lapsityövoima että nyt tää kuulostaa pahalta mutta siis se että et ennen se oli mulla aina niin et tosi mustavalkonen ajatus että kaikki*

lapsityövoima pahasta ja ei ei ei mutta nyt ku on nähny että se kuuluu siihen perulaiseen kulttuuriin esimerkiks et koko perhe osallistuu siihen elatuksen hankkimiseen ja monet lapset suhtautuu siihen niin että et se on vaan semmosta niin ku leikkiä (...) ja ne on tosi ylpeitä siitä kun ne saa osallistua et totta kai sillon jos se on tosi raskasta se työnteko jos se jotenkin estää sitä koulunkäyntiä jos se on pois läksyjen tekemisestä ni se on pahasta (...) [mutta] mä en nää sitä niin pahana kuitenkaan et jotenkin tullu uusia sävyjä tähän omaan ajatteluun.

26) *Mua säälittääkin se et et jengi menee niin ku tuol kadulla ja ne on niin ku laittautunu ja ne on niin ku niin tärkeitä ja (...) ne elää sellasel pintakerroksella (...) altistuminen sellasille olosuhteille [Nigeria] tekis ihan hyvää jokaselle suomalaiselle (...) me ollaan niin ku sellases pistees et et niin ku tissit kuntoon botoxii (...) joo kyl mul on niin ku syvällisii ajatuksii ja joo mä haluun auttaa mut sit siin ei tapahdu mitään (...) tääl niin ku jengi valittaa ja kyl mä ymmärrän (...) sit jengi niin ku nitisee täällä niin ku sellasist pikkuasioista et mä oon silleen et ihan oikeesti et vitsi ku säkin oisit niin ku nähny sen jutun siellä niin ku et et kyl suu pysyis soukemmalla (...) sais vähän silleen toisenlaista perspektiivii siihen et kuinka todella hyvin täällä oikeesti on.*

27) *Tän kokemuksen jälkeen pystyn kyllä siis pystyn samaistumaan paljon paremmin [maahanmuuttajiin] et siellä tuli kyllä aika monesti mietittyykin sitä ku mä oli siellä jossain lounaspöydässä työpaikalla ja viistoista opettajaa sun muuta mitä nyt siellä olikaan töissä ni syö*

lounasta ja hirvee nauru ja selitys ja ei ymmärrä niin ku mitään ni sit alko just miettimään et ei se on niin ku niillä maahanmuuttajilla että se ei ole todellakaan niin kun helppo se tilanne (...) se on mun mielest niin epäreiluu että suomessa maahanmuuttajiin ja ulkomaalaisiin monesti just suhtaudutaan niin silleen että et toi ees puhu suomee kunnolla et ei ainakaan puhuta sille ja sit siellä mä sain osakseni ihannointia (...) ja uteliaisuutta (...) ja just pystyn samaistuu siihen et miltä tuntuu ku on ihan pihalla (...) ja [mikä] ainaki musta tuntuis hyvältä mikä huonolta niin ku kohtelulta.

28) *Ja ulkomaalaisten kohtaaminen täällä, niin ku siellä [Ghanassa] ne oli niin niin ystävällisiä ja jos mä kysyin neuvoa jossakin et miten johonkin mennään ni sitten tyyppi ehkä vaan saatto mut sinne asti vaikka sillä oli muita suunnitelmia. Mulle tuli ihan sellanen kiitollisuuden velka mä aattelin että kun mä oon suomessa niin mää jotenkin tässä yritän maksaa takaisin sitte mä oon koittanu olla tosi ystävällinen ja niin ku huomata ja huomioida maahanmuuttajia.*

29) *Se [ystävä] kysy multa suoraan että tota tuliks susta vähän rasisti ku sä olit siellä (...) ni jos rasismia aattelee et sehän ei oo pelkästään negatiivista vaan se on vaan sitä ennakkoluuloa tietyllä tapaa (...) rasistinen ajatteluhan ei tarkota sitä et sä ajattelet niin ku negatiivisesti niin ku muun maalaisista tai muun kulttuurisista ihmisistä vaan se et sul on ennakkoluuloja heitä kohtaan mut nehän voi olla niin ku periaattees positiivisiaki ni että se mulla kyllä on (...) sen mä niin ku*

nyt jotenki näen sen asian ihan eri tavalla ku mitä ennen reissua (...)

toi on tollanen tummaihonen et niitä on helppo lähestyä tai että ne

helposti lähestyy muita (...) mut musta sitten tuli must tuli rasisti.

30) *Mä just meinaan aktivoituu siinä tai hakee jonnekin taksvärkki ry:n*

   tekee jotain (...)on mul semmonen olo et mä tuun viel toimii aika

   vahvasti (...) kylhän mä tuun tommosten kehityskysymysten kaa toimiin

   niin ku enemmän tai vähemmän (...) mä haluisin mennä tekee graduu

   jonnekin jos mä joskus pääsen siihen vastaan ni ehkä jostain

   kehitysmaasta sisältä (...) mä haluisin toimii silleen et maailmantalous

   on niin ku tasa-arvosempi tai et ihmiset ihmisil on enemmän tsänssii

   vaikuttaa omiin asioihinsa ja (...) siis globaaleihin arvoketjuihin.