"I think this is very unique. Apart from my family they are the most important."
A case study on informal relations in a youth project

Department of pedagogy and sociology
Lund University

A thesis submitted for the degree of Bachelor in behavioural sciences, 15 credits
Majors in Sociology (SOCK04) and Pedagogy **(**PEDK21)

Autumn term 2019

Authors: Laura Juarez Sandkvist, Martina Herbert
Supervisors: Magnus Karlsson, Agneta W. Flinck

Abstract

This thesis is based on a case study conducted during eight weeks in a youth project in Colombia. The project aims to support vulnerable youth from communities outside Cartagena into entering higher education and enhance their engagement in social work in their communities. The purpose of the thesis was to investigate how the relationships established in the project interplayed with the project's progress and its participants' personal development. Three aspects of the project relations became our focus: informal relationships, trust and encouragement. Our data collection was done through participatory observations, individual interviews and focus group discussions with participants and mentors of the project. Because of our two majors in Behavioural science, the theoretical framework and research questions has derived from both Social psychology theories and Relational pedagogy. We believe they complement each other when explaining how relationships with others influence the individuals' development. Our main results show that the project members' informal relationships, trust and encouragement were a basis for the participants' personal development. We suggest that these relationships, which had extended beyond formal project relations, were necessary for the participants in order to cope with the project. The study therefore highlights the importance of building relationships for the formal project work to proceed.

Keywords: *Informal relations, youth projects, vulnerable youth, mentoring, youth development, Colombia*

Table of contents

1. Introduction

This thesis is based on a qualitative case study conducted in a youth project in northern Colombia. The project was directed towards vulnerable youth with the aim of supporting them into higher education and engaging them in social work in their communities. Something that caught our interest during the field time was that relationships between the project members seemed close and personal. We thereon discovered that these close relationships seemed to be important for the project aims to be reached. From these observations we wanted to understand how relationships interplayed with the aims and the project participants' personal development.

1.1 Aim of study

The aim of this study is to investigate and analyse the relationships created in the project and how they interplayed with the project's progress and the participants' personal development, focused on three aspects of the relations: informal relationships, trust and encouragement.

1.2 Significance of study

There are many projects aiming to support underprivileged, marginalized or vulnerable youth to overcome structural barriers and life situations. Providing economical and practical support is usually a crucial part of a project's formal activities and is easy to motivate. However more difficult to detect are the emotional, social and informal kinds of support such a project can provide for their participants. Because these aspects are less visible they can be hard to motivate and value. Still, they might be as crucial in order to actually reaching out with economic and practical support, i.e. to actually proceed with the formal project work. This is why we found it significant to do a study that focused on the less visible factors that interplays with youth development in projects like in our case.

2. Background

This bachelor thesis is based on a data collection conducted with a Minor field study scholarship from *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency* (SIDA). The criteria for the scholarship include the study being useful for countries classified as

developing and of benefit for the country's development. Our study took place in northern Colombia, where we during eight weeks visited a social and educational project working with Afro-Colombian youth. Data collection was mainly conducted in the rural community where the project is located: a two-hour bus ride outside Cartagena. As we are students of Behavioural science the thesis has a multidisciplinary perspective, including both a sociological and a pedagogical perspective. The background consists of a description of the settings: the country's essential conditions for the youth, the community where the project is working and the project's organizational structure and aims.

2.1 Colombia and the target group

By the World Bank Colombia is considered an upper middle-income country (UMIC) (Romero Rodríguez et al. 2015:30-31). The country has had an overall steady economic growth in the last decade and the proportion of middle class has grown (Radinger et al. 2018:36-39). Even though poverty rates have decreased and socio-economic conditions have improved for many of the poorest, the gap between rich and poor is continuously large. The Latin American and Caribbean region are the most unequal in the world and Colombia's economic division and possibilities for social mobility through generations are lower than in any other OECD country of the region (Radinger et al. 2018:39-42).

Afro-Colombians are Colombia's largest minority group, around 10,6% of the population (Radinger et al. 2018:43). The population is centred along the Caribbean and Pacific coasts and there is a clear correlation between extreme poverty and Afro-Colombian density (Romero Rodriguez et al. 2015:18-19, Radinger et al. 2018:43). The young part of this population, 14-26 year olds, constitutes 23,7%. Of them, 70% are considered poor (Romero Rodriguez et al. 2015:45-46). As a minority group Afro-Colombians are among the most vulnerable groups in Colombian society. They have faced an un-proportionate part of the violence during the 50 years of internal conflicts. Colombia has the highest number of internally displaced people in the world and many of them are Afro-Colombian farmers (Romero Rodriguez et al. 2015:20-21). Our study took place in an Afro-Colombian community on the countryside near Cartagena. In this community, few people had high education and normally those who managed to study after secondary school soon left the village to find a better life elsewhere. In the community the issue of displaced population was also prominent since many of the families had moved to the area due to the conflicts.

Both Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities' legacy of slavery is reflected in today's economic and social inequalities, underrepresentation and lack of powerful positions. Except for low educational level and high poverty rates these communities also face barriers like discrimination and low aspirations (Radinger et al. 2018:46, 65). Informants from the community highlighted the importance of Afro-Colombian culture and identity as a way of uniting and improving the quality of life.

2.2 Colombia's education system

Socio-economic background plays a great role for access to education and learning outcomes in Colombia. Along with students' place of residency, ethnicity and gender it decides the opportunities for education. Afro-Colombians has lower graduate level than the majority population and are less represented in higher education (Romero Rodriguez et al. 2015:45-46). It is unlikely to overcome social background (Radinger et al. 2018:64-65). The enrolment fees of higher education and differences in learning outcome are creating a class-based separation in accessibility to higher education (Romero Rodríguez et al. 2015:55-56).

Secondary education plays a great role to ensure college-readiness. But the education given in secondary schools in the country differs. When comparing results from the national exam *Saber 11* the strongest influence was the socio-economic category of the school (OECD & IBRD 2012:95). In 2017 the exam showed that 80% of the students from the lowest socioeconomic category reached a minimum or less in the test scores whereas only 15% of students from the highest socioeconomic status had the same low score. The gap in learning outcome is also present between rural and urban areas. Results from PISA showed differences equal to one academic year in test scores between urban and rural students (Radinger et al. 2018:64-67). Overall, this means that when secondary school fails to prepare students for higher education the transition to university can be very difficult (OECD & IBRD 2012:92). The project aims to tackle this problem by guiding its participants to higher education. A core function is providing help to sign up for pre-university courses, exams and university programmes.

To enter higher education a state exam is provided twice a year, a test that comes with an admission fee (ICFES 2019). After that, university fees have to be paid each trimester. Even though public universities are distinctly less expensive than private ones they still have a

noticeable cost compared to other countries in the region (OECD & IBRD 2012:270). For the project participants one of the greatest barriers to higher education were the costs. Starting university meant the families had to provide for trimester fees but also for traveling and living costs for the students that had to move closer to the city. Naturally, the project paying for university fees was crucial.

2.3 The community

Our informants were from semi rural Afro-Colombian communities outside of Cartagena. The closest smaller town, where healthcare and other services are accessible, is about one hour away. The communities are characterized by agriculture and the inhabitants mainly work at the fields or plantations. Other common jobs are housekeeping and childcare as well as driving motor taxis or hairdressing and manicure salons at home etc. The community we visited was the base for the project and where they mainly did their activities. This community has the largest school in the area, which is up to secondary level and picks up students from surrounding communities. Nevertheless, all those communities are very close to each other and the participants' families lived in several of them.

2.4 The project

The project aims to support their participants, both by helping them fund and start university studies and by mobilizing their engagement in the development of the community. The director pointed out that the youth is their target group because they tend to connect generations and have great possibilities of leading change. The two aims are therefore set to help both the youngsters to push through their barriers and to contribute in the development of the area. Technically the project works with 8 participants between the ages of 16 - 19. The school in Colombia is mandatory and free until the end of secondary school, which means that the project picked up students who just finished secondary school and were at the edge of becoming adults. The participants were getting support from the project in the university processes: financial aid with school fees, guidance through Colombia's tertiary education system and support with choosing and fulfilling their formal goals. The project was orienting them in those new settings that the participants had no experience from before. The participants were also organizing and leading workshop-like activities like open discussions, exercises, movie screenings etc. with the people from their community. These activities, that we from now on will name *community work*, had a social aim and addressed e.g. family

relationships, environmental concern and Afro-Colombian identity. The director and the coordinator of the project also organized their own workshops and lectures, sometimes called *guidance sessions*, with the participants. This was in order to give them the tools needed for doing community work and to orient them in their new life settings.

2.4.1 Organizational structure

The founder of the project is from the Netherlands and has a background in anthropology. She came in contact with the community when doing an investigation for her master's thesis. While searching for a field area in the outskirts of Cartagena she came in contact with the president of a social work association. This association was formed in 2006 by a group of people in the community. Their aim, as described by the president of the association; is to contribute to a healthy development of the community with educational and cultural projects related to Afro-Colombian identity. With support from Law 70 (1993:70), created to protect the rights of the Afro-Colombian community, they try to unite people living in the villages and change the conditions for the families. The associations' president is also one of the teachers in the community's school where the founder came to do her research. During this period, the founder spent time with the last year students at the school talking about their future, which resulted in the creation of a foundation that started the project. The founder is now the project director and the associations' president became the project coordinator.

For the director, it was important that the participants wanted to study at university and that they wished to do something for their communities. In the application process, last year students that wanted to participate had to present a project idea of social character for their community. The participants signed a contract that stated that they will receive the support for university and that they will work together: planning and doing social activities for the community that contributes in the development.

Today, the project's basis consists of: the *director*, who mainly works from the Netherlands but visits for longer periods; the president of the social association, who has taken the role as *coordinator* for the project; and two other members of the association from the community. Those members are described as *mentors* to the participants, and are aimed to help and support the participants in community work. In this way the project and the local association had close ties and were in some way complementing each other towards their goals.
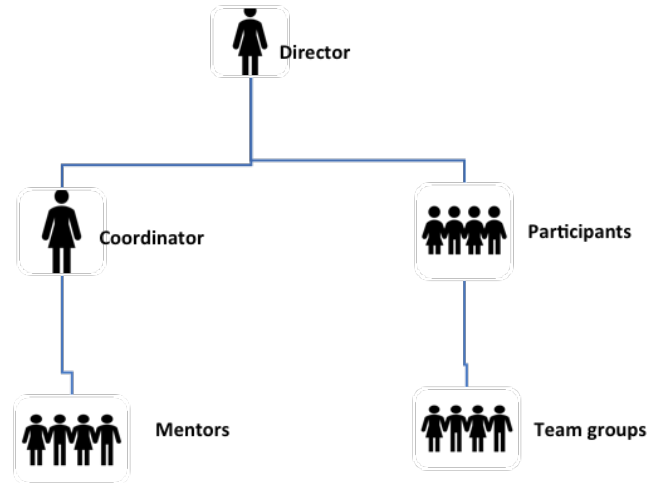
Picture 1. From the project's core documents: "work roles and official tasks", 2018

The project is as indicated rather young, started in 2018. Funding is mainly collected through fundraising events in Europe and through social media, but has aims of getting more local sponsors.

At the time of our fieldwork four participants were studying at university. One was studying at the polytechnic school, but planned to complement with university studies later on. The remaining three participants recently had done the national entry exam for universities. None of them passed that semester but were starting pre-exam courses to prepare for the next one. To reach the social aim of the project the participants were doing community work every weekend.

3. Previous research on informal mentorship

As our case study collected data from a small project working with youth support, we found it relevant to search for previous research on the area of youth support programmes. Our research questions concerned the project relationships and their role for its' progress and the youths' development. We therefore found it relevant to summarize previous research that highlights the role of mentor relationships in youth programmes. Even though the project of our study did not explicitly call itself a mentor programme we consider it to share similar settings and is therefore of interest.

A Meta analysis on mentoring programs for youth (DuBois et al. 2002) emphasizes the importance of a structure that supports the mentoring relationships throughout a programme. This stands in contrast to usual norms with most resources put on the preparatory stage of the mentor role, such as screening and matching (DuBois et al 2002:188). The Meta analysis establishes a strong link between the quality and intensity of the relationship between mentee and mentor and a beneficial outcome. Strong relationships are favorable both for programme outcomes and youth development. The Meta analysis took into consideration studies that found that e.g. emotional closeness, frequency and longevity all plays important roles in positive youth development (DuBois et al 2002:188).

What does it mean then to put resources and emphasis on the evolvement of strong relationships between mentors and mentees? Rogers's (2009) study conducted on a programme for youth from low socio-economic backgrounds, also saw strong and supportive relations as a main factor for its progress. It was both minimizing withdrawal and making successful transitions for students. Rogers found this kind of support lacking in vulnerable youth's home environment and being fulfilled in a mentor relationship (Rogers 2009:118). The psychosocial support that the mentors provided was highlighted, along with their consistency/availability and their personal investment (Rogers 2009:111). Those three factors give us a hint about what it means to nourish an informal mentorship in a youth project. Psychosocial support was explained by the youth as support going beyond career advice or other practical support. It meant personal, emotional support filling the mentees with encouragement (Rogers 2009:112). Personal investment referred to the students' experiences of their mentors to believe in them. The informants in the paper said that they could rely on their mentors with practically anything, meeting their needs because of their strong bonds and not because of duty or being paid (Rogers 2009:114).

Similar conditions were found important in another study of mentor relationships (Rhodes & DuBois 2006). Closeness was described as a bearing factor for mentoring to even exist. Closeness is understood as a bond between mentor and mentee that involves mutual trust and a feeling of being liked, understood and respected. According to the authors, fostering close emotional bonds between mentee and mentor resembled fostering a therapeutic relationship with empathy and authenticity as well as by just having fun and enjoying each others' company (Rhodes & DuBois 2006:3). More concrete examples of informal mentoring are found in Rogers study from 2011 where the author states that they are characterized by

flexibility. The informal relationships are supervising, yet filled with entertaining jokes and stories along with the mentors showing personal interest in the youth (Rogers 2011:162).

Which effects on personal development did previous research see in the participants? In 2011 Rogers found that informal mentoring relationships was enhancing self-esteem in the participants. The key part of the mentoring is described as encouragement and confirmation rather than instruction (Rogers 2011:161) and the mentor relationships were understood as creating support networks. This had an effect on the youth's self-efficacy because of the emotional and personal encouragement they counted with from the mentors (Rogers 2011:163). Furthermore, research on ethnic minority youth in youth programmes shows that the relationship bonds between adults and youth are essential for participation (Lee et al 2009:236). In the study, the feeling of safety and having relationships with the staff were the main reasons to participate for the youth. Also interacting with caring adults was a strong factor (Lee et al 2009:236). A motivation for participation was also a sense of belonging and having a positive behaviour with others (Lee et al 2009:237). Other effects that have been seen are in relationships between participants and their parents. Rhodes, Grossman & Resch (2000) suggested that mentoring had an improving effect on those relationships, which also played a role in the adolescents' improvement in academic outcomes and behaviour. It is suggested that establishing healthy relationships with other adults could help rewire the adolescents' frame of relationships. A connection is shown between a supportive, guiding adult from outside and an improvement in child-parent relationships (Rhodes, Grossman & Resch 2000).

The studies presented above, show the impacts and benefits of informal mentoring relationships. To further understand how project relations could have influenced the youth's development in the project our theoretical framework will be presented further down. It aims to deepen the understanding of how we interact, create social bonds and learn through relations.

4. Methodology

4.1 Design of the study

This is a qualitative case study based on data collection during eight weeks of field time. Case

studies relies on multiple sources for their evidence and enables the researcher to study relations and social processes in a holistic sense (Yin 2014:16-17). This gave us opportunities for an in-depth understanding of complex relationships and learning processes in the project. The data was attained by participatory observation, individual interviews and focus group discussions. Especially observations as a prime source gave us better insight on the informants' experience of the relations (Merriam 1994:43). The case study also emphasizes the importance of context for understanding a social phenomenon (Yin 2014:16-17). By spending eight weeks in the field we gathered a detailed understanding of the context: the organisational work, how members were connected to each other and the participants' experiences of the project.

As stated, case study method helps understand all parts of a social phenomenon and how they are connected (Denscombe 2009:60-61). To serve our research aim, conducting a case study was therefore beneficial due to the complexity of analysing relations and their meaning.

4.2 Sampling sources and access to the field

The research area and our research aim limited the sample selection. In line with qualitative method the sampling of our sources was aimed (Merriam 1994:60-62). We wanted the selection to be as comprehensive as possible and aimed to investigate the whole population of the selected case (Merriam 1994:63). This included the 8 participants, the coordinator and director. Even though all participants were interviewed and observed at some point, two of them did not participate in an individual interview. This was because of ethical concerns and timeframe. One informant was going through a difficult time and we decided not to push for an interview, and the other one was not present until the end of our field time.

The project's director was the gatekeeper that gave us access to the field. By introducing us to the project participants, the community and the people involved, she helped us set up the interviews. Both the coordinator and the director gave us vital contextual and project work related orientation.

4.3 Data Collection

We lived in Cartagena and went to the community several days a week for participating in activities, helping out with some of the directors' workshops, talking with informants and doing interviews. To build a better relationship with the informants it could have been beneficial to stay longer, giving us more insight on informal interactions. However, ethical concerns come with building personal relationships and then having to leave. Also, the danger of forgetting the researcher role and becoming a part of the group, by Denscombe referred to as "going native", was perhaps avoided by having some distance to the field (Denscombe 2009:290). Besides participatory observations, individual interviews and group sessions that were recorded, we also took field notes.

4.3.1 Semi structured individual interviews

Our interviews were semi structured to stimulate the informants to speak freely. Interviews normally lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each, all were recorded and took place in connection to project activities or as planned meet-ups. The interview guide was written after the first weeks of observations, under the influence of earlier studies and conversations with participants. Usually they spoke freely around our questions, sometimes to the degree that follow up questions were set and answered by themselves.

4.3.2 Focus group discussions

After the individual interviews we gathered data through focus group discussions with the participants. We conducted three discussions with different constellations of participants. The sessions were structured similar to a focus group but also shared similarities with group interviews where the aim is to reach a group discussion and dynamic. This kind of interview uses social and psychological processes of group behaviour to facilitate the participants' active participation in the discussion and sharing perspectives (Denscombe 2009:236). We found it rewarding to address certain topics through the group setting in order to stimulate richer discussions. Participants helped each other to define as well as highlight aspects by sharing and discussing their different views and experiences.

The themes that we needed more data on and saw beneficial to discuss a group setting were: Conflict and collaboration, Structural barriers and "What does being *professional* mean?" (meaning experiences of becoming a responsible adult). During the discussions, we had

different researcher roles: moderator and observant. The moderator's assignment was to create a safe environment for discussion and encourage all to participate (Denscombe 2009:239). This job concerned for example taking extra caution during "Conflict and collaboration" due to existing or past conflicts in the group. To stimulate the participation the discussions were sometimes facilitated through dynamic exercises where informants had to share opinions and together create answers.

4.3.3 Participatory Observation

As both Yin (2014:117) and Denscombe (2009:284) states, the advantage of participatory observations is the access to otherwise inaccessible events and groups. The method is vital in order to gain insights into an organization's culture (ibid.). Participating in exercises during e.g. guidance sessions or community work was good for getting to know the participants and develop relationships with them. Through these relationships the trust enhanced between us, giving us more access to important information from under the surface and letting us do observations in close interactive situations in the project.

A danger in collecting material this way is the observer effect, which means that people act differently when they know they are being observed. This can be cleared when more time is spent in the field and the researchers become a more natural part of the setting (Denscombe 2009:81). In our case the observer effect cannot be discarded. At the beginning of field time our presence was very noticed as we were two unknown researchers observing their work. Occasionally we chose not to participate in order to interfere as little as possible, but our presence was probably never forgotten. Although, with time and by participating in the project's daily activities we could see how the informants worried less about our presence.

4.4 Validity

If as in our study, combining multiple sources of data the case study validity is strengthened (Yin 2014:119-121). Triangulation can be used to deepen the picture and in terms of accuracy and authenticity by complementing and comparing different sources (Denscombe 2009:184-190). Some of our findings were seen in all of the data channels and some only visible in one. By comparing the sources we could deepen the understanding and establish some traces. To revisit informants with data can also strengthen the validity of the data first encountered (Denscombe 2009:380). Due to time and distance limitations we could not do a follow-up

with individual interviews. By revisiting data in focus group discussions instead we could consider if previous findings were confirmed or elaborated on and gain deeper knowledge in certain subjects.

4.5 The data collection process

During the fieldwork we followed an inductive logic, which resulted in an explorative research process (Denscombe 2009:62-63). In the first phase the interviews were of open character and our main aim was to understand how the project was organised. We gathered information on the project activities and relations, compared them and followed different traces. After gaining a general understanding of the project and its people we aimed to understand which project areas had supportive functions for the participants. We discovered the existence of close relations and wanted to understand how they interplayed with participation and access to new societal positions. This led us to investigate the participants' relations with their community, families, mentors, each other and their own experienced development.

Some of our traces we had to discard, both because of ethical considerations and difficulty to gain access to certain topics. This concerned e.g. community work and family relations. We consider this a possible limitation of the study because losing information that could have showed other outcomes. Staying longer in field, having time for more interviews and getting to know the participants better could have given us better access.

4.6 Coding and analysing the material

Analysing qualitative data means breaking down the data into categorized units. By repeatedly going through the material searching for regularities in themes and connections between them the data can be explained (Denscombe 2000:247-248). When analysing we followed Denscombe's (2009:348) steps of the qualitative data analysis process. We read our transcribed interviews and field notes several times and catalogued all the text. A first investigation compared the experiences of community and family relationships with the ones established in the project. We discovered that the project relations were bearing for its' progress and for the participants to develop. We thereon coded our material in various ways trying to find what characterized the mentor relations and participant relations. Patterns appeared regarding experiences of personal relationships, trust and learning together with the

other project members. When coding and analysing, an abductive approach was taken. We alternated between developing codes and themes with starting-point in the material and testing our codes and themes with the data, theory and previous research. This way we could limit our study and gain saturation in the material (Hjerm, Lundgren & Nilsson 2014:67). When writing the thesis we interpreted our codes and gathered them under four units: Contextual background, Informal relationships, Trust and Encouragement. They describe in what ways the project relationships were extending beyond formal project roles and why they were important for the project's progress and the participants' personal development.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Our informants belong to a vulnerable group in several ways: among them their ages and difficult life situations. Our responsibility as researchers putting them in another vulnerable situation had ethical obligations (Denscombe 2009:193). For example, anonymity and confidentiality are two important components in ethical considerations of qualitative studies (Merriam 1994:189-190). Our informants were left anonymous so that other project members cannot recognize their opinions. We also anonymous their genders and are using the term "they" instead of he or she in the findings chapter. Because of its small size the community and the project are as well left unnamed. All data has been handled with confidentiality. Although, due to the size of the project there is a risk that the anonymity among the people involved has been compromised.

Consent in the interviews consisted of informing about the purpose of the study, promising anonymity and the ability to withdraw at any moment. Case study interviews sometimes cannot give sufficient information about the investigation, resulting in informants feeling pressure to answer without being able or willing to (Merriam 1994:190). We were careful not to push informants on subjects that we insinuated were uncomfortable for them, especially because we were asking about subjects such as family relationships. This we did considering the importance of respecting their integrity and making sure no informant should suffer any damage from participating (Denscombe 2009:193).

The ethical consideration triumphs any research aim. Therefore, informants' present life situation sometimes negatively affected the sample comprehensiveness. The balance of power between us and the participants was certainly present and could not be avoided. However the ethical considerations taken is an attempt to address it.

4.7.1 Researcher role

Qualitative data is always a product of interpretation, which makes the researcher always intertwined with the research activity. This calls for reflexivity, which is especially highlighted in ethnographic research (Denscombe 2009:383-385). The meaning researchers apply to their data can be considered a product of their own culture, personal experiences and social background (Denscombe 2009:99-100). Both of us grew up in a white middle class Sweden, entering the field without experience of the cultural context. An example of how this could have biased the data collection is our interpretation of behaviours. Something we consider friendly and informal might just have been an act of politeness in the context. This was something we put much thought into when interpreting data. We also see and take into consideration the hierarchical roles as researchers and being under the wings of the project director. Sometimes we were afraid that we resembled the director role when helping organize workshops, putting us in a position of expectations on good outcomes and economical contracts when asking our questions.

4.8 Limitations

What primarily could be questioned is the representation of all project participants in the findings. Lacking the experiences of two divergent participants is a limitation in the analysis of the material, whereas they probably would have had different insights on the relations created during the project. The timeframe was a limitation for the collection of enough material. Spending eight weeks in the field required the information gathered to be rather precise, as we had no possibility of returning. Another limitation of the study was the time spent in the community. Staying in the community longer could have been valuable to better understand cultural norms. It could also have given us more time to observe project work that took place without the presence of the director and better understand the group relations. Considered a possible weakness for the validity of the data was the language barriers. One of us is native in Spanish and did the moderation during interviews, however this was not always enough due to the coastal accent and local variations in the communities. To overcome language barriers we had a translator clarifying certain sayings both during interviews and when participating in some activities. One of us did the translations from Spanish to English of the transcriptions. Due to the missing cultural and professional experience of this task we assume that some nuances and standpoints of the material have gone missing.

5. Theory

As the aim of this study is to investigate and analyse the project relations, our theoretical framework discusses relations as a basis for the individual's development. We will go through some theories of social psychology and relational pedagogy that can deepen the understanding of informal and pedagogical relations between mentors and participants. It aims to explain and emphasize the role of relationships and its interplay with personal development.

5.1 Social psychology and relational pedagogy

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) Goffman initiates with stating that individuals mutually influence each others' actions and ways of being when finding themselves in the others' physical presence (Goffman 1959:23). This definition of human interaction describes something simple, yet an elaborated understanding of the human being and society. According to the social psychological theories it is not enough to study neither the inner world of the individual - nor social structures. The micro perspective of social interaction may seem evident, but are nevertheless often forgotten and not given enough importance for social phenomenon (Johansson & Lalander 2018:15).

Relational pedagogy as well puts human interaction in focus (Aspelin & Persson 2011:15). Relational pedagogy argues that relationships are vital for learning processes; because it is through relations we learn and gain skills and capabilities. In a school setting this makes e.g. the student-teacher relationship important. Relational pedagogy thereon establishes the interlaced existence of knowledge and social relations in educational environments (Aspelin & Persson 2011:10-13). Knowledge and social development cannot work without one another according to Relational Pedagogy (Aspelin 2010:64-65, 70-72). If losing the aimed knowledge learning, the relations between teacher-students would result in negative, individualistic and therapeutic relationships. In contrast, losing social care would fail to address the student's personal, social and emotional needs. This could then lead to students and teachers transforming into abstract functions of the school system instead of concrete participants (Aspelin 2010:70-72). To summarize, this means that treating people as things or roles in social systems and not meeting as concrete persons, threatens the development into stable healthy persons. It is then argued that this could lead to individual's alienation (Aspelin 2011:135-136).

What social psychology and relational pedagogy theories teach us is that human beings need and develop through interactions and by engaging in relationships with others. We cannot disregard their implications for social phenomenon. This is the reason why emphasis in this essay is on the relationships created in the project to explain and discuss the project's progress and the participant's development. Even though the field of our study had more informal settings than the school institution we find Aspelin's examples of the school system and teacher-student relations valuable. We believe they explain the importance of placing education and development in pedagogical relations. The project had indeed an educational environment, with goals of knowledge- and social development for their participants.

5.2 Social responsivity and personal development
To highlight the interplay between relations and personal development the interactionist perspective and Aspelin's relational pedagogy can be used. The following section describes the relation between social responsivity and an individual's development in educational environments.

According to Asplund (1987), being socially responsive is the "natural form of existence" of human beings. When Asplund states that: "I is always contaminated by you" (Asplund 1987:106) he means that the individual is never separated from others' influence and vice versa. Furthermore, it means that from this perspective our actions, beliefs, self-concept etc. will always be intertwined with the social responsive world we share with others. Similar to this, Aspelin argues that social responsivity functions are "the basic condition for a vital educational experience and existence" (Aspelin 2015:500). In earlier work, Aspelin also draws on Buber's interpersonal theory where the "I" is always in relation to the surrounding world either as a "You" (other being) or an "It" (thing). Both the I-You an I-It relation are important but it is the I-You relation Aspelin stresses the most. This is where a person can gain realization of herself and become a concrete person - not a role - in social systems (Aspelin 2010:92). Again, social responsivity could be described as a condition for the learning situation and the purpose of the pedagogue is to help their students learn how to relate to their surrounding world (Aspelin 2010:88-89).

What does this have to do with personal development? Aspelin means that it is the I-You relations that will make a person break free of her isolation from the world. The individual enters the world through dialogue on an interpersonal path with others, called true meetings

(Aspelin 2010:92). If a student with the help of a pedagogue is given the opportunity to relate to the world and to act as an I towards a You, the education is personally developing. If the student through the learning feel they have gained a deeper relation to the world, themselves and others, the education have been personally developing and not just educating (Aspelin 2010:94-96).

In this essay we also define personal development in relation to the common definition of perceived self-efficacy: a feeling of self-capacity that according to Bandura is important for an individual to handle the world. Without self-efficacy one will feel shy, insecure and inhibited (Psykologiguiden 2019). This sense of becoming an own person is similar to the existential aspect Aspelin distinguishes in students' personal development when they learn to be in relation to the world (Aspelin 2010:95).

5.3 The social bond

In the previous section, emphasis is put on the relation between a pedagogue and student. The theory of social bonds can deepen the understanding of such a relation.

Scheff's argument is that since our behaviour, attitude and personality emerges from our relationships they clearly depend on the quality of these relationships (Scheff 1997:73). Secure and insecure social bonds established with others in life leads to different conducts and emotions. The theory focuses on the social bonds created in the family and its' impact on the child's development, although some emphasis is also placed on the relationships created later in life. A secure social bond is characterized by that "the individuals involved identify with and understand each other" (Scheff 1997:76). This includes mutual understanding of the others' thoughts, beliefs and feelings. Above this it is also featured by acceptance for each other (Scheff 1997:65). The insecure bonds are characterized by the opposites: misunderstanding and rejection. As mentioned before, secure and insecure social bonds will lead to different kinds of emotions. When the social bonds are healthy they will increase emotions of pride in the individual, leading to effective and responsible adults (Scheff 1997:73). Healthy bonds and emotions of pride are more likely to promote solidaric behaviour among individuals (Scheff 1997:104). Unhealthy, or insecure, social bonds will increase the emotion of shame which in turn is connected to alienation. We will not dig further into the term other than noting that Scheff attributes insecure social bonds with lacking sense of self in adulthood and incapacity of developing secure bonds with others (Scheff 1997:80).

5.4 The relational pedagogue

The relational pedagogue is someone who will help the student find their own unique path, not by telling where to go but being a vital guide on the interpersonal path (Aspelin 2010:90). A pedagogue in the following sense does not aim to make something out of the student. They rather show a way through their own personal example by being present and entering in a relationship with them (Aspelin 2010:91). The pedagogue then teaches the student indirectly by presenting knowledge to process and directly with his or her own standpoints and by relating to the student (Aspelin 2011:18-20). This stresses the importance of a pedagogue to be more than their formal role and the need for being a person in the relationship with the students.

Worth to mention is that these relations are not something exclusive for teachers and students. It is something that can happen in any meeting where one person is supporting another's maturing. The first one identifies the other as a concrete person and experience what they experience and then responds in a productive way. The "student" gets recognized for what they are and get a hint of where to go and take their steps. Even though a pedagogue should work to make this meeting possible, they cannot create or plan them. The most important feature is that it is unpredictable and mostly an unconscious process (Aspelin 2011:9-10).

5.4.1 Directed relational work

Relational pedagogy describes an approach, which is planned and directed relational work from a pedagogue. This work is necessary to nourish relations between students and between the teacher and students (Aspelin 2011:10-11). Relational Competence, a concept by Juul och Jensen, is brought up as a possible answer to how a pedagogue can work with the relations in educational environments. This competence concerns two factors: the ability to see the student and adjust after their premises and to take full responsibility for the relation in a sense of pedagogical ethics. The relational competence is important especially for helping better defective relations and communication (Aspelin 2010: 96-97).

However, the relational competence has limits. Aspelin argues that if we see relational competence as a tool to understand oneself and others, it will result in a relation between subject and object. The subject uses relational competence to manoeuvre the relation from

outside instead of engaging in it. Aspelin concludes that relational competence is about "I-It" relations, which is not enough. Aspelin states that: "Relations is something that the pedagogue should work in not with" (Aspelin 2010:98-99). By entering an I-You relation we become *persons,* which is vital both for existential and knowledge development. Skills and knowledge constituted in the students' relation to the world becomes genuinely understood only when connected to the students' reality. If only having I-It relations, such as the relationship with a pedagogue doing directed relational work, one will stay separated from other individuals (Aspelin 2010:92-97). Entering I-You relations is not a planned activity and concerns the impact of the pedagogue's presence as a person in the meeting between the pedagogue and student (Aspelin 2010:92-94). I-You relation also generates insight in the student, which facilitates intuition of how to support the students' development (Aspelin 2010:98-99). Aspelin also means social development is a process realised when actors are in tune with each other. An individual will not reach social development through studying basic generalized social skills but practically in true meetings with other people (meeting as I-You) (Aspelin 2010:70-72).

5.5 Informal interactions backstage

The settings could also be of importance for the informants' relations and meetings. Goffman's theory of backstage and front stage regions explains how individuals behave differently in different settings. The regions could be any kind of spaces but are demarcated from others either by physical walls and similar limitations (e.g. a bathroom) or more abstract ones such as timeframe or specific groups of people (e.g. family time). Goffman's discovery is that individuals try hard to follow the social norms of behaviour according to what region they believe they are at. Individual maintains and personify the expected norms (Goffman 1959:98). Front stage is characterized by performance and involves an audience that has to believe the individual to be performing the role accordingly. An example could be a teacher in front of the students in a classroom. Whilst backstage is an area where the performing individual can relax and prepare for their next entrance, e.g. teacher's room.

The backstage region is in most cases the space where informal behaviour takes place. The participants of backstage takes on relaxed positions, allows each other to be sloppy and talk in less formal ways: cursing or joking with each other. It is also a space where personal matters can be discussed; for example sexuality, and it is a space for putting down one's facade (Goffman 1959:114). The expected behaviour here helps the individuals to relax and share

their stories, increasing solidarity among them. Those relations are by Goffman defined by having a friendship-function in the individual's daily life, and more importantly; the informal interactions helps the individual to relax from and prepare for performances (Goffman 1959:114). Backstage is therefore an important part in the development of a person, because of its' shaping of the performance. As we know, Goffman means that our ways of being and notion of self is created in the meeting spaces with others (Goffman 1959:219).

5.6 True and untrue conversation

Similar to the different levels of honesty and facade depending on different regions explained by Goffman, Aspelin brings up two dimensions of having conversation in a pedagogical practice. One where beings are true, honest and spontaneous, another where people are manufacturing an image of themselves and living together in each others' idea of them. In the second dimension students and teacher are driven by the impression they want to project and not by honest common interests. Something that triggers the dishonest dimension could be a pedagogue's impersonal interaction, where students do not feel like a concrete person but rather as a function of a social system. This tends to make the student start projecting a person they think will be liked by the teacher and not showing an honest image of themselves. This could create an over-dependency to the pedagogue, turning into a barrier to the interpersonal meetings and true conversations (Aspelin 2010:112-114).

With the help of Buber, Aspelin brings up some conditions for true conversation to occur. Firstly participants must accept each other as valid participants in the conversation. The whole person needs to be listened to and respected, and not only what is verbally said. Also participants have to give each other existential affirmation. What is shared is not adjusted to better one's appearance before the others'. Participants speak openly and freely without censoring, concealing or modifying (Aspelin 2010:115-116).

6. Findings

The starting point of the empirical material will be a contextual background based on the interviews. This will give an understanding of the participant's life situation, what the project provided and what motivated us to investigate the project relationships. Further on, three aspects of the relations created during the project will be investigated: informal relationships,

trust and encouragement. Together they describe three different experiences that the participants had of these relationships. They seemed of importance to be able to cope with the project goals and for the participants' personal development.

Before starting with this, the notion of "the mentors" in our study has to be clarified. In the Background we stated that there were two members of the social association in the community working as mentors in the project. During our field time we did not see them as involucrate as the others and in interviews they were described as less active than the director and coordinator. In fact, the participants instead described the director and coordinator with mentor abilities and functions. This made us interpret their roles as the project's real mentors. From now on, when we refer to "the mentors", we therefore mean the project director and -coordinator.

6.1 Contextual background

For the participants adult life was just beginning. They had recently graduated from high school and been engaged in the project since then. Some of them were studying at university, while others were in the process of application. Some had moved to the city and others still lived with their families. The first part of our interviews explored the participants' life situation and view on the possibilities of the project.

6.1.1 Social mobility

Participants said that being from a low socioeconomic area influenced their lives. Their economical conditions were hard and in the community there were small options for stable jobs. This affected the families, particularly the ones with many children, families with health problems or the ones of single parents. The project was perceived by the participants as an opportunity to study in order to get jobs with better prospects. A participant said that the project was a chance to change the patterns in the communities and their economical situation.

"To me, university studies means a source of knowledge. An economical way out."

The low quality of education compared to other schools made it hard for them to pass the entry exams and follow their new courses in higher education. Some spoke about the lack of school material and knowledge gaps between them and other students. University was

perceived as personal development. Both by those who had started studying and those who had not, it was described as a way of breaking free from communities' ignorance, taboos or prejudices.

"I want us all [community] to grow as individuals and as citizens. When you are a professional...when you go out to the big city from here everything is different! It's like our mind starts to open."

But even though receiving help from the project it was not all easy to start university. It often implicated moving to the suburbs of Cartagena. Some had started to support for themselves and were working beside their studies to pay for their living. Living in suburbs could be hard as there were usually more problems with criminality and being exposed to racism and discrimination because of being from the villages.

"I'm living alone with my cousin, and they always say to me that there are things that I don't know about, that could mislead me, hurt me. Also, the suburb that I'm living in now isn't really safe."

For the youth in the community, one could say that this formed a barrier for social mobility because of the fear of being subject to crime or the families' fears of them changing their ways in the city. From what we observed the participants' own parents had varying support for them to start studying and participate in the project. To get the parents on-board was definitely something the mentors put much work into.

6.1.2 Deficient family and community relations

When talking about the project and its possibilities to change the patterns in the community, a participant described a lack in terms of family relationships, both on individual level and on community level. Some informants described experiences of being let down by others and a difficulty to know in whom to trust in the community. The participant had identified bad communication with adults as a root problem:

"There's no communication in the families, there's violence. The parents bounce from home to the fields, to the parties, and then back home again and they never have time for us"

Their experiences indicate a loss of attention from and exchanges with parents or other adults. It had created a need for being seen and valued.

The participants were concerned with social problems in the communities such as involvement with drugs, early age pregnancies and perceived a high rate of depression among the youth. They often talked about the importance of good communication within the families and being able to establish healthy relationships with others to beat those problems. With their community work they were trying to improve this situation by talking about communication, how to handle conflicts, express love and being understanding.

"I think that something crucial in those problems is that there is very bad communication within the families. The parents could talk with their children about contraceptives for example, that's good communication!"

The participant emphasized that many topics were considered taboo and therefore not spoken about. They were not able to speak openly with their parents and other adults and it was something they wished for.

The communities' suspiciousness towards their community work and their newly started careers also exemplifies the participants' experiences of lack of support and high pressure from the community:

"It's just something about that that keeps occupying my mind… It's hard working with the community; we do many good things around here and sometimes they say: "Wow, you did all this!" but others are just like: "They're probably stealing or whatever!". Whatever small weakness are at risk with them and also they just remember your mistakes, not the good things only the bad things"

To be able to make the participants find encouragement and belief in themselves and in a better future, the project had to address their needs. To be able to participate and commit to the project, the participants needed trustful relationships with other adults and emotional encouragement, something they found in the mentors and in each other. This was what made us discover that the informal relations that were established in the project were valuable and especially determinant for accomplishing with the project goals and the participants' personal development.

6.2 Informal relationships

Our definition of informal relationships is the relationships that had extended beyond the project's formal obligations. The mentors had identified deficient relationships in the participants' lives. This need made their relationships with the participants extends from work related to close bonds. In the project, both mentors and participants knew and cared for each other. Their relationship had evolved beyond any project relations established in project contracts. They were less formal and more personal and informal, as will be explained in this chapter.

6.2.1 Informal mentor relationships

One of the mentors spoke of a way of working with the participants that went beyond her formal role. I was a flexible role that met the personal needs of the participants without limiting to a project coordinator's strictly administrative assignments. Instead, she saw herself as an adult they could turn to:

"Even though my role is to be on the administrative part, here we say "todero" [i.e. handyman]. I'm trying to be a mentor, because when they were in school I always wanted to be one. Growing up you need an adult person you can rely on and sometimes these kids don't have that with their parents." (Mentor)

In resemblance to this the other mentor saw her relation to the participants as a close mentoring relationship:

"my relation to them is much more like a mentor; trust person. […] try to stand next to them and I will guide them in the process and so on." (Mentor)

The participants perceived the relationships with the mentors as close ones. They said that they had personal relationships with both of them. They were described as being present in the activities and their lives, as the ones always being there to give support or advice. The mentor-participants were extending into involving concerns of personal matters and not only project activity oriented such as school applications and similar.

Both mentors' quotations above show that the building of personal relationships with the project participants was intentional. They had identified a lack that had to be fulfilled. How did they do this? The mentors valued and put time in nurturing the relationships by taking a personal interest in the participants' emotional, social and personal life. This way, the mentors made exceptions from their official work tasks to consider the need for present adults and emotional support. One mentor explained how she adapted after the participant's individual needs like this:

"[...] I think the mentoring depends per student. So I notice for example for some who I know that will not get like a lot of this curious questions, like: "How was your day? How was class? What was funny? And how did you feel about your test?" So, they get more [from me]. And then it might feel a little bit more like almost becoming closer to a parenting role. Because, it is so important for them just to have somebody asking them about his day." (Mentor)

By making this effort, the mentors actively worked with upholding and bettering their relationships with the project participants. One could compare this to what Aspelin calls relational competence. The mentors were nourishing and taking responsibility for relations as well as adjusting to the premises of the participants. They indeed knew a lot of what was going on in all of the participants' personal lives. At multiple occasions we could observe them discussing the participants with each other in order to be up to date and figure out how to support them the best way. Their relational competence seemed to play an important role in order to get the project activities to work. For example, if someone were having difficulties at home or personal struggles the mentors could use this as a tool to prevent the participant from falling out of the project.

Practically, the mentors took care of the relationships by creating spaces for individual conversations. One of the mentors planned and held individual meetings, called *individual guidance sessions*, with each one of the participants. These spaces were a source for the participants to seek support and for the mentors to get to know them and build more personal relations with them. This one-on-one time could also emerge spontaneously whenever participants asked for it, for example when we were walking through the community together

or waiting for an activity to start. Observations were made on how the participants often sought private conversations with both mentors during these "in-between" spaces.

6.2.2 Informal group relationships

When participating and observing the project activities it was clear that the eight participants also had close ties, i.e. informal relationships, with each other. When we asked them about the project group they used expressions as "true friendship" and "being a family" to describe the relations they had with the others:

"Here in XX [community] there are many groups of friends, but one thing is to be a group, another is to be a team and something very different is to be a family - like I've come to with these people. Sometimes when we've met up and someone is missing we call them to ask where they're at. If they're feeling bad we go see them. I think this is very unique. Apart from my family they are the most important."

To compare the others with family members instead of a project group implicated another care for each other, extending their relationships from project companions to close friendships. When asking an informant about the companions in the project they made it clear that it was the wrong expression:

"I don't think companionship is what we've got here. I mainly think of this group as my friends, they're part of my life...companionship is not the right word for us. We are friends, almost becoming like a family."

The same informant said that their friendships were going to continue after the project and therefore they would continue to make an impact on the community. This suggests that the building of informal relationships between the participants as well were important for reaching the project's goal of social change in the community:

"The project will end when we graduate but our friendship won't end with that. If we manage to continue when we've started working, we could with that money and our friendship-bonds continue the work in our communities. With more people, more good relationships involved, the results will be even better."

Some participants stated there were no other natural engagements in the villages apart from festive events. Some told us that the relationships with others in the village normally became less close as an adult. The project could therefore be seen as keeping and evolving their relationships in lack of other social activities in the community doing so.

"When you graduate from High School here everyone, like, scatter up [...] Now we're more united, even more, because we work on the activities together."

Engaging in the project gave them time for hanging out and their relationships to be kept and be further developed. As a result of this unity an informant saw the friendships play an important role in solving conflicts:

"When creating the project there were some struggles because we had different ideas about how we were going to do the activities. But in the end we worked it out well because, as I told you, we're colleagues but also very good friends."

But the project also provided a support for their mutual relationships. As will be shown in chapter 6.3.2, the mentors played an important part in managing the group relations. By making sure conflicts got handled and ensuring collaboration between the group members, the mentors helped keep and evolve their friendships into healthy ones. The mentors' relational competence was monitoring the relations. They were doing planned and strategic actions to better the relations, which as Aspelin puts it: nourishes the group relations.

Besides improving their mutual relationships the participants also experienced improved relationships with others in their lives. A participant said that they had grown closer to their mother because having learnt to understand others better:

"I managed to connect better with family members that I'd had some problems with before. I've grown closer to my mother. That's the things you learn here, how to handle other people with no judgement, try to understand their motives and reasons for being what they are."

Working in the project had increased the participants' ability of putting themselves in others' shoes and understanding others' behaviour. Some told us about how they had become more tolerant and able to handle others in respectful ways:

"I've never worked with kids before. The project taught me how to handle them. I used to nag them...but here I learnt that they are different, they feel other things. I'm like a psychologist here: understanding what people are going through. When someone behaves strangely I have more tolerance now than before."

6.3 Trust

There was a need for trustful relationships where participants could feel understood and respected. This was important for the participants to commit to the project and be able to continue through obstacles, as they knew there would be someone there to care for them. The chapter describes their experiences of trust in their relationships and how we believe it was built.

6.3.1 Trust in project members' relationships

An example of how the mentors made sure the participants could trust them was by not letting go of them. If any of the participants were feeling bad or considered at risk for dropping out of the project, the mentors were very persistent in continuously talking to and encouraging them. Instead of demanding results they searched for solutions to their problems and motivated them. Especially participants that had experienced problems told us so:

"If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here, I would be in a bad place. I have so much to thank them for."

This suggests that the informal relationships with the mentors meant that the participants could trust there was someone who cared for and looked after them no matter what.

What could also be observed and understood from the participant's experiences was that the relations in the participant group were built on a great amount of trust as well. They relied on each other for practical and certainly emotional matters. Relating to the others and being able to confide in them were important components of the group relations. The stance taken against calling the others companions had the following explanation:

"Companionship for me is to rely on someone, but friendship is to relate to that person and having confidence with him or her."

Instead of trying to over shine one another they valued helping each other out and give each other support if someone had a hard time performing. This means that the development of trust as well was important for reaching formal goals, the project would not have worked if they did not trust each other:

"It is not like everyone is looking for their own interest but for the group's. If someone makes a mistake they are not judging they're trying to make it better. [...] It wouldn't work if we didn't have those relationships. If we weren't talking, or everyone just did their own thing and only were involved because of the benefits the project provides...no, the team is constructed by everyone"

6.3.2 Building trust

But how was trust between the project members built? The project members spent a lot of time together, whereas not all this time was dedicated to formal project activities. Whenever off formal activities the atmosphere was filled with loving gestures and friendliness. Many of our observations consisted of how the informants behaved in a relaxed and laid-back way with each other, e.g. joking, dancing, sharing something to eat and speaking confidentially with each other. Given the background of deficient family relationships, the time spent with the project members could be seen as a way to address this lack. An informant tried to explain it to us:

"In my home there's very little of...there's not much talking like here...my siblings they are very small and so I have to take care of them, I don't go out that often. So when I get together with them *laughs* we "mess things up"[have a lot of fun or get real]."

The participant was telling us about how they experienced relief when getting together in the project. In a way, they expressed that they had found their place in the group where they could be themself. Our impression when participating during free time from activities was that the informants could relax from the outside world and be off performances. We noticed

how they changed language and manners according to the situation and the people being present, leading us to think about these experiences as a backstage region.

There was also a stability in the relations in terms of them not ending when speaking in affect or giving critique. An informant talked about the possibility to make complaints towards another participant without the fear of being rejected or excluded from the group:

"We're here for each other. We don't fear telling the others when we see them doing wrong."

Even though there could be exchanges of harsh words or smaller fights, the participants showed understanding and respect for each other. They described being able to share personal and sensitive matters in the project group without being judged. This environment we also interpret as the conditions of true conversation, where project members could put down their facade and talk about personal matters. It could help understand how these conditions were facilitating trust to be built among them. We do this interpretation because informal interaction backstage serves to increase solidarity in a group and because true conversation is based on existential affirmation, i.e. being yourself and respecting the other; which we believe is important for people to trust each other.

The mentors had as well an important part to play in managing the participants' relations. This way they could ensure that their relationships would not be harmful and that trust was built among them. According to one mentor, managing the relations within the project group and being aware of the dynamics was part of what she had to do. It could be seen as a condition for the project work to proceed.

"It's not only about mentoring, this job, it's also managing the group, solving conflicts so that this won't harm their relationships with each other." (Mentor)

Following the ideas of Aspelin, the mentors' management of the group relations is what is called relational work. When conflicts did arise in the work group, the participants often sought help from her. This one mentor had because of having been their teacher in school known them almost all their lives. Naturally she was also the one of the mentors who had the most cultural and contextual understanding of the participants. During interviews she was

often described as always being there to sort out inconveniences and making sure the work continued:

*"I always seek up X [*Mentor*], because she lives close by, and I tell her: Mrs, this is happening, this group member is doing like this and so on. Because I know that she knows what to do, what to say, how to calm things down. She brings the harmony to our family, so that's why I turn to her"*

We observed how, both on the mentors' and the participants' initiative, time was taken to speak out and talk problems or difficulties through. During these occasions participants were allowed to speak freely with each other about misunderstandings or problems they had experienced. This indicates that the mentors helped the participants nourish stronger bonds between them instead of letting a conflict ruin their relationships with each other. Instead of dividing them, the conflicts could be solved and they learned, much due to the relational competence of the mentors.

6.3.3 Access to the truth

We observed some differences between how honest and open the participants were with the mentors. Sometimes, participants were more prominent to talk about problems with the coordinator, whilst before the director they would keep it to themselves or lie about it. The coordinator would then either help solve it in discretion or push participants into speaking with the director. An example of when participants gave different versions to the mentors was when one of them lacked money for traveling costs. The director was told that they were not able to attend the activity while the coordinator was told the true reason behind it. The director noticed the participants' tendency of turning to the coordinator:

"I think what the biggest difference is in terms of, I think, money, and sort of shameful things. I think they might tell X [coordinator] more than they will tell me. So like to me, now they'll say "Oh I can't". Whereas to X they will say "I don't have the money". So it is changing that. So there are things that they will be, like, too ashamed to tell me" (Director)

The coordinator would more often be in a dimension where true, honest conversation was held whereas the director sometimes ended up in the dimension where participants tried to act in a way they thought she wanted. We interpret this as the honest and dishonest dimensions of

pedagogy. As the dishonest dimension can be triggered by an over-dependency, the obvious power relation between director and participants should be mentioned. As being the founder and head of the project the director had a powerful position in relation to the participants. What also seemed to be a reason for the participants to turn to the coordinator was her deep knowledge of the participants' lives as she had been part of their lives for a long time.

6.4 Encouragement

A third important aspect of the project relations that we identified both in mentor relationships and participant relationships was encouragement. Participants were encouraged to commit to the project so that the formal goals could be reached. They were also encouraged to believe in themselves and go their own way, because the relationships provided the emotional support needed for this.

6.4.1 Mentors' emotional support

The participants often said that they had the mentors' unconditional support. This referred to emotional support: for example when going through hard times, self-doubt or having problems at home. Some had experiences of being sought by the mentors when going through something difficult and said that they were the ones that had motivated them to continue. During our field time we observed both of the mentors trying to reach out, paying visits at participants' homes and discussing solutions with each other. Especially the ones that had been on the edge of dropping out of the project had stories like this to tell us:

"Without her I would still be this neglected child, still in the community with no way out. They encouraged me, because when all happened with my dad, I got very sad and I didn't even want to study any longer. But they kept talking to me and they convinced me to keep going."

This shows that the mentors had deep knowledge about the participants' personal life. It made them capable of interfering when participants did not commit as much to community work or studies as the others, ensuring their continued participation in the project. Their close relationships provided them with knowledge of their individual needs and how to encourage them accurately. An important part of this was to be persistent and show belief in the

participants. One of the participants expressed how they felt motivated and encouraged to keep on working by them:

"When we're with her [Mentor] we won't get bored and she's always motivating us, that's what I like about her. She always reminds us that we are capable and that she is proud of us. It encourages us to continue. [...] There's also another figure [Mentor]. She's encouraging us too. Me for example; I did not want to join in the beginning. I thought it was too much responsibility. But she told us that she knew that we were capable."

Encouraging participants to find and follow their own way were sometimes described as guidance. A participant said that the mentor's guidance went right into her heart, something we interpret as an expression of feeling genuinely and deeply understood and given useful and accurate advice:

"Through her there's been many positive things, many changes around here. I also trust her, she gives us guidance that gets right into your heart"

Feeling understood, especially in terms of inner thoughts and feelings, are the conditions for secure and healthy social bonds that Scheff describes. Fulfilling the participants' needs for such bonds would explain why the participants told us they had found motivation in the project, as secure bonds are linked with emotions of pride and becoming a responsible adult. The social bond theory also serves to emphasize the importance of having a healthy relationship with the mentors instead of insecure with family members. As shown in chapter 6.2.2 the insecure family bonds were often marked by rejection and misunderstanding. Participants perceived the mentors as not only "supervisors" but also "advisors":

"If we need psychological support she's there to help us or to help us find someone else who can. So she's the advisor and the supervisor at the same time."

Receiving and accepting advice from someone differs from being supervised, indicating a more personal or close relation with the mentors. Giving advice that goes "right into your heart" by deeply understanding the participants was generating a genuine guiding function for the participants. They felt supported and helpfully advised by the mentors. As the following

quote reveal they felt encouraged to go their own way and dare to do something regardless of fears or other's opinions. In other words, the mentors were helping them listen to themselves:

"When applying for university there was a lot of people telling me: "it'll be too much for you!" Some people said I should study to become a teacher instead. But I didn't like the idea of being a teacher. So I talked to her [Mentor] and she said that she was going to guide me to follow my dream and not others'. Thanks to her I now feel good with what I'm studying"

The mentors were meeting the participants as whole persons, acknowledging all their needs. They were guiding and supporting the participants to become their own persons acting on their own will. They made room for the participants to figure out how to be themselves and encouraged them to dare. As Aspelin mentioned, guidance is not about showing where to go but to help the other one to make its own way in the world.

As mentioned, many family relations around the communities were quite tough, not answering to the youth's emotional needs. Because of their informal relationships, the mentors had a clear picture of the participants' individual, social and psychological needs. Their emotional support consisted of communicating their belief in them, attuned to what they perceived that the participant needed. Therefore it was evident that the mentors represented an emotional support that motivated the participants to go through with the opportunities presented through the project and to believe in themselves. If we understand the mentors as relational pedagogues, we can see how they were guiding the participants to find their own unique ways, they were showing them how to make room for themselves.

6.4.2 Group's emotional support and mutual learning

Among the participants there was also a deep knowledge of each other's lives and inner thoughts. A participant reflected on how they felt that they truly knew the others:

"[...] to be able to have these friendships with them is beautiful. I feel that I know them so well, I know their struggles, we help each other out…"

Participants would seek each other's support, as they knew the others would understand and they could encourage each other through hard times. When talking with them it was often

clear how they cared for and took into account each other's individualities. A participant spoke of their experiences of it:

"I know they're experiencing the same, that's the support we're giving each other. [...] like when someone is feeling stressed. University is very stressful - sometimes I get to the point that I just can't do anymore! I get headaches! Then I call X [other participant] and he says: "keep going! Just listen to some music for half an hour and get on with it again". And Y [other participant] tells me: "keep calm, don't get mad about this." We tell the others things we know will help them in the moment."

Something we noticed in the participant group was how they were sharing personal matters with each other. Personal issues were often discussed spontaneously among them. It made us see the project group as their space for sharing things they could not do at their home or with others in the community. We already described how this was possible because of the trust built in the backstage region and in true conversation. Interviews indicated that they continuously spoke with each other and shared personal thoughts and struggles:

"Little by little we've been opening up to each other. We tell the others how we feel, what we want to do, what we missed from our parents, how the day was, things like that we share. [...] Some of them have problems at home and don't tell at first but in the end we share what we have on our minds and that is good"

Between the participants there was also trust because they confided in each other with feelings and thoughts without the fear of being judged or neglected. They could be honest with each other and shared a supportive and learning environment when they were together. An example of this was a participant who told us about how the taboo topic sexuality for the first time was brought up in a relaxed way in the project:

"with their help I started to understand certain topics I've never could have imagined before like...drug addiction, drugs and other stuff, sexuality. They knew about it all and I would just listen to them with eyes wide open."

This informant said that those spaces with the participant group had helped they mature and be better prepared for the grown-up world, indicating that their trustful and encouraging relations were leading to personal development as well. The guidance in a I-You meeting is not excluded to teachers and mentors. Understanding the participants' mutual relations as potential for interpersonal pedagogical meetings can explain how they were learning from each other, where the more experienced guides the one with less. The participant speaking about how they called the others for support indicates that the project had facilitated a network of people who could encourage and guide each other through obstacles and difficulties in their new lives.

6.5 Summary of the findings chapter

Several times we noted that the participants said the project work would not have been possible without their friendships and their mentors. This tells us about the importance the participants ascribed the relationships established in the project. Participants had experiences of unhealthy relationships, mistrust in other adults and lack of emotional support in their daily life. We understood that those lacks were something that to some extent had to be fulfilled in order to commit and engage in the project. This made us investigate the relationships established in the project as a bearing factor for the projects' progress. Our discovery was that the relations were besides formal project roles also close and personal. The participants had established informal relationships and they had found trust and been provided with encouragement. Those three experiences have been explained in the last three chapters of the findings. We see them as vital parts of the project relations that generated the project's progress.

7. Analysis and discussion

The findings described the three aspects' importance for the participants' development and for the formal work to proceed. In this analysis we will explain and discuss how the three aspects and their importance can be understood theoretically. Aspelin's relational pedagogy, Goffman's theory of the backstage region and the social bond theory will be used to explain how the relationships could extend into informal ones that were trustful and provided the participants with encouragement.

7.1 Informal relationships

The project's informal relationships, in the sense of being friends or family rather than colleagues, were according to the participants the reason for why they solved conflicts. They were also seen as reasons for being able to complete the projects' work. Informal relationships were therefore an important aspect to ensure the project's progress and we mean that the mentors' interference was what made the evolution of the relations possible.

The mentors described themselves as: *"[...] trying to be a mentor"*, *"trust person"* or *"someone to rely on"* which indicated that they regarded their project roles as extending beyond formal tasks, to fill the needs for supportive adults. We mean that these descriptions showed how the mentors were taking responsibility for the participant relations. The mentors were doing directed relational work, in the form of relational competence. Relational competence concerns the ability to understand and adjust to the students' (or participants') premises and taking responsibility for relations. In the findings we described how the mentors took this responsibility by taking one-on-one time with participants to catch up on the participants' thoughts and struggles. This way they were able to acknowledge the participants as individuals with different needs and premises and adjust to these. The mentors concerned themselves with these matters. As described in the findings we observed how they often discussed with each other how to support different participants depending on their current situations. We suggest that because of the mentors' relational work and responsibility over the participants, informal relationships between mentors and participants could be established. As Aspelin argues, the practice of planned and directed relational work, e.g. as relational competence, is vital for nurturing relations between students and teachers, and in our case for participant-mentor relations.

Relational competence also concerns taking care of the student's mutual relationships. The mentors were for example taking this responsibility when supporting conflict solving among the participants. By supporting/monitoring the participants' mutual relations, mentors were ensuring that the participants would keep and evolve also their informal relationships with each other. This was also a factor for the participants to build trustful relations and will be discussed in the next chapter regarding trust.

According to Aspelin, directed relational work is an outside monitoring of relationships that is necessary in order to improve defect relations and communication. Following this, we understand the mentors' monitoring as the reason for the participants to ensure and improve their mutual relationships. Apart from keeping good relationships with each other some participants also expressed that they had improved relationships outside the project. As an example, a participant said that they had grown closer to a family member and another said that they had gained a greater understanding for others. This would suggest they had developed secure social bonds within the project. Scheff connects the existence of secure social bonds with abilities to establish secure social bonds with others. In other words; by having secure social bonds one can also develop the ability of building healthy relationships with others in life. This could therefore be an explanation of why the participants had experiences of improving their relationships also outside the project. A suggestion is that relational competence could be a way to set conditions for the establishment of secure social bonds.

Summing up, we suggest that the fact that the projects mentors both acknowledged and understood the participants' lack of sufficient relationships made them take on the responsibility over the project relationships. We suggest that by actively nurturing and taking care of the relations they improved the relations within the project. By possibly building secure social bond in the project, we can understand how the participants improved relations both within the project as well as outside.

7.2 Trust

Participants described how they could rely on each other and how they felt safe to confide in each other. They did not fear that their relationships would end because of disagreements or by speaking their minds. These experiences made us assume that there was a strong feeling of trust in the relations between the participants. The trust that existed in the mentor-participant relations was most clearly pronounced when the mentors had been there for them during hard times. According to the participants, the project work was dependent on the fact that they could trust each other within the participants group. In this chapter we will argue that the mentors' relational competence along with the conditions of backstage regions and true conversations in the project facilitated the trust to be built.

7.2.1 Trust through backstage regions and true conversations

As suggested in the findings, we mean that to be able to build trust, the project members had to meet each other off performance. They had to put down their facades, be themselves and respect each other's individualities. The participant who compared the project group and their family described how the project was perceived as a relaxed environment where they could be themselves: *"In my home there's very little of...there's not much talking like here(...) I don't go out that often. So when I get together with them *laughs* we "mess things up""*. This was, as we understand it, an environment where the participants felt safe to share personal matters and where they could feel and be like themselves.

The conditions above we interpret as the conditions of a backstage region or a true conversation. Goffman describes the backstage region as a situation where one can speak freely and relax from the performance on stage. Similarly, in true conversations one can speak honestly, without censoring oneself. We suggest that interaction in the backstage region and in true conversations were important for the participants to feel accepted just as they were in the project. In true conversations one is for example respected and given existential affirmation, which we mean could lead to participants confiding in each other (as they knew that they were going to be respected). They did not have to perform to be accepted. The backstage region is where solidarity increases in a team, which we also mean could be a condition for trust building between the project members. Solidarity could ensure that they felt safe to speak about personal matters and show who they really were. Because of this we also suggest that the backstage region was a space for the participants to develop solidaric behaviour. As described by a participant, rather than competing with each other they learnt to show understanding and support the others in the project group: *"It is not like everyone is looking for their own interest but for the group's. If someone makes a mistake they are not judging they're trying to make it better."*

7.2.2 Trust through relational competence

Besides interactions backstage and true conversation, the mentors played a role in evolving trustful relations in the project. This implicated keeping both their own relationships with participants and participants' mutual relations healthy. As we understand it, trust is part of a healthy relationship, which is why we mean that the mentor's directed relational work ensured trust to be built. Mentors relational competence induced healthy relationships between participants. The clearest example that we used to show this was that the mentors interfered in

case of conflicts between them: "[...] *she knows what to do, what to say, how to calm things down.*". By taking time to deal with conflicts among the participants, the mentor made sure the project relations was not harmful and that the participants instead developed trust for each others. As suggested in previous chapter the mentors' acknowledgment and interest taken in the participants' individualities could also be a reason for how they were able to be there for them when needed. A participant expressed this when the mentors had been there to catch them when falling: *"If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here, I would be in a bad place. [...]"*. The trust towards the mentors was also built on their responsibility and care over the participants and their relations, not letting go of them and always being there to support group or individual difficulties.

7.2.3 Trust and the dishonest dimension

Because of trustful relationships the participants could tell the mentors about their problems or struggles. But some of our observations involved how the participants not always would do this with the two mentors. They were sometimes honest with one of them and kept the truth to themselves in front of the other one. This was the case when something shameful like lack of money or a conflict had to be brought up. We suggest this was an example of how the participants dealt with problems in true conversations, or a backstage region, with one of the mentors. The interaction with the other one had turned into performance in a front stage region or what we interpret as a meeting in the dishonest dimension.

Aspelin explains this dimension as being closed off from the access to a person's honest feelings and thoughts. Instead one receives a performance that has been based on expectations and dependency. To understand why the participants felt more trust to share the truth and being honest with only one of them, we need to understand what triggered them to enter the dishonest dimension. Not addressing the whole person, like in I-You meetings, is one of these triggers. This suggests that the reason for one of the mentors to be in the dishonest dimension was due to not fully or often enough having I-You meetings or informal interaction in the backstage region with them. Considering the findings, this would not be surprising as the mentors' geographical and cultural approximation differed, as well as the amount of time to have built relationships with them. The participants presenting a manufactured version of themselves could also be a result of over-dependence, which hinders I-You meetings as well. This would also seem logical because of one of the mentors being the founder and director of

the project. We mean that this difficulty of being completely honest and true could have affected the trust between the director and the participants.

7.3 Encouragement

The chapter of encouragement is about how the participants found encouragement to believe in themselves and how they found encouragement to go through with their new duties and life situation. To believe in oneself is interpreted as gaining a sense of self-capacity. In this chapter we will explain how secure social bonds and I-You meetings between the project members encouraged them to go through and to believe in themselves.

In the encouragement chapter of the findings we described the participants' experiences of receiving emotional support from the mentors, especially when going through hard times. The example was about a participant that had lost their motivation for the project when finding themselves in family problems: "*[...] when all happened with my dad, I got very sad and I didn't even want to study any longer. But they kept talking to me and they convinced me to keep going.*" As discussed under informal relationships, the mentors' relational competence of adjusting to the participants' individual needs and premises, was part of how they were able to encourage participants accurately. But as Aspelin points out, the I-It meetings (such happening when practicing relational competence) are not enough for a person's development. Entering in an I-You relation generates insight in the other, providing intuition on how to support the other. This is why we are going to explain how encouragement could have been established by meeting in the I-You.

7.3.1 Encouragement to believe in themselves

Aspelin suggests that we can see a pedagogue's purpose to be: support the student in learning to relate to the world. This is a type of guidance that happens when going into a true meeting (I-You). Here, the one relates to the other as a person. One shares experiences and standpoints and supports the other to find its own way, without wanting to push the other in a certain direction. This can be understood as the one who is the pedagogue; the one with more experience, helps the other to become its own person. In the findings, we described how the mentors provided the participants with guidance or advice. This was something that encouraged the participants to listen to themselves instead of others: "*But I didn't like the idea of being a teacher. So I talked to her [*Mentor*] and she said that she was going to guide me to*

follow my dream and not others'". The guidance that had emerged in I-You meetings between mentors and participants had supported the participants to find their own way.

The feeling of being not just supervised but advised and receiving: "[...] *guidance that gets right into your heart* [...]" described the mentors' deep understanding for the participants. Besides the understanding that we described emerged because of relational competence, I-You meetings generate a deep understanding of each other. As Aspelin explains, entering an I-You relation generates an insight into each other, providing the pedagogue with intuition on how to support the student. This is also what secure social bonds are characterised of; the individuals' mutual understanding of each others' inner thoughts and beliefs. The understanding and intuition of how to support the participants was also part of how we mean that the mentors could encourage the participants' motivation and belief in themselves.

Meeting in the I-You is according to Aspelin vital for understanding both oneself and others in the world, which is necessary in order to neither be absorbed nor disconnected from the world. It is through I-You meetings that one becomes a person interacting with the world as a "You". The I-You meeting seems to develop an individual into becoming someone, a person with a sense of self that makes one's own choices, interacting in the world without being engulfed or isolated by it. We understand it as connected to developing self-efficacy, because of the sense of self-capacity. In the project, participants received emotional support that encouraged them to believe in their self-capacity. "[...] *I did not want to join in the beginning. I thought it was too much responsibility. But she told us that she knew that we were capable. [...]*" This was how the mentors verbally expressed their belief in the participants in order to support their feeling of self-capacity. According to Scheff, secure social bonds are as well vital for developing a sense of self. We mean that establishing secure social bonds with the participants also was an important factor in order to encourage the participants' sense of self. This encouraged their belief in themselves, which was necessary for their sense of self-capacity. The existential affirmation given in an I-You relation also supports the creation of a self and should therefore as well affect the sense of self-capacity. We understand the emotional support described as "unconditional support" by the participants as a form of existential affirmation. The mentors were seeing the participants for what they were, no matter their accomplishment and formal work. To conclude, the meeting in the I-You is important for the existential development of a self.

7.3.2 Encouragement in new life settings

The participants needed emotional support in order to cope with the project's demands and the new life settings they were presented with. This support they mainly found in each other. Participants described how they gave and sought support in each other as they knew the others would understand or were having similar experiences. We mean that their support encouraged them to go through, to mature and to learn from each other.

Secure social bonds are characterised by identification with one another. The way participants spoke about the others as family members, being able to understand and relate to each other, suggests that they as well had established secure social bonds. Establishing those bonds would in line with the social bond theory support the assumption that it had interplayed with the participants' development into effective and responsible adults. We mean that their mutual relationships was what supported their development so that they were able to cope with their new duties.

The previous chapter discussed how trust was built in true conversations between the project participants. Now we want to highlight how the participants by I-You meetings also learnt from each other, as a part of encouragement. The participant who explained that they had learnt from the other, showed how the participants were supporting each other to become more prepared for the world: *"with their help I started to understand certain topics I've never could have imagined before like...drug addiction, drugs and other stuff, sexuality.[...]"*. By sharing their experiences in this accepting environment explained as I-You meetings, the participants were learning from each other. As Aspelin states it is only in I-You meetings that knowledge gets truly connected to a person's own reality and thereby gets relatable and filled with meaning. As relational pedagogues the participants were sharing experiences and guiding each other in the interpersonal. We mean that the encouraging function of their relationships were supporting their development, helping each other to mature and understand the world around them. This kind of development is also what Scheff derives from having secure social bonds. Their secure social bonds helped them become responsible and healthy individuals.

7.4 Concluding remarks

Our theoretical framework takes off by explaining people as socially responsive beings who by interaction creates beliefs, self-concept and actions. The way we interact and are in a

relation with each other is therefore crucial. Goffman explains how we interact differently depending on which stage we are performing on. Scheff emphasises the quality of the relationships for developing healthy behaviours in adulthood. Aspelin's Relational pedagogy enhances this notion by emphasising Buber's ideas of our need for relating to the world and others as a "You". It points to the importance of having personal (informal) relations rather than anonymous (formal), to be able to develop oneself.

We see the three aspects as examples of how the project members had built relationships with each other as whole persons instead of their formal project roles. In the analysis we have discussed how these three aspects of the relationship were important for the participants' development. As mentioned, the project both aimed for and depended on the participants' knowledge- and social development. Therefore we suggest that establishing relations extending beyond formal project roles was necessary for proceeding with the formal work and reaching the project goals. Like previous research, we argue there is a potential strength in the informal parts of a mentorship project. Previous research indicated that allowing mentor and mentees' relations to evolve into informal ones has beneficial outcomes both for the programme and for positive youth development.

Our theories also describe a danger of not establishing relations that extends beyond formal roles. Aspelin means that only engaging as roles in a social system, failing to address someone as a whole person with social and emotional needs, would lead to alienation. Also Sheff leads the absence of secure social bonds to alienation by the increase of shame in insecure bonds. In the project, without their relationships addressing each other as a whole, there would be an increased risk of the participants becoming alienated in the project. To continue this discussion, we would like to suggest further research on the subject of informal relations as a prevention of alienation. A subject of interest could be in what ways informal relationships could enhance vulnerable youth's participation in society.

References

Aspelin, J. (2015). The elementary forms of educational life: understanding the meaning of education from the concept of ''social responsivity''. *Social Psychology of Education 18*(3), 487-501. doi: 10.1007/s11218-015-9298-6

Aspelin, J. (2010). *Sociala relationer och pedagogiskt ansvar.* (1. uppl.) Malmö: Gleerup.

Aspelin, J. & Persson, S. (2011). *Om relationell pedagogik.* (1. uppl.) Malmö: Gleerup.

Asplund, Johan. (1987). *Det sociala livets elementära former.* (1. uppl.) Göteborg: Bokförlaget Korpen

Denscombe, M. (2009). *Forskningshandboken: för småskaliga forskningsprojekt inom samhällsvetenskaperna.* (2. uppl.) Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Denscombe, M. (2000) *Forskningshandboken: för småskaliga forskningsprojekt inom samhällsvetenskaperna.* Lund: Studentlitteratur.

DuBois, D.L. Holloway, B.E. Jeffrey, C.V. & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology 30*(2), 157-197. doi: 10.1023/A:1014628810714

Goffman, Erving. (1959). *Jaget och Maskerna. En studie i vardagslivets dramatik.* (2. uppl.) Simrishamn: Rabén och Sjögren

Hjerm, M., Lindgren, S. & Nilsson, M. (2014). *Introduktion till samhällsvetenskaplig analys.* (2., [utök. och uppdaterade] uppl.) Malmö: Gleerup.

ICFES, Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education (2019). *Información general.* Collected 2019-08-13 From: *http://www2.icfes.gov.co/en/web/guest/acerca-del-examen-saber-pro#Tarifas*

Johansson, Thomas & Lalander, Philip. (2018). *Vardagslivets socialpsykologi.* (3. uppl.) Stockholm: Liber

Lee, S. Borden, L.M. Serido, J. & Perkins, D.F. (2009). Ethnic Minority Youth in Youth Programs. Feelings of Safety, Relationships With Adult Staff, and Perceptions of Learning Social Skills. *Youth and society 41*(2), 234-255. doi: 10.1177/0044118X09334805

Merriam, S.B. (1994). *Fallstudien som forskningsmetod.* Lund: Studentlitteratur.

OECD/International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank (2012), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: Tertiary Education in Colombia 2012*, OECD Publishing. doi: 10.1787/9789264180697-en

Psykologiguiden (2019). *Psykologilexikon.* Collected: 2019-08-13 From: https://www.psykologiguiden.se/psykologilexikon/?Lookup=self-efficacy

Radinger, T. Echazarra, A. Guerrero, G. Valenzuela, J. (2018). *OECD Reviews of School Resources: Colombia 2018. Paris:* OECD Publishing. doi: 10.1787/9789264303751-en

Rhodes, J.E. & DuBois, D.L. (2006). Understanding and Facilitating the Youth Mentoring Movement. *Social Policy Report 20*(3), 3-19. doi: 10.1002/j.2379-3988.2006.tb00048

Rhodes, J.E. Grossman. J.B. & Resch, N.L. (2000) Agents of Change: Pathways through Which Mentoring Relationships Influence Adolescents' Academic Adjustment. C*hild Development 71*(6), 1662–1671. doi: 10.1111/1467-8624.00256

Rogers, R. (2011). Evaluating community-based interventions for young people: measuring the impact of informal mentoring. *Journal of poverty and social justice 19*(2), 156-168. doi: 10.1332/175982711X574021

Rogers, R. (2009). 'No one helped out. It was like, "Get on with it. You're an adult now. It's up to you". You don't ... it's not like you reach 17 and suddenly you don't need any help anymore': a study into post-16 pastoral support for 'Aimhigher Students'. *Pastoral Care in Education 27*(2), 109-118- doi: 10.1080/02643940902897673

Romero Rodríguez, G. García Buitrago, C. Rodríguez Castro, C. Tobón-García, D. (2015). *Youth and public policy in Colombia.* (Youth Policy Review Series). Berlin: Youth Policy Press. From: http://www.youthpolicy.org/pdfs/Youth_Public_Policy_Colombia_En.pdf

Scheff, Thomas J. 1997. *Emotions, the social bond and human reality. Part/whole analysis.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

SFS 1993:70. LEY 70 DE 1993 (Agosto 27) "Por la cual se desarrolla el artículo transitorio 55 de la Constitución Política. El Congreso de Colombia."

World Education Services (2015). Education in Colombia. Collected: 2019-08-13 From: https://wenr.wes.org/2015/12/education-in-colombia

Yin, R.K. (2014). *Case study research: design and methods*. (5. ed.) London: SAGE.

Appendix 1

Individual interviews participants (First version)

Intro

Somos estudiantes de la universidad de Lund en Suecia, estudiamos pedagogía y sociología y estamos recolectando información para nuestra tesis. Nos interesan los proyectos de jóvenes. Pensamos que el trabajo que están realizando acá es algo realmente importante, y que ustedes son parte de un trabajo global por un mundo mejor – no solo se trata de Colombia si no de todo el mundo. Hemos preparado unas preguntas, en cualquier momento que no sepas y quieras contestar una pregunta puedes pasar. No te preocupes. Solo estamos interesadas en saber tus experiencias y lo que tu piensas y opinas.

Si no te molesta también queremos grabar la entrevista, esto es solo para poder recordarla mejor. Sería una ayuda para nosotras y nadie les va a escuchar más que yo y Laura, vas a ser totalmente anónimo/a.

Te parece bien? Hay algo que no entendiste?

Inledning (berättelsen om dig):

Al principio quisiéramos saber un poco sobre ti...

- Hur gammal är du? Vad studerar du? Etc. – Que edad tienes? – Que estudias o quieres estudiar?

- Hur kom du kontakt med projektet? – Cómo fue que empezaste a participar en el proyecto? Que motivación había?

- Hur har du deltagit i projektet? – De cual manera has participado en el proyecto hasta ahora? Como ha sido?

Huvuddel

Tema **Relation till** projektet (åsikt, uppfattning) och **upplevd påverkan** (lärande)

Deras upplevelse av lärandesituationen (projektet) och upplevda lärande

Berätta hur ni jobbar med projektet, vad gör ni?

Hur planerar ni, går till väga? Vilka? Hur funkar det?

Vad får ni lära er? - Que están aprendiendo con XXXX?

Vad tycker du att du lärt dig? - Qué has aprendido personalmente? Hay alguno de estos aprendizajes que valoras más que los demás?

Påverkan

- Har projektet förändrat någonting för dig? - Has percibido/experienciado algún cambio durante este año en relación al proyecto? (por ejemplo; en tu manera de pensar, actuar o en relación a la comunidad etc.)

-Att studera vidare: Är det viktigt att plugga på universitetet? Vad betyder det för dig? - Te parece importante estudiar en la universidad? Que significa el poder estudiar para ti?

Värderande

Vad betyder projektet för dig? - Que significa XXXX para ti?

Är det någonting som varit svårt/lätt? Varför? - Hay algo que te ha parecido difícil/fácil? De que manera?
Skulle du vilja ändra på något? - Cambiarías algo? Más/Menos? Hay algo que funciona mejor/peor?
Vad tycker du om projektet i helhet/den aktivitet som du deltagit i? - Y el proyecto en sí, qué piensas de él?

Vad har hänt under året som gått? - Si piensas en como era hace un año en comparación con ahora, hay algunos cambios (pensamientos, sentimientos, manera de actuar, sueños etc.)?

Tema lokalsamhälle och projektet
Relation till lokalsamhälle: t ex förankring, kontakter, status. Känsla positiv/negativ, lojalitet, ansvar, delaktighet, påverkansmöjlighet etc.

Hur är det att vara från XX?
Para ti, qué significa ser de XX? Te gusta?
Hur är det att vara ung i XX?
Qué significa ser jóven en XX (ej. En relación a oportunidades, realización de sueños, si son capaces de cambiar/si les escuchan...)?

Tycker du det är viktigt att göra saker i XX? (Delaktighet, ansvar.)
Te parece importante contribuir en el desarrollo de XX?
Crees que la mayoría de la población piensa lo mismo?
Te sientes responsable o parte del futuro de XX?

Hur är det att jobba med projektet/med era aktiviteter i XX?
En que está enfocado tu actividad? Cómo ha sido/es trabajar con este tema en XX?
Lätt/ svårt? Vilket funkar bra/mindre bra?
Esta tarea te parece difícil/fácil?
Crees que es una buena manera de promover cambio en XX?

Vart går du för att få hjälp/stöd? Var finner du motivation?
Sientes que tienes las suficientes herramientas/conocimientos para realizar esta tarea?
A quién/dónde te diriges para recibir ayuda si no? (Que importancia tienen los mentores/voluntarios de XXX/Y/Z?)
Dónde encuentras tu motivación?

Tema gruppen och projektet
Vad betyder gemenskap för dig? – Que significa el compañerismo (o unión) para ti?
Känner du att detta finns mellan deltagarna? Crees que existe compañerismo entre los estudiantes?
Gemenskap i byn?
En cuanto a XX: percibes que aquí existe compañerismo/unión?

(Crees que el proyecto que empezó hace un año ha podido influenciar en la unión de ustedes?)

Lägga till något? Te ha faltado alguna pregunta, algo que nos quieras contar etc.