DEVELOPMENT OF GROUP DYNAMICS AND CULTURAL COMPETENCES IN A MULTICULTURAL STUDY GROUP

Mari Heiskanen

Thesis, autumn 2012

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

Diak South, Järvenpää Unit

Degree Program in Social Services

Bachelor of Social Services (UAS) +

Focus on Community Development Work

ABSTRACT

Heiskanen, Anna Mari. Development of Group Dynamics and Cultural Competences in a Multicultural Study Group. 57 pages, 1 appendix. Language: English. Järvenpää, Autumn 2012. Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Degree Programme in Social Services. Degree: Bachelor of Social Services.

The aim of the study was to explore the development of group dynamics and cultural competences in a multicultural study group in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. The research material was collected during autumn semester 2010 and spring semester 2011. In the center of attention as a multicultural study group is a specific study group of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. When the research was conducted, the students started their first years of studies to attain Bachelor degree in Social Services.

The study follows ethnographic research methodology. Mixed qualitative methods such as participant observation and semi-structured focus group interviews were used in this study to reach the objectives. Moreover, three focus group interviews using three same participants, were applied in separate phases of the academic year. Transcribed interviews and field notes from participant observation were analyzed by qualitative content analysis.

The main results of the thesis present firstly the development of group dynamics.
The analysis of the research data shows examples of the features and emotions that are in connection with the development of social relations and division within the group. Secondly, the study indicates the development of cultural competences of the students. The experiences of the students stressed the importance of the cultural skills and awareness when studying in a multicultural community.

The study shows that in a multicultural group the dynamics are especially influenced by the cultural characteristics of the group members. Cultural similarities as well as common ethnic background play a crucial role on the way that group members interact with each other. The research presents different stages of group development, in addition to diverse processes and conflicts during a group's existence. Students in a multicultural study group learn to be more culturally competent on a daily basis during the studies. Cultural diversity, however, may cause a source of conflicts. Therefore, proper conflict management is vital to ensure successful cross-cultural interaction.

Key words: group dynamics, culture, cultural competence, qualitative research, ethnography

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Motivation and background

For personal interest and for the fact that nearly every practical placement I carried out was related to multiculturalism, the decision was to study the theme to the thesis. Moreover, myself I have been studying in a multicultural campus, therefore I have had the possibility to conduct the research. Personally, I had the privilege to study in a multicultural group, the first group that was part of the Diaconia University of Applied Science's (Diak) English Degree Programme in Social Services (DSS). In this research I will use the abbreviations Diak and DSS, when I refer to the school and degree programme of the study.

 I started with one group but due to parental leave, my studies continued with a different group. By studying myself in this international and multicultural group, I started to explore into questions related to multicultural groups while at the same time collecting experience and knowledge related to it.

When I started to conduct the theoretical research on the topic, a new international study group was about to start in August 2010. I have become motivated to study the group by using an ethnographic approach, therefore, by openly participating in the group's activities. Nevertheless, I defined the exact topic to be examined during the process of getting to know the research group. I was interested in the matters of social actions within the group, in addition to the cultural and ethnical diversity. As a result, the idea of development of group dynamics and cultural competences appeared.

1.1. Purpose of the study

The research aims to examine the development of group dynamics, as well as the relevance of cultural competences, in the context of multicultural groups of students. The factors that contribute to the development of such dynamics, group development stages, group communication, group conflicts, multicultural skills and multicultural sensitivity are few of the themes that are going to be analyzed as to achieve the main goals.

When a group of students from different cultures begin to study together on an everyday basis, the social relations form inside the group and shape the group dynamics. A share of the students might identify some individuals more close than others. Therefore, in the study I underline the qualities needed to success in interacting effectively with people from different cultures. Moreover, the research aims to discover the reasons behind the development of group dynamics, and the factors that unite or divide students in study days and leisure time activities.

Qualitative approach and methodology are used to analyze the research data. The study group is represented by one group of culturally and ethnically heterogeneous students. The objective for students is to graduate as social service workers. Moreover, the research aims to examine the importance and stages in development of cultural competence during the studies. Similarly, understanding of the skills needed to obtain cultural competency is considered in this research.

In order to accomplish the research aims, three research questions were established. Firstly, this study aims to explore what kind of social relations exist in a multicultural group. Secondly, the study pursues which factors are affecting the formation of group dynamics. Thirdly, the research seeks to find out by what means are cultural competences relevant when studying in a multicultural group.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Group dynamics

When I got involved with the group researched, I became interested in the pleasant atmosphere in the group. I aimed to study in more detail understanding of the group processes and the development of group dynamics. My objective was to clarify the certain explanations behind to why members form closer intergroup relations with certain individuals, in addition to how cultural and ethnical backgrounds affect to group formation and subgroups. Furthermore, my motivation was to define the developmental stages of groups and to identify typical conflicts groups might face during their existence. This chapter provides theory on the groups and their processes that affect to the group dynamics. It was challenging to limit the themes for this research, since there are various relevant and fascinating matters to take into account when discussing groups. However, I chose to specify certain aspects that I regarded the most applicable for this research.

2.1.1 Definition of groups

In social psychology, the concept of 'group' has been traditionally defined with certain definitions of collection of individuals. Lahikainen & Pirttilä-Backman (2004, 146) list the definitions as following: Individuals are connected with each other with social relations network, and members are in social interaction. Members work together to reach a common goal and are aware of other individuals belonging to the group. A group is coordinating its functions to reach the common goals. (Lahikainen & Pirttilä 2004, 146.)

According to Levi (2007) group members are connected to one another. Significant process for group is the interaction and communication, and interaction of group members is regulated by formal and informal roles and rules. Individuals of the group do acknowledge their memberships in it. Social relations within the group benefit in its best the individuals with the support. Group members should communicate well, work

cooperatively together, and provide emotional support to one another (Levi 2007). Levi adds that the most effective groups obtain good social relations and coherency.

2.1.2 Group development stage theory

Relationships of individuals in the group, as well as the group dynamics change over time. Tuckman (1965) and Tuckman & Jensen's (1977) group development stage theory, cited in Pennington (2002, 71-73) and Kassin et.al. (2010) focuses on social relations' development within the group. The theory is recommended by social psychologists. According to the model, group development includes five development stages: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. However, every group does not go through all the five stages. Either the group is not able to progress past a particular stage, or keep repeating the former stages. According to this model, groups gradually progress from a period of initial orientation through stages of conflict, compromise, and action, followed by a period of withdrawal if the group no longer satisfies members' needs (Kassin et.al. 2010).

Forming is the first stage, where individuals start to get familiar with each other in a group. They are exploring the others and often act politely. The ground rules are created in forming stage, in addition to establishing the common objectives. The forming stage finishes when familiarity between other members is reached allowing more comfortable interaction within others.

Storming is the second stage in the group development model. Members become more confident in which role they want to take in the group. Conflicts and hostility may appear in due to disagreement in individual goals and objectives. Bargaining can arise in this stage, when attempting to come up with mutual agreement on priorities in a group.

In Norming stage a group has developed positive sense of group identity. Members have overcome the conflicts mentioned in storming stage. Individuals in the group gain more commitment and satisfaction to reach agreed rules and priorities.

Performing stage contains work done within the group to achieve the agreed goals and complete the tasks. Group works together with mutual interdependence between the members. Co-operation and commitment is an outcome of the performing stage.

The final stage adjourning might occur in the group if the task set has been completed and the group disbands. Adjourning stage can occur as well when one or more members leave the group and it is impossible to complete the task. In this stage, members decrease activities within the group. Nevertheless, if the task is completed, the group may be connected informally and continue activities in more casual occasions. (Pennington, 2002, 71-73; Levi, 2007, 38-40.)

2.1.3 Norms, roles and cohesiveness

Interdependence between group members generates new phenomena in intergroup processes. Norms, roles and cohesiveness, together with communication and status are central factors in the group functions. (Ahokas 2010, 188.)

Forsyth (2009, 8-9) addresses the concept of group structure. Norms, roles and inter member relations form the patterns and regularities within the group.
Group norms are the rules by which a group operates (Pennington 2002, 84). As stated by Pennington, norms give the group mutual understanding of the customs how to think, feel or behave. The function of norms is to benefit the group to reach its objectives. Ahokas (2010) describes that equal group share the mutual norms. The settled norms unify the individuals within the group, and confirm a common ground for understanding appropriate behavior. (Ahokas 2010, 188-189)

Group norms often develop unconsciously and gradually over time. They are created by mutual influence and develop through the interactions of the group members. Separate reasons affect to the development of group norms. Individuals may use experiences about group norms that they are familiar with. When established, the influence of early stage of the group existing is strong. Thus, the norms can develop in circumstances

where individuals are not confident of appropriate behavior. Advantage for successful group is to produce precise group norms by joint discussion to ensure individual's awareness of expected behavior. (Levi 2007, 49.)

Roles help to clarify the responsibilities and obligations of the persons belonging to a group. In addition, they provide one important way in which groups shape the behavior and thoughts of their members. Group roles are set in formal or informal manners. In study group, individuals are likely to obtain roles without formally allocated. (Baron & Byrne 1997, 437.) According to Ahokas (2010, 189) unlike norms, roles are inclined to differentiate the functions of individuals in the group. When group member's roles settle more within the group, the norms and expectations of individual's behavior are focused diversely towards different individuals. A role is a set of behaviors typical of people in certain social contexts (Levi 2007, 64.) Laine et. al (2009, 65-66) claim that personal features, social relations and roles outside the group have an influence on the division of group roles. In addition, individuals can emphasize either task-related or socio-emotional roles. Task related roles aim for achieving the settled goals, when socio-emotional roles focus on behavior attaining positive and supportive interaction in the group, that strengthen the group cohesion.

Bordens & Horowitz (2000) describe the term of group cohesiveness as 'the strength of the relationships that link members of a group together and is essentially what keeps people in a group or causes them to stick together'. Group cohesion is the interpersonal bond that forms within a group. It can emerge from feelings of belonging, social identification, interpersonal attraction, or commitment to the group's task. (Levi 2007, 70). Levi adds that co-ordination and mutual support can improve the task performance of the group. Improving the communication within the group, benefits from group cohesion. Conflict resolution and problem solving are central features in relation to group cohesion. Groups with good social skills and open communication are in more comfortable position to constructive conflict management. Levi emphasizes the importance of initial stage of the group's existence to develop social cohesion and good social relations. (Levi 2007, 62-63.)

Cohesiveness

'Glue' that holds a group together

Group norms

Rules by which a group operates

Group structure

Interrelationships between group members

Roles

Behaviours expected of positions in a group

Status

Standing of the individual in a group

Communication structure

Permitted means of communication between group members
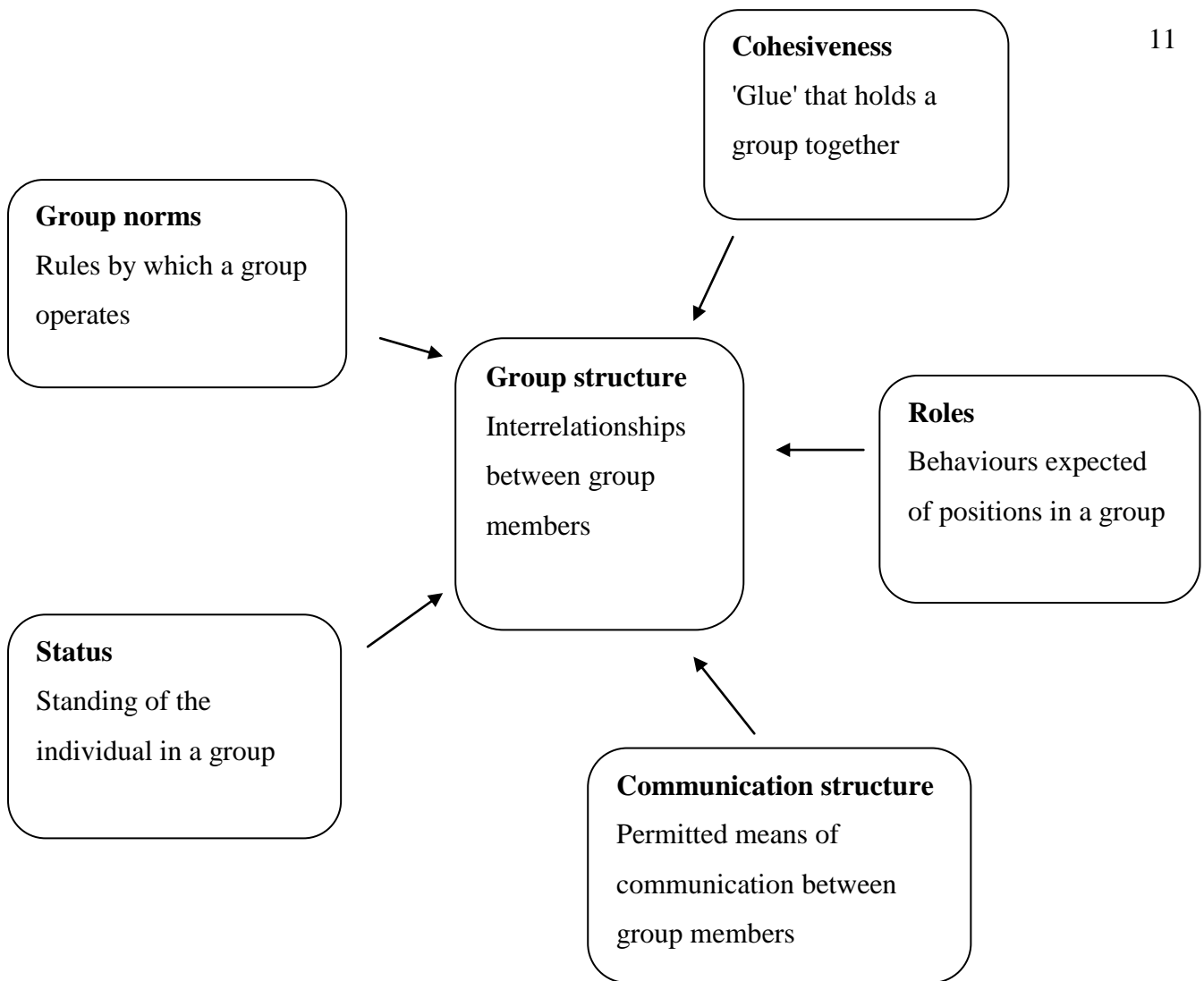
FIGURE 1: Five components of group structure which affect performance, stability and effectiveness of a group. (Source: Pennington 2002, 93.)

2.1.4 Group communication

Culture influences greatly to communication with other individuals. Intercultural differences in communication involve e.g. diverse interpretations of the same issues and connotations. Understanding cultural differences in communication is essential to avoid misinterpretation and conflicts. Different words or concepts might have dissimilar meanings in other cultures. Intercultural differences in communication vary additionally in the behavioral norms within diverse generations and social classes. (Alitorppa-Niitamo 1993, 140-144.)

The elements of verbal and non-verbal communication are of central importance to a consideration of the dynamics and effects of culture contact because the evidence indicates that many of these processes vary between cultural and ethnic groups (Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001, 51). Non-verbal communication can often be unconscious, and is in significant position e.g. in expressing emotions and approaches in communication. We might reveal hidden signals that we are not aware of. Examples of the elements of non verbal communication are e.g. levels of mutual gaze, bodily contact, and gestures. As the elements of non-verbal communication vary across the cultures, the misinterpretation of behavior of others can lead to friction within the group and increase the intergroup division. (Ward et al. 2001, 51-58.)

In this point, I considered the importance to point out the differences of individualism versus collectivism. As the students in DSS come from different cultural backgrounds from all over the world, the cross-cultural variability is considerable. Individualism-collectivism as comparison between societies gained attention after Hofstede's research. In short, individualism vs. collectivism dimensions represent the intensity how the individuals are integrated to groups. (Parkkisenniemi 2007, 163.) Individualism and collectivism are conceptualized as syndromes of beliefs and attitudes that distinguish different cultural populations (Millen & Schaberg 2003, 37). In collectivistic cultures, the importance is on the group, emphasizing collective needs, rights and duties more than one's individual achievements. Solidarity towards the community is strong. On the contrary, individual cultures appreciate the individual achievements. The ties between the other individuals are more loose than in collectivistic societies. (Millen & Schabert 2003; Pennington 2002; Parkkisenniemi 2007.) According to Hofstede's study (cited in Parkkisenniemi 2007, 164) the most collectivistic cultures are from South-American and Asian countries. On the contrary, individualistic cultures come mainly from North America, Australia, New Zealand and Western Europe.

2.1.5 Social relations within the group

For my research I considered it fascinating to discover the rationale behind the social relations within the group. Moreover, why do students form closer relationships with particular individuals rather than the others? When observing the group I wanted to discover the factors that escalate the intergroup relations.

For theoretical perspectives I became interested in the matter of similarity-attraction. Ward et. al (2001) introduces the theory of similarity attraction by Byrne (1969), described as 'which predicts that individuals are most likely to seek out, enjoy, understand, want to work and play with, trust, believe, vote for, and generally prefer people with whom they share salient characteristics' (Ward et al. 2001, 9). This similarity may be either in the form of readily detectable attributes such as race or ethnicity or in the form of underlining attributes such as values, attitudes and beliefs (Härtel, Lloyd & Sighal 2010, 196).

The impact of individual's openness to differences for teams and organizations has been examined recently in various researches. Ayoko and Härtel (2000b) (cited in Härtel et al. 2010) recognized in their study that openness to differences and attitudes of other individuals in the team is a factor in conflict resolution and group cohesion. They emphasize the importance of group leaders to recognize the actuality as well as personally having openness to differences in the group. The ability would be beneficial to minimize the influences of cultural diversity. (Härtel et al. 2010, 197.)

2.1.6 Social loafing

When considering the challenges the groups face, I discovered relevant to discuss the term 'Social loafing'. Robert Shuter (Frey 2002, 275-276) presents that the term of social loafing was firstly discovered by Latane, Williams & Harkins (1979). It 'refers to the finding that when a group is responsible for completing a task, this sometimes leads to reduced individual performance on certain types of tasks' (Frey 2002, 275).

Working in groups can be advantageous when collection of individuals share their know-how and diverse experiences. However, sometimes the motivation of group members can be decreased due to believing that the individual efforts are not significant in order to succeed in the task. Individual effort can be unclear in shared attempt, which can decrease the motivation to do one's best in the group work. (Levi 2007, 58-59.)

Social loafing is as well a common phenomenon in study groups. As Baron & Burne (1997) mention, 'Letting others do the work in group tasks' is general in additive tasks where group members produce one shared product. Motivation for individuals' working effort may decrease, while others work hard for the outputs. Collective Effort Model suggested by Karau and Williams (1993) shows an explanation to the occurrence, proposing that the performance effort and results of an individual is lower if the task is done together with others, comparing to working alone. According to their study, social loafing is more usual in individualistic cultures (e.g. The United States), where individual achievements and performances are valued, rather than in collectivistic cultures (e.g. China) in where the emphasis is on a group's actions and results. (Baron & Burne 1997, 444-447.)

2.1.7 Conflict management

Conflict is the process by which people or groups perceive that others have taken some actions that has a negative effect on their interest (Levi 2007, 112). Conflict can arise over a very wide range of issues including differences in attitudes and opinions, competition for scarce resources, power struggles and leadership challenges in a group, personality clashes between two people, status differentials and access to information (Pennington 2002, 105).

Conflict is healthy and a natural component in the group's actions. A group without conflicts might indicate about problems e.g. having a dominating leader or get stuck in the task routines instead of making an effort to improve the performances. However, groups may manage conflicts in non-constructive ways. Levi stresses that 'defensive avoidance', attempt to disregard and avoid the conflicts instead of making an effort for conflict management, may have consequences for further problems and disadvantaged

decision-making. The developmental stages of groups (see more in chapter 2.1.2.) set diverse foundation of conflicts. In the initial (forming) stage, conflicts may be uncommon since the individuals might behave politely and make an effort to get familiarized with the other's views and perspectives. When the group reaches the second (storming) stage, the members possibly feel more aware of the group and its roles and rules. Different opinions can cause conflicts in carrying out task performances. This stage is the most vulnerable for disagreements. Comparatively, groups do not face conflicts to a great extent in the final stages (norming, performing and adjourning) since the motivation is on implementation of the objectives according to the mutually agreed rules. (Levi 2007, 111-116; Pennington 2002, 71-73.)

How do groups resolve conflicts, then? Levi (2007) and Pennington (2002) bring out the suggestions of Thomas (1976) to selected approaches how groups can resolve conflicts. Conflict resolution may be analyzed through two dimensions: Distribution, where participants in conflict might act self-confident, with aspiration to benefit individually, or Integration, where the focus is on mutual satisfaction of the outcomes. From these dimensions, five diverse conflict resolution approaches are formed:

1. Avoidance (ignorance and denial of a conflict),

2. Accommodation (give in one's own opinions and viewpoints to make agreement),

3. Confrontation or competition (try to achieve individual satisfaction over others),

4. Compromise (try to obtain outcomes that are agreed the most within all participants, everyone 'giving in' a little bit), and

5. Collaboration (aim to find out resolution which satisfies everyone involved)

All of these approaches can be applied when trying to resolve conflicts. However, certain tactics might be more helpful in relation to overall success in managing conflicts. Collaboration and compromise are approaches of satisfying potentially the majority. Altogether collaboration, where a group works on finding a solution that pleases everyone, can be the optimal approach whenever possible. (Levi 2007, 116-118; Pennington 2002, 107.)

2.2 Culture

My research has emphasis on the impacts of cultural diversity on individuals. Therefore, I considered examining certain definitions of culture (chapter 2.2.1), multiculturalism and cultural diversity (chapter 2.2.2).
Moreover, I will discuss the concept of cultural competence. There are numerous descriptions of the concept of cultural competence. For this study I chose to introduce the development of cultural competence according to two different theoretical models. Different models of development of cultural competences are introduced in the chapter 2.2.3.

2.2.1 Definition of culture

Culture is a historically created system of meaning and significance or, what comes to the same thing, a system of beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate, and structure their individual and collective lives (Parekh 2006, 143).

Parekh emphasizes the importance of common language when articulating a culture. However, e.g. traditions, rituals, proverbs, and body language are defining a culture of society. Culture is also giving human life structures in activities and social relations. (Parekh 2006, 143-144.) Religion has been closely connected to culture. Cultures are influenced by religions and vice versa. However, religion functions diversely in different cultures. Although no culture can be exclusively based on religion, it can be shaped by it in different ways and degrees (Parekh 2006, 147).

Leavitt articulates that to understand other individual's viewpoints and to become more culturally competent it is vital to recognise the factors of culture and its influences to our daily life. As stated by Leavitt, our cultures form of three sections: The material culture as concrete matters, behavior in relation to accepted cultural norms, and the non-material culture such as values and beliefs. (Leavitt 2010, 19-20.) The culture of society is always influenced and developed by the economics, politics and other institutions of the society. On the other hand, culture also has influence in shaping and developing the

institutions. Factors such as technology, wars or natural disasters as well are influencing and changing the cultures. (Parekh 2006, 151-153.)

Culture influences individuals' lifestyles, personal identity and their relationship both within and outside their culture (Papadopoulos 2006, 10). O'Hagan (2001) describes culture as 'the distinctive way of life of the group, race, class, community or nation to which the individual belongs'. Culture can be defined through physical environment or location, and which is shaping with physical characteristics and the development of for instance communication and perceptions. Our cultures influence powerfully to our attitudes and actions towards and within marriage, family life, social relationships etc. Furthermore, they have different influence in different cultures. (O'Hagan 2001, 233.) Cultural identity is the sense of sameness and belonging which an individual experiences in living, sharing and expressing a particular culture. That sense of sameness and belonging may vary according to the many differing expressions of culture. (O'Hagan 2001, 234.)

According to Parekh (2006) bonds between cultural community members are strengthening with e.g. shared beliefs and historical memories or common objects. Membership of a cultural community gives structure and shape for personality of an individual and gives identification to a certain group. A sense of rootedness, effortless communication, a structured moral life and ease of mutual understanding, all of which are important parts of human well-being, are the spontaneous products of the membership of a stable cultural community. The dimensions of cultural community are cultural and communal. Both, cultural content and communal basis are closely related. The term 'our' culture refers not to one in which we are born, for we might emigrate or be given up for adoption and raised in another culture, but one in terms of which we understand and organize our individual and collective lives. (Parekh 2006, 155-156).

Leavitt tells that ethnocentrism is familiar in all of the cultures. The term refers to the belief that their culture's accepted ways of actions are the only right manners. On the contrary, cultural relativism promotes cross-cultural communication and interaction. Cultural relativism highlights cultural variability as well as underlines the necessity to attempt to understand diverse cultures from their own perspectives. (Leavitt 2010, 29.)

Cultural communities cannot be completely free from the influences of other cultural communities. Influences of others can shape the beliefs and practices or for example borrow the technology. Globalization has strengthened intercultural interaction including technology and increased migration. However, the western culture has strong power in e.g. economics and politics, leaving the interaction between other cultures unequal position (Parekh 2006, 163-164).

2.2.2 Cultural diversity and Multiculturalism

'Multiculturalism' has been used to describe a wide range of circumstances and is understood and interpreted in a number of different ways. As a result, it no longer has any real meaning, other than at a very generalised level and in political terms (Cantle 2008, 68.) However, I intend to explain selected ways multiculturalism is described in literacy. Leavitt (2010) expresses that The term multicultural reflects to the idea that a culture is heterogeneous with regard to age, color, ethnicity, gender, national origin, political ideology, race, religion, and sexual orientation, and it includes the presence and participation of people with disabilities and those from different socioeconomic backgrounds (Leavitt 2010, 37).

When doing a study about students in multicultural context, I consider that it is relevant to mention the impacts on individuals in unfamiliar environment. In the group being studied consists Finnish students as well as from Asian, African or South American e.g. countries. A number of students come to Finland from completely different societies and cultures, which causes challenges in adjustment. I will shortly introduce the main features of the theory of cultural shock. Kalvero Oberg (1960) was the first to present the term 'culture shock', to explain the stress and anxiety in adjustment process to unfamiliar surroundings. This psychological construct of culture shock has been used to describe the adjustment process in its emotional, psychological, behavioural, cognitive, and physiological impact on individuals (Pedersen 1995, 1).

Winkelman (1994, 122) present the Oberg's concept (see also Ward et al. 2001) that list the four different phases of emotional reactions that typically are involved in cultural shock. The first phase, 'honeymoon' includes excitement and positive expectations of

the new culture, the differences are considered to be interesting. The second phase 'crisis' or 'cultural shock' follows with feelings of frustration, anxiety and hopelessness. This is the phase the new culture appears negatively. Criticizing the host culture is typical, and learning the new language may not seem attractive. In the third phase learning to adjust to the new culture begins and this stage can as well be described as the 'recovery'. Crisis resolution and starting to learn how to adjust to the new culture, becomes relevant. The final stage of culture shock is reached when individual achieves steady cultural adaptation to the new environment. (Winkelman (1994, 122.)

According to multiple studies, in contrast to culturally heterogeneous groups, culturally heterogeneous groups face more difficulties in the processes. Process difficulty can include tension, competitive conflict, power struggles, misunderstandings, and inequality in turn taking among members and generally refers to communication processes that hurt the performance of a group (Watson et al. 1993, cited in Oetzel 2002, 123).

2.2.3 Cultural competence

A key topic in the research, Cultural competence has various definitions and theoretical perspectives to explain the subject. Cultural competence is the ability to maximize sensitivity and minimize insensitivity in the service of culturally diverse communities (O'Hagan 2001, 235). I will introduce two models for developing cultural competence: Firstly, a model developed by Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs, and secondly, a model developed by Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor.

Leavitt (2010) introduces selected models to define cultural competence with objective for cultural proficiency. The models are involved with the concept, that the process of cultural competence is everlasting and under constant development. Leavitt prefers the model developed by Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs (1989), which is the most relevant and commonly applied. As indicated by Cross et al. cultural competence is a continuum of series including actions, strategies and viewpoints to be successful in cross-cultural interaction. The model stresses the significance of culture, awareness of

dynamics in consequence of cultural dissimilarities, service modification for culturally distinctive requirements, estimation of intercultural relations, and development of cultural knowledge. (Leavitt 2010, 38, 4.)

Cross et al. define four factors essential for proficient cultural competency:

1) Recognition of cultural influences. Interactions of individuals are guided with characteristics of their cultures. Self-awareness is significant to understand oneself and others.

2) Consideration of cross-cultural relations and alertness of diverse cultural differences that affect to the dynamics. Possible misperception and misinterpretations in communication can occur in cross-cultural interaction. Enhanced communication and consideration are emphasized.

3) Broadening knowledge of cultures together with containing the understanding in to practice. Leaning about different cultures of individuals is valuable to improve interaction and perception of the certain issues.

4) Adaptation to diversity. A need exists to develop cultural sensitivity.

Cultural competence does not mean discarding one's own culture, or demanding others to abandon their cultures. It is not necessary to gain knowledge of all cultures. In addition, it would be unachievable. (Leavitt 2010, 4-5.) O'Hagan (2001) states that willingness to learn, and to have open and respectful approach towards individuals is more valuable than knowledge about different cultures. He adds that 'Self-awareness is the most important component in the knowledge base of culturally competent practice.' (O'Hagan 2001, 235).

The Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor model for developing cultural competence (Papadopoulos 2006, 9-23) was developed to promote inclusion to transcultural nursing education. The model contains sections of cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and cultural competence. For this research I considered this model to be straightforward. According to Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor model cultural competence includes four stages: Cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity and cultural competence.

The first stage is cultural awareness, which begins with consideration to our personal values and beliefs. Papadopoulos emphasizes the importance of self-awareness. Influences of our values, beliefs and cultural identity affect our interpersonal behavior,

even subconsciously. Understanding one's own background and identity is crucial when aiming to understand others. (Papadopoulos 2006, 11-13.)

Cultural knowledge in Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor model underlines anthropological, socio-political, psychological and biological understanding. Culture and structure are equally significant matters in this stage in the Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor model. To learn about cultural similarities and differences and to recognize the impacts to our lives is essential to acknowledge in our work. (Papadopoulos 2006, 13-16.)

Cultural sensitivity requires development of proper inter-personal relationships when working with clients. Trust, acceptance and respect are required in equal affiliation with the clients. Oppressive behavior of the professionals should be avoided in order to progress towards culturally sensitive work. Intercultural communication skills are highlighted in the stage of cultural sensitivity. These skills involve recognition of the communication challenges across cultural limitations. Verbal and non-verbal communication varies significantly in diverse cultures. Barriers of communication can be a result of ignorance in different communication approaches between the cultures. (Papadopoulos 2006, 16-18.)

The achievement of the fourth stage (cultural competence) requires the synthesis and application of previously gained awareness, knowledge and sensitivity (Papadopoulos 2006, 18). Papadopoulos adds that in this stage of development the most vital element is to 'recognize and challenge racism and other forms of discrimination and oppressive practice'. (Papadopoulos 2006, 18.)

The following figure visualizes the different stages of developing cultural competence Developed by Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor.

CULTURAL AWARENESS
Self-awarenes
Cultural identity
Heritage adherence
Stereotyping
Ethnohistory

CULTURAL COMPETENCE
Assessment skills
Diagnostic skills
Clinical skills
Challenging and addressing prejudice, discrimination and inequalities

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE
Health beliefs and behaviors
Anthropological, sociopolitical, psychological and biological understanding
Similarities and differences
Health inequalities

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY
Empathy
Interpersonal / communication skills
Trust, respect
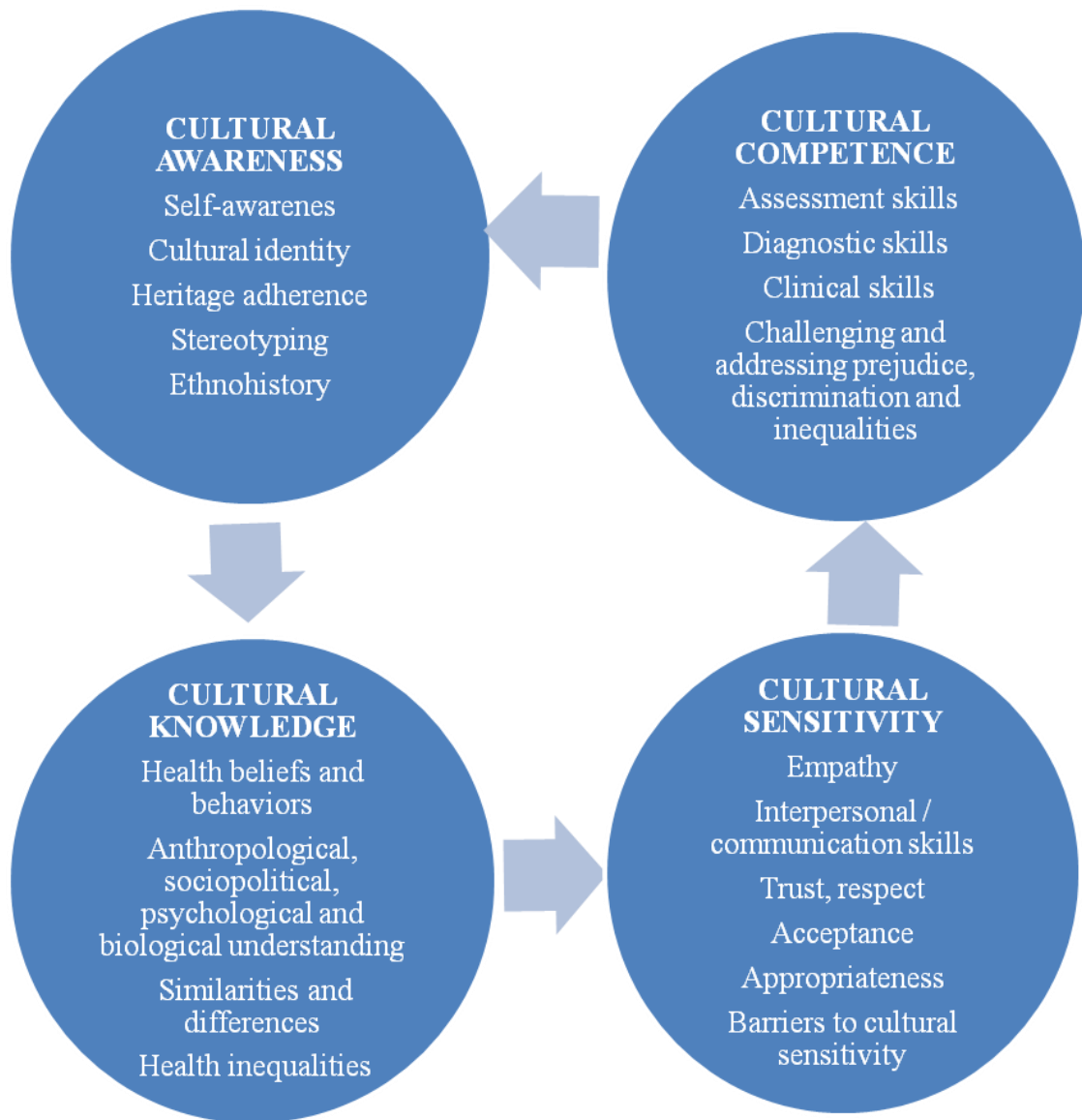Acceptance
Appropriateness
Barriers to cultural sensitivity

FIGURE 2: The Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor model for developing cultural competence (Source: Papadopoulos 2006, 10.)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Ethnography

Ethnography is one of the most important methods of social research. It originated in anthropology, but has now become a basic technique in sociology. (Fielding 2009, 282.) In starting point of the thesis process the choice for methodological approach was chosen to be ethnography. The reason behind the selection of the method was the personal interest about international students in Finland studying in Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. However, not knowing precisely the object of the study I aimed to enter the field and trace the fascinating phenomenon to be researched.

Ethnography is an eclectic methodological choice which privileges an engaged, contextually rich and nuanced type of qualitative social research, in which fine grained daily interactions constitute the lifeblood of the data produced (Falzon 2009,1). Gathering the data by several methods provided me valuable data that would not have been achievable with other types of research. However, the approach required prolonged period to gather the relevant data. Especially I experienced participant observation highly time-consuming.

Ethnographies are based on observational work in particular settings. The initial thrust in favour of ethnography was anthropological. Anthropologists argue that, if one is really to understand a group of people, one must engage in an extended period of observation. (Silverman 2005, 49.) According to Fielding (2009, 283) when getting close to people researched in their own natural environment, researcher may some across with ethical issues. Still, the method can provide advantageous understanding of social life in certain venues.

In the initial stage of the research I had motivation to get involved in the daily life of the students being studied. The purpose was not to have defined research questions in that stage, yet to be complemented later in the process. As by that time, I had had experience of being a member of two international student groups in Diak, I had somewhat idea about studying in a group with students from different cultures. My motive was to deepen the understanding of selected phenomena in the field. The exact research

questions developed in time after observing the school life and other activities of the students.

Table 1: Phases of research data collection.

Autumn semester 2010 (August-December)	Spring semester 2011 (January-May)
Participant observation in 1) Lectures and campus activities 2) After school activities (e.g. freshmen party and sauna parties)	Participant observation in 1) Lectures and campus activities 2) After school activities (e.g. sauna party, informal gatherings)
1st Focus group interview (December)	2nd Focus group interview (March)
	3rd Focus group interview (May)

Table 1 shows the phases in the process of collecting the data. The Autumn semester I focused more on participant observation to gain insights of the group being studied. The autumn semester was additionally the phase to formulate specific research questions. Hence, the observation period was beneficial to specify the topics that I found fascinating. In the autumn semester I had a possibility to create central themes and structures for following focus group interviews.

With participant observation in 1) 'lectures and campus activities' I mean the lectures, breaks, actions arranged by student tutors, and other activities located at the campus area in office hours. Moreover, the section contains the material collection from obligatory performances. 2) 'After school activities' refers to the leisure time, wherein participation of students is optional. In the first semester of the studies student tutors are arranging activities for freshmen to socialize after school. The activities contained freshmen party and sauna parties for the group, and for the whole school. I had a

possibility to participate in those gatherings during the data collection time. As the activities were not as formal, my privilege was to observe the group in a dissimilar setting.

 3.2 Participant observation

During the academic year 2010-2011 I implemented participant observation with the group studied. The observation was carried out in the lectures and school life, in addition to after school activities and social gatherings. In total, I participated for 13 days in lectures and campus activities. In after school activities I participated for 7 occasions. In addition, I participated in informal social gatherings that took place during and after the academic year. However, I decided not to gather field diary notes from those informal occasions. Observing equally in school and after school activities I wanted to develop awareness how the group behaves in diverse contexts.

Simultaneously observing and participating the activities give the researcher closer insights of the "natives". Furthermore, the personal role of the author was to be both, inside and outside the group. I was participating in the activities, yet in the same time aiming to be as objective as possible. Good participant observation thus requires a selfconscious balance between intimacy with, and distance from, the individuals we are seeking to better understand (Hume & Mulcock 2005).

I noticed limitations and disadvantages when gathering data for the research by participant observation. Since ethnographic approach demands lengthy involvement in participant observation, the method was highly time-consuming.

During the first months of observation, I participated in lectures and after school activities as much as possible. After the first semester, due the personal studies and timetables, the focus was more on after school activities and conducting the focus group interviews. However, the possibilities to participant observation in lectures and breaks were applied. Another disadvantage in the method was the validity of research data, since I could not know how my presence would affect the group. Would the group

members act normally when I was observing? Then again, the participation occurred during a for lengthy period providing an opportunity to gaining natural role in the group. Nonetheless, finding an exact role was rather problematic. Nigel Fielding (Gilbert 2008, 271) raises the matter of 'going native'. Though researcher adopts the perspective of members, the strategy is yet methodological. The emphasis is on gathering data, not becoming a new member of the particular group. I encountered uncertainty in 'how close to get', in relation to involvement within activities and lectures. Since I was a student in Diak, similarly than the individuals in the group I was observing, my role as a participant observer was dissimilar in contrast to researchers with different status. As I identified myself as a student in a multicultural group, the acceptance of the group perhaps turned out to be more open. An observer from another organization would have possibly received disparate reception from the group. From the very first day of the participant observation I experienced warm welcoming to the group's activities. Beneficial for the research was the possibility to participate as early as in the first day of the studies together.

To gather the relevant information for further analysis, the field notes were collected to research field diary. The field diary included information details about the environment, reflection and target group of the observation. I experienced challenges when writing field notes. As the writing obliged concentration to the written information, certain details in communication can be failed to notice. However, I did benefit from the support of the group members, which I felt valuable. At times, individuals from the group asked did I notice specific tension on group communication in certain encounters.

3.3 Focus group interviews

Liamputtong (2011) claim that focus group methodology was described as early as 1926 by Emory Bogardus in social science research. The method was used also during the Second World War. Focus group interview methodology has been common in marketing research, and reached popularity in qualitative research in health and social sciences during last decade. According to Liamputtong (2011), the benefits of using this

methodology have been experienced time efficient and inexpensive technique to gather complex data.

According to Krueger & Casey (2000) gathering information with focus group interviews give the researcher material for research, to understand the feelings and opinions of the participants about the issues related to the topic. The discussions should be implemented in nonthreatening and permissive environment, allowing participants possibility for relaxed conversations. Two of the focus group interviews took place at school, where I made reservation for a classroom to ensure undisturbed position for discussions. One of the interviews was organized at my home, which allowed a relaxed environment and an opportunity to serve coffee and snacks while discussions.

Focus group methodology is useful in exploring and examining what people think, how they think, and why they think the way they do about the issues of importance to them without pressuring them into making decisions or reaching a consensus (Liamputtong 2011).

The group must be small enough for everyone to have an opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions (Krueger & Casey 2000). For this research, the amount of interviewees was decided to keep as low as three. The reasons for limited amount participants were to a) create relaxed atmosphere for natural communication b) assure space for duration of speech to every participant to express their perspectives fully and c) facilitate the transcribing process.

The participants were selected from amongst the group, stressing the diversity of cultural backgrounds. In the focus group I wanted to include viewpoints of group members from different continents. The focus group was mix gendered. The selection was made as well according to my experiences of the individuals, who could have capability to voice out their genuine opinions without restraint. As I asked three selected students if they would have interest to participate in the focus group interview, each one wanted to join in.

I had previous experience of the focus group method gained from lectures. Focus group methodology was studied in study model Roles, Relationships and Power (RRP) In third

study year, second semester. My personal role for focus group exercise was the moderator. The exercise was beneficial for conducting focus group interview in the research. However, managing a group can be challenging. Hennink (2007) points out limitations when using focus group method. The flexible nature of the method requires the moderator skills to manage the discussions towards convenient material for further data analysis. If the interviews are poorly managed, the discussions can end up with gathering plenty of unnecessary material which is not relevant to the research questions. The reliability and quality of the research can also be at risk if bias between the participants, or in the delivery of questions by moderator occur.

The impact of group dynamics may influence the outcome of data collection. Although group members may stimulate each other in the discussion, there is also a risk that some members may dominate the discussion, either due to an authoritarian tone or in the time spent talking (Hennik 2007). Comparing to individual interviews, focus group method might provide less confidentiality. Consequentially the setting can limit the individual perception on issues concerned.

My personal experiences of focus group settings were very positive. Students in the interviews brought up personal experiences and conflict freely, sharing their viewpoints related to the topics. Nevertheless, the low number of respondents is limiting the generalization to the whole group or in understanding certain phenomena.

Throughout the focus group, the moderator must create a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere so the people feel relaxed and comfortable. In addition, they must probe responses for depth, detail, clarity and examples and encourage dialogue between the group members. (Foster-Turner 2009, 218.) The date and time for the interviews were planned to reach the variety of development stages within the first year of studies. The purpose was to collect data that would benefit the research, in addition, to recognize the change within time. The first interview was planned to be implemented at the end of the first semester. The second implemented after Christmas holiday, and the final interview at the end of the second semester. The interviewees were exceptionally cooperative, and enthusiastic to participate in the research process. The dates and times were reconciled via social media with private messages as agreed with the interviewees.

Besides participant observation and focus group interviews, I planned to conduct social network mapping for the whole group. However, the design was left out of the methodology for integral extent, as the time for data collection was limited. Nevertheless, I used the method in the last focus group interview and tested the technique with a small number of students outside lectures. Social network maps are used to visualize social relationships within the group. In other words, students are instructed to draw a circle in the centre of a blank paper and write own name inside the circle. The next step is to write the names of other members in the group, located in the paper accordingly to the individual's impression who he or she feels more close and connected to. Social network maps can be advantageous when the aim is to discover the rationale of interaction within a group. For this research, I experienced testing the method beneficial for developing deeper understanding of the features that divide or unite students.

3.4 Qualitative content analysis

For analyzing collected data, I chose to use qualitative content analysis. The focus group interviews were transcribed literally. Transcribing process was highly time-consuming, since there were overall three hours to be transcribed word by word. However, I experienced with videotaped material more effortless than with tape recorded material as practiced within personal studies.

Field diary notes were analyzed continually during participant observation. After observation I used time to study the written text. From the notes I formed mind maps or summaries from interesting findings and reflections. Moreover, the exact research questions and objectives emerged from the field note findings.

The final analyzing process commenced after with reducing the data by underlining relevant citations or observations. Then the expressions were listed to seek for similarities or differences of the themes. I used color pencils to separate diverse themes from each other, which made the material more manageable. After making subcategories from verbal expressions, I began to form theoretical concepts of by

forming subcategories, upper categories and main categories. Eventually, my research obtained two main categories: Group dynamics and cultural competences.

3.5 Ethics and validity

As in any scientific research, ethnographic research must follow certain ethical values. Bulmer (2008, 158-159) presents description of Research Ethics Framework, published by UK Economic and Social Research Council. As viewing the ethics of research, the framework points out six key principals: 1) Reliability and quality of a research are ensured by designing, reviewing and commencing. 2) Researcher is obliged to inform about the objective, methodology and the results to the people involved the research. 3) Confidentiality and anonymity must be valued. 4) Involvement of the participants has to be voluntary. 5) The research should not cause any disadvantage for the participants. 6) It should be made obvious, that the research is an independent study. The possible bias or conflicts are concerning specific issues. (Bulmer 2008, 158-159.)

All participants must be aware that they are participating in the study, be informed of all the consequences of the study, and consent to participate in it (Rubin & Babbie 2007, 257). When I started data collection in the first day of the DSS group's studies, I used an opportunity to introduce myself and my aims and motivations as a researcher. I named the reasons why am with them and briefly explained the strategies I was going to use in the research in following semesters. The first days of the studies are certainly confusing to the new students, including numerous unfamiliar faces, and plenty of additional information. Therefore, I revised my status over the time spent with the students, individually 'chatting' and for the whole group.

Rubin & Babbie (2007) emphasize, that participation to the research must be voluntary. When there is a wish for sharing personal information to be included in the research material, there should be no pressure to reveal information that makes one uncomfortable. Voluntary contribution must be highlighted. However, when a group of people is being studied, individuals might question what impacts could rejection to

involvement would have. Researcher should also be aware of not causing any harm to the individuals of the group being studied. Sensitivity in gathering the data and reporting on the findings is essential, yet challenging for the researcher. (Rubin & Babbie 2007, 256-258.) In the research I attempt to value the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. I will make effort in reporting the findings in such way the student of the group participated will not be harmed or get uncomfortable from the results I have made of the analysis.

When I asked the chosen participants to participate in the focus group interviews, I clarified that the interviews are being videotaped and transcribed. However, I emphasized that their anonymity will be ensured. For the whole group being studied, my choice was to document a signed consent form for the participating students in the group. The purpose of the form was to confirm that the individuals in the research group that I observed were aware of the study; its objectives, themes and methods that I wanted to implement. I wanted to ensure that the students know what they are included in.

Validity is an altogether more complex concept. It tells us whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe. (Bell 1999, 104.) Validation in ethnography can be complicated. Fielding (2008) points out, that critically measuring a certain matters of social life in unfamiliar settings sets ethnographers intense responsibilities. He adds that there might not be any exact tactics for the readers to verify the statements or discoveries that have been argued by the researcher. The perceptions in the research are experimental. (Fielding 2008, 276.)

4. FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will present the results from data collection analysis. Qualitative content analysis was used to form categories from the transcribed focus group interviews and field diary notes. The chapter aims to present the results of the ethnographic research that was conducted among the study group. I will also explain the findings analyzed from the research data and refer to the theoretical background described in the chapter 2. Analysis from research data collection of focus group interviews and participant observation is collected to this chapter, additionally to personal narrative for endeavor to achieve wider understanding about the phenomena.

I want to underline that the DSS students come from diverse settings, additionally various Finnish students study in the same degree program. Various students from other cultural backgrounds have lived in Finland for years before attending to Diak. For the ones that arrive straight to unfamiliar surroundings to study, the experiences can be extremely different.

In these chapters I will include quotations referred from the focus group interviews. The three focus groups are distinguished in the text by using different abbreviations FG 1 (the first focus group interview), FG 2 (the second focus group interview) and FG 3 (the third focus group interview). I considered that this is very important in order to make visible the progress and the development that occurred during different stages of the academic year.

4.1 Group dynamics

In this chapter I aim to discuss the findings analyzed from research material, considering the processes in the groups and in the development of group dynamics. Firstly, I will present the results of changes and development within the first academic year. Secondly, I discuss about the social relations in the group relating to the similarity attraction theory. Thirdly, cases of conflicts and suggestions for appropriate conflict management are discussed.

4.1.1 Changes and development within the first academic year

According to Tuckman and Jensen's group development stage theory, described in the chapter 2.1.2, a group goes through varied stages during its existence. Forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning are the five potential stages to be observed. The group being studied was on its initial stage as I started the process of data collection. According to the data, the excitement of the new group and studies was high in the beginning. As previously mentioned, in the forming stage members of a group get to be familiar with each other and may act politely. As a result to my findings in all of the study groups I have observed the results have been parallel: connection between group members is tight as individuals seek out their position in the group in line with common objectives.

> "We started with a crazy energy and it was quite nice. ... I've seen that In the beginning it was quite homogenous." (FG 1.)

> "And it was quite tight, the group.. There was no difference." (FG 1.)

> "In the future, more and more we get to know the things will change. Things will go different. People will separate even more. Some people get work and then they go do their own things and then we get less and less and less time to get together." (FG 1.)

Student's expectations for the further studies were high in the beginning. In addition to get professional qualifications, social aspects were emphasized. New friendships, friendly environment, interaction with others, and knowledge about different cultures were visible matters when students had an opportunity to express their expectations.

As stated earlier, in forming stage individuals in the group become more confident on the roles they want to take in the group and feel more comfortable interacting with the group. After the beginning the motivation and energy however, can decrease. The research data exemplifies that due to e.g. stress of cultural or environmental differences, additional working responsibilities and multiple school related assignments limit the social interaction. In the chapter 2.2.2 I introduced certain issues related to cultural shock. The effects in adjustment process to a new country can include stress and anxiety, which was observed as well in this research. The findings of the adjustment process as concerns of an

individual are discussed more in the chapter 4.2.1. However, the process similarly influence to the group as a whole. Theoretical background of group roles, norms and cohesiveness is examined in the chapter 2.1.3. Norms provide mutual understanding in the group of the customs how to think, feel or behave.

> "In the beginning I was so full of energy, and I was like really active and really jolly. And you know, slowly, maybe during the winter or whatever, I'm feeling little lost." (FG 1.)

> "The reality is that people are more aware, and there is not as much socializing and so much fun as we used to have. We have to do the assignments and all... Everyone's busy, trying to get both ends together, financially speaking." (FG 2.)

> "Most of us are working, and we have our small things to do, like assignments." (FG 2.)

Norming stage includes positive awareness of the group identity. In the second and the third focus group interview the participants described experiences of progress in terms of comfort in the group. As the group members became more familiar with each other the impacts were seen for example in more effortless interaction with each other.

> "People are not scared anymore as they used to be. People get comfortable in this environment. People go freely. (FG 3.)

> "Personally I feel more comfortable now. We know each other better, we know some tricks from other persons, I can understand more, and I'm more patient. I feel better now after the beginning when there was no connection at all, group of people put together in the same place, but now it's little bit changing maybe. "(FG 2.)

> "I feel more blended. There are still closer friends that like to stay together. People mix with each other." (FG 2.)

Roles help to clarify the responsibilities and tasks between the group members. In a study group, individuals may obtain roles without formally assigned. Observed from the research data, after the group members had become more familiar with each other, the norms and expectations of individual's behavior were focused in different ways towards different members of the group. For instance, when a generally talkative individual was being silent, the others supposed something to be wrong.

4.1.2 'I feel more comfortable with them, of course.' – Does the similarity magnetize?

The chapter 2.1.5 considers the theory of similarity attraction. Hypothesis of the theory is that people do have tendency to associate with other individuals with similar characteristics. This research material indicates certain factors of similarities that support the theory. Similarity commonly implies to individual's cultural background. The emotion of comfort emerged repeatedly. As I have observed diverse multicultural study groups during my studies, in every group the phenomenon of similarity attraction has been visible. Even though the individuals in the groups do communicate well with each other and are in agreement, one way or another the connection to similar characteristics is typically stronger.

Inside the study groups, frequently smaller sub-groups arise during the group's existence. According to the data the sub-groups include usually students with certain similar features.

> "I'm not complaining with all that, I'm more comfortable in my own group like you know. My own people, like XXX guys... I feel more comfortable to approach in anything ... I can express more clearly and I can really express myself. I don't know. I feel more comfortable with them, of course." (FG 1.)

> "We get together with the people we feel most comfortable with. So then Africans start to go together with Africans, no matter if they were from Zambia or Kenya… whatever. And the Nepalese get together. And then there is a sort of drifters, there might be one group or other" (FG 1.)

> "And so then there is like a sort of "the group" that I hang out the most. And there are some... Most Finns, but it's a sort of Finns that are related to foreigners, or they are half Finn, half foreigner. So then there is something in common. It's like… I don't know, sort of a Finn – pro foreigner group. And me and XXX are there. Complete strangers. And I could say that... Ok, like I said there was the first part, then there came this sort of separation to small groups. And you can see it little bit in class I could say." (FG 1.)

The material in this study shows cases, in which ways the similarities were experienced. Formation of subgroups and closer friendships were commonly explained with the cultural norms that they are familiar with.

As described in chapter 2.1.3, norms give the group common understanding of the customs in what manners should they think, feel or behave. When group members share related insights of the accepted norms from the past, the communication possibly is more uncomplicated and effortless. Mutual understanding about topics discussed reduces the need to explain background information. The reality can have an effect on individuals to seek out the social relations in which they, or the others do not have to explain their behavior or statements.

> "They know how to behave because it's so similar to each other." (FG 1.)

> "Language is of course there, but it's about feeling of togetherness and feeling of brotherhood, you know. And it's so compact." (FG 1.)

> "And these XXXs, they want to talk to each other, because they know what the other is talking about. He's not gonna be sitting with me and tell something that is totally typical in XXX, and I will be like huh? If I have to hang out with them, and they have to hang out with me, we both have to pretend. They have to say something I understand, and I have to say something they understand. I Don't wanna offend anybody. " (FG 3.)

Even if the communication within the group is working well, differences of experienced norms may cause awkward emotions when interacting with others. The individuals can possibly feel that they are outside their comfort zone. Through the data collection analysis I made discoveries of the barriers in trust and voicing out one's opinion as a consequence of fear of judgment.

> "But deep down I just feel so uncomfortable, I just wanna run away, you know. But at the same time I have to socialize and I cannot just be like that." (FG 1.)

> "I cannot go and tell to her or him that I feel like this. I might think that, Oh… I cannot trust that person. So the trust factor is always missing... There's always that barrier. And I cannot feel that I can open up." (FG 1.)

> Than if we have to have a certain group, like maybe different than it might be hard for me to adjust and to voice out my opinion. I might think people will have judgment." (FG 1.)

> "They're always like my sisters, cultural vice. I can go over there, you know. I can just say whatever I like. I can always just say "shut

up!" I can just be myself, and I know tomorrow they will be the other way. Like today I say ok, I'm angry to just express myself. Tomorrow you will be here and you are changed towards me. But for them, I know they won't change the opinion of me." (FG 1.)

Formation of subgroups within the whole study group develops during the group's existence. Studying in DSS includes multiple group work assignments and presentations. Most of them are done in the same 'home group' within the first year of studies.

Home groups are small groups including five to eight students in one group. According to the material the individuals build closer relationships within members of their own home group as the interaction within them is more attached. The members of home groups are more aware of their roles and norms, statuses, roles and communication structure (see more in chapter 2.1.4.). A number of students recognized the home group members as the ones who they experience the closest ones within the whole group. When I implemented social network maps in the focus group interview and with share of the students, the remarkable observation was the closeness to one's own home group. The perceptions I made from the material, students recognized themselves in closer social relations to culturally alike individuals. However, the significant factor in relationships was the influence of home group.

> "When we are in class, we study together, but then there is always a division, like group division. If we are in this home group, that we work together as like doing assignments, that's there, but then beside home group like people like to have around with their own group and that's very natural" (FG 1.)

> "I think after this vocation, we were more involved with our small little groups, like doing mini research and doing field visits. So, that's why I think we are more close to our own group. We know each other so well and we are all working. Especially in my group we understand each other very well. In class is more to come study and go. Cause everyone is so busy with their own lives. Most of us are working, and we have our small things to do, assignments." (FG 2.)

The following citations come from the third focus group interview, in which filling up the social network map was implemented. The experiences of close social relations to own home group was visible in the results. The students were aware of the upcoming

academic year, as the home groups were changed after the first year. The expectancy of the students referred to the changes in group dynamics after the home group exchange.

"The closest is basically my home group." (FG 3.)

"It's gonna look so different next year, when we are changing the home groups." (FG 3.)

The method of social network map that was used in the last focus group interview was a practical technique to visualize the social relations within the group. The results of the maps support the research outcomes in relation to similarity attraction. Students disclosed more close connection to other individuals with similar characteristics. In most cases, ethnic origin or culturally similar backgrounds were features that magnetize.

In the chapter 2.1.7 I described discoveries cited in Härted et al. (2010). Openness to differences and attitudes of group members is beneficial in conflict resolution and group cohesion. Moreover, group leaders would advantage from paying attention to the reality and personally having openness to differences in the group.

4.1.3 Cases of conflicts in a multicultural study group

Conflicts can be both, harmful and beneficial for the group, subject to the approaches and practices the conflict issues are tackled with. This chapter provides examples of conflicts as indicated from the research data.

After the storming stage, conflicts may arise due to diverse individual objectives, as discussed in chapter 2.1.2. Several observed and discussed conflicts within the group were related to diversity in culture and religion. According to the research data, culture and religion are often topics in heated arguments. Religious ethnocentrism was experienced

"If you have a really strong culture, you are so narrow minded. Of course you're gonna crash with other people... You just need to adapt a little bit." (FG 2.)

> "Some people think that having a different religion is funny to them" (FG 2.)

As described in the culture definition chapter 2.2.1 according to Parekh (2006), cultures are influenced by religions and vice versa. The concepts can be problematic and some students experienced issues in different interpretations within the same religion.

> "Is it called cultural difference or religious? We follow the same religion but still. There's so much differences in mind." (FG 2.)

Certain behavior can be seen differently according to several cultural norms or habits. The same conception can be interpreted in distinct ways depending to one's own perception. Verbal and non-verbal communication varies considerably in diverse cultures. Chapter 2.1.4 defines certain aspects in group communication stressing the cultural diversity. According to my research data and own personal narrative, students experience challenges in diverse communication structures.

> "I don't know, they say it's socializing." (FG 3.)

> "Like, a lot of people come over, and they usually speak louder, and that's normal. For us it's called shouting" (FG 2.)

> "People said I overreacted. How? I was just asking kindly... What am I supposed to do?" (FG 3.)

> "In XXX, like XXX said it's polite to be late. It's normal, you are not supposed to be on time at all! In my country I would get very upset. But it's pointless, that's how they do. And I do it differently, so." (FG 1.)

Some conflicts can arise due to social loafing (explained in the chapter 2.1.6.). The term social loafing refers to letting other group members do more work in e.g. presentations or written assignments. Individual effort can be unclear in shared attempt, which can decrease the motivation to do one's best in the group work. If each of the group members working in the task are not making comparable effort for common objectives, it can cause tension between individuals.

> "Some people are late and they haven't put so much effort as you had, for example. I let it go, basically. Some people just come with some silly excuses, that they cannot come to the field, because they have to go there and do this…." (FG 1.)

"If you got problem or something, just tell me! Don't give a silly excuse, because you can see it in their eyes. Be honest!" (FG 1.)

"Of course sometimes you think some people should do more for the group." (FG 1.)

"It's always there, some people should do more." (FG 1.)

Dialogue between the group members can be productive. Nevertheless, the discussions can turn into heated arguments. Consistent with the research data, one of the topics for passionate discussions was religion. Sometimes the arguments influence to the atmosphere in the group negatively.

"Sometimes some arguments get quite heated... It's part of the process." (FG 1.)

"Maybe there are some guys and girls, it doesn't matter. They try to emphasize their own opinion more." (FG 2.)

"But sometimes it puts impact to the whole environment of the class. People get offended sometimes." (FG 2.)

"I think people have no right to humiliate other people's opinion. Like if you were the only one who's right, which is a thing that bothers me a lot." (FG 2.)

"Everybody has their own boundaries." (FG 2.)

"That's why I avoid talking about religion." (FG 2.)

The familiarity between the individuals in the group allows more stable ground for different viewpoints. After the group members have developed acquaintance with other group members the conflicts can be solved in more productive manners. However, familiarity can develop for a source to provocation in arguments.

"We have arguments, but I think the arguments are getting more well based. People know each other better." (FG 3.)

"In conversations in class we know now better which buttons to push. Some people know how to push my buttons. This is part of the experience." (FG 3.)

Negative experiences from conflicts can remain in thoughts for long time. According to the data, sometimes students felt insulted of the behavior of others. The issues were experienced also in the student's free time, frequently in multicultural student housing.

> "It caused so much stress, and it hammered me badly..." (FG 3.)

> "We come to school to study social work, and when your friend is in need… Obviously, we study together. And I was in need, and he was saying no you cannot." (FG 3.)

In chapter 2.1.7 is listed five different approaches to conflict resolution; Avoidance, accommodation, confrontation, compromise and collaboration. As stated, collaboration is presumably the best approach to be used in conflict resolution whenever possible. Student's expressed approaches as they have attempted to manage conflicts.

> "Talk to the person to realize it's not worth it. Think from a different perspective." (GF 2.)

> "Patience and compromises. Forgive people. Let go, no matter how angry you are." (FG 2.)

> "It's just about being positive." (FG 2.)

> "If there's an argument I just let go, I don't wanna offend people" (FG 1.)

Social loafing in group's tasks can increase tension in the home group or other task related group. According to the data, students benefit from open communication when questions of common effort for group arise.

> "Small things, yeah! We can always talk, I have talked about this small issue in my group, and it's gone. Just like this. Only one time we had this problem. And that's it." (FG 1.)

A group of students goes through different stages during its existence, and the study aimed to clarify particular occurrences which are natural phenomena in group processes. This research material indicates certain factors of similarities that support the similarity-attraction theory (see more details in the chapter 2.1.5) which refers to hypothesis that people do have tendency to associate with other individuals with similar characteristics. Similarity commonly implies to individual's cultural background. The emotion of

comfort emerged repeatedly. Formation of subgroups and closer friendships were commonly explained with the cultural norms that they are familiar with.

The individuals frequently build closer relationships within members of their own 'home group' (study group) as the interaction within them is more attached. The members of home groups are more aware of their roles and norms, statuses, roles and communication structure.

The research data presents that the conflicts arising in the group are typically concerning cultural or religious differences. Behavior which was considered natural in the individual's cultural background might be interpreted differently among others. Especially shared accommodation in multicultural housing has often been experienced challenging. Diverse customs, language and styles of interaction create tension. Effects of controversies related to religious ethnocentrism have generated negative impacts on groups. In the chapter 2.1.3 was stated that conflict resolution and problem solving are vital elements to improve group cohesion. Groups with good social skills and open communication are more able to manage conflicts constructively. Moreover, a group could benefit if the teachers draw attention to the context of conflicts.

4.2 Development of cultural competences

In the chapter 2.2.3 I examined the theoretical perspectives in development of cultural competence. As a result of globalization, very few societies today are culturally and ethnically homogeneous. The group being studied is aiming for professional qualification in social services. Social workers are most probably working with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Therefore, in this chapter I aim to specify the relevancy of cultural competences of students in social services.

Cultural competence (see chapter 2.2.3) is an ongoing process, which include actions, strategies and viewpoints to productive interaction between individuals from different cultures. (Cross et al. 1989, cited in Leavitt 2010.) Students in international degree

programme gain valuable insights of diversity already in everyday life in studies. In this chapter I will discuss the developmental stages of cultural competence, such as cultural awareness, knowledge and sensitivity. In addition, I want to draw attention to the processes in adjustment to a new society that may cause distress within students.

For some, the Finnish culture and surroundings are completely different than what they have been familiar with before attending Diak. Because of this, I want to underline certain challenges recently arrived students cope with during the first year of studies. Various students have come to study in Diak straight from their home countries. Additionally, a group of students have experienced the different stages of adjustment process in Finland before studies.

4.2.1 Adjustment process

In the chapter 2.2.2 I presented background about the theory of culture shock, which describes anxiety and stress that the adjustment process contains. Moreover, the research material reveals certain outcomes that the students have been experienced when they have arrived to Finland. The three different stages of culture shock are 'honeymoon', 'crisis or cultural shock' and 'recovery' (see more details in the chapter 2.2.2).

> "It's a privilege for me to come outside my country and study in very diverse environment plus it's a challenge for me also, because to get into the system because of environment and climate and people." (FG 1.)

> "Not exactly a cultural shock… I think I expected more. You know when I got the visa, I expected more." (FG 1.)

> "I realized that I have to adapt more or less to Finnish culture to adjust and to understand, be myself but at the same time not so much. I have to be more a little bit Finn." (FG 1.)

> "I went back home, it was nice! Of course the expectations were higher when I came to Finland. It was hard to cope up. But I think the phase has passed, I guess! so I'm already used to everything. I go to work and do the activities, I'm adjusted now. I feel more comfortable. better than before." (FG 2.)

As stated in the chapter 2.2.2, in the crisis stage of process the new culture appears negatively. Moreover, in that stage it is usual to criticize the host culture and the motivation to learn the new language might be weak. After the beginning of enthusiasm and high expectations the positive emotions can decrease significantly.

When students come to study from a completely different society, it is advantageous to be aware of the adjustment process. The length of the phases in the process is individual, and everyone experiences the development in own ways.

4.2.2 Cultural awareness

Students expressed the changes in their cultural identity, as they have lived abroad and studied with others from different cultures. The research material illustrates emotions of confusion in cultural identity, for example the communication structure in the host society is rather different to the culture of student's background. A share of students participated in the research acknowledged complexity in their cultural identity in relation to variety in behavioral norms between the cultures. Nevertheless, the experiences from studying in a multicultural context increase awareness.

As stated in the chapter 2.2.3, understanding one's own background and identity is crucial when aiming to understand others.

> "We get modified and blended with other cultures, the beliefs and languages and way of being etc. I think the culture changes... It gets more rich, you have your own culture, then you get parts of other cultures that you think is good. And other points of view, but just some more info that is really interesting. Little by little.. you sadly lose some parts of your own culture, but then you gain something to exchange. It's not destroyed, it's changing." (FG 2.)

> "I realized that I have to adapt more or less to Finnish culture to adjust and to understand, be myself but at the same time not so much." (FG 2.)

> "I've lost it all (own culture). It keeps fading every single day. I become Finn more and more. I tried to combine Finnish culture and

XXX culture, but they don't mix. I cannot put these together." (FG 2.)

"You are like water. You are there, but you are shaping if you are in a different container." (FG 2.)

The research material presents cases of stereotyping towards the host culture and society. Stereotyping is common when individual arrives to a new country. However, particular stereotypes can be reduced when obtaining familiarity with individuals from that culture.

"I had some judgment before. I thought every Finn is so reserved and they don't speak and they are shy. But then it has changed. I go to work and they don't speak, but they smile at me and just say 'moi', 'hi', 'hello', 'bye'. They Know I don't speak Finnish, so they come and speak with me in English. That feels so good." (FG 2.)

According to the data, self-awareness has increased during the studies in DSS. Discoveries related to one's own culture, background and characteristics emerged in the research material.

"I have developed high respect towards other people and I think it's gorgeous. I have learned a lot in DSS; I have great respect to everyone in class, just for the factor they come from so far away from their small communities. They came, and I'm from a different place, we see and just to put all that talent in one place. It's unique and I love it." (FG 1.)

"I am discovering myself more, and now I am so amazed to see how strong I am." (FG 2.)

"I think we can add to this that basically this concept of arguing or discussing or socializing it the school and everything, for me at least I get to find who I am basically. I get to see how far can I go... Basically discovering yourself from totally different perspective. Because I know who I was at home but then I came here to study and realized there are so many other things that I didn't even suspect." (FG 1.)

For some students the experiences of studying abroad in a different context have created more positive opinions about one's own home country and culture. Development of cultural self-awareness has advanced from living and studying abroad.

> "I came here, and I realized more about my culture. And now I'm more close to my culture. I respect more and I love everything about my country. I realize it more. Back then it was already there, I didn't used to care... When I went back home, I had different point of seeing things. For me it has changed in a very good way." (FG 2.)

4.2.3 Cultural knowledge

In various discussions between the students and in the focus group interviews students articulated positive learning experiences about studies in multicultural group. Cultural knowledge develops constantly in the course of the studies, since the teaching stresses mutual interaction. The students gain knowledge about other cultures in daily basis. As stated by Alitorppa-Niitamo (1993), understanding cultural differences in communication is essential to avoid misinterpretation and conflicts. (See more in the chapter 2.1.4)

> "And together with the topics goes all the people because we are all from the different places, we have different point of views" (FG 1.)

> "I have developed constantly and especially since Diak I have developed so much. Every single day in school I learn something new." (FG 2.)

> "I see so many cultures in the same place and so many ways to say the same sentence." (FG 1.)

Cultural knowledge inevitably improves during studies in DSS. Interactive and reflective learning is highlighted, and students gain information about other cultures throughout the studies.

4.2.4 Cultural sensitivity

According to Papadopoulos, Tilki and Taylor model for developing cultural competence cultural sensitivity stage includes empathy, communication skills, respect, acceptance, trust and appropriateness (explained in the chapter 2.2.3). My research data confirms certain skills the students achieve during their first year of studies. Respect towards

others despite the diversity was observed in the data. The undergraduates highlighted acceptance regardless of different viewpoints.

> "I've discovered respect towards other cultures. Because, in XXX I was narrow-minded. I didn't care about foreigners. But in here I've seen new people, all the friends and everything. And I'm foreigner myself." (FG 2.)

> "We are not criticizing each other, just because they have different kind of opinion." (FG 2.)

> "There are really good things here and there, so we should learn from everything. And if you cannot learn, I don't know what you are doing as a social worker." (FG 2.)

According to the research data the qualities of students to become more culturally competent are improved during the first year of studies in DSS. Students expressed that they have achieved different perspective in how to see the world and their own society. Additionally, prejudices towards other religions and cultures have decreased. For the individuals who have recently arrived to a new country, the cultural and environmental changes can become challenging. Every participant expressed in the focus group interviews that they have faced difficulties in adjustment to a new country after arrival. However, they stated that the affects facilitated in time.

Students in international degree program gain valuable insights of diversity already in daily life throughout the studies. Cultural competence education in the early steps of the studies can benefit students to understand each other's differences and to avoid prejudice. Essential to understand what impacts do cultures have on us. The advantage for students is to train the cultural awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to improve cross-cultural interaction. Consequently, according to the data studying in a multicultural environment promote cultural competences.

5. DISCUSSION

In this study I have discussed the theoretical concepts, methods and research findings on the development of group dynamics and cultural competences. Teachers are in significant position when considering group processes and learning how to become more culturally competent. As I consider how the research could benefit the development of DSS education, I suggest considering certain experiences that were observed in this study.

Firstly, as the research material indicates, attraction to similar characteristics is a natural phenomenon when students form social relations in a new study group. The features of similarity often relate to comparable cultural and ethnical backgrounds. However, the members in own 'home groups' were often experienced as the closest relations within the whole group. According to the DSS teachers, home groups are not used in any longer in the same sense for the whole first academic year. This research illustrates the consequences of working in small culturally diverse groups, to break the natural tendency to associate essentially with individuals with culturally similar backgrounds.

Secondly, conflicts in the group should be paid attention to. In this study I have collected theoretical background and student's viewpoints of conflict issues. According to the data, specific issues emerged to produce tension within the group. Social loafing is a phenomenon teachers must recognize. According to my personal experiences in various study groups in Diak, there has always been evidence of decreased motivation of group members to do their best when the group shares a common outcome.

I had the impression of welcoming atmosphere towards me throughout the data collection with the group being studied. Personally, I had recently joined to a different DSS group, which had been studying together for two years. In the third year we did not have common studies to a great extent. As I started the material collection process in the initial stage of the particular group, I occasionally had an impression that I was more connected to the group I observed than the one I study in. The reaction can perhaps be explained e.g. by the fact of being a new member to study group that had already existed, and the 'initial component' of the group being studied. I considered that examining the phenomenon of becoming a member of a new group could have been relevant for this research. However, I was obliged to limit the theoretical perspectives.

During participant observation process, I became even more aware of division between Finnish and 'DSS' groups. In general, the 'multicultural' students have habitually loose connections with the student groups in the Finnish side of Diak. Regardless of common parties and other after school activities, the similarity is visible in this case, too. In school related parties, I frequently have observed the division between the groups.

My personal emotions similarly support the tendency. Despite the fact that I am a Finnish student, I have always felt more connected to students in DSS than in the Finnish side. For further research, I would suggest to examine in more detail the reality of intergroup division between multicultural and Finnish study groups in Bachelor degree level. Moreover, this study demonstrates evidence of social relations within the groups, and that similarity often is a magnet for developing social relations. Developing facilities for cross-cultural interaction between the groups can perhaps benefit from this research, to understand group processes and impacts of cultural diversity in a University of Applied Sciences.

6. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As I became familiar with several student groups during the course of the study, I gained valuable insights from culturally diverse groups. Hence, I benefitted from the experience in this research, and in my further professional career as a social service worker. When I reflect on the experiences along the way, undoubtedly I made the most to learn from different individuals, groups and cultures.

Data collection with participation observation was pleasant. Implementing the method was experienced as 'the fun part' of the research. However, the process was highly time-consuming. Participant observation though, was beneficial methods to understand social life of particular group in the daily life surroundings. I collected the most relevant data by the focus group interviews. However, I advanced from participant observation in the particular group, since I had gained trust within the focus group members. Furthermore, there was no need to expend time for student's background information.

Even if the emphasis in the research is on the data collected from the selected methods participant observation and focus group interviews, I found it challenging not to reflect the phenomenon to my personal experiences from the past when studying in Diak. As a result, I desired to include certain experiences by personal narrative. When I studied the research data and analyzed the material, I considered valuable to use additionally my own personal experiences as a student in the similar study groups. I have been involved with other DSS groups and become familiar with numerous international students, thus I chose to reflect to my personal experiences in the research. Personal narrative was included in the data collection not only to add connected data, but also to enhance anonymity in the research. As the participant observation and focus group interviews were applied for the certain group, I chose to add experiences from the previous groups as well to increase confidentiality of the individuals. Personal narrative can be defined as any form of narrative which recalls past experience (Holliday 2007, 132). The method can benefit the data by personal insights and perspectives. However, personal narrative can be problematic as the nature of the insights is personal, ensuing researcher's individual interpretations and views from the past that do not apply for the particular research. Yet, learning from own personal narrative can allow researcher advantage when getting into the research material. (Holliday 2007, 132-133.)

I experienced certain challenges during the research process. First of all, the ethnographic approach is fairly unstructured and flexible. Uncertainty of the exact research questions was challenging at the first stages of the research. Furthermore, balancing the roles of an insider and outsider was challenging in relation to develop relationships, however, to maintain objectivity and distance. Problematic for reliability was that I could not be certain that my personal characteristics did not influence the data and interpretation. Also, when I was writing down field notes, certain incidents might be failed to observe.

The emphasis on the research topics changed during the process as I encountered increasing personal interest with social psychology. Studying the theoretical background I become fascinated in psychological and social processes of groups and individuals. Additionally, I was excited to learn about the matters related to culture, and what impacts do cultures have on us. During the process of this research, I discovered certain challenges and opportunities that cultural diversity sets for a study group. As I am motivated to work with culturally diverse groups in the future, the process of this study gave me valuable awareness and knowledge of the topics that will benefit my future work in social services.

The study group that I was involved with in order to gather the research data was extremely co-operative with me. The reception I received in the group was delightful, and the students showed sincere interest to my research. I am especially grateful for the participants in the focus group interviews. I was fortunate to gather research data in collaboration with the students, in addition, to understand the group processes from different perspectives.

7. CONCLUSION

Studying in an international degree program demands a great deal of the students involved. For the individuals who have recently arrived to a new country, the cultural and environmental changes can become challenging. Students may encounter the dimensions of diversity in both positive and negative aspects. A group of students goes through different stages during its existence, and the study aims to clarify particular occurrences which are natural phenomena in group processes.

Similarity plays a crucial role in development of social relation within the group. Similar characteristics do attract in certain levels within the group members. Furthermore, feelings of comfort and togetherness were commonly emphasized in relation to individuals from alike cultures and ethnic origins. According to the research data however, during the first academic year individuals felt more connected to the group as a whole, as the group obtained familiarity with each other. For the first academic year, multicultural 'home groups' were constituted to be applied for group works. The connection was experienced positively within own home groups, despite the cultural differences.

Every group confronts conflicts along the way. However, appropriate conflict management must be emphasized. In this research, conflicts related to differences in interpretations, religious perspectives and communication structures, ethnocentrism, and social loafing were concerned.

Obviously, cultural competences are relevant when studying in a multicultural group. However, the question is how are they relevant. As mentioned, cultural competence is an ongoing process and one can probably never be fully culturally competent. There is no need to understand details of every culture in the world. Nonetheless, we can train the cultural skills, for instance awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to enhance cross-cultural interaction. DSS students are in privileged position to promote the cultural skills in daily basis of the studies. Cultural diversity sets challenges for a study group and cultural differences of opinion or conflicts cannot be avoided. Still, if the disagreements are managed in productive manners, cohesion within the group can be improved.

REFERENCES

Ahokas, Marja 2010. Ryhmät ja niiden väliset suhteet. In Suoninen, Eero, Pirttilä-
        Backman, Anna-Maija, Lahikainen, Anja Riitta, Ahokas, Marja. Arjen
        sosiaalipsykologiaa. WSOYpro Oy. 185-242.

Alitorppa-Niitamo,   Anne   1993.   Kun   kulttuurit   kohtaavat.   Suomen
        Mielenterveysseura r.y & Sairaanhoitajien koulutussäätiö. Keuruu:Otava.

Baron, Robert A. & Byrne, Donn 1997. Social psychology. Eight Edition. Allyn
        and Bacon.

Bell, Judith 1999. Doing Your Research Project A guide for first-time researchers
        in education and social science. Third Edition. Open University Press.

Bordens, Kenneth S. & Horowitz, Irwin A. 2000 Social Psychology. Mahwah:
        Lawrence   Erlbaum.   Accessed   24.9.2012.
        http://site.ebrary.com/lib/diak/Doc?id=10084536&ppg=341

Bulmer, Martin 2008. The Ethics of Social Research. In Researching Social Life.
        Nigel Gilbert/Ed. Third Edition. SAGE Publications. 145-161.

Cantle, Ted 2008. Community cohesion: A New Framework for Race and
        Diversity. Revised and Updated Edition. Palgrave Macmillan.

Falzon, Mark-Anthony 2009. Multi-Sited Ethnography. Abingdon: Ashgate
        Publishing   Group.   Accessed   3.9.2012.
        http://site.ebrary.com/lib/diak/Doc?id=10281379&ppg=16

Fielding, Nigel 2008. Ethnography. In Researching Social Life. Gilbert,
        Nigel/Ed.Third Edition. SAGE Publications. 266-284.

Forsyth, Donelson R. 2009. Group Dynamics. Fifth Edition. Wadsworth: Cengage
        Learning.

Foster-Turner, Julia 2009. Focus Groups. In Research Methods for Health and Social Care. Neale, Joanne/Ed. Palgrave Macmillan. 211-224.

Frey, Lawrence R. 2002. New directions in group communication. SAGE Publications.

Hennink, Monique M. 2007. International Focus Group Research: A Handbook for the Health and Social Sciences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holliday, Adrian 2007. Doing and Writing Qualitative Research. Second Edition. SAGE Publications.

Hume, Lynne & Mulcock, Jane 2005. Anthropologists in the Field : Cases in Participant Observation. New York: Columbia University. Accessed 3.9.2012. http://site.ebrary.com/lib/diak/Doc?id=10183404&ppg=11

Härtel, Charmine E.J., Lloyd, Shannon & Sighal, Divya 2010. Intercultural competencies across cultures: same or different. In Managing Cultural Diversity in Asia: A Reserch Companion. Özbilgin, Mustafa F. & Sayed, Jawad/Ed. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. 192-223.

Kassin, Saul, Fein, Steven, Markus Hazel Rose 2010. Social Psychology. Eight Edition. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.

Krueger, Richard A., & Casey, Mary Anne 2000. Focus Groups: A Practical guide for applied research. Third edition. Sage Publications.

Laine, Anne, Ruishalme, Outi, Salervo, Pirjo, Sivén, Tuula & Välimäki, Päivi 2009. OPI ja OHJAA sosiaali- ja terveysalalla. Helsinki:WSOY Oppimateriaalit Oy.

Leavitt, Ronnie 2010. Cultural Competence A Lifelong Journey to Cultural Proficiency. New Jersey: SLACK Incorporated.

Levi, Daniel 2007. Group dynamics for teams. Second edition. Sage Publications.

Liamputtong, Pranee 2011. Focus Group Methodology: Principle and Practice. Sage Publications.

Miller, Joan G. & Schaberg, Lynne 2003. Cultural perspectives on personality and social psychology. In Handbook of Psychology, Personality and Social Psychology. Edited by Millon, Theodore & Lerner, Melvin J. Editor-in-chief Weiner, Irving B. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

O'Hagan, Kieran 2001. Cultural competence in the caring professions. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Oetzel, John G. 2002. The Effects of Culture and Cultural Diversity on Communication in Work Groups. In Frew, Lawrence L. (Editor), New Directions in Group Communication. SAGE Publications.

Papadopoulos, Irena 2006. Transcultural Health and Social Care - Development of culturally competent practitioners. London: Elsevier.

Parekh, Bhikhu 2006. Rethinking multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory. Second edition. Basingstone: Palgrave Macmillan.

Parkkisenniemi, Juha 2007. Monikulttuurisuus ja soveltava psykologia. In Sosiaalipsykologia yksilöstä yhteiskuntaan. Pekka Kuusela (Ed.). Oy UNIpress Ab.

Pedersen, Paul 1995. The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents Around the World. Greenwood Publishing Group.

Pennington, Donald C. 2002. The social psychology of behaviour in small groups. Psychology Press Ltd.

Rubin, Allen & Babbie, Earl 2007. Essential Research Methods For Social Work. Second Edition. Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning.

Silverman, David 2005. Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook. Second edition. SAGE Publications.

Ward, Colleen, Bochner, Stephen & Furnham, Adrian 2001. The Psychology of Culture Shock. Second Edition. Routledge.

Winkelman, Michael 1994. Cultural shock and adaptation. Journal of Counseling & Development. Vol. 73. Accessed 26.12.2012. http://anna.diak.fi:2100/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=61ad2520-b2c1-48f0-9ae1-0e15c8c51407%40sessionmgr12&vid=6&hid=18

APPENDIX

Interview structures for focus group interviews

1st Focus group interview: Group dynamics

December, 2010

- General impression about the group

- Group atmosphere: Factors indicating to it, conflict that can affect to it

- Formation of sub-groups inside the DSS group

- Participation of after school activities

- Expectations about the development of social relations

2nd Focus group interview: Cultural competences

March, 2011

- Changes in group dynamics after the 1st interview

- Changes in culture related issues: Cultural stress

- Opening the concept of Cultural competences

- Have the cultural competences developed during studies in Diak

- Students' cultural competences and functioning of the group

- Culture related conflicts and settling the issues

3rd Focus group interview

May, 2011

- Repetition of the previous interviews and changes in the issues, through Mind map method

- Creating social network maps of interviewed students