

“We are not Integrating them, they Should Experience that
we are Involved in Something Together”
Reciprocal Integration

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Abstract

Integration may be seen as a reciprocal process where both the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers must go through a process of adaptation. This thesis studies the impact that the migration of refugees and asylum seekers has had on the host population in a municipality in Rogaland, Norway. It looks at how the experiences of the host population affect the process of integration and how this knowledge can help to achieve the better integration of refugees and asylum seekers to this municipality in Rogaland. The thesis is based upon sixteen qualitative interviews conducted with members of the host population. The role of religion in connecting the host population with the refugees and asylum seekers and the reciprocal possibilities of volunteer organizations and the relationships formed through these organizations are themes that are discussed in depth through the course of the thesis.

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Chapter One – Background Information

Introduction

Immigration has become a central issue in Europe, especially after the 2015 influx of immigrants to Europe. “In recent years, Norway has received large numbers of immigrants and has become a multicultural society” (Johansen, 2016). The process of integration and adaption becomes more and more complex in the era of globalization where technology gives people the possibility to remain more greatly connected to their country of origin or even to several countries at once. Refugees and asylum seekers coming to Norway may encounter an already and increasingly diverse population.

With the advent of the so-called migration crisis in Europe it is likely that the need to accommodate the sheer number of arrivals will mean dispersal of refugees from cities to smaller towns and even rural areas locating individuals beyond settlements familiar with diversity and offering unparalleled integration challenges and opportunities (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018).

I have studied the impact that the immigration of refugees and asylum seekers has had on the host population in a municipality in Rogaland, and how their values and perspectives have changed or been affected through their encounters with different cultures. Due to the fact that Norway is a large and diverse country, I have narrowed my research to a municipality in Rogaland. John W. Berry argues that for integration to be successful, there must be a mutual adaption of migrants, the state and the host population (Berry, 1997). Berry illustrates the importance of mutual adaption, highlighting the notion that integration is a reciprocal process involving both the host population and the immigrant (Lennox, 2018).

Thesis Topic

The integration of refugees and asylum seekers to a municipality in Rogaland, from the perspective of the host population.

Thesis Statement

How do the experiences of the host population, in a municipality in Rogaland, affect the process of integration and how can these experiences help to achieve the better integration of refugees and asylum seekers?

Motivation for the Selection of the Topic

Culture and Immigration are topics that have always interested me and, having immigrated to Canada from Scotland as a teenager, they are topics that have impacted me personally. Through moving frequently and coming into contact with people from many different cultural backgrounds, I have become very interested in the idea of being open to new understandings and different ways of relating and doing things. I find it interesting how this cognitive process can affect integration and feelings of well-being; in order to be able to accept difference one must be open to it. Through learning theories of intercultural competence, I have become more consciously aware of the cognitive skills necessary for intercultural competence, and I have been able to practice skills that I developed over time in a deliberate manner. Immigrating to the west coast of Canada as a teenager was challenging and bewildering even though I had assumed the cultural differences between the two countries to be minimal. Perhaps because I had made this assumption was it a shock to discover these inevitable cultural differences and I became very shut and judgmental of difference. Over time and through encountering people from many different cultural backgrounds, I began to suspend judgement and to be more open to difference (Lennox, 2018). Throughout the course of this thesis, I would like to convert my implicit knowledge into explicit knowledge. While I encountered difficulties integrating into Canadian society, it was not until later on that I started to think about how the people already living in that society had experienced their contact with me. However, it was not until my neighbors, who came to Norway as refugees, moved into our building that I really thought about the reciprocal nature of immigration and indeed of integration. Through getting to know my neighbors and seeing how they have been able to engage themselves with other people in the neighborhood, I have become very interested in what they have become to mean for the people already living in the neighborhood and how these encounters may have challenged pre-conceived ideas and stereotypes. I know that I myself have received so much from the warmth

and hospitality of my neighbors and this has motivated me to explore the reciprocal nature of integration.

Why is this Topic Relevant and who is it most Relevant for?

When deciding which topic to write my thesis on, I wanted to write about something that would be relevant for the people within the community that I live in. I wanted to write something that could help us to better understand the reciprocal potential and nature of integration (Lennox, 2018). After having conducted my research, I believe that this thesis is most relevant for the volunteer sector and the further development of volunteer organizations that aim to help not just with integration but with community development in general. I believe that the reciprocal potential of volunteer organizations that I have discovered through my research can be very important for further community development and in this way the thesis may be relevant for both the local and national government.

I believe that this topic is very relevant in today's Norway, which has, as I will discuss below, seen high increases in immigration in recent years. While immigration is not a new topic for many European nations, it is something that Norway has only more recently experienced making this topic relevant for Norwegian society.

The Development of the Research Questions

When developing the research questions, I wanted to understand how the host population experiences immigration and how this, in turn can affect the integration of refugees and asylum seekers to a municipality in Norway. The research questions I developed for this thesis are;

- How have the perspectives of the host population changed or been challenged through their encounter with a different culture?
- What is it that makes people more open to difference?
- How does religion affect the relationship between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers?
- How has the contact with refugees and asylum seekers impacted the lives of the host population?
- How can Norwegian society achieve better integration?

Terms and Definitions

For the better understanding of this thesis, I believe that it is important to define some of the terms I have used.

Religion

E.M. Kasiera discusses the complexities of defining the term religion. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I will use the follow definition:

Edward B. Tylor (1832–1917) suggested one of the early definitions by proposing that religion was “Belief in spiritual beings”. Indeed, most of us use the word “religion” in this way to refer to beliefs in gods, spirits and other powers which occupy a world beyond the world that is known to us all (Kasiera, 2010, p.5).

Culture

Culture may be defined in a variety of ways, however, I feel that Clifford Geertz’s description of culture is fluid and useful for the purpose of this thesis, because it illustrates how every person has his or her own ‘culture’. This also means that while one can speak about a national culture, in that there are certain straits and norms, one must be aware that not everyone from the same country share the same culture (Lennox, 2018).

The concept of culture I espouse, and whose utility the essays below attempt to demonstrate, is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. (Geertz, 1973, p.5)

Integration

To date the most prominent idea used in discussions on immigrants’ adjustment and settlement in Europe has been the concept of integration which focuses upon the participation of immigrants in the life of a receiving society (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, J, 2018).

Reciprocal Integration

John W. Berry’s definition of integration presents the approach to integration that I will explore throughout this thesis (Lennox, 2018).

[I]ntegration is a strategy where individuals regularly interact with a host society at the same time maintaining their original ethnic and cultural identity. Such process can only occur through the mutual adaption of migrants, the host population and the state (Berry, 1997).

Indeed, the E.U. defines integration as, “a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents” (EESC, 2004). The term reciprocal integration was found in an article by Phillimore, Humphris and Khan (Phillimore et al, 2017).

Assimilation

Brochmann and Kjeldstadli describe assimilation as a policy that favors the absorption of the minority population into the majority.

Assimilation [...] usually meant a policy more than a process, where claims on newcomers in terms of adjustment to the majority ways were strong and sometimes coercive (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.18).

Assimilation was used in earlier times as an immigration policy, but it has been discarded in favor of integration in more recent times (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.18).

Refugee

Refugees are people fleeing armed conflicts or persecution. There were 19,5 million of them worldwide at the end of 2014 according to UNHCR. Their situation is so perilous that they cross national borders to seek safety in nearby countries and become recognized as refugees with access to assistance from states and aid organizations. An important piece of this is that refugees are protected by international law, specifically the 1951 Refugee Convention (“Refugees, Asylum seekers and Migrants”, 2019).

Asylum Seeker

An asylum seeker is someone who claims to be a refugee but whose claim hasn't been evaluated. This person would have applied for asylum on the grounds that returning to his or her country would lead to persecution on account of race, religion, nationality or political beliefs. Someone is an asylum seeker for so long as their application is pending.

So not every asylum seeker will be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker (“Refugees, Asylum seekers and Migrants”, 2019).

Migrant

Migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat or persecution but mainly to improve their lives:

- Finding work
- Seeking better education
- Reuniting with family

Unlike refugees who cannot safely return home, migrants can return home if they wish. This distinction is important for governments, since countries handle migrants under their own immigration laws and processes (“Refugees, Asylum seekers and Migrants”, 2019).

A Municipality in Rogaland

In order to protect the identity of my informants, I have decided not to name the municipality in which I conducted my research. The municipality lies within the greater area of Rogaland, so I will simply say a municipality in Rogaland when referring to the geographical area of research. The municipality in which I have conducted my field work lies within Rogaland in the south-western corner of Norway. The municipality is rural with only a few small sized towns and is described as being situated within the “bible belt” of Norway (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.248).

The church actually proved to be more of a common ground for newcomers and Norwegians – Stavanger is actually placed in what is called the Norwegian bible belt – the western coastal parts of the country in which Christianity has a stronghold (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.248).

As I will mention, immigration to Norway developed on a low scale right up until the 1990’s, where Norway was considered to be an average receiving country (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.254). The presence of immigrants was very much concentrated in urban areas (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.270). This means that because the municipality in Rogaland that I have studied is rural and does not contain any large cities, it had not experienced any significant immigration until more recently.

The Host Population

The host population refers to the population that already resides in the geographical area in question. The host population can include anyone who is established within the geographical area in question; they need not be ethnically from that area and may not have been born there. The term host population was found in an article by Dambrun, Maisonneuve, Testé, and Taillandier-Schmitt. (Dambrun et al, 2014).

A History of Immigration to Norway

Right up until the 1960's, Norway was considered to be a 'sending' as opposed to a 'receiving' country, meaning that up until this point, more people left Norway than entered it, with many going to places such as the United States (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.12-13). It was not until the late 1970's that individual asylum seekers started to come to Norway. They arrived spontaneously without prior organization. The first asylum seekers were Vietnamese citizens fleeing the Vietnam war in 1975, these refugees came on boats and were picked up at sea by Norwegian ships. Chileans fleeing the 1973 coup d'état constituted the other significant group of refugees to Norway in the 1970's (Brochmann, & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.216). However, the numbers of refugees coming from Vietnam and Chile were small; only 89 asylum seekers arrived from Vietnam in 1975, "followed by 80 and 58 the following two years" (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.216). 1,300 arrived at the end of the 1970's and 1,300 at the beginning of the 1980's. 24 Chilean refugees arrived in Norway in 1973, by 1982, 824 Chilean citizens had received residence permits in Norway (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.214-216). The following quote from Brochmann and Kjeldstadli illustrates how few 'foreigners' there were in Norway in the 1950's and 1960's. As a context for this thesis, it is important to note that most of my informants grew up in Norway during this period of time and would, hence, have had very little contact with 'foreigners'.

'Is there an American people?' asks the American writer Nathan Glazer. For us who grew up in the '50's and the '60's, a similar question would have seemed absurd. Hardly any of us had ever seen what we called a Negro live. We were born of parents who had experienced 'the war' – the German occupation of Norway – and stories from this period dominated the master narratives [...] we had no reason to doubt that we belonged to the world's most beautiful country, and that we were the luckiest people on earth. Less lucky people in other places of the globe received

our sympathy and charity, particularly on the 24th of October: the anniversary of the United Nations. A typical event on this day was a lecture by a Norwegian missionary in Africa, accompanied by a film from the field (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.237).

Through this quote, it is also important to note that the connection to other cultures is created through the presence of missionaries.

By the mid 1990's, immigrants constituted 5.1 percent of the Norwegian population, however, with a geographical concentration in Oslo and parts of Finnmark. Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka were the largest group at this time. Up until well into the 1980's, western immigrants represented the majority of all newcomers, however, they were not considered real 'immigrants' this status was reserved for 'non-westerners' and held negative connotations. In the beginning of the 1980's, Stavanger had the highest density of foreigners, 8 percent of the population, as a result of the oil industry (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.245-247).

By the 1990's, Norway was considered to be an average receiving country in Europe, measured in terms of population (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.254). By the year 2000, urban Norway was on a par with, "the larger metropolises on the European continent in ethnic pluralism" (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p.270). The war in Syria, and other countries, resulted in a high increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers coming to Norway between 2015 and 2016 (frivilighet norge. 2016).

The Informants

As the research for this thesis is based upon the qualitative interviews conducted with sixteen informants in a municipality in Rogaland, it is important for the reader to gain an understanding of who these informants are. In order to gain this knowledge, I will briefly present some information about the participants I interviewed in this section of the thesis. With so many informants, and many with similar backgrounds, I have decided to present them under categories rather than individually.

While conducting the interviews for this thesis, I have been met with incredible warmth and hospitality. I have been invited into peoples' homes and offered tea, coffee and food, I was even given a recipe for bread! I write this here because it shows something about the mentality and openness of the informants and it gives the reader a picture of the people I have interviewed. Over the course of the field work, I have gained enormous respect for the informants and for the work that they do.

Background

All of the sixteen informants I interviewed were born in Norway to ethnic Norwegian parents. Thirteen of them are women and three are men; all the men I interviewed were interviewed together with their partners. Only one of the informants was under the age of forty, the majority were over the age of fifty. All of these points will be discussed further on in the analysis, however, the information is necessary here for the reader to gain an understanding of the demographics of the informants. Although some of the participants did travel as children, the majority did not and their contact with other cultures came primarily from their interactions with returning missionaries, either in the church or through family members. Again, this is an important point that will be discussed in depth in the analysis. Many of the older informants spoke about a Norway that was very different to the one we know today, a Norway with little immigration and influence from other cultures, a country that was also economically speaking much poorer than it is presently. When asked if they had travelled much as children, one couple, who were interviewed together, replied;

No, the first trip I took abroad was to Yugoslavia when I was sixteen (Interview 8, informant 8).

I didn't travel at all as a child. Norway was completely different. My father had never left Norway when he was fifty (Interview 8, informant 9).

It had to do with the economy. Norway was a poor country right up until the 1960's (interview 8, informant 8).

Did you have contact with people from other cultures as children? (interview 8, interviewer).

No, I remember it, look! there's an African! Look! (interview 8, informant 8).

I often tell this story about the first African I saw in Oslo in 1954! I had never seen an African before! (interview 8, informant 9).

Another couple answered the same question in a very similar way:

Did you travel much as children? (interview 1, interviewer).

There wasn't the economy for it. I had never been abroad with my parents (interview 1, informant 2).

Did you have contact with people from a cultural background different to you own as children? (interview 1, interviewer).

No, just Norwegian. As a child I lived in Stavanger and I remember in primary school at the end of the 1980's there were quite a few immigrants who came from Vietnam to Stavanger. I had four or five in my class and I played with them, it was very exciting! ... But not much apart from that no (interview 1, informant 1).

There were very few I would say, or there were very few immigrants here thirty years ago, there weren't so many who moved to Norway. The oil industry came in the 1960's and before that, Norway was one of the poorest countries in Europe. And now, because of the oil, Norway has become a rich country and as a result, many immigrants have come looking for work (interview 1, informant 2).

Some of the informants, however, did travel as children. One informant spoke about how she would travel with her family to visit an older sister who did missionary work in different countries.

Did you travel a lot as a child? (interview 4, interviewer).

Yes. Not when I was very little but from when I was five or six we travelled quite a lot (interview 4, informant 4).

Where did you travel to? (interview 4, interviewer).

A lot to the south and places like that, and to Turkey and Bulgaria. A lot of southern countries. And when my sister started to travel we would go to the places she was living to visit her. First she lived in Turkey and then she lived in North Africa (interview 4, informant 4).

Although the majority of the informants did not travel or have much contact with other cultures as children, many of them have travelled extensively as adults. This says something about the economic situation of the informants and illustrates the high degree of interest that many of the participants have in other cultures and places. One participant described where she has been.

Have you travelled a lot as an adult? You mentioned that you lived in North and South America? (interview 5, interviewer).

Yes, and I have travelled a lot outside of that (interview 5, informant 5).

Which countries have you travelled to? (interview 5, interviewer).

Africa, Asia, South America, not Australia, but otherwise I have travelled a lot in both North and South America, in Africa and quite a bit in Asia (interview 5, informant 5).

Politically speaking, the majority of the informants voted for KRF, or the *Kristelig Folkeparti*, the Christian Democrats of Norway. However, many of the participants also cited hesitations in voting for KRF recently, due to their dealings with the right sided FRP. When asked what her political affiliations were, one informant replied, “ummm...I used to vote for KRF but recently I have voted for *Senterpartiet*, [the Centre Party]” (interview 4, informant 4). Another informant replied, when asked the same question. “yes ... I vote for KRF. I would say so yes ... but I do not always agree with everything they say...” (interview 3, informant 3). One of my other participants, however, answered;

Does that have anything to do with it? ... If I am political? I am not politically active, but I am not conservative to put it like that...I am more socialist (interview 14, informant 16).

Religious Identity

Interestingly, out of the sixteen informants I interviewed, fourteen identified as active Christians, while one identified as agnostic and the other as atheist. As illustrated in the background information, this trend reflects the religious nature of this municipality and, as I will discuss further in the analysis, it plays an important part in the meeting between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers. For the majority of the participants, the church plays an important role in daily life. One informant described what sorts of things she and her husband enjoy doing at the weekend. “we like to go for walks, visit friends, play board games [...] we are also active in the mission house...in the church here” (informant 1, interview 1). Another interviewee described how she and her friends enjoyed their free time.

With friends, we tend to ... I am an active Christian, so often at the weekend we go for a Sunday meeting and then we find something to do afterwards. Sometimes we go out to eat, us with children, we go to a playground or to *Lekeland* ... we find things to do with the children. sometimes if we do things in the evenings, we go to the cinema (Interview 4, informant 4).

Informant 5 also described how she was, “a little bit active in the church” (interview 5, informant 5), when asked about how she enjoys socializing and what sort of things she likes to do.

Education / Work

Of the sixteen people I interviewed for this thesis, twelve were trained as teachers, other professions included a chef and a hairdresser. Part of the reason for this is that I interviewed four people who worked at a teaching center for refugees and asylum seekers. There are, however, within my group of informants, still a high percentage of trained teachers working as volunteers with refugees and asylum seekers. What struck me when conducting the interviews was how natural it was for the informants to use their professions in ways that they could offer help to the refugees and asylum seekers. When asked why she decided to volunteer with refugees, one interviewee replied;

I had time and I wanted to start working as a volunteer. I just saw the advert, that they were going to have a language café. I am a chef, so it was pretty natural for me to work in the kitchen there, right? (interview 13, informant 15).

Another participant described with so much care how she would sometimes take some of the women from the asylum center to the salon where she works, to pamper them. When asked how she experiences the contact between herself and the refugees and asylum seekers she volunteers with, she answered:

It depends a bit on how their language is. there is a woman who is 65 and she speaks very bad Norwegian, but we have a heart connection which means that we don't have to speak so much to understand. I understand when she is tired, I take them sometimes with me to the salon after its closed and I sit them in the massage chair and wash their hair. I don't have to color their hair or anything but just that that they can sit in a chair and drink some coffee while they wait their

turn for the massage chair or to get their hair cut. they all stand round the one who is getting her hair cut (Interview 11, informant 12).

Many of the informants have mentioned that they try to help with things such as homework, learning Norwegian and filling out forms. One participant, a teacher, talked about the sorts of things that her and her husband try to help with; they had been connected through a volunteer organization with two men who had recently come to Norway.

We help a bit to do with school, with their subjects, some words that they find difficult. For example, they have to take social sciences and they need to be able to explain and understand what all these words mean. There are many words that we don't use in everyday use and it's hard to help them to understand (interview 1, informant 1).

Attitudes and Views

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of getting to know the informants, is to gain a notion of their attitudes and feelings; what they hope for, how they feel, what they think. The reflections and opinions will be discussed in greater depth in the analysis section of the thesis, however, I want to show enough here for the reader to be able to gain an understanding of who these informants are. One participant described how it is important to remember to acknowledge immigrants when one sees them on the street and how it can make a big difference.

It's like I tend to say at school, that it doesn't take much more than a smile! It can mean so much for the whole day. I think that a lot of immigrants are met very negatively. And I can see that we have changed in that now when we meet people we are starting to remember some names and we always say hi and I think that it is really positive (interview 1, informant 1)

Another participant spoke about how, when she volunteers at the language café, she likes to include everyone if she can.

We practice some phrases and things, it's very nice, but otherwise I think that if you can have everyone involved that's the best! I feel that, oh no, he is sitting over there, and he doesn't have anyone to talk to and I see everyone. I try to include everyone but there is a limit to how many people can play UNO! So now we have to try to include everyone in things like bingo, that's what I like best! I want everyone to have a nice time! (interview 3, informant 3).

Although many of the informants have encountered cultural barriers between themselves and the refugees and asylum seekers they have met, the majority have exhibited attitudes of respect and a willingness to help. Many of the informants are very involved in volunteer work with refugees and asylum seekers, some even stating that a big part of their social lives involves socializing with refugees and asylum seekers. One couple described how they try to help where they can but how they feel that they could always do more.

There is a lot to learn, we are always learning and there is always this thought, oh we could have done a bit more. It's difficult for me to sit at home and think I am sitting completely alone... when we drove to Bergen we had space for five (interview 11, informant 12).

We were so happy the whole way! I always leave the refugee center happy. I always have a good feeling, even if I feel sad for them, which I often do. There is a lot that hurts... If you think of these good moments you can give them, it's worth a lot. We bought hot dogs on the boat and they were so happy, then we bought ice cream afterwards...you feel so much happiness when you see their happiness (interview 11, informant 13).

Through presenting the participants of my research for this thesis, I hope that the reader is able to gain a feeling of who the informants are and that this feeling can help to build a better understanding of the findings and analysis.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

This thesis is qualitative and inductive, in that it has allowed me to use a limited number of interviews to draw broader conclusions. I have used grounded theory to construct theory, developed through theoretical sampling. It is an explorative study that has allowed me to clarify the lines of research I wanted to follow. The data collection for this thesis comprises of qualitative interviews conducted with sixteen informants throughout the course of the fieldwork (Lennox, 2018).

Methods Used to Gather Information

The data for this thesis was gathered through the qualitative interviews I conducted with my sixteen informants. While I have used the interviews I did with the sixteen informants for the research for this thesis, I have omitted the interview I conducted with a seventeenth participant because it fell out with the geographical area of research. Although I have interviewed sixteen informants, I did so over the course of thirteen interviews because six of the informants were couples who were interviewed together with their spouses.

The Interviews

I have carried out all of the interviews in person, and I feel like I was able, in doing so, to create a positive connection with the informants. Jody Miller and Barry Glassner discuss qualitative interviews in the book *Qualitative Research*, edited by David Silverman.

In sum, we believe that qualitative interviews provide us access to social worlds, as evidence both of ‘what happens’ within them and of how individuals make sense of themselves, their experiences and their place within these social worlds (Miller & Glassner, 2016, p.52).

In order to attempt to shed some light on the topics surrounding my research questions, I chose to conduct semi-formal guided interviews, where I followed the interview guide that I made before starting the interviews. However, although I did loosely follow the interview guide, I found that as I gained more knowledge after having carried out the first interviews, I was able to ask the questions without the guide in front of me and I added some questions that appeared as unexpected themes in the first interviews. I tried to formulate open ended questions that would give the participants the opportunity to discuss; I wanted the interviews to flow like a

natural conversation so that I could develop theories based upon the themes that emerged from the interviews. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium discuss some of the different approaches to interviewing, one of which is interesting for me as a description of how I have attempted to approach the interviews I have conducted. Holstein and Gubrium claim that instead of attempting to pertain to the methodological constraints of how one should conduct the standardized interview, researchers should see the interview as an “active and interactional process activation and capitalize analytically upon interviewers’ and respondents’ constitutive contributions to the production of interview data” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2016, p.69). Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson also discuss the process of interviewing, in their book, *Ethnography Principles in Practice*. Hammersley and Atkinson discuss how although there is much discussion surrounding the distinction between structured and unstructured interviews, they believe that all interviews are in some way structured and that the real distinction is between prestructured and reflexive interviewing (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.117). Ethnographers do not usually decide beforehand the exact questions they want to ask, and do not ask each interviewee precisely the same questions, though they will usually enter the interviews with a list of questions to be covered (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.117). Hammersley and Atkinson accurately describe the approach I have taken to interviewing my participants. Although I did have a detailed interview guide, I did not rely on it fully and asked some follow up questions that were not included in the interview guide.

I was given permission to audio record twelve of the thirteen interviews which I later transcribed and translated into English. All of the interviews were conducted in Norwegian and later translated into English. I took notes for the interview I was not given permission to record. Due to technical difficulties, I also lost the recordings of two of the interviews. I wrote down as much as I could remember of these two interviews as soon as I realized that they hadn’t recorded. The interviews varied in length between twenty-five minutes and two hours. When organizing the interviews, I always asked the informant where he or she wished the interview to take place, giving the participant the opportunity to choose a location in which he or she felt the most comfortable. I also tried to be as flexible as possible with the times we could meet, again letting the informants decide what time suited them best. Many of the interviews were carried out in the homes of the participants, some were conducted in places of work and some in cafes or libraries.

Access / the Gatekeeper

Access to the informants is usually gained through a gatekeeper. A gatekeeper is someone who gives the researcher access to the participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.49). Sometimes, it may be necessary to use various gatekeepers (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.50). I gained access to my informants through a variety of different ways. Firstly, I asked a friend of mine who had worked with refugees and asylum seekers if she knew anyone I could contact. She put me into contact with someone who also worked with refugees and asylum seekers who then put me in contact with another gatekeeper, the leader of the place of work, who then sent an email to ask who else was interested in taking part. One of the informants I gained access to, asked the people she volunteered with if anyone wanted to be interviewed. Another friend put me in contact with another gatekeeper who was able to find people who had volunteered with refugees and asylum seekers for me to interview. My supervisor was also able to give me the name of someone who could act as a gatekeeper and I was also able to find informants through her. I did not previously know any of the informants I interviewed. The process of gaining access was highly challenging and time consuming. In the end, I was contacted by more informants than I had initially planned to interview but I decided that it would be beneficial for my thesis to speak to them all.

Deciding Who to Interview

In many ways, access determines who to interview. Hammersley and Atkinson say that, “Sometimes the difficulty of getting access to informants determines who will and will not be interviewed” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.105). Initially, I had divided up my research into three groups. I wanted to interview four or five people who worked with refugees or asylum seekers, four or five who volunteered with them and four or five who had become friends informally, such as through being neighbors, mutual friends etc. However, I found that I was unable to come into contact with those who had become friends informally, leading me to theorize, this theory began to emerge through talking to the informants as well, that because Norway is an organized society, people tend to make friends through organizations and societies, rather than through more informal settings (Lennox, 2018). This is a theory that I will discuss in chapter three on theory and chapter four on findings and analysis. I also found that there was so much overlap between the other two groups, as almost all of those I interviewed

who worked with refugees and asylum seekers also volunteered with them, that I ended up abandoning the idea of groups.

When I started researching some background information for this thesis, I came across the idea that in today's world of globalization and as a result, increase in migration, the host population would also include informants who were not ethnically Norwegian and perhaps were not even born in Norway. However, perhaps due to a lack of access, and the fact that the municipality in which I chose to conduct my research, is rural and has only experienced greater immigration in more recent years, all the interviewees are ethnically Norwegian. The majority of those I interviewed, as I have discussed in the previous section on the informants, were women over the age of fifty. Although, as I have discussed earlier, this may also have to do with more than just a question of access. Access has determined, to an extent who I was able to interview for this thesis.

Personal Situation in the Field

I do not believe that my own personal situation in the field has greatly compromised the data collected. I feel as though my informants were comfortable speaking to me and were able to be open with me and to freely express their opinions and beliefs. However, although I have a good grasp of Norwegian, it is not my first language and it is possible that my understanding of what was said could have impacted the accuracy of the data collected (Lennox, 2018). The language has been an extra challenge for me, however I feel that I was able to conduct the interviews effectively in Norwegian. Transcribing the interviews, however, was a slow process due to the fact that it was done in Norwegian and then translated into English, though I only translated what I have used for this thesis.

Hammersley and Atkinson discuss how the personal attributes of the researcher may affect the research and how, as a result, the researcher needs to decide how much of his or her own personal beliefs should be disclosed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.72). I personally encountered a similar dilemma when, at the end of one interview, the informant made a comment that implicated that she assumed that I was very religious. The informant had been very open about the role that religion played in her volunteer work with refugees and asylum seekers. When I realized her assumption, I decided that it was appropriate to confess that this wasn't the case but that I had great respect for her and for all of the other volunteers I had spoken to. I felt quite uncomfortable with the fact that the informant may have been so open with me about her religious beliefs because she had assumed that I held the same beliefs.

However, I managed to leave the interview on a positive note. I believed that it would not have been ethical, when asked directly about my own religious beliefs, not to tell the truth (Lennox, 2018). Hammersley and Atkinson say that, “[p]articular problems arise when the researcher’s own religious or political attitudes differ markedly from those of the peoples being studied” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.72). I have also felt unable to disclose too many aspects of my personal life due to the fact that I feel that they went against the conservative values of some of the informants. This encounter led me to question my position in the field and to wonder if it has influenced how open the informants have been with me with regard to the extent to which religion has been a motivating factor in their work with refugees and asylum seekers. Having said this, however, I still believe that the informants have been open to me and have been honest with their responses.

Methodological Challenges

One methodological dilemma I have encountered while conducting the fieldwork for this thesis was whether interviewing couples together would compromise or enhance the quality and reliability of the answers and narratives. I decided that, because the couples all volunteered together, it would be more natural for me to interview them together. I believed that the conversation we could have together could create interesting narratives. I am satisfied with my decision to interview the couples together, as I feel like the couples were able to be open and honest in their expressions and that this method did, indeed, enhance the quality of the interviews in that they developed into interesting narratives and discussions. In fact, the interviews I conducted with the couples turned out to be some of the most interesting and dynamic interviews I performed (Lennox, 2018).

As I have already discussed, I encountered some methodological challenges in gaining access to the informants. Access has limited who I was able to interview, but it has also led to the development of new theories, as I will discuss in the next chapters of the thesis.

One of the main challenges of doing the field work has been the practicalities of organizing interviews and finding informants. It has taken considerable time to come into contact with the informants and to organize the interviews. Many of the informants were occupied and needed considerable time before they were able to partake in the interviews. As a result, I was unable to start the interviews as early as I would have liked, and I continued conducting interviews later than was desirable, stretching the fieldwork into January 2019.

Ethical Considerations

When I contacted the informants, I sent them a letter containing information as to what the research project was about and what taking part in the project would mean for them. All the informants then signed the letter, after I went over the letter with them, giving me permission to use the data, before we started the interviews. When gaining access, it is important to provide information about the research and what it might mean for them (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.42). The letter was given in both English and Norwegian. All but one of the participants gave their consent to be audio recorded and I took notes for the interview that I was not given permission to record.

Confidentiality is of great importance when conducting this type of qualitative research. Hammersley and Atkinson discuss the complications of privacy. “A frequent concern about ethnographic research is that it involves making public things that were said or done in private” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.212). It is therefore important to protect the identity of the informants. All my informants were guaranteed complete confidentiality and as a result, I have not referred to the informants by name and I have changed any identifying information, such as the names of people and countries. I will now destroy all the audio recordings I took, and I do not have any written notes linking the informants to the transcriptions.

I applied to NSD for ethical approval to carry out the research for this thesis, and I was told that I did not need it, but I have of course kept to NSD’s ethical standards for research as mentioned above.

Ethical Challenges

Throughout the course of the fieldwork, I do not feel as though I encountered any real ethical challenges. Some of my informants invited me to carry out the interviews in their houses and offered me food, tea and coffee, and I have bought coffee for the informants I have met in cafes, but I would consider these gestures to be within the normal realm of hospitality. I have not been asked by any of my informants for compensation, nor have I received any gifts from my participants. Because I live in a different municipality to the one in which I conducted my research, I have always offered to travel to the participants, carry out the interviews, paying for my own train tickets.

Grounded Theory

I have used grounded theory and theoretical sampling as a means by which to analyze the data I have collected through the course of the fieldwork. Rather than begin with a hypothesis, I have used grounded theory as a means by which to develop theory (Lennox, 2018). Grounded theory, rather than beginning with a closed hypothesis, uses close data analysis to develop theory (Silverman, 2015, p.218-219).

Grounded theory is a method of qualitative inquiry in which researchers develop inductive theoretical analysis from their collected data and subsequently gather further data to check their analysis. The purpose of grounded theory is theory construction, rather than description or application of existing theories (Silverman, 2015, p.219).

One way to establish grounded theory is through theoretical sampling:

Theoretical sampling involves gathering new data to check hunches and to confirm that the properties of the grounded theorist's theoretical category are filled out. Researchers may also use it to define variation in a studied process or phenomenon or to establish the boundaries of a theoretical category. When these properties are saturated with data, the grounded theorist ends data collection and integrates the analysis (Silverman, 2015, p.222).

Indeed, Kathy Charmaz and Antony Bryant discuss grounded theory and theoretical sampling. They use the below diagram to show the process of grounded theory and theoretical sampling. I have chosen to include the diagram because I feel that it clearly illustrates the process involved, and it is a process that I have followed through the course of this thesis.

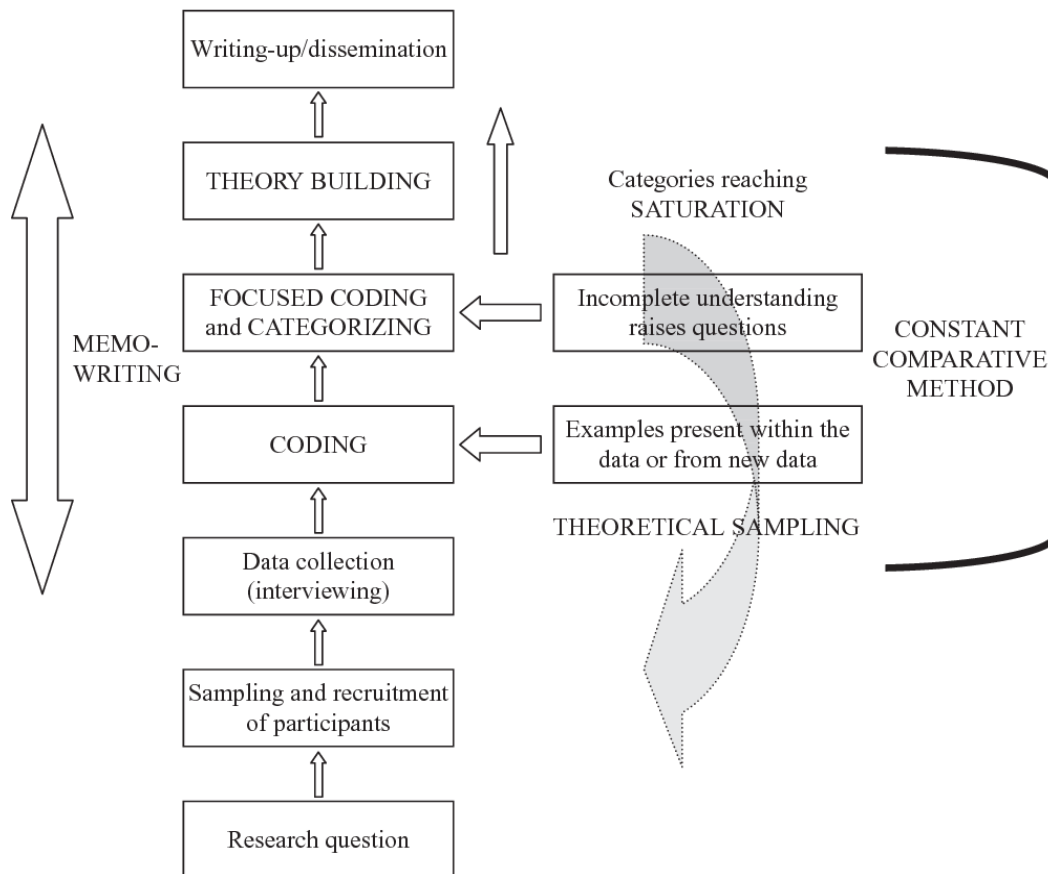


Figure 21.1 A visual representation of a grounded theory

Source: An earlier version of this figure originally appeared in Alison Tweed and Kathy Charmaz (2011). 'Grounded theory for mental health practitioners', in D. Harper and A. Thompson (eds), *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy: A Guide for Students and Practitioners*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, p.133. Alison Tweed constructed the original figure. (Charmaz & Bryant, 2016, p.349).

Throughout the course of the fieldwork, I began to form various theories based upon the responses that the informants had given me. As a result, I developed some new questions to ask the following informants. As the interviews progressed, I improved my interview skills and became better equipped to pose follow up questions that helped me to develop new theories and gain a better understanding of the areas of research that were important for the development of the thesis. Grounded theory allows the researcher to begin with a research question but to follow an explorative line of research where theory is developed as the data from the interviews is collected and analyzed. In grounded theory, one does not go out to prove a theory that the researcher has, but, instead, the researcher develops theory through exploration.

Chapter 3 - Theory and Discussion

Robert Putnam's Theory of Social Capital

Robert Putnam's theory of social capital has been widely used in relation to integration, society development and religion, it is relevant for the purpose of my thesis as it is able to illustrate how both religion and volunteer organizations can be used as a means to connect people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. This can help to create a sense of community between them and achieve the better integration of refugees and asylum seekers to the municipality of Rogaland where I have conducted my research.

Literature on social capital, by which we mean the norms of trust and reciprocity that arise out of our social networks. Some social capital consists of bonding, or interconnections among people with a common background. Other social capital is bridging in nature, and thus connects people of different backgrounds. While both bonding and bridging each serve important purposes, bridging is vital for the smooth functioning of a diverse society. When birds of different feathers flock together, they come to trust one another (Campbell & Putnam, 2013, p.620).

Here, trust emerges as a key component of successful bridging, when different groups are not acquainted with one another, fear may predominate and there may exist a lack of trust; when groups come together, they can learn to trust. Therefore, one can argue that the meeting between these groups is essential for the creation of trust. I will discuss how an increase in contact between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers has helped to create an environment of trust and understanding.

Guro Ødegård, Jill Loga, Kari Steen-Johansen and Bodil Ravneberg, in their book, *Fellesskap og Forskjellighet*, discuss Robert Putnam's theory of social capital in relation to the potential that societies have in achieving better integration, through expanding social networks (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.9). Ødegård et al, discuss the theory in reference to the Norwegian setting, making their work very relevant and important for my thesis. Throughout the course of the thesis, I have developed the theory that Norwegian society is very structured and organized, meaning that volunteer organizations can be a central means by which to expand the social capital of the refugees and asylum seekers, given that coming into Norwegian society, due to its organized nature, can otherwise be challenging. I will further discuss this point through the course of the next chapter. Ødegård et al, back up my theory that Norway is an organized society, saying that when the focus is put on civil society as an arena for integration, one needs to take

into account the formal social networks that exist in the Norwegian society (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.10-11).

Thomas Hylland Eriksen, in his book *ET LANGT KALD LAND, nesten uten mennesker*, discusses in a simplistic way how Norway has become one of the most organized countries in the world (Eriksen, 1998, p.32). At the time this was written, Eriksen claims that while Norway only had 4.3 million inhabitants, there were 17 million members of different societies (Eriksen, 1998, p.32). Furthermore, Eriksen describes the typical local community in Norway as built up of family networks, work places, public administrations and society life (Eriksen, 1998, p.34).

Volunteer Organizations as an Arena for Integration

Volunteer organizations can be an important arena for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers to Norway. Throughout the course of my research, I have discovered how volunteer organizations are able to connect the host population with the refugees and asylum seekers and allow for the formation of reciprocal relationships that can help to strengthen the community.

Ødegård et al, claim that participation in volunteer organizations is connected to higher income and education (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.60). This is a phenomenon that I have also discovered through the course of my fieldwork. Of my sixteen informants, only three did not have higher education and eleven were teachers. Ødegård et al, also claim that there is higher involvement in volunteer work outside of the bigger cities in Norway (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.60). From my research I can see how the religious nature of the municipality in Rogaland that I studied has created a sense of wanting to help, a motivation for involvement in volunteer organizations, as I will discuss further on through this chapter and in the next chapter of the thesis on findings and analysis. Indeed, Asle Høgmo, in his book, *Fremmed i det norske hus innvandreres møte med bygdesamfunn, småby og storby*, discusses how small towns in Norway can also be an arena for integration. He studied the case of a small Norwegian town, illustrating how the combination of formal organizations and informal organizations have been able to work together to create opportunities for Norwegians and immigrants to meet (Høgmo, 1998, p.47).

While Ødegård et al, discuss different kinds of volunteer organizations, such as sports clubs, as an area for integration, I will focus on humanitarian volunteer organizations as the majority of my informants have volunteered in humanitarian volunteer organizations. Ødegård et al, discuss how humanitarian volunteer organizations can help to open doors and build bridges, in that volunteers can help with practicalities such as connecting immigrants with

public organizations, such as NAV, and the crisis center etc. (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.61). They also mention how these volunteers can be important in helping to expand the social network of immigrants who may otherwise struggle to build these networks (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.61). It is the personal relationship that is built between the immigrant and the volunteer that helps the most in integration. These relationships can be built through volunteer tasks such as homework help, guides, mentors, through family visits among others (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.62). Furthermore, Ødegård et al, discuss how through building this relationship with the volunteer, the immigrant will hopefully be inspired to contribute themselves in the local community (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.62). Through volunteer organizations, immigrants can receive help to improve their written and spoken Norwegian, to find work and to understand how social relations between people work in Norway; to better understand Norwegian society and culture (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.65).

The Connection Between Religion and Civic Engagement

Valerie A. Lewis, Carol Anne MacGregor and Robert D. Putnam, discuss the role that religiosity plays in civic engagement, in their article, *Religion, Networks and Neighborliness: The Impact of Religious Social Networks on Civic Engagement*, arguing that there is a link between increased religiosity and civic engagement (Lewis et al, 2013, p.332). Lewis et al, argue that North Americans with higher degrees of religiosity tend to engage more frequently in what they call ‘neighborly or helping behaviors’ (Lewis et al, 2013, p.332), meaning that they are more likely to donate money, to volunteer, to help a neighbor etc. (Lewis et al, 2013, p.332). This neighborly or helping behavior can be seen strongly throughout the course of my interviews, and I aim to discuss this further throughout the next chapter. Interestingly, Lewis et al, state that, “[h]owever, although religious Americans tend to be more politically conservative, the current evidence suggests that religious Americans’ civic engagement is not primarily focused on conservative causes, either political or religious” (Lewis et al, 2013, p.333). I will argue that the more conservative values of those who have higher levels of religiosity may be a point of connection between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers, even though they may not hold the same religious beliefs. Furthermore, Lewis et al, argue that this connection between civic engagement and religiosity holds even through different religious traditions (Lewis et al, 2013, p.333).

Religion as a Motivation for Civic Engagement

After establishing that there is a link between religiosity and increased civic engagement, Lewis et al, discuss why this may be; why does religion increase civic engagement? (Lewis et al, 2013, p.333). They argue that religious altruism or notions of selflessness may contribute to the motivation of religious people in the United States to engage in civic engagement (Lewis et al, 2013, p.333). They state that, “All major religions preach some form of selflessness and inherent value in helping others” (Lewis et al, 2013, p.333). Through this quote one can see how religion can loosely motivate civic engagement, in that it promotes the notion of trying to help others, and that this is something that is common to all the major world religions. What I have seen through the course of my fieldwork is that there is a commonality in the ways in which peoples from different religious faiths express themselves, this notion of wanting to help, of doing what you can for your neighbor; this is something that connects the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers that come to the municipality in Rogaland where I have conducted my research (Lennox, 2018). This is something that I will discuss further in the analysis of this thesis. What is also interesting to note, is that even within organizations that directly acknowledge a religious presence, religion is not prevalent in the discourse (Lewis et al, 2013, p.333).

Paul Lichterman, in his article, *A Place on the Map: Communicating Religious Presence in Civic Life*, discusses how although members in his study of a religious volunteer group in the United States displayed religious knowledge and were able to refer to biblical passages when asked, they did not appear to be driven by religious teachings and did not appear ‘religious’ in meetings, meaning that the fact that they were religious was not obviously visible (Lichterman, 2007, p.139). When discussing religion as a motivation for civic engagement, Lichterman argues that religion is an indirect motivation for civic engagement.

Nearly everyone in the Cluster supported the increasing investment in community development projects. Yet their mixed vocabulary of motives could have supported a variety of goals. In private interviews toward the end of my study, and in group brochures, members described the Cluster’s work as “caring for our neighbors,” “servanthood,” “doing justice,” “loving thy neighbor,” “being a nurturant person,” and “helping our neighbors build their community,” among others. There was a very loose relation between these religious and secular terms, on the one hand, and the emerging, specific goals of the group, on the other (Lichterman, 2007, p.141).

Here, much like the findings of Lewis et al, there is a loose presence of religious motivation in civic engagement.

Through the course of my fieldwork, I have also found that while, for a small minority of my informants, religion is a direct motivation for engagement in civic life, it is a loose motivation for the majority of my informants, and it presents itself in a similar way to the findings discussed above. This is something that I will discuss in the next chapter on findings and analysis.

Lewis et al, highlight the role of the congregation in instilling civic responsibility; the “influence of the clergy, affiliation and social connections” (Lewis et al, 2013, p.333). Lichterman also touches upon the role of the congregation in encouraging civic engagement, saying that North Americans come to associate civic engagement with congregational life (Lichterman, 2007, p.142). Furthermore, Lewis et al, mention how for some North Americans, listening to sermons that discuss helping those who are less fortunate may influence their motivation for engaging in civic life. “The impact of attending religious services may be that individuals internalize the needs to help one another fostering altruistic beliefs that engender civic engagement among the religious” (Lewis et al, 2013, p.333). However, they also concede that for many, the clergy do not directly influence their decision to engage in civic society (Lewis et al, 2013, p.334). However, the norms for certain behaviors, the so called “helping behaviors” are set in the congregation and the congregation also serves as a space where tight social bonds are formed (Lewis et al, 2013, p.334). This community sense and the behavior that stems from it can be seen to a great degree through the interviews I conducted with my informants. Within the geographical area of my research, I have gained an understanding from my informants as to the community spirit of the area and the people within it, this spirit extends to the concept of *dugnad* which can roughly be translated as volunteer work and is something that is held as a strong value by many of the people in the area. This notion of *dugnad* will be further discussed in the next chapter of the thesis.

Lichterman creates a picture of the religious motivation of the Cluster parish he studied that reflects strongly the religious motivation of my informants, with regard to conversion to Christianity. He discusses how, on the one hand his informants claim that they do not wish to convert people but on the other hand, they associate themselves with the Parish (Lichterman, 2002, p.144). This point will be discussed in the findings and analysis chapter of the thesis; however, this mixed motivation is something that I have encountered through the course of the field work.

Religion as a Point of Connection

Although much of the research I have discussed focuses on the United States, I will argue through the course of this thesis that there is a strong correlation between the religious and civic makeup of the United States and the municipality of Rogaland where I conducted my research, meaning that although the geographic area of research is different the findings are still relevant. Mariann Villa and Marit A. Haugen, in their book, *Lokalsamfunn*, discuss how small towns in the United States and in Europe are often set in contrast to one another. Immigrants are more easily integrated into small towns in the United States where local life revolves around the church, and children's sports clubs, while integration may be much more difficult to achieve in small European towns where it may take generations for people to become integrated into the local society. A small town in Germany is used as an example (Villa & Haugen, 2016, p.401). However, Villa and Haugen argue that while historically small towns in Norway may have been closer to the German example than that of the United States, in today's Norway, this may no longer be the case (Villa & Haugen, 2016, p.402). They claim that in the last ten years, the church in small Norwegian towns has played a central role in integration (Villa & Haugen, 2016, p.402).

Having said this, Ødegård et al, caution the comparison between the two countries, stating that the differences in government and the makeup of the country mean that the conclusions as to how Norway creates social capital cannot be compared with how it is done in the United States with regard to religion (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.123).

Peter Kivisto, in his book, *Religion and Immigration*, discusses the case of religion in the United States, using Putnam's theory of social capital to argue that while religion may be viewed as a 'bridge' to integration in the United States, it is seen as a 'barrier' to integration in Western Europe (Kivisto, 2014, p.22). Kivisto speaks about the relationship between religious immigrant communities and those of the receiving society, discussing whether or not religion can serve as a means by which to promote the integration of immigrants (Kivisto, 2014, p.7-8). I believe that this is relevant to my thesis because, although Kivisto bases much of his discussion around the United States, there are some relevant similarities with regard to the levels of religiosity of areas of the United States and the municipality in Rogaland that I have studied; both geographical areas exhibit high degrees of religious participation (Lennox, 2018). He argues that there is a difference in religious behavior between the United States and Western Europe in how religion is viewed (Kivisto, 2014, p.23). Kivisto claims that the difference in

attitudes to religious diversity comes from the fact that while in the United States religion is, “viewed in positive terms, as a source of overcoming marginalization and a major facilitator of integration, [...] in the latter case [in Western Europe] religion is seen as a problem, as an impediment to incorporating into the social mainstream” (Kivisto, 2014, p.22). I, however, would disagree with Kivisto’s analysis of religious life in Western Europe. Western Europe is a large and very diverse area, as is the United States, and through conducting my research I have found religious expression and civic engagement, in the municipality of Rogaland that I have studied, to be closer to that of Kivisto’s and indeed, Lewis’ et al, description of religious behavior and civic engagement in the United States. Furthermore, from my own empirical knowledge of living in North America, I can see the similarities between the municipality in Rogaland that I have studied and North America in general, with regards the ways in which religion is expressed and the affect that it has on civic behavior. In the municipality of Rogaland, religion is very much a part of the everyday lives of the inhabitants and serves as a point of connection between the host population and that of the refugees and asylum seekers who have come to the area (Lennox, 2018).

Campbell and Putnam, in their article, *Americas Grace: How a Tolerant Nation Bridges its Religious Divides*, much like the argument made by Kivisto, discuss how, “[f]or many Americans, religion serves as a sort of civic glue, uniting rather than dividing” (Campbell & Putnam, 2013, p.611). Although I have argued that in many ways the religious makeup of the United States and the municipality of Rogaland where I conducted my research is similar, one difference is the fact that while in areas of the United States people are accustomed to religious diversity and may have close friends and family of different faiths, the informants that I have interviewed have had little contact with people from different religious faiths, and, indeed, from different ethnic backgrounds (Campbell & Putnam, 2013, p.613). Having said this, however, the majority of my informants have, later on in their lives, come into direct contact with people from different religious faiths and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. I will discuss this point through the course of the next chapter on findings and analysis.

Campbell and Putnam argue that, using the model of social capital that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, an increase in contact with different religions results in an increase of interreligious acceptance and the establishment of trust and reciprocity between the groups (Campbell & Putnam 2013, p.620).

Interreligious Dialogue

Interreligious dialogue can also be useful in illustrating the connection that can exist between peoples of different religions. Indeed, Oddbjørn Leirvik, in his book, *Interreligious Studies A Relational Approach to Religious Activism and the Study of Religion*, argues that people of two different religions may have more in common than someone who is religious and someone who is not. “The dialogue between believers and non-believers is sometimes more difficult than the conversation between adherents of different religions” (Leirvik, 2014, p.34). Furthermore, Leirvik outlines how when talking about interreligious dialogue, there is a fear from more liberal secular minded citizens that interreligious dialogue may be used as a means by which to advance more conservative ideas (Leirvik, 2014, p.40). Leirvik uses the Norwegian example of what happened in Kistiansand, which he describes as a city located in the ‘bible belt’ of Norway, when Christian and Muslim leaders created a joint pact against plans for a “gender-neutral marriage act” (Leirvik, 2014, p.40). this took place in 2005. Leirvik discusses how this pact against gender-neutral marriage, “represents a [...] pragmatic alliance based on conservative-value convictions that can be recognized across the borders of faith [...] as was not exactly an expression of open-ended, interreligious dialogue” (Leirvik, 2014, p.41). Although the complexities of interreligious dialogue will not be discussed here, Leirvik’s take on interreligious dialogue can serve to illustrate how religion may help to connect people from different cultural backgrounds and that there can also be a consensus between more conservatively minded religious people.

Andrew Wingate, in his book *Celebrating Difference, Staying Faithful How to Live in a Multi-Faith World*, discusses interreligious dialogue on a more personal level. He mentions how interreligious dialogue takes place whenever people of different faiths meet each other.

All kinds of interfaith dialogue happen in an entirely informal context, between neighbors, friends, work colleagues, fellow students, and so on. These are the most natural of experiences, and are to be much valued. They are possible for all, and can transform attitudes (Wingate, 2005, p.11).

Wingate agrees with Leirvik that people of different faiths can have more in common than someone of faith and someone who is not religious.

An elderly Christian told me that it was through talking to her Muslim neighbor, Mrs. Ahmed, that she had come to the conclusion that religious persons from different faiths have much more in common than do a Christian and a person of no faith, even if they share the same culture (Wingate, 2005, p.11).

Wingate speaks directly about asylum seekers and refugees from the Christian perspective, something that is important for the purpose of my thesis in that almost all of my informants are of the Christian faith and very involved with refugees and asylum seekers. Firstly, Wingate discusses passages of the bible that illustrate the responsibility that a Christian person has toward those in need (Wingate, 2005, p.136). He mentions how in the Old Testament it is stated that the Jewish people had the obligation to look after the ‘stranger’ and that, [t]he people of Israel were especially judged when they failed in this obligation. This care was to be an expression of their thankfulness for the way God had looked after them when they were aliens in Egypt (Wingate, 2005, p.137). Furthermore, Wingate mentions that in the New Testament, nations are judged upon how they are able to care for those in need. (Wingate, 2005, p.137). He also speaks about the parallels between the modern case of refugees and asylum seekers and Mary, Joseph and Jesus’s plight to Egypt to seek refuge from King Harold (Wingate, 2005, p.137). All of these points from the bible illustrate the obligation that some people of the Christian faith may feel to help those who come as refugees and asylum seekers. Wingate proceeds to discuss ways in which people are able to support refugees and asylum seekers, citing things such as volunteering (Wingate, 2005, p.137).

When discussing the conversion of refugees and asylum seekers to Christianity, Wingate mentions that although refugees and asylum seekers will see the Christian as a person first and a Christian second, it is not uncommon for them to be curious about the Christian faith and to even ask if they can attend worship (Wingate, 2005, p.137). When talking about the motivation to convert to Christianity, Wingate says that, “[t]hey may be motivated by an academic interest or by a real empathy for what they have experienced from Christians, whether in their homeland or after they have entered Britain” (Wingate, 2005, p.139). Conversion to Christianity, as I will discuss within the next chapter of the thesis, is a topic that many of my informants have experienced and that appears to be relatively common.

Stereotypes and the ‘Other’

There is some discussion in the field of intercultural competence as to what stereotypes are and whether or not they are inevitable. While it is not important for the purpose of this thesis to discuss this debate at length, I will mention some points of the debate.

Prejudice is also described as a hostile attitude and shunning of a person because he belongs to a group with criticisable characteristics. The ‘erroneous’ and ‘inflexible’ character of the representations contained in prejudice are emphasized in all of these definitions (Christoffanini, 2004, p.83).

According to Christoffanini, prejudice comes from our natural tendency to categorize, but, he claims that categories and stereotypes are not the same; that while categories are necessary for us to understand the world around us, they are flexible and can change, while stereotypes are fixed and inflexible (Christoffanini, 2004, p.86). Ruth Illman, however, disagrees with Christoffanini, citing the works on cognitive perspectives on stereotypes to claim that the formation of stereotypes is inevitable. Illman argues that stereotypes are formed when our natural process of categorization goes too far and becomes a stereotype (Illman, 2006, p.104). Stereotypes, “are seen as by-products of a necessary cognitive process” (Illman, 2006, p.104). According to the cognitive perspective, stereotypes are a necessary cognitive component of the mind; stereotypes are “fixed and final” (Illman, 2006, p.105). Illman sees this view as problematic because she argues that it fails to allow for a deeper understanding of stereotypes (Lennox, 2018).

According to Dahl, in order for a prejudice not to become a fixed stereotype, it is important to be open to the creation of new meanings. Through the course of the thesis, I will argue that increased contact with different cultural groups can lead to a deeper understanding of them as individuals and an openness to difference. Dahl describes stereotypes as the “categorizing of groups of people in a specific culture” (Dahl, 2016, p.56). He does not necessarily view stereotypes as frozen or fixed, as does Christoffanini, but describes prejudice as “locked-up, “frozen” stereotypes that are not altered even in the face of new evidence” (Dahl, 2016, p.56). He does, however, much like Ruth Illman, view stereotypes as inevitable, “but we must be willing to change them when we receive a new understanding” (Dahl, 2016, p.106).

When talking about the representation of the ‘other’, one can find it to be either markedly positive, as in the ‘exotic’ other or negative, the ‘other’ as “ignorant, dirty, corrupt, violent, superstitious, inefficient, cruel etc.” (Illman, 2004, p.97). Either way of seeing the other strips him of his humanity, his “emotions, feeling, thoughts, and life experiences [...]” (Illman, 2004, p.97). ‘Othering’ as Dahl puts it, is when we reduce the other to something different to ourselves, as not part of our group and as a result as alien or exotic; the other is reduced to an object (Dahl, 2016, p.52). Dahl describes how we view our own group as ‘normal’ and ‘proper’ while we reduce the other group to ‘bizarre different’ (Dahl, 2016, p.54).

Culturalism

Much like the ways in which racism and sexism work in society, culturalism can also be used as a means by which to simplify the explanation of behavior (Dahl, 2016, p.55). “*Culturalism* is a systemized othering that implies that people’s behavior is determined by culture” (Dahl, 2016, p.55). Dahl uses the Somali immigrant who beats his wife as an example of culturalism.

If a Somali immigrant beats his wife, an easy explanation is to conclude that such intimidations is “part of his culture,” or to claim that the “abuse of women is common in Muslim cultures.” If a Norwegian commits the same abuse, it is easier to assign him special traits [...] In the latter we find that the Rowdy Norwegian is an exception to our stereotypes about Norwegians, while in the case of the Somali the explanation alludes to the idea that such abuse is common [...] But such use of the concept of culture is reductionist since we only refer to a fraction of what we might call Muslim or Somali culture (Dahl, 2016, p. 55).

Hermeneutics

Having looked at the formation of stereotypes and the representation of the ‘other’ it is important for the purpose of this thesis to ask the question, how do we overcome these stereotypes and notions of the other to create a real understand of the person as an individual? Øyvind Dahl’s hermeneutics can help us to understand prejudice and stereotype, as well as how we can develop understanding. Hermeneutics can, in turn, shed some light upon the process that the host population goes through when coming into contact with the refugees and asylum seekers

Hermeneutics was originally designed as a means by which to interpret texts, specifically religious texts and was further developed by the German philosopher Hans-Georg

Gadamer (Dahl, 2016, p.105). Dahl builds upon Gadamer's hermeneutics and the adaption developed by Danish researcher Marita Svane for intercultural communication (Dahl, 2016, p.105).

In order to escape the negative connotations of prejudice, Dahl uses the term 'pre-judgement' or 'pre-understanding' (Dahl, 2016, p.106). This important difference also illustrates the possibility for change of judgement; that prejudice is something that may be changed (Dahl, 2016, p.106). The hermeneutic model may help to explain how understanding develops over time (Dahl, 2016, p.109). According to Dahl, understanding means, 'producing meanings' (Dahl, 2016, p.109). When we meet people, who may have different horizons of understanding, both parties must be able to adjust their own understandings, creating what Gadamer calls a 'fusion of horizons' (Dahl, 2016, p.109). However, Dahl also mentions how it is not necessary for the two parties to agree. The necessary tool for the fusion of horizons is the ability to empathize (Dahl, 2016, p.109). When describing his model of hermeneutics and the meeting between two people, Dahl poses the questions, "[a]re they open to each other in a way that promotes a fusion of horizons? Or are they closed, prohibiting a common understanding?" (Dahl, 2016, p.110). Here, Dahl mentions the other necessary tool for the creation of the fusion of horizons; the ability to be open to one another and to difference.

The first stage of Dahl's hermeneutic model is the pre-understanding, which is constructed of our life experiences and our understanding of "ourselves and the cultural context to which we belong" (Dahl, 2016, p.110). This becomes our horizon of understanding, which may be conscious or, as is often the case, unconscious (Dahl, 2016, p.110). The second stage is understanding; this is where we may feel that our pre-understandings were not adequate, and we enter the phase of communication where we attempt to create meaning and different horizons of understanding come into contact with one another (Dahl, 2016, p.110-111). "In this stage our pre-understandings are tested, prior experiences are put under a critical light and new things are explained and reflected upon. Symbols, language, experiences from interacting with the other and the interpretation of the setting are essential in this stage" (Dahl, 2016, p.111). The last stage is after-understanding. Here, we have created new understandings which we are able to reflect upon and which, in turn, become our new horizon of understanding; we are back at the beginning with a new pre-understanding (Dahl, 2016, p.111).

Golden moments of understanding are where you understand what you previously did not understand.

Golden moments permit the asking of new questions and allow an adjustment of your understanding. In such cases your horizon of understanding might be extended. As such this is the golden opportunity for new discoveries, but if you don't understand that you don't understand then you have a problem. Then you are locked in your pre-judgements (Dahl, 2016, p.112).

Dahl states how surprise occurs when our pre-understandings are not adequate and may lead to a new golden moment of understanding where something wasn't expected, giving the potential for new insight (Dahl, 2016, p.112).

According to Dahl, the attitudes of the people involved are important in achieving new understandings and fusing the horizons of understanding.

The possibility of understanding, lack of understanding or misunderstanding depends on the mutual attitudes of the people involved. There are two possibilities, 'closed' or 'open' communication (Dahl, 2016, p.112).

Where closed communication does not allow for a fusion of horizons and no new understanding can be created due to the adherence of their own stereotypes and pre-understandings. As a result, a lack of trust may develop and can lead to ethnocentrism, culturalism and racism (Dahl, 2016, p.112). Open communication, however, is when "we enter into an 'I-you' relationship allowing for the production of meaning. The partners will open their horizons of understanding. Earlier pre-understandings are challenged and confronted with understandings and interpretations" (Dahl, 2016, p.112-113). Through open communication and attitudes, pre-conceived idea may be discarded, and new horizons of understanding created. When both parties speak the same language this creation of meaning and understanding may be easier to achieve, however, other forms of less formal communication may be used, such as body language, signs, gestures, simple utterances etc. (Dahl, 2016, p.113).

Power Relations

For the purpose of this thesis I believe that it is important to mention power relations as they play a role in the relationship between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers. Power comes into play whenever there is communication between two people and it is, there for important to discuss power relations. Although there are many different types of power relations, those that are relevant here are social power, where "[s]tatus in society, profession,

rank, age, gender, and role are important factors in communication” (Dahl, 2016, p.118), and power of definition which is,

[t]he person who can define limits and conditions for activities and opinions about what should be prioritized and what should be ignored, has the power of definition. For instance, in a multicultural Europe, the majority population has the power of definition in relation to minorities (Dahl, 2014, p.118).

Majority and Minority relations are an important aspect of power relations when discussing the meeting between the host population and that of the refugees and asylum seekers who come to the municipality in Rogaland that I have studied. Another important aspect of power that is relevant for my thesis, is the power of language, meaning that those who are proficient in the majority language have significant power over those who are not. “People who have proficiency in the language of the majority have greater power than those who do not have sufficient language skills to discuss issues on the premises of the majority” (Dahl, 2016, p.120).

The opposite of power is powerlessness, which means that one is paralyzed, that one does not have control over one’s own life situation (Dahl, 2016, p.120).

Powerlessness means dependence and may open the way for exploitation by others. Many asylum seekers, for example, who have arrived in Europe, feel that they have lost control over their own lives. For months they have to stay in reception centers just waiting for the decision whether they will be allowed in the country or sent back where they came from (Dahl, 2016, p.120).

While there is a power dynamic between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers in the municipality in Rogaland that I have studied, there is also a sense of being powerless over their own destinies. The issues of power will be discussed within the course of the next chapter on findings and analysis.

Chapter 4 - Findings and Analysis

Religion

Through conducting the research for my thesis, I have discovered that religion plays an important role in the lives of the majority of the people I have interviewed; religion can be seen as an integral component of many peoples' lives in this municipality in Rogaland. The majority of the participants I have interviewed identify as active Christians; the church and the community play a central role in their daily lives. The motivation to help the refugees and asylum seekers, of some of the participants, can be seen to come from religious altruism and the desire to help the community (Lennox, 2018). Indeed, within my group of sixteen informants, only two did not identify as Christian. Of all of those who did identify as Christian, all claimed to be at least somewhat active in the church, while the majority said that they were active in the church. Throughout this section of the findings and analysis, I aim to answer the research question, 'What role does religion play in the relationship between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers?'

Religion as a Point of Connection

While religion is an important part of the lives of many of the participants, it is also an important part of the lives of many of those who have come to this municipality in Rogaland as refugees and asylum seekers. I have discovered, through interviewing my informants, that although the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers do not necessarily share the same religion, religion can be seen as a point of connection and understanding. When religion is a component of daily life, it may be easier to understand how, although their beliefs may not be the same and the rituals and practices may be different, life is still led by a belief system (Lennox, 2018). As I have already discussed in chapter three of this thesis on theory, Oddbjørn Leirvik's discussion on intercultural dialogue can serve to illustrate this connection between religions. Indeed, Leirvik claims that there may be more in common between peoples of different religious faiths, than between someone of religious faith and a non-believer, despite the fact that they may share a culture (Leirvik, 2014, p.34). One informant told the story of how a Muslim woman had prayed that another family would be given asylum in Norway. The quote illustrates how religion, although not necessarily the same religion, is a point of connection and understanding between the informant and the woman who came to Norway as an asylum seeker.

There is one lovely story. There was an older Muslim woman who had a Christian neighbor from Ethiopia who was waiting for a reply for her case. She had a seven-year old son who would ask her every day after school if they had been given an answer. One day the Muslim woman saw this boy come home and it just broke her heart. She woke up one night and felt the need to light a candle and pray. She was Muslim. Give this family a positive reply, she prayed. She prayed to God and I thought that it was incredible that she prayed. I don't know if she prayed to Allah or to God, but the next day they got a positive reply! I was there, and she screamed! 'Thank you, thank you! Thank Jesus! Thank God!' She had been waiting for seven years for permission to stay in Norway and she was able to be so happy that someone, who had been waiting just one year, got a positive reply. That was amazing for me (interview 11, informant 12).

The same couple told another story that can illustrate the connection they felt through religion, with the asylum seekers they met at an intake center.

In 2009 many people started coming to Norway from Ethiopia. We travelled, me and two or three others from the *bedehus* to the intake center to visit them. We wanted to go and see if we could get to know them. When we came in everything looked very dismal, the blinds were down, and we thought that nobody lived there. But then we went in and there was a door open, so we entered and there we met a Christian from Eritrea. After that we started to get to know more of them and what was really moving to see was how they thanked god for everything they had. whether they were orthodox or catholic, they had a very strong faith and they really believed that Jesus was there and heard them. They said, 'we don't miss anything', although we thought that they missed everything, they just had two small bags of belongings (interview 11, informant 12).

The above excerpts from my interviews illustrate Andrew Wingate's discussion of interreligious dialogue on a more person level. Wingate discusses how interreligious dialogue takes place whenever people from different faiths meet and that it can happen informally, with the possibility to change ways of thinking and attitudes toward other people (Wingate, 2005, p.11). Through the excerpts we can see that the informant is able to see the commonalities in faith, although they have different religious beliefs, that she shares with the people she meets at the intake center.

Another informant discussed how she got to know a woman from Eritrea through her work as a volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers. She mentions that while some of the practices within the Orthodox Christian tradition, which this woman from Eritrea belongs to, are hard for her to understand, there is a connection between them, in that they both practice

religiously. She mentions how the woman from Eritrea brings her two children to the local church even though they do not share the same religion. The nearest Orthodox church is quite far from where they live.

While she holds tight to her own culture and religion, she takes her two boys to the *bedehus* here. She also travels sometimes to the Orthodox church in another municipality (interview 12, informant 14).

Although religion is a point of connection between the host population and the refugees and asylum-seekers, some of the informants have mentioned that the contact between themselves and other Christian religions may be easier than between themselves and those of other religions, especially highlighted was the Muslim religion.

We had a party at the church. It was religious, and we asked them [two men from North Africa] if they wanted to come with us. They said yes, and I think that they were being honest. It may have been different if they had been Muslim, because they would have been two very different religions, but because they are Orthodox Christians and we are Christians, we have something in common. I think that we hold some of the same values in a way. Something in common, I think, even though they are different. We have spoken about it and they are very open about what they believe (interview 1, informant 1).

Although some of the informants have discussed how it may be more challenging to find commonalities between themselves and those of the Muslim faith, there is still a high degree of openness and willingness to understand. Even between Muslims and Christians, religion remains a point of connection for many of my informants; there is still a common understanding for the ritual and presence of religion in daily life. Indeed, the presence of religion in everyday life for both the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers can be seen throughout the course of the interviews with the informants. Many of the informants brought up religion voluntarily and discussed how they were active in the church. Throughout the course of the interviews, many of the informants discussed how they would pray, sometimes even together with the refugees and asylum seekers. “We (the informant and an asylum seeker she met) read the bible together and she was filled with warmth and peace” (interview 11, informant 12). One informant described how when her Muslim friend, someone she knew through her work in an adult education center for refugees and asylum seekers, would come with a Christmas present for her, she would reciprocate with a present for Eid.

The mother [her friend] always comes with a Christmas present for me. The first year I thought what can I do for her? I can't bring her a Christmas present because she is Muslim. ...but I wanted to do something, but then I thought, well, they have Eid, so now I bring her a present for Eid (interview 14, informant 16).

Through this quote, we can see that although the informant has to navigate difference in religion, she understands that there is something in common and she finds a way to reciprocate that she feels is meaningful and considerate of another belief system. We can see through the interviews, that while it may be more challenging for some to understand the Muslim faith there is still a common understanding as well as a great degree of warmth and openness.

One informant described how she met the Muslim family of a woman who had converted to Christianity during the period of time she lived in Norway. The informant was visiting the woman after she had been returned to a country in the middle east.

It was so strong, her whole family round the big table. Some of them had taken time off of work to be there. They thought, 'who are they? That they mean so much that they are here to visit'. I just wanted to cry, I felt a love that was so intense. She had been so worried about the Muslim mentality and about how they would take her, but I just felt that they cared so much about her. They were her uncles and aunts because her mother had died. she had grown up with her grandmother. They were so moved that we were so moved when we met them. I am crying now when I talk about it! It was a very strong meeting. you can say that ok, they are Muslim, but they showed so much care, that we could feel! They laid out an incredible table for us, so we felt so incredibly welcome (interview 11, informant 12).

The excerpt illustrates Andrew Wingate's take on interreligious dialogue, in that interreligious dialogue can be seen as something that can happen naturally when two people of different faiths meet one another (Wingate, 2005, p.11). According to Wingate, two people of different religious faiths can have more in common than someone who is religious and someone who is not, even if their cultural backgrounds are more similar (Wingate, 2005, p.11). Through the above excerpt, one can see how this connection has formed through religion. It is important to note the level of respect that the informant shows for the Muslim family she met.

Another informant, who identified herself as an active Christian, illustrated how she was able to understand the importance of religion for identity and as an integral aspect of daily life.

This boy [from a North African family that she knew] he started to think, 'who am I' 'Am I Muslim? Am I Norwegian?' There were just women around him, he had no father until later on. It took many years for his father to join them in Norway. So, I thought, he needs help to come

into the world of a Muslim man. So, I managed to get hold of a support contact who was a Muslim man and he took him to the mosque and introduced him to this world (interview 14, informant 16).

The above excerpt illustrates an extraordinary respect for different religions and the importance it has for identity. The informant is able to recognize how vital religion and culture is for the identity of the boy she spoke about; the participant does not expect the boy to assimilate into mainstream Norwegian culture. Here we can see how the participant understands integration as a reciprocal process where it is important for the refugee or asylum seeker to uphold his or her own identity (Berry, 1997).

It can be argued that it is sometimes more difficult to understand how someone can be atheist, or not follow a specific religious teaching, as I have already discussed through the work of Oddbjørn Leirvik. One informant described how she does not mention to anyone that she is atheist, because she feels that it would be difficult for many of the refugees and asylum seekers she meets to understand. She does not wish to take away from those whose beliefs have been vital for them in overcoming challenging situations (Lennox, 2018).

I think that I can provoke some men who can be very macho, it has something to do with religion. Ok, but you can believe what you want (interview 6, informant 6).

Are you ever asked what you believe? (interview 6, interviewer).

Yes. But I never say that I am atheist (interview 6, informant 6).

No, why not? (interview 6, interviewer).

Because for many, most of them [asylum seekers] either they are Orthodox, Christian or Muslim ... but especially in this situation I don't say anything. Their religion is what keeps them going, I don't want to destroy that for them (interview 6, informant 6).

Through this quote, we can see that while, as I have already discussed, the meeting of two different religions can be a point of connection, the encounter between someone who is religious and someone who is not religious can be more challenging. Both Leirvik and Wingate discuss how it is often more difficult for religious people and non-religious people to relate than it is for those of different religious faiths. While Leirvik claims that the dialogue between believers and non-believers is sometimes more difficult than the dialogue between believers of different faiths, (Leirvik, 2014, p.34) Wingate says that people of faith can have more in common than someone of faith and someone who does not believe (Wingate, 2005, p.11).

Leirvik argues that more liberal secular minded citizens can worry that intercultural dialogue can be a way to advance more conservative values (Leirvik, 2014, p.40). However, although the informant feels that she is unable to share who she is through these encounters, she demonstrates a level of respect for the fact that religion is such an integral part of the lives of many of the asylum seekers she meets through her work. Another informant, who identifies herself as agnostic also highlights the difficulties she has in understanding religion.

Are there any cultural norms or practices that you find hard to understand or accept? (interview 9, interviewer).

Yes, of course there are. If you think about things to do with women and women's rights. That's something that's difficult to understand. Also, religions power over man, not being able to think freely, the oppression of different groups (interview 9, informant 10).

Conservative Values as a Point of Connection Between Religions

Another interesting point of connection between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers in this municipality in Rogaland is the link between religion and more conservative values (Lennox, 2018). Indeed, Leirvik discusses how there is a fear among more liberal non-believers that interreligious dialogue can result in the advancement of more conservative ideas, things such as the blocking of sexual minority rights (Leirvik, 2014, p.40). One informant, who identified herself as atheist, discussed her reservations to the more conservative values of some of the asylum seekers she worked with, stating that because of the conservative nature of the values, she felt unable to be open about who she was.

I taught a woman from North Africa how to drive. I spent thousands of hours with her in the car, she took a long time to learn how to drive. But when she heard that I was married to a woman she broke all contact with me. At the reception center I only say it if I am asked. it is difficult (interview 6, informant 6).

Is it something that many find hard to accept? (interview 6, interviewer).

Yes, it is. Some of these women from North Africa, they say that in their country there are no gay people! Those that are gay don't dare to say so. It can depend a bit on their education and religion. It is difficult [...] There are some private things that I don't feel that I can talk about (interview 6, informant 6).

On the other hand, however, one couple mentioned how they felt that they had to close their eyes over some of the more liberal attitudes of the refugees and asylum seekers they met. They did concede however, that their encounters with other cultures and values had served to open their ways of thinking.

We shut our eyes to many things to put it like that! There are things that we actually don't need to worry about or bother about. both to do with... they have different morals. There are many women who come from North Africa and have a child here, none of them are married. But maybe they think that if they have a child there will be a better chance for them to stay, I don't know but there are some morals there that we don't quite understand. But then we think that we don't really need to worry ourselves about it either (interview 11, informant 13).

So, we have become less square in our thinking (interview 11, informant 12).

We have become round! (interview 11, informant 13).

I think that it's also healthy for us, for us who have grown up in such a conservative *bedehus* culture, such as we have. Both of us have grown up in extremely conservative homes (interview 11, informant 12).

For many of the informants, however, this matching of more conservative leaning values between themselves and the refugees and asylum seekers they have come into contact with, serves as a point of commonality. One informant discussed how she believed that her and her husband held many of the same values as the people they had met from Eritrea. "I feel that we have the same basis of values in a way, a common way of thinking, even though we are different" (interview 1, informant 1).

The Role of Missionaries in Igniting Interest in Other Cultures

Although my initial question guide did not include direct questions about the informants' connection with missionaries, as I had never expected it to be such an important influence, I soon discovered that almost all of the informants have had close contact with missionaries and that many of the informants have relatives who are missionaries. Many of the participants mentioned how their first contact with another culture came from missionaries. Some of the informants described the excitement of a relative returning home from missionary work in a foreign land. As a result, I quickly began to ask directly if the informants had or have

missionaries in their families or if they had had contact with missionaries through the church (Lennox, 2018).

When asked if he had missionaries in his family, one informant spoke about the excitement of encountering returning missionaries.

I had a big sister who had been a missionary in North Africa for fifteen years. I also had an aunt and uncle who were doctors and nurses in North Africa (interview 8, informant 8).

Was that when you were little? (interview 8, interviewer).

yes (interview 8, informant 8).

So, you had some contact with other cultures as a child? (interview 8, interviewer).

Yes, it was always so exciting when they came home with presents, it was very exciting to see what they had brought with them (interview 8, informant 8).

For many of my informants, this contact with returning missionaries was some of the first exposure they experienced to other cultures (Lennox, 2018). Another of my participants described this exposure and how it kindled an interest in other cultures.

I grew up with a lot of missionary information. A lot really, there were many missionaries in my family, a sister who lived in Asia for many years ... it runs in the blood, this type of information, I grew up with this kind of culture. It's a subject of interest that runs in my family (interview 5, informant 5).

For others, this contact with missionaries has given them a feeling of connection to other countries outside of Norway, as well as a feeling of responsibility to carry out similar work. As I will discuss in the following section of the findings and analysis.

I have a sister who lives in North Africa actually, she is a missionary. I can say that I feel connected to North Africa because we travel there often, we have been there many times. We have been there maybe twice a year (interview 4, informant 4).

One couple described this excitement and exposure to other cultures through returning missionaries. They also highlighted the fact that almost all their early exposure to other cultures came from these missionaries.

Did you have contact with other cultures as children? (interview 11, interviewer).

Not really...I have two sisters who have been missionaries, both in Southern Africa, so we have been there to visit (interview 11, informant 13).

What we did get from other cultures was from the missionaries who came home and told stories (interview 11, informant 12).

Did you also have missionaries in your family? (interview 11, interviewer).

yes, not just missionaries in our family but also when we went for meetings in the church there were many missionaries. They came home and told us stories and showed us things that came from those cultures (interview 11, informant 12).

While many of my informants have or have had missionaries in their families, others, as the quote above also illustrates, have mentioned the excitement of returning missionaries coming to their churches and sharing with them stories and artifacts from other cultures.

Many of the participants have expressed how different cultures have always interested them and that it is something that they have experienced as exciting (Lennox, 2018). I have developed the theory that this interest in other cultures may have come from the participants' early exposure to returning missionaries. The participants have continued with the helping culture created by the missionaries by involving themselves with refugees and asylum seekers in their communities and helping with their integration into Norwegian society. This point leads us on to the next category, where religion is discussed as a motivation to work with refugees and asylum seekers.

Religion as a Motivation

For many of my informants, religion is a motivation to become involved with refugees and asylum seekers (Lennox, 2018). Having said this, however, religion is an indirect motivation for the majority of my informants, in that it has created a culture of 'help your neighbor' but there is no direct or conscious religious motivation. Indeed, Valerie A. Lewis, Carol Anne MacGregor and Robert D. Putnam discuss the relationship between religion and civic involvement, claiming that there is a direct link between an increase in religiosity and civic engagement (Lewis et al, 2013, p.332). This, they claim, is down to the fact that people with higher levels of religiosity tend to display greater degrees of what they term 'helping' or 'neighborly' behaviors (Lewis et al, 2013, p.332). When asked about her motivation for working with refugees and asylum seekers, one informant, who identified herself as an active

Christian, said, “It is in a way to be able to help ... I like it a lot, I feel like they (the refugees and asylum seekers) are so alive in a way” (interview 3, informant 3).

Another informant, who also identifies as an active Christian, discussed how she also is motivated to work with refugees and asylum seekers by the feeling that she is able to help.

What motivates me the most is if I am able to help someone to reach his or her potential. If I can give them information and help them further, to be able to understand and to reach closer to achieving their goals (interview 5, informant 5).

Paul Lichterman conducted a study of a religious volunteer organization in the United States and discovered that while members were able to quote passages of the bible when asked, they did not appear to be driven by religious teachings (Lichterman, 2007, p.139). He goes further to state that he found only a looser religious motivation, much like the findings of Lewis et al. Lichterman found that the religious motivation for his informants, involvement in volunteer work stemmed from their desire to ‘servanthood’ ‘doing justice’ ‘loving thy neighbor’ and so on (Lichterman, 2007, p.141).

However, while the majority of my informants did not mention an overtly religious motivation for working with refugees and asylum seekers, there were some who acknowledged the presence of religion as a motivation for their work. One couple did mention how missionary work was a direct motivation for them to help refugees and asylum seekers. However, they showed great respect for other religions and were able to connect with the refugees and asylum seekers they met through the presence of religious life regardless of which religion they practiced. They stated clearly that they did not aim to convert those they met with other religions, though at the same time they did acknowledge that they hoped that they would find Christianity and many of the refugees and asylum seekers they spoke about did convert to Christianity.

I feel that there is a missionary motive in it. It is a mission we have been given, to share. Matheus 25, it says that what you do for the small you do for me. It is a verse that motivates me to reach out an arm. Jesus, he says, there is a verse, it speaks about that we are allowed to be his arm, that we are allowed to walk in his strength and I feel that his strength guides us in who we should go to. There are so many times when you just feel that this is where we were meant to be today. There were many times when we felt that God guided us to those who needed us most that day. Maybe they had nothing in the fridge and you come with some milk and some bread. Right (interview 11, informant 12).

Many think of missionary work as something you go out to do in other countries, but I think that we have been given missionary work right here with us. I think it would be positive if people could be aware of this (interview 11, informant 13).

It is interesting, for example the woman who was a Muslim but loved Jesus. to see how little, she could speak but how much we managed to talk about. We had amazing talks and we managed to ...because there was something so close and deep she wanted to get a hold of. We would read the bible and she would be filled with warm and peace, her whole body was peaceful and when she came home and started to read the bible she understood everything. She never gave up, she just read and read. She goes to a church now in the Middle East so now she is back in the Middle East and I believe that god sends some back and god wants to use her to awaken us but also to send her home to be a missionary in her own country. that I have really believe for and I have so much faith in. I don't want them to think that we just want to be with them because we just want them to convert to Christianity. There was someone from the Middle East who said, 'they are just interested in converting you!' but a friend stood up for me and said 'No! we are friends! she is my friend!' Those who know me know that I go just as much to those who are Muslim as to those who are Christian. and that I care about everyone I want them to know that I wish them well, but I want them also to know that I hope that the love of Jesus will speak down there as well. so that they will want to feel something more. I think it's really exciting! (interview 11, informant 12).

Another informant also mentioned how her work with refugees and asylum seekers was overtly influenced by religion. "I think that it is a bit religious. There is something in the bible about helping refugees, this was a theme they brought up in the church" (interview 12, informant 14).

Indeed, Andrew Wingate discusses the issue of refugees and asylum seekers from a Christian perspective, mentioning both the New and Old Testament and their direction to help the needy and more specifically refugees and asylum seekers (Wingate, 2005, p.137). I will not repeat here what I have already discussed in the chapter on theory, but one can see how direct instructions from the bible can influence some Christian believers to help refugees and asylum seekers, as can be seen within the content of the last two excerpts from my interviews.

Conversion to Christianity

Another interest and reoccurring topic throughout the course of the interviews has been the discussion surrounding the conversion of refugees and asylum seekers to Christianity. Although the aim of my informants has not been to convert, at least overtly, those they have come into

contact with to Christianity, it is something that I understand, from speaking to my informants, happens relatively frequently (Lennox, 2018). Although the informants do not overtly encourage the conversion of refugees and asylum seekers to Christianity, they are very supportive of the decision and highlight deep frustrations with a system that does not generally recognize conversion to Christianity as grounds for asylum. This topic has come up so many times through the interviews that I feel compelled to discuss it.

Andrew Wingate discusses the conversion of refugees and asylum seekers to Christianity from a Christian perspective, discussing how many refugees and asylum seekers do show interest in the Christian faith and often wish to learn more about it. There is, therefore, a desire from some refugees and asylum seekers to explore further the Christian faith (Wingate, 2005, p.137). When discussing possible motivations for this curiosity in the Christian faith, Wingate states that the refugees and asylum seekers may be motivated by an “academic interest” or “real empathy” toward those who have helped them. He also cautions, however, that one must be sure that the motivation for the conversion to Christianity is not down to an assumption that it will make it easier to get asylum (Wingate, 2005, p.139). Through many of the interviews I conducted, one can see that the enormous amount of continuing help, support, and friendship that the refugees and asylum seekers receive from the largely Christian host population could be a motivation to convert to Christianity.

One of my informants explained how she volunteers in a group that is specifically designed for refugees and asylum seekers who wish to know more about the Christian faith. She also mentions the difficulties many of those who convert to Christianity face when they are not given asylum in Norway based upon their conversion to Christianity and the potential dangers they face upon returning home.

I have been involved in a bible group, it's called the Alpha course, have you heard about it? (interview 3, informant 3).

No, I don't know what it is (interview 3, interviewer).

It's a course that we arrange in a way that if they [refugees and asylum seekers] are interested in the Christian faith, they can come and ask all their questions and be lectured on what the Christian faith is about. I started volunteering there about two years ago. I was there and there were many who couldn't understand so I tried to translate on my cell phone! So, it was very exciting. I do a lot of volunteering, in bible groups and the Alpha course. It gets a bit busy. These are relationships you keep for life. There was one who didn't get given asylum here in

Norway so he went to France and was given asylum there. He converted to Christianity, but they didn't believe him here, they believed him in France though (interview 3, informant 3).

Many of my informants spoke about the difficulties surrounding the fact that those who convert to Christianity are often not believed in Norway and are not usually granted asylum on these grounds (Lennox, 2018). Through speaking to my informants, I have been able to see that this specific issue plays heavily on the minds of some of the informants and causes them a lot of stress and worry.

Sometimes we experience very difficult things with people who are denied asylum and it turns out that they are from Afghanistan and have converted to Christianity here in Norway and they haven't been believed. If they are returned to Afghanistan they may risk their lives. It is very demanding. I have experienced that I have written in that they are believing Christians and I have also experienced that my word is not believed either. It is tough. I know that person very well and I have seen the process that they have been through and then they say that I am lying, that I am not serious, that I am naïve (interview 8, informant 8).

Another informant also highlighted the fact that many of those who convert to Christianity are not believed and that they are often returned home where they risk prosecution and may be putting their lives in danger (interview 10 informant 11).

For those who have converted to Christianity and are later returned home or move to another country, there appears to be continued support from those within the church. One informant spoke about how she and her husband befriended two men from an intake center who started to come to church with them.

So, then we got to know him and someone from South Asia they would come to the *bedehus*. They would both come along for everything. Especially the one from South Asia, he would say, 'what is this here!' He was a Sikh and had never been to a church before. He was baptized after in the church. He had to move to Southern Europe and there are still some people from the church who have a lot of contact with him (interview 11, informant 12).

The same informant also describes the conversion of a family from the Middle East to Christianity and how people from the church continued to support the family both emotionally and financially after they were sent home. The excerpt illustrates the level of involvement in

and help given by some members of the church in the lives of some of those who convert to Christianity.

There is a family we got to know from the Middle East and they were sent back home. We have been to visit them there twice now. They were sent back to the Middle East and we went there to visit them. There are many of us who help them from the church. We help them to pay for medicine, we helped them to buy a house. They were all baptized here before they travelled, they became Christian before they left (interview 11, informant 12).

Are there many who convert to Christianity? (interview 11, interviewer).

We know about many yeah. The mother [the family from another Middle Eastern country] took a long time to convert. She said that she was a Muslim but that she loved Jesus, and for me it was a bit like, ok, how do we do this. we have to be happy that she loves Jesus, so we read the bible together and she was really happy about that. She had a dream and was able to explain it from the bible, she would have dreams and visions. In the beginning it was very secretive, and she didn't want to tell anyone but after a while she told us she told someone who was a Muslim and she said, 'do you know what! I've been baptized!' That was the last thing she did before she was sent back. She was baptized with her daughter in the church. We have a lot of contact with them through skype, we talk a lot. I just sent them Christmas presents together with someone else who wanted to send something (interview 11, informant 12).

Through many of these excerpts, one is able to see how religion can become a promotion of social capital, something that I will discuss further under the next heading.

Religion as a 'Bridge' in Social Capital

Peter Kivisto uses Robert Putnam's theory of social capital as a means by which to argue that in the context of the United States, religion may be a 'bridge' to integration, while in the European setting, it is a 'barrier' to integration (Kivisto, 2014, p.22). Through the course of chapter three on theory, I have argued that the municipality in Rogaland that I have studied hold greater similarities with Kivisto's account of the United States than it does with the European case. Although I will not go into this argument again here, I will say that I believe while Kivisto may be correct in his statement when we consider much of Europe, his statement is not true in the context of the municipality in Rogaland where I have conducted my research. Throughout the course of my studies, I have come to the conclusion that in this municipality in Rogaland,

religion is a bridge to integration, connecting the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers who come to the area. Throughout the analysis and findings presented above, I have been able to make the case that religion is a point of connection between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers (Lennox, 2018). The religious nature of the municipality in Rogaland very much reflects that of small town USA in the ways in which religiosity is expressed. The one main difference between the two places is the fact that while the United States has long had a religiously and ethnically diverse population, immigration to the municipality in Rogaland is relatively recent and the inhabitants, especially the older ones, have little experience with people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. However, contact with returning missionaries has ignited an interest in other cultures and has given some form of early exposure to other cultures.

Reciprocity

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of this thesis, for me, is the reciprocal nature of the relationships formed, especially with regard to those who volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers, through the contact that the host population has with the refugees and asylum seekers they meet (Lennox, 2018). Having said this, however, those who work with refugees and asylum seekers have also discussed how they have learned a lot through their contact with refugees and asylum seekers and how they have also evolved personally. As I have discussed in the methodological chapter of this thesis, there is significant cross over between those who volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers and those who work with them, making it hard to really distinguish the difference between the two groups. Throughout this section of the findings and analysis, I intend to explore the research question, ‘How has contact with refugees and asylum seekers impacted the lives of the host population?’ The potential that volunteer organizations have in connecting people and the reciprocal nature of the relationships formed are of particular interest to me.

The Reciprocal Nature of Volunteer Organization

Throughout the course of the research for this thesis, I have become very interested in volunteer organizations as a means by which to increase the social capital of both the host population and that of the refugees and asylum seekers who come to Norway. The reciprocal potential of volunteer organizations is a way to, not only aid in integration, but help with community development in general. One participant discussed how through the volunteer organization she

is involved with; the aim is to work together with the refugees and asylum seekers; that the relationship should be reciprocal.

Our thinking is that we are not doing something for the refugees and asylum seekers but something with them. We are not integrating them, they should experience that we are involved in something together (interview 8, informant 8).

The majority of those I interviewed for this thesis are over the age of fifty and many are retired. For many of them, the contact they have with the refugees and asylum seekers through their volunteer work becomes an integral part of their social lives. One can theorize that volunteer work with refugees and asylum seekers has the potential to alleviate loneliness in older people, as well as aiding with the practical, cultural and social aspects of integration. (Lennox, 2018). Within the cultures of many of the refugees and asylum seekers to this municipality in Rogaland, the participants have highlighted a degree of respect for older members of society that many of the informants believe has disappeared in Norwegian society; this is something that is highly appreciated by some of the older informants. When asked about how her views and values may have changed through her contact with refugees and asylum seekers, one informant discussed that she believes that while in Norway people have some values that some of the refugees and asylum seekers that she has encountered do not have, she believes that they also hold some that in Norway people have lost.

Respect and equality are values that we have that they need to take on. They also have some that we don't have though ... respect for older people for example. I feel like they have respect for me as an older person, while here people think, 'old people! what do they know, what can they do!' It is important for older people to be shown that they are still here, that they can still contribute and be valued (interview 14, informant 16).

Another informant mentioned, when asked about what she thought could be challenging with Norwegian culture, that in modern Norwegian culture one does not always care so much for other people. She gave the example of the elderly in Norway and how they are often very lonely.

We do not always think about one another and we are not always able to show care and warmth to each other. A good example would be how we treat older people, loneliness is a challenge and it's something that we don't see so much of in many other cultures. So, there are some things that I wish that we could be better at here (interview 5, informant 5).

As I mentioned above, and as I shall discuss more about below, I believe that contact with refugees and asylum seekers can help older people in Norwegian society to alleviate some feelings of loneliness and isolation and can help them to feel valued and integrated themselves into the local community.

While Asle Høgmo discusses the case of a small Norwegian town as a platform for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers to Norway, mentioning the interplay of formal and informal organizations in trying to create spaces where the refugees and asylum seekers can meet with the host population, he does not go into the reciprocal possibilities of these meetings and appears to view them very much as a benefit for the incomers rather than a meeting that can be mutually beneficial (Høgmo, 1998, p.47).

For many of the informants, the connections they have made with the refugees and asylum seekers have developed into important and often long-term friendships. One couple I interviewed spoke about the connection they developed with two Eritrean men they met through their volunteer work.

We see that we are able to help but at the same time we can see that we have become good friends. We have helped them a bit and maybe later on they can help us, right! When we are together with them, we get a lot back as well and when we have been together with them we have had a great time! (interview 1, informant 1).

Another informant mentioned how she still keeps in touch with a family that came to the municipality in Rogaland as refugees in the early 1990's.

I worked at a primary school for twenty-five years and then in the early 1990's I started working with one of the first family who came to this area as refugees. I taught the children Norwegian. They were the first family who came as refugees to this area, there were some single men who came before that, but they were the first family. We are friends, I still have good contact with them. They were from Eritrea (interview 14, informant 16).

One couple highlighted the reciprocal nature of the relationships built through the contact they developed as a result of their volunteer work.

We have learned a lot about what a friendship is. we have friends around the corner here that we have had since we were teenagers and then there are others from other countries who we

might have known for a very short time and you find that you have a heart connection with them that you have never had with these friends you have had for such a long time. That is strong, and you realize that you really love them. So, it's not just to help, they are really friends and they support us too. If we need help they will be there...when we moved and didn't ask them for help, they were actually furious! 'why didn't you ask us! we could have helped!' (interview 11, informant 12).

It is through this connection that integration can be most effectively achieved. Indeed, Ødegård et al, discuss this point, saying that this relationship may be built through performing tasks such as homework help, being guides, mentors and through visiting the individuals at home (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.62). Although Ødegård et al discuss the importance of the relationship between the host population and the refugees and asylum seeker that they come into contact with through their work as volunteers, they do not really explore the benefits that the host population receives from these meetings, nor the need for the refugees and asylum seekers to feel like they can give back to the relationship. There is a feeling within the host population that I interviewed, that the refugees and asylum seekers that they have come into contact with want to give back, they want to feel as though they also have something to offer, that they are useful and not a burden. It is important for both the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers that the relationship goes both ways; that it is reciprocal (Lennox, 2018). One couple mentioned the need that they experience that the refugees and asylum seekers they have met have to be able to contribute, to be able to give back.

They [the refugees and asylum seekers] love it if they can give you something, if they can serve you injera or something like that so that they feel like they can give back. They really want to feel like they can give you something back, that you have a friendship (interview 11, informant 13).

The same couple also mentioned how one woman they had met through the intake center would help them to clean the house, so she could feel as though she was able to give something back.

They [the refugees and asylum seekers] are such amazing workers. Many of them help me with things such as cleaning the house, they do such an amazing job! (interview 11, informant 12).

There is a woman here from North Africa and she cleaned the house! She washed the windows and swept the floors! (interview 11, informant 13).

She said, 'now I am going to clean your house!' Because she needed to feel that she was able to give something back to us (interview 11, informant 12).

Ødegård et al do, however, mention that later on, the experience that the refugees and asylum seekers have with those they meet through volunteer organizations can inspire them to contribute in a similar way when they are more established in Norwegian society (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.62) Here, it is important to briefly discuss the aspects of power that can exist in a relationship of this nature.

Volunteer Organizations as a Means to Increase Social Capital

Volunteer organizations have the potential to increase the social capital, not just of the refugees and asylum seekers, but also of the host population. Many of the informants have spoken about how they have actively tried to introduce the refugees and asylum seekers they have contact with to their friends and members of their family. They have tried to include those they have met through their volunteer work and to expand their social network. Here, I believe that it is useful to look at Robert Putnam's theory of social capital. Within the course of chapter three on theory, I discussed Robert Putnam's theory of social capital. Putnam discusses how social capital can be both 'bonding', where people from similar backgrounds are interconnected, and 'bridging' which is the connecting of people from different backgrounds (Campbell & Putnam, 2013, p.60). By social capital, Putnam and Campbell discuss how they mean "the norms of trust and reciprocity that arise out of our social networks" (Campbell & Putnam, 2013, p.60).

As Ødegård et al argue, volunteer organizations can act as a 'bridging' in social capital and can help to achieve the better integration of refugees and asylum seekers into Norwegian society. Throughout the course of the interviews I have done with my informants, I can see how the contact that the refugees and asylum seekers have with the host population can help to expand their social networks and can create a link between themselves and the host population.

One couple described how they actively tried to include two men from North Africa they met through their volunteer work into their social circles.

We have thought a bit, we have tried to take them with us together with our family and we have also tried to introduce them to our friends and we have received very good feedback from everyone (interview 1, informant 1).

It is also that that we have tried to gather our families together with them, our parents, our children, and that in a way everyone has accepted it and it has gone very well (interview 1, informant 2).

We also see that when they (family and friends) meet them, on the train or somewhere, they speak to them. These two are very good at making contact so if they see someone they have met with us, they always go over and say hi. So, we get very good feedback from our friends and family. They are so positive, and they really want to have contact so that is what we have tried wished to achieve. That they can get to know us but that they can also get to know other people through us. It is important that when you go into a shop or on the train that you have someone to say hi to. For them in their culture this is very normal (interview 1, informant 1).

Another couple also mentioned how they try to connect the refugees and asylum seekers they meet through their volunteer work with their friends and families.

We can see that our mothers and fathers are also very fond of all of those [refugees and asylum seekers] they have met through us. They [the informant's parents] like our friends [refugees and asylum seekers] and that means a lot for our friends to be included in the family. Our family are open to them, they go and visit them, and they drive them if they need to be driven somewhere. When they meet here, they speak to one another (interview 11, informant 12).

For them [the refugees and asylum seekers] if they can get to know our families then they have become family (interview 11, informant 13).

Many of the informants, however, have also discussed how they themselves have been invited to parties and the likes and have also expanded their social circles, many citing that the refugees and asylum seekers that they have met through their volunteer work, make up a substantial part of their social lives.

One couple mentioned how they had been invited to the birthday party of one of the refugees they had come into contact with through their volunteer work and as a result, had become acquainted with more people, expanding their own social networks.

When we were at the birthday party of one of the men we met [through their volunteer work] we got to meet lots of their friends and now, when we meet them we can speak to them and say hi (interview 1, informant 1).

When asked who they normally socialize with, one couple answered that they normally socialized with refugees and asylum seekers, showing how their contact with the refugees and asylum seekers they met through their volunteer work has been important for their own social life.

Mostly with refugees! (interview 11, informant 12).

Yes! Mostly with refugees! (interview 11, informant 13).

Another couple also mentioned how their social life consisted mainly of socializing with the refugees and asylum seekers they had met through their volunteer work. When asked who they normally socialized with they answered that they normally socialized with refugees and asylum seekers.

Mostly with immigrants ... (interview 8, informant 8).

Yes, mostly immigrants, either we sit together in church or ... (interview 8, informant 9).

The Building of Trust

Trust is an important component of any relationship and it is something that must be developed, especially in relation to 'bridging' where one connects people from different backgrounds. Campbell and Putnam discuss how when two groups do not have much contact with one another, fear and distrust predominate, however, when these groups have the opportunity to be acquainted and to get to know one another, they begin to build trust (Campbell & Putnam, 2013, p.620). I would argue, however, based upon my research with my informants, that for trust to develop, there must be meaningful contact between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers. Some of my informants have discussed how they themselves were initially skeptical of refugees and asylum seekers and how they were able to develop trust through the increase of contact. Others have mentioned how they have encountered skepticism toward refugees and asylum seekers from other members of the host population who have maybe not had the same levels of exposure to people from different cultures.

Some things have happened down there (at the in-take center) stabbings and things, the police have been and people ask, 'are you not scared to go there?' But I don't feel scared there. I think

that its more people who stand on the outside who are scared for us. We are not scared (interview 11, informant 13).

Another participant also discussed the skepticism toward refugees and asylum seekers, that she encountered from other members of the host population, when she first had contact with them:

Most Norwegians are very reserved...I remember when my first family came, and I spoke to some Norwegian friends who said, 'you go and visit them!' 'What if they come to you?' 'What if they come all the time?!' They are skeptical to what they don't know (interview 14, informant 16).

These excerpts illustrate that trust is something that can be built through exposure to other cultures, those within the host population who have not had the same levels of exposure to the refugees and asylum seekers as the informants are described by the informants as skeptical and untrusting.

Family Type Relationships

What is interesting to note, from the interviews I have conducted with my informants, is the repeated use of words related to family relationships used by both the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers. When used on the part of the refugees and asylum seekers, I believe that it gives the host population a sense of closeness and being valued and included in the family. One informant describes such a relationship with a family she met through volunteering at a language café.

Yes, so she (the daughter of the family) calls me her other mother, her Norwegian mother and the mother, she calls me her sister. So, we have parties together, we eat together, and we celebrate birthdays together, both ours and theirs (interview 3, informant 3).

Interestingly, however, this way of classifying a relationship between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers is reciprocal in that many of my informants in the host population also refer to their relationships with the refugees and asylum seekers in familiar terms, illustrating feelings of closeness and affection while, perhaps, at the same time giving a natural name to a relationship of power. When the host population classify the relationships in such a manner, it could be seen as highlighting, perhaps subconsciously, the power dynamic

that can exist, at least in the initial stages of contact, though this does not necessarily mean that there is not the same feelings of intimacy and connection. Indeed, Ibsen Jensen, discusses descriptive power which is where power is used as a means to describe a relationship, not to criticize it in any way (Jensen, 2006, p.88). An example of descriptive power would be the hierarchy that exists between a mother and her son. When the host population use familiar terms to describe their relationship between themselves and the refugees and asylum seekers, they are not criticizing the power relationship, rather attempting to describe it as accurately as they can; they acknowledge that there is a power dynamic between themselves and the refugees and asylum seekers they encounter. One couple discussed what this relationship means in reference to two young men from Eritrea that they had contact with through a volunteer organization.

Yes, we speak about different things, I am very concerned with social norms, things like not using your phone at work. I try to give them good advice, what they shouldn't do, and I try to give them advise about what they should do as well (interview 1, informant 2).

He thinks of them as his sons, he wants to raise them well (interview 1, informant 1).

Another informant discussed this power relationship in terms of family hierarchy, mentioning how she has taken the role of grandmother to the son of a young woman from the Middle East who she has had contact with through a volunteer organization. While the extract illustrates a genuine sense of caring and wanting to help, it also illustrates a definite power dynamic.

I feel like in a way I am a bit like the grandmother. I have taken some Norwegian books with me and explained to her (the mother) that here in Norway we read for our children, that its good practice both for her and for him. I have taken some traditional things with me, some Lego, things like that, and shown her ...I see that she is really tidy, she tidies away all the toys. She doesn't have so much space but when my children were little, there were always some toys available in a way. I can see that even though they have a lot of toys, they are not very available. I try to explain to her the things that I think are positive about Norwegian culture (interview 9, informant 10).

Another informant describes her relationship with the younger men she met through her volunteer work in terms of a mother figure. She also uses this role as a means by which to discuss and teach aspects of Norwegian culture.

Of course, I am like a mother for most of them, they are just young boys. I want them to see me as a mother, not as a friend. It is not natural that they should hang out with me, I am as old as their parents. Many are very young, but it is very nice, I have learned a lot from them and I try to teach them a bit about Norwegian culture. With the boy who lived with me, I tried to teach him a bit, to provoke him so he could see how things work here (interview 13, informant 15).

In all of these excerpts, the role of an older family member is taken and used as a means to give cultural advice as well as encouragement and more general advice.

Feelings of Worth and Having Something to Offer

Through conducting the interviews, I gained a great sense that the informants felt like they had something to offer the refugees and asylum seekers, especially those who volunteered, giving them a sense of worth that is important for their own well-being.

We feel like its meaningful work. That we get a lot back as well and that they (the refugees they have contact with) appreciate us as well (interview 1, informant 2).

We come into their lives and we see that we are able to help a bit and that it is important for them. That is very important (interview 1, informant 1).

Another informant also recognized how important her involvement in her volunteer work is, giving her a sense of worth.

Yes, we are going to celebrate a birthday later on today, it's very nice. We will bring cake and presents and things like that. You realize that when they are here alone and don't have family, you mean a lot to them, just to have someone there who cares (interview 3, informant 3).

Volunteer work can be especially important for older members of society to feel as though they are still valuable and able to contribute to society.

Norwegian Society

Through conducting the field work for my thesis, I have discovered many aspects of Norwegian society and how it works, specifically in the municipality in Rogaland in which the research took place. Given what I have discovered, through speaking to the participants, about the nature

of Norwegian society, I began to wonder how this knowledge could be used to achieve the better integration of refugees and asylum seekers (Lennox, 2018). Throughout the following section of this chapter, I aim to answer the research question; ‘how can the better integration of refugees and asylum seekers, be achieved in this municipality in Rogaland?’

Norway as an Organized Society

One may argue that Norway is an organized society where making friends and connecting with people is often done in structured settings; through clubs, societies and volunteer organizations. I first began to think about this theory when I realized that it was very difficult to find people to interview who had become friends with refugees and asylum seekers in more informal settings, such as neighbors and the likes (Lennox, 2018). Thomas Hylland Eriksen makes the point that Norway is an organized society, claiming Norway to be one of the most organized societies in the world where, although, in 1998, there was a population of just 5.4 million people, there were 17 million members of different societies (Eriksen, 1998, p.32). Although these are old statistics, they give an idea of the scale of organization that existed in Norwegian society. One couple discussed how there is even a *forening* which may be translated as society or union, for neighbors to get together, illustrating the extent to which being part of societies is an important aspect of peoples’ social lives in this municipality in Rogaland.

We meet the neighbors sometimes, when we have social occasions for the neighbors. We have a well society that organizes different activities for the neighbors, so we meet them there (interview 1, informant 1).

A Culture of Fear

Many of my informants have discussed an initial skepticism or fear of contacting refugees and asylum seekers.

One participant, who worked with refugees and asylum seekers, discussed how one of her students had come to her and asked why when he invited his Norwegian neighbors to his house they never came. She describes her take on why some people within the host population may be skeptical toward having contact with the refugees and asylum seekers.

There is one man who asked me why when he invited his neighbors to dinner again, and again and again they never came. He asked me why I think they never came and I think that it has a lot to do with that they are scared, scared to communicate, what if it’s embarrassing, if we don’t

manage to talk, if we don't manage to have a conversation and there is silence (interview 4, informant 4).

One participant mentioned how when she retired she wanted to get involved with refugees and asylum seekers but that she felt nervous to do so without the backing of a volunteer organization. She felt that a volunteer organization would give her the safety of having someone to contact if she had any difficulties or concerns. The informant discussed how she felt safer and more comfortable with the backing of a volunteer organization, (informant 7, interview 7). Many of the informants, however, did create friendships with those they met through their volunteer work, often forming involved and long-term connections (Lennox, 2018).

Some of the informants have even travelled to other cities and countries to visit some of the friends they made through their work as volunteers. After describing her initial skepticism toward refugees and asylum seekers, one volunteer spoke about how she and her husband would travel to Continental Europe to visit a family they made friends with at a language café (interview 3, informant 3). I will further discuss this topic under the theme, 'cultural understanding' and I will include the excerpt I am referring to here.

Repeatedly, the participants have discussed how they recognize that it is very difficult for people to break into Norwegian society, that society in Norway is very closed and that one needs social connections to be able to come in.

There is a huge community sense here, but I can see that you have to work hard to come in. you have to come from the right family, you need connections. Even to go to the church, it's not easy for everyone, to come in and start from the beginning. You need someone to help you, a network that means that you have a connection there. We are lucky that we've grown up here. it's not easy to come in ... you have to be very brave to just go in alone (interview 11, informant 12).

There is, however, recognition and understanding from the host population that it is difficult to break into Norwegian society. With more awareness, many of the members of the host population that I have interviewed have tried to help create these social connections.

Another aspect of Norway being a very organized society is that finding work can be very difficult without social connections and recommendations, especially if one has a foreign name. However, as I have discussed above, volunteer organizations can serve as a means to create these connections with others in Norwegian society and as a result can help with the practical aspects of integration, such as finding work. Ødegård et al discuss this point, stating

that volunteer organizations can be important for helping with the more practical aspects of integration, such as finding work, as well as the forming of social relations (Ødegård et al, 2014, p.65). One couple I interviewed commented on how it can be difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to find work and how they were able to help one man they had contact with from North Africa.

We can see in a way that if I am looking for a job it's very easy for me because I have a Norwegian name and that makes it much easier to find a job. But when they (refugees and asylum seekers) look for a job you know it's more difficult... Norway works in a way that there is a lot of weight on friendships and social connection. People here often get work because of who they know. They went to school with the woman who works in the shop so, ok, then we know that he is ok and that it can work ... so then we know that ok his children might be ok as well, so they might also get a job. But they (refugees and asylum seekers) don't have a chance to find work. But then we can also see that if we speak positively about them, we have experienced that people call us and ask if they are interested in working because now they need someone. Right? When we know them, and we give them good references, they have a chance to find work, it makes it a bit easier. It's to do with who you know. If you don't know anyone in Norway you don't have a chance (interview 1, informant 1).

A Culture of *Dugnad*

Interestingly, many of the participants discussed how *dugnad*, which may be roughly translated as volunteer work, can be seen as an important Norwegian cultural aspect. The desire to help and work to give back to the community creates an ambience in which the host population actively attempt to include newcomers to the area (Lennox, 2018). The interviews suggest that the notion of *dugnad* may be particularly strong in this municipality in Rogaland and could be seen as creating a culture in which volunteer work is encouraged. One could theorize that this culture of volunteer work comes out of the religious nature of the municipality in Rogaland. Indeed, Lewis et al, argue that there is a connection between religiosity and civic engagement, claiming that those who have higher degrees of religiosity are more likely to engage in what they call, 'neighborly or helping behaviors' (Lewis et al, 2013, p.332). One informant highlighted this notion when asked what she liked about Norwegian culture.

I don't really know about Norwegians in general, but what I really like about the local society, in Jæren, is the *dugnad* value. I would say that that is a really important value, I don't know if it is a general Norwegian value or not (interview 4, informant 4).

Another informant also mentioned the importance for her of *dugnad* when asked the same question. “*Dugnad* ...yes, volunteer work in general” (interview 5, informant 5). As stated above, I believe that part of the motivation of *dugnad* could come from a religious notion of helping your neighbor, which could explain why this value is so strong in this municipality in Rogaland.

Challenges of Laws and Systems for Integration

Some of the participants have discussed their frustrations surrounding the laws around refugees and asylum seekers. They highlight the fact that many refugees and asylum seekers struggle to find work and that some asylum seekers may spend long periods of time in intake centers where they are not permitted to work. Some of the informants have highlighted the need for greater job opportunities for those refugees and asylum seekers who come to Norway with little formal education as well as the easier recognition of qualifications from other countries (Lennox, 2018). While some refugees and asylum seekers come to Norway with little in the way of formal qualifications, others come highly qualified and educated but struggle to have their qualifications recognized and as a result may end feeling frustrated in low paid jobs. One couple discussed the difficulties that they have witnessed, for some of the refugees and asylum seekers that they have come into contact with in trying to find work.

There are too many unemployed [refugees]. They need to find work, but they struggle to find employment (interview 8, informant 8)

It's not easy for those who came with no schooling... (interview 8, informant 9).

Think about Ahmed for example, he was a psychologist in his country and then he came here and had to start again, to learn the language and everything. He's not young either (interview 8, informant 8).

Many of the informants have expressed frustration as to how the right to stay in Norway is granted and who it is granted to. Some of my informants discussed how those who convert to Christianity are not believed and are returned to dangerous situations. There has also been frustration as to the fact that there is no follow up by the Norwegian government of those people who have been denied the right to stay in Norway and that the Norwegian government is not interested in what happens to those people who are returned (Lennox, 2018). One participant discussed how it is very difficult to be integrated into Norwegian society when you do not know

if you will be allowed to stay, you are not permitted to work, and you are unable to bring your family with you.

We must create a system where it is possible to be integrated. It is not so easy to integrate if you don't have your family with you here in Norway. I think that if we have a system where you must first work hard for many years to learn another language and to gain an education and then find work and then make enough money so that you can bring your family...then integration is difficult (interview 5, informant 5).

Cultural Understanding

Cultural understanding or awareness and openness, from both the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers, is important for successful integration. Throughout this section of the findings and analysis, I aim to look at how the informants experienced their contact with the refugees and asylum seekers and how these experiences may have changed their feelings and attitudes toward the refugees and asylum seekers over time. I also aim to answer my last research question in this section of the findings and analysis, which is, 'How have the values / perspectives of the host population changed or been challenged through their encounter with the refugees and asylum seekers?' In many ways, this last research question also highlights the reciprocal nature of the meeting between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers; through our meetings with different cultures we gain new understandings.

An Increase in Contact with Other Cultures

While I had assumed that early contact with other cultures either through travel or socializing would create an interest in or openness to other cultures, the interviews I conducted with my informants proved this assumption to be false, at least in the ways in which I had assumed. Almost all of my informants had almost no contact with other cultures as children except through their encounters with returning missionaries, either through the church or through family members. Most of my informants are over the age of fifty and international travel, when they were young was very rare. Furthermore, there were relatively few immigrants to Norway before the 1960's, as I have discussed in the background information, resulting in the fact that the majority of my informants had little contact with other cultures as children. Perhaps because my informants had so little contact with other cultures, did the experiences they had with returning missionaries seem so exciting, igniting an interest in other cultures. These cultures

may have seemed exciting and exotic to the informants who had never experienced something so different. According to Ruth Illman, when one talks about the ‘other’ it may be done in a markedly positive light, the ‘other’ as an exotic being, or in a negative way, the other as ignorant, cruel and so on (Illman, 2004, p.97). Either way of seeing the ‘other’ strips him of his humanity (Illman, 2004, p.97). Dahl mentions ‘othering’ to be when someone is seen as different to ourselves and not part of our group and hence as alien or exotic; in other words, the other may be reduced to an object (Dahl, 2016, p.52). While one could conclude that for my participants, contact with missionaries ignited an interest in other cultures, where the ‘other’ is seen as exotic and exciting, increased contact with different cultures through work, volunteer work and travel later on in life, may have given the informants the contact needed to see past the exotic and to view the humanity in the ‘other’. One informant spoke about how this increase in contact with other cultures can change people’s attitudes and pre-conceived ideas.

Many people here in Norway have not known so many people from different cultural backgrounds, its new for them. I just read that small towns can be more open to things that are different than, for example, big towns. It has something to do with getting to know people. There is a story where people have said no to an intake center and then when they wanted to close it afterwards, they wanted to keep it! There is something about when you meet people face to face you get to know them and in a small town you might have more of a chance to get to know them (interview 9, informant 10).

Interest in Other Cultures as a Motivation

While religion is a motivation for some to work or volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers, my findings show that interest in other cultures is a motivation for others. One participant discussed how her interest in other cultures motivated her to work with refugees and asylum seekers. For this participant, her interest in other cultures could be seen as stemming from her early experience of living in another country and does not come from religious motivation as she identifies as agnostic.

It is interesting to work here and be able to contribute to integration. The meeting with other cultures is very exciting. I feel well here (interview 9, informant 10).

Another participant, who identifies as Christian, states that it is interest in other cultures that motivates her to work and volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers. “Interest...I am very interested in other cultures and other people” (interview 14, informant 16).

Interestingly, and this is something that I discussed above, early contact with returning missionaries ignited this interest in other cultures for many of my informants. In this way, it could be argued that religion is an indirect motivation to work or volunteer with refugees and asylum seekers. While it could be argued that this interest in other cultures may have begun, as I argued above, as viewing the ‘other’ as something exotic and perhaps as a result not being able to see the humanity of the ‘other, I have seen through the course of my interviews that an increase in contact with other cultures has given the host population the opportunity to get to know people from cultures different to their own and as a result to begin to see the humanity, if we can say, in the refugees and asylum seekers they have come into contact with.

A Change of Attitudes to Other Cultures

Although the majority of my informants were never directly racist or prejudice, toward refugees and asylum seekers, they discuss how increased contact with individual refugees and asylum seekers has served to broaden their understanding of what it means to be a refugees or asylum seeker and at the same time, creating an understanding that while there exist cultural differences, they share many commonalities. Here, it can be useful to look at the formation of stereotypes and Øyvind Dahl’s hermeneutics. Dahl’s hermeneutics can help us to understand the formation of stereotypes and prejudice and the development of understanding. In order to refute some of the more negative connotations of prejudice, Dahl developed the term ‘pre-judgement’ or ‘pre-understanding’ (Dahl, 2016, p.106). Although I have already discussed Dahl’s hermeneutics in the theory section of this thesis, I will briefly outline the concept of hermeneutics here. When two people meet, especially when they do not share the same cultural background, each person comes with their own pre-understanding which becomes our horizon of understanding (Dahl, 2016, p.110). We then adjust our pre-understandings through communication to create after-understandings which in turn become our new pre-understanding (Dahl, 2016, p.111). And hence the cycle begins again, so we are continuously adjusting our pre-understandings. Critical for the development of new pre-understandings, as Dahl discusses, is the attitudes of the people involved (Dahl, 2016, p.112). New understandings cannot develop with a closed attitude. This will only result in the formation of fixed or frozen stereotypes (Dahl, 2016, p.112). Throughout the course of the interviews, one can see how the informants approach the refugees and asylum

seekers with attitudes of openness that allow for the changing of attitudes toward the refugees and asylum seekers and the creation of new pre-understandings.

One couple discussed how they had gained a greater understanding of what it means to come to Norway as a refugee or asylum seeker through their contact with two men from North Africa who came as asylum seekers to Norway. They also mention how as a result of getting to know these men, they are now able to see other refugees and asylum seekers in a new light.

You realize that, I would not say that we were ever against immigrants or that we have even been racist, but I see that we now have a whole new understanding about what it means to be an immigrant and we have gained a new respect for them. What I see now is that through meeting them and getting to know other North Africans, we have changed our thinking, we think differently when we meet other immigrants (interview 1, informant 1).

Another informant, as I discussed above, spoke about how she and her husband felt nervous the first time they entered a language café.

There has been a shift in the last three to four years, to do with immigrants, now we actually spend a lot of time with them. we now have a lot of contact with them. It started in 2015, I had a friend who would go to the language café and both I and my husband felt that it was something that we wanted to go and experience what it was. We found it very scary at first, to go into a room with people who had different skin colors and couldn't understand us. It was like my husband said, 'do I dare to leave my jacket outside like this? Shouldn't I take it in with me?' You come with some ideas about what it's like, what they are like. But that has changed so much for us. I have actually never felt safer. I know that they would always protect me and that they have a lot of respect for me, right? It really cost a lot for us to go in the first time but that first evening, we got to know a family from the Middle East, a mother and a daughter. The daughter was the same age as my daughter. They could speak good English, so it was nice that we could communicate (interview 3, informant 3).

For one informant, little contact with other cultures when she was younger meant that she initially felt negatively toward immigrants to Norway.

I was pretty racist as a teenager. very racist. I wanted to be tough (interview 13, informant 15).

What was it that changed? (interview 13, interviewer).

No, I just wanted to be tough. I didn't know any refugees as a teenager, I just thought that it was tough to hate them. [...] I was just blank before, I didn't have any reference point. That racist period just lasted a while when I was a teenager, it's not like that now. When you are blank there isn't anything (interview 13, informant 15).

One participant discussed how she believes that the local community has become more open to refugees and asylum seekers through an increase in contact.

To have respect is very important, to be open and to take people on. I think that in Norway, we were very skeptical before, but I believe that we are now more open. I think that it's because we are used to immigrants now and we have gotten to know them. The community has changed in a way (interview 1, informant 1).

What is also important to Dahl's hermeneutics, is that it is not always necessary for both parties to agree, what is necessary is for both parties to be able to empathize (Dahl, 2016, p.109). Many of my participants discuss how they do not always agree with or understand the refugees and asylum seekers but they are able to empathize and realize that it is okay to behave and think differently. When asked if there were any cultural norms or practices that she found difficult to understand or accept, one informant replied;

Yes ... it's difficult to understand the Muslim man who refuses to shake the hand of a Norwegian woman. That's difficult to understand but at the same time I know that it's part of their culture and religion. But it's hard to accept (interview 14, informant 16).

Through these excerpts from the interviews I conducted with my informants, one can see how an increase in contact with other cultures can help to dissipate the fear of the unknown and can leave space for understanding and acceptance. However, as Dahl highlights, there must be a willingness to understand, an openness, in order for there to be the possibility to change attitudes. I believe, through analyzing the interviews that I have conducted with my informants, that an interest in other cultures, whether it stemmed from early contact with other cultures through travel or missionaries, has given the informants the ability to be open and willing to create new understandings.

How Different are We?

‘Culturalism’ is another form of ‘othering’ that implies that ones’ behavior is determined by culture (Dahl, 2016, p.55). Some of the participants have mentioned frustrations they have had with the medias presentation of refugees and asylum seekers; that if something happens involving a refugee or asylum seeker it becomes an outcome of his culture but if a Norwegian does something it is presented as an exception. Others have mentioned frustrations to the fact that the media wishes only to cover negative stories involving refugees and asylum seekers:

We are like this in Norway, that we read in the newspaper about an immigrant who has broken into a house and taken something, and we think that they are all like that. We become very skeptical because the newspapers are colored (interview 1, informant 1).

Another informant discussed how she and her husband had arranged a big walk through a volunteer organization, which included about 400 people both Norwegian and refugees and asylum seekers. She discussed how the newspapers were not interested in reporting on this arrangement and that they only wish to report negative stories involving refugees and asylum seekers.

There is nothing good reported in the newspapers. It’s not interesting for the journalists (interview 8, informant 9).

But when an immigrant does something criminal!! They put it in there straight away! (interview 8, informant 8).

While some of the informants can see how culturalism works can work in the wider community, it is something that the interviews show that some of the informants can still struggle with, even after an increase in contact with the refugees and asylum seekers. However, having said this, their willingness to understand and their ability to see the humanity in the ‘other’ means that they have the possibility to overcome the problems associated with ‘culturalism’.

There are some things with the Islamic culture that I find a bit difficult. The hijab for example, and I think that they have a very bound way of thinking. But I have learned to see past it. I have a group with a lady from Somalia, she wears a long dress and a hijab, but look how she shines! She was wearing big sunglasses! We were in a shop and she put on these sunglasses and it was

so fantastic! So positive! I have been more and more surprised, we mustn't put people into a box. Don't judge people beforehand (interview 3, informant 3).

Here we can see how an increase in contact and understanding lead the informant to change her initial ideas about culture.

While there are cultural practices and ways of being that some of the informants struggle to understand, there are also many aspects of other cultures that the informants really come to appreciate:

I have learned a lot from them [young asylum seekers] to do with what we miss about our own children, politeness. When his [a teenage asylum seeker who spent time with the informant's family] friends came to visit they always came to present themselves and sat down. My children and their friends, they just go into their rooms and come out only if they need something from the fridge right! There we have a lot to learn, with being polite (interview 13, informant 15).

Many of my participants have discussed how, although there are obvious cultural differences between themselves and the refugees and asylum seekers that they have come into contact with, there are many core values and basics of humanity that everyone shares:

We have more in-common than we don't have. To be a human, it includes a lot. To be a mother, for example, to be a daughter, to miss someone ...(interview 5, informant 5).

We have a lot in common, we all wish for peace, for the possibility for our children to grow up without fear ...(interview 6, informant 6).

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Throughout the course of the thesis, I have shown how religion plays a significant role in the lives of the majority of my informants. I have argued that religion serves as a point of connection and understanding between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers. I have discussed the link between conservative values and religion, illustrating how conservative values, as emphasized by religion, can be a point of connection between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers. For many of the informants, the more conservative leaning values of themselves and the refugees and asylum seekers were a point of connection. While the majority of my participants had little contact with other cultures as children, the contact that they did have may have come from either missionary within their own families or missionaries returning to the church. I have argued that this early contact with missionaries may have ignited an interest in other cultures and, as a result, may be a motivation for the informants' work with refugees and asylum seekers. Although religion may be a motivation to become involved with refugees and asylum seekers, I have argued that for the majority of my informants, it was an indirect motivation. The majority of the informants expressed a desire to help as a motivation for their work with refugees and asylum seekers. I have argued, using Robert Putnam's theory of social capital, how religion may be seen as a 'bridge' to integration in the municipality in Rogaland, as opposed to a 'barrier'.

Throughout the course of the thesis, I have discussed how contact with refugees and asylum seekers has impacted the lives of the host population. I have discovered that of particular interest is the reciprocal nature of the relationships formed and the reciprocal potential of volunteer organizations. The informants have spoken about the importance of the relationships they have formed with the refugees and asylum seekers and how these relationships have become a big part of their own social lives, expanding the social capital of the host population as well as of the refugees and asylum seekers. In this way, the thesis has shown how the reciprocal nature of volunteer organizations have the possibility, not just to aid in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, but also to enhance community development. Through their volunteer work, many of the informants have expressed how they have gained a feeling of worth, that they have something to offer, which has enhanced their own well-being.

Through analyzing the interviews that I conducted for the field work of this thesis, I developed the theory that Norway is an organized society where social connection are generally formed through structured settings, such as clubs and societies. Many of the participants

expressed an initial skepticism toward refugees and asylum seekers, something that diminished with an increase in contact. I have also looked at the challenges that the laws and systems can pose for integration, something that was highlighted again and again by the participants.

Cultural understanding and openness is important from both the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers in achieving successful integration. I have looked at how the host population experienced their contact with refugees and asylum seekers and how these experiences may have changed their attitudes and feelings towards refugees and asylum seekers. The interviews have shown how an increase in contact with refugees and asylum seekers can help to dissipate initial skepticism. An increase in contact with refugees and asylum seekers served to broaden the participants' understanding of what it means to be a refugee or asylum seeker. The majority of the informants had little previous contact with people from other cultures and their interest in cultures different to their own may be seen as coming from their contact with missionaries. This interest in other cultures may also be seen as a motivation for the participants' work with refugees and asylum seekers. Although the informants discussed cultural differences between themselves and the refugees and asylum seekers, they also mentioned how they shared many commonalities.

Throughout the course of the interviews and analysis, I have been able to draw the above theories and conclusions, that I hope can aid in the better understanding of the experiences that the host population have in their contact with refugees and asylum seekers, in this municipality in Rogaland, and that this understanding can help to achieve not only the better integration of refugees and asylum seekers, but greater community development. As one informant said,

When you have a friend who you have a heart connection with it can make all the difference in how you think. If you really enjoy doing something, take someone with you! Make a new friend!
(interview 11, informant 12).

Recommendations

Perhaps the most interesting and important finding to come out of this thesis, for me, is the reciprocal nature of volunteer organizations and of the relationships formed between the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers. I believe that there is potential for this knowledge to be used to change the ways in which we approach volunteer organizations and that they can be developed in a way in which there is more emphasis put on working together rather than working for. When true connections are formed, the social capital of both the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers can be increased, creating a better and more

inclusive society. Given the religious nature of the municipality in Rogaland, religious volunteer organizations may work well as a way to connect the host population with the refugees and asylum seekers. There is a need to involve as many people from the host population as possible in volunteer work with refugees and asylum seekers, as this is an effective way to dissipate skepticism toward refugees and asylum seekers. Of particular interest to me is the possibility that this involvement in volunteer work can mean for older people who may feel socially isolated, reciprocal schemes can benefit both parties. There is also a need to involve people from the host population who may have come to Norway as refugees or asylum seekers themselves, as their involvement can be important for integration and giving back to the community.

Suggestions for Areas of Future Research

The reciprocal nature of volunteer organizations is an area of research that I feel would be an important area of research to continue with. The possibilities that volunteer organizations have as a means by which to connect the host population and the refugees and asylum seekers, and the reciprocal nature of these volunteer organization are important areas to gain a greater understanding of and the implications that these volunteer organizations can have for the greater community.

Another area of research that I believe would be important to follow, is the role that religion plays in connecting the host population with the refugees and asylum seekers. A larger study on this topic would be important in the understanding of the experiences of the host population, in their contact with refugees and asylum seekers, in more rural Norwegian municipalities, where religion still plays a part in the daily lives of the host population. This knowledge can help to aid in the better integration of refugees and asylum seekers in rural Norway.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Guide

Interview Questions

Background

- How long have you been in Norway? were you born in Norway? Did you grow up in Norway?
- What is your cultural / family background?
- What is your religious background?
- What are your religious beliefs?
- How old are you?
- How much previous contact have you had with people from a different cultural background to your own?
- Do you feel part of Norwegian society? Do you feel integrated into Norwegian society?
- What is your political affiliation? How would you describe your political views?
- Have you traveled much? Where do you like to go and what do you do when you are there?
- Do you have strong connections to any other countries besides Norway? Which ones? In which ways are you connected to those countries?
- Did you travel much as a child?
- Did you have contact with people from cultures different to your own as a child?

Socializing

- With which groups of people do you normally socialize? Is it family / friends? What is their cultural background?
- Who have you socialized with this week?
- How do you like to socialize? What sorts of things do you enjoy doing?
- What sorts of activities do you do together?
- What did you do the last time you met up?
- What kinds of food do you enjoy together?
- How do you greet one another when you meet?

- How would you expect to be greeted?
- What sorts of things do you talk about when you meet up? How long have you known this person?
- How do you connect? Have you ever found that you have a lot in common with someone from a very different culture to your own?
- Have you ever found that it is hard to find things to talk about?
- How would you react if someone did or said something you didn't agree with? Would you challenge them? Would you stay silent?
- Have you ever experienced a difficult or uncomfortable situation with someone from a different culture to your own? How did it make you feel? How did you react? Did it change how you feel about that group of people?
- Have you ever experienced a very positive situation with someone from a different culture to your own? How did it make you feel? How did you react? Did it change how you feel about that group of people?

Training

- What is your educational background?
- Have you received any specific training through your work / volunteering?
- What was that training?
- Did you find it useful? In which ways?

Reflections/ Experiences

- Has anything surprised you through your encounter with a different culture?
- Why do you work / volunteer with refugees? What is your motivation?
- Do you feel like you have learned or gained anything through your encounters with people from a different culture to your own?
- Do you feel like you have changed as a person through your encounters with people from a different background to your own? In which ways? Are there things you do differently? For example, do you try to make recipes you have learned?
- Are there any cultural practices or customs in your experience, that you find difficult to understand / accept?
- Have you encountered any specific challenges through your encounter with people from a different culture? How and why?

- Do you feel like there are any barriers between you and those you have encountered from a different culture? What are they?
- How do you approach the cultural challenges you encounter?
- Do you feel like your views / values have changed as a result of contact with new cultures? In which ways? How has this impacted you?
- What do you think are some of the most important values in Norwegian culture?
- What do you like about Norwegian culture?
- What do you find challenging about Norwegian culture?
- What do you think can be done to achieve better integration and understanding?

Appendix 2

Intervju oversikt

Spørsmål

Background

- Hvor lenge har du bodd i Norge? Ble du født i Norge? Har du vokst opp i Norge?
- Hva er din kulturell/familie bakgrunn?
- Hva er din religiøs bakgrunn?
- Hva er din religiøs trosoppfatning?
- Hva er din alder?
- Hvor mye kontakt har du tidligere hatt med folk fra en kulturell bakgrunn som er forskjellig fra din egen?
- Føler du deg en del av det norske samfunnet? Føler du deg integrert i norsk samfunn?
- Hva er din politisk tilhørighet? Hvordan ville du beskrive dine politiske meninger?
- Har du reist mye? Hvor ville du gjerne reist og hva ville du gjort mens du var der?
- Har du en sterk tilknytning til noen andre land utenom Norge? Hvilke? På hvilken måte er du tilknyttet det/de landet/landene.
- Reiste du mye som barn?
- Hadde du kontakt som barn med folk fra kulturer forskjellige fra din egen?

Sosialt samvær

- Hvilke ulike grupper omgås du til vanlig? Er det familie/venner? Hva er deres kulturelle tilhørighet?
- Hvem har du omgås med denne uken?
- Hva slags sosialt samvær liker du? Hva liker dere å gjøre sammen?
- Hva slags aktiviteter deltar dere i?
- Når var det dere sist traff hverandre?
- Hvilken type mat liker dere å spise i lag?
- Hvordan hilser dere på hverandre når dere treffes?
- Hvordan forventer du å bli hilst på?
- Hva snakker dere om når dere treffes? Hvor lenge har dere kjent hverandre?

- Hvordan er kontakten? Opplever du å ha mye til felles med noen med en bakgrunn som er veldig forskjellig fra din egen?
- Har du noen gang opplevd at det er vanskelig å finne en samtaleemne?
- Hvordan ville du reagert hvis noen gjorde eller sa noe du ikke var enig med? Ville du utfordret dem? Ville du latt det gå/holdt taus? Hvorfor?
- Har du noen gang opplevd en vanskelig eller ubehagelig hendelse med noen fra en annen kultur? Hvordan følte du? Hvordan reagerte du? Endret det måten du følte om en gruppe mennesker?
- Har du noen gang opplevd en svært positiv hendelse med noen fra en annen kultur? Hvordan følte du? Hvordan reagerte du? Endret det måten du følte om en gruppe mennesker?

Utdanning/ opplæring

- Hva er din utdannings bakgrunn?
- Har du hatt noen spesiell opplæring gjennom arbeid/frivillige verv?
- Evt hvilken opplæring?
- Var det nyttig for deg? På hvilken måte?

Refleksjon/Erfaringer

- Er det noe med ditt møte med en annen kultur som har overrasket deg?
- Hvorfor jobber du/gjør du frivillig arbeid med flyktninger/asylsøkere? Hva motiverer deg?
- Opplever du at du har lært eller ervervet deg noe gjennom dine møter med folk av en forskjellig kultur fra din egen?
- Føler du at du har blitt forandret gjennom dine møter med folk av forskjellige kulturer? På hvilken måte? Er det noe du nå gjør annerledes? For eksempel, prøver du ut hjemme noen av oppskriftene du har lært?
- Er det noen kulturelle normer eller skikker som du opplever som vanskelig å forstå/akseptere?
- Har du har du truffet på noen spesifikke utfordringer gjennom ditt møte med folk fra en annen kulturell bakgrunn? Hvordan og hvorfor?

- Opplever du at det finnes noen barrierer mellom deg og de du har møtt fra en annen kultur? Hva er disse?
- Hvordan møter du disse kulturelle utfordringer?
- Føler du at dine synspunkter og verdier har endret seg i møte med nye kulturer? På hvilken måte? Hvilken konsekvens har dette hatt i ditt liv?
- Hvilke tror du er noen av de mest grunnleggende verdier i norsk kultur?
- Hva liker du med norsk kultur?
- Hva synes du er utfordrende med norsk kultur?
- Hva tror du kan gjøres for å fremme bedre integrering og forståelse?

Appendix 3

Request for participation in research project

The integration of Refugees to a Norwegian Kommune from the perspective of the host population.

Name: Hannah Chazal Lennox. **Contact Information:**

Study program: Master of Global Studies, (MGS), VID specialized University, Stavanger.

Background and purpose: Immigration has become a central issue in many European countries in recent years. As more and more people migrate, while at the same time keeping greater connections than before to their countries of origin or even to several countries at once, as a result of globalization, the process of integration and adaption becomes more complex. I am writing my thesis on the impact that immigration has had on the population already living in Norway, and how their values and perspectives have changed or been challenged through their encounters with different cultures. Successful integration can be seen as a two- way process so I am interested in seeing how the integration of refugees, specifically to Norway, is seen from the perspective of the host population and how these encounters affect the process of integration.

What does participation in the study imply? Individual interviews will be the main method of research for this study. If you would like to participate in this study, you will need to set aside some time in October or November for an interview. The Interview will be between one hour and an hour and a half. Interviews may be conducted in either English or Norwegian, upon the request of the participant. If the informant gives their consent, the interviews will be recorded, if not, I will need to take notes throughout the interview. Participants may, on request, be shown a copy of the interview guide. All information given by the informant will be kept confidential.

What happens with your personal information? All personal information will be treated confidentially. Only the researcher will have access to personal information, sound recordings and other collected data. The sound recordings will be transcribed and all personally identifying information removed soon after the interview is conducted. The sound recordings will then be deleted. Personal information will be kept separately from other collected data so that the participant cannot be identified. Names and other personally identifiable information will not be included in the final publication. Data collection will be

finished by December 2018 and the final thesis will be completed by May 2019. All collected data will be deleted upon the completion of the project.

If you would like to participate in or if you have any questions regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact Hannah Chazal Lennox, see the above contact information. The study is reported to the Data Protection Official for research, Norwegian Science Data Service.

Confirmation to participate in the study

I have received information about the study, and I am willing to participate

(Signed by participant, date)

(Signed by project manager, Hannah Chazal Lennox, date)

Appendix 4

Forespørsel etter deltakere til forskningsprosjekt

Integrering av asylsøkere i en norsk kommune fra verts-kulturens perspektiv.

Navn: Hannah Chazal Lennox. **Kontakt:**

Studieprogram: Master of Global Studies (MGS), VID Specialized University, Stavanger.

Bakgrunn og formål: Innvandring har i senere år blitt et sentralt tema i mange europeiske land. I dag er det stadig flere som migrerer, samtidig som de beholder flere tilknytninger enn tidligere til opprinnelsesland eller til og med flere land simultant, som resultat av globalisering. Dermed blir integrerings- og tilpasningsprosessen mye mer kompleks. Jeg forsker i masteroppgaven på virkningen av innvandring på befolkningen som allerede bor i Norge, og hvordan deres verdier og synspunkter har forandret seg eller blitt utfordret gjennom deres møter med forskjellige kulturer. Vellykket integrering kan anees som en gjensidig prosess, derfor er jeg interessert i å se på hvordan integrering av flyktninger, spesifikt i Norge, oppleves fra mottakerlandets perspektiv og hvordan disse møter påvirker integreringsprosessen.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i dette studiet? Individuelle intervju blir hoved forskningsmetoden for dette studiet. Hvis du ønsker å delta i forskningen, blir det nødvendig å sette av litt tid til et intervju i Oktober eller November. Intervjuet varer fra en til 1 ½ timer. Intervjuene kan utføres på enten norsk eller engelsk, etter deltakerens ønske. Hvis deltakeren gir tillatelse, blir intervjuet spilt inn, ellers skriver jeg referat. Deltakeren kan, om ønskelig be om å se en kopi av intervju-oversikten. All informasjon gitt i løpet av intervjuet er konfidensiell.

Hva skjer med din personlig informasjon? All personlig informasjon blir behandlet konfidensielt. Bare forskeren har tilgang til personlig informasjon, lydopptak og andre samlet data. Lydopptakene blir transkribert og all personlig identifiserende informasjon fjernet straks intervjuet er behandlet. Lydopptakene blir slettet. Personlig informasjon blir oppbevart separat fra annen samlet data slik at deltakeren ikke kan bli identifisert. Navn og annen personlig-identifiserbar informasjon blir ikke inkludert i den endelige publikasjonen. Data innsamling blir fullført innen Desember 2018 og den endelige avhandlingen innen Mai 2019. All samlet data blir slettet innen fullførelse av prosjektet.

Studiet blir rapportert til Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Science Data Service (NSD).

Hvis du ønsker å delta eller hvis du har spørsmål vedrørende forskningen, vennligst ikke nøl med å kontakte Hannah Chazal Lennox (se kontaktinformasjonen over).

Bekreftelse av deltakelse i forskningen:

Jeg har mottatt informasjon angående studiet og er villig til å delta:

(Deltakerens signatur, dato)

(Prosjektlederens signatur, Hannah Chazal Lennox, dato)