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Multimedia applications in LGBTIQ work: a self-expression group

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2016 Laurea



Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Multimedia applications in LGBTIQ work:
a self-expression group

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Degree Programme in Social Services
Bachelor's Thesis
April, 2016

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The purpose of this project thesis was to create and implement an empowering, open photography group for sexual and gender minorities. The planning and creation was in collaboration with a local LGBTIQ rights organisation, Pirkanmaan Seta ry, Tampere, Finland and a national support and help service Sinuiksi. The group consisted of five sessions where group members participated in different self-expressional exercises using photography as a method and an online-based photodiary which lasted the whole duration of the project. Project planning was started in April 2015 and the group was implemented during summer 2015.

The objectives of the project were to support the empowerment of the participants through creative, self-expressional exercises and group spirit promotion, highlighting feelings of togetherness and belonging and offering tools to help manage and understand day-to-day life. One objective was also to improve the group leading skills of the group leader. The empowering methods chosen were self-expressional and creative photography and active functioning in a both physical group as well as an online forum.

The theoretical frame of reference contains the concept of empowerment, self-expression and the foundations of LGBTIQ work. The idea of empowerment ran through the whole project in the background so that the participants would not even necessarily notice it. The exercises were planned so that the participants could work together most of the time in the first couple of sessions for peer support purposes and then move towards more self-realized working in the later sessions. All exercises promote mirroring of the participants' own feelings and past experiences.

The success of this thesis project was evaluated based on group feedback, a questionnaire and observations and self-evaluations made by the group leader. A central focus point in the evaluation was the group participants' views of how well the exercises and online features worked for them and if they should be used again in the future. It was found in the results that online-based communications and exercises do support the actual group activities and that the participants find them meaningful. It can also be seen in the self-evaluations and observations of the group leader that the leader's own skills in leading a group have improved from the starting point.

Keywords: empowerment, LGBTIQ, photography, self-expression

Joona Rontu

Multimediavälineiden käyttö seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistötyössä: itseilmaisun ryhmä

Vuosi 2016 Sivumäärä 54

Tämän toiminnallisen opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli tuottaa ja toteuttaa valokuvausta hyödyntävä, voimauttava ja avoin ryhmä seksuaali- ja sukupuolivähemmistöihin kuuluville. Opinnäytetyön suunnittelu- ja toteutustyö tapahtui Tampereella yhteistyössä tuki- ja neuvontapalvelu Sinuiksi:n ja Pirkanmaan Seta ry:n kanssa. Valokuvausryhmä koostui viidestä tapaa-iskerrasta, joissa ryhmään kuuluvat osallistuivat erilaisiin valokuvausta hyödyntäviin harjoituksiin sekä verkkopohjaisen valokuvapäiväkirjan toteuttamiseen. Projektin suunnittelu aloitettiin huhtikuussa 2015 ja ryhmä järjestettiin kesällä 2015.

Ryhmän tavoitteena oli osallistujien voimaantumisen tukeminen luovilla, itseilmaisullisilla valokuvausharjoituksilla sekä ryhmähengen edistäminen, yhteenkuuluvuuden ja läsnäolon tunteiden korostaminen ja elämännäköisten työkalujen tarjoaminen. Yhtenä tavoitteena oli myös ryhmänohjaajan omien ohjaustaitojen kehittäminen. Voimauttaviksi elementeiksi valittiin itseilmaisullinen ja luova valokuvaus sekä aktiivinen ryhmätoiminta niin fyysisesti ryhmässä kuin sähköisesti verkossakin.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys koostuu voimaantumisen käsitteestä sekä itseilmaisun ja vähemmistötyön pohjateorioista. Ajatus voimaantumisesta kulkee kaikkien projektin osaluokkien läpi harjoitusten taustalla niin, etteivät osallistujat välttämättä edes huomioi sitä. Harjoitukset suunniteltiin niin, että ensimmäisillä ryhmäkerroilla osallistujat keskittyivät pari- ja ryhmätyöskentelyyn tutustumis- ja vertaistukitarkoituksessa. Myöhemmillä tapaamiskerroilla keskityttiin enemmän ryhmäläisten itseilmaisulliseen työskentelyyn. Kaikki harjoitukset kannustivat osallistujien omien tunteiden ja aikaisempien kokemusten reflektointiin.

Opinnäytetyöprojektin onnistumista arvioitiin ryhmäpalautteen, palautelomakkeen ja ryhmänohjaajan omien havaintojen ja itsearvioinnin pohjalta. Arvioinnissa keskeisenä elementtinä oli ryhmään osallistuneiden näkemys harjoitusten sekä verkko-ominaisuuksien onnistuneisuudesta ja uudelleenkäytettävyydestä. Tulokset viittaavat siihen, että verkkopohjainen yhteydenpito ja harjoitusten tekeminen tukee varsinaista ryhmätoimintaa ja on osallistujien kannalta mielekästä. Itsearvioinneista ja ryhmänohjaajan omista havainnoista selviää, että ohjaajan omat kyvyt ryhmänohjaamisessa ovat kehittyneet lähtötilanteesta.

Avainsanat: voimaantuminen, LHBTIQ, valokuvaus, itseilmaisus

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1 Introduction

This project thesis is planned to the development and organisation of a self-expressional group for Pirkanmaan Seta ry in collaboration with Sinuiksi support and help service. Its main focus is to gain a deeper insight into the methodology that lays behind the group empowerment method using an anti-oppressive approach and evaluating the project with the SWOT model in the beginning and in the end. Also participant feedback will be utilized in the evaluation of the project. It will also aim to shed light on questions like how to use photography as a creative method help to empower the participants and how empowering group functions can be supported with online-based services like discussion forums. The social media will be utilized to advertise the project.

The interest toward starting a self-expressional photography group for LGBTIQ minority members first rose partially from personal experiences of minority stress and exclusion. Finding an expressional channel for personal thoughts and feelings is important for everyone and photography and writing were mine, so it felt only natural to offer either of them to others. The magnificent method of empowering photography by Miina Savolainen, an art and social educator from Helsinki, gave inspiration for this project and by putting pieces together with a working life partner which was already familiar, the idea of a group saw life.

In Finland there has been different group activities from elderly ladies' sewing clubs to golf clubs and youth groups for several decades. In these groups their participants have shared political and religious views, talked about sports and hobbies, spent time with friends and met more likeminded people. As the theories of social work and therapeutic work started to develop in the United States of America and other places around the world, groups with a therapeutic viewpoint started to arise, for example AA-groups. These diverse groups were led by a professional therapist or social worker, aiming to offer peer support and a safe environment for open discussion and therapeutic work. As a result, the risk of loneliness, social isolation, depression and other health issues were better noticed so they could be addressed and dealt with.

One minority group which also started to create their own peer groups was the LGBTIQ minority (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer/Questioning). The first sexual orientation and gender minority association in Finland, Psyke ry, was founded in 1968 to promote the equality and rights of these minorities. Six years later in 1974 Seksuaalinen tasavertaisuus ry (Seta) - Sexual Equality (Seta) was founded to follow in Psyke ry's footsteps. Their main focus was to offer peer support and in later years to promote the visibility of minority issues in the society.

In the current state of Finnish society, media and visual communicational technology rules the world of most people through social media applications like Facebook and Twitter but also through the other implements like TV, radio and online publications. Even educational institutions are finally starting to tap into the media and information technology and use it in teaching. Media reading skills are taught in schools but often the empowering side of creating multimedia art is forgotten.

2 Background

2.1 Pirkanmaan Seta ry

Pirkanmaan Seta is a regional, non-governmental association advocating for equal human rights regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. It was founded in 1973. Pirkanmaan Seta is one of the oldest and largest member organisations of the national umbrella organisation and has its office in central Tampere. Seta - LGBTIQ Rights in Finland - aims for a society of equality and individual welfare that includes everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

At the moment the local association has about 15 peer support groups for gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender and queer youngsters, adults and elderly with their mutual or separate interests. There is also a choir, evenings for games and so on. Pirkanmaan Seta also organises annual events such as IDAHOT (International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, May 17th), Pirkanmaan Pride week, panel discussions, queer movie festivals etc.

In 2014 the association opened a national helpline (www.sinuiksi.fi) to help people in Finland to deal with their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Many of their callers talk about minority stress, identity or coming out process (closet anxiety), and social pressure, just to mention a few. The concept of minority stress is not based on one congruous theory, but is inferred from several social and psychological theoretical orientations. In general, minority stress can be described as being related to the juxtaposition of minority and dominant values and the resultant conflict with the social environment experienced by minority group members (Garnets & Kimmel 2003, 700).

Pirkanmaan Seta ry organises a legendary rainbow party called Leimarit® about 8 times a year. Leimarit is a phenomenon in Tampere and it has gathered rainbow people to have fun together for the past 25 years. Each party brings together hundreds to enjoy good music, clubbing and dancing. In the early days Leimarit or Leimautumisbileet roughly translated meant “getting labelled” or coming out. These days it is more about partying in a truly open atmosphere, but you can still get a label at the door if you want. Leimarit is a trademark

owned by the association. The party is organised by volunteers of Pirkanmaan Seta and by paying the entry-fee you will support the human right work of the local Seta. (Pirkanmaan Seta ry website)

2.2 Sinuiksi - national support and help service

Another collaborator in this thesis in addition to Pirkanmaan Seta ry was the national support and help service Sinuiksi, which offers online and phone support for people living in Finland who have problems with accepting their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity or any LGBTIQ-related matter.

Sinuiksi, which roughly translates to English as “becoming in terms with oneself”, was launched in 2014 in with the help of Ranneliike.net-website (which is a service maintained by Sateenkaariryhteisöt ry). Before, Sinuiksi had functioned two years under Pirkanmaan Seta ry with rather small resources and professional basis. In 2013 Ranneliike.net and DTM Gay Bar & Night Club donated over 9000 euros to fund a support and help service. Pirkanmaan Seta ry also got funding from RAY, the Finnish Slot Machine Association, a non-profit gambling company, which enabled the service to be launched and developed further.

In addition to offering one-to-one phone services with a professional, Sinuiksi also has a group of voluntary people who work as “experience experts”, people who have gone through similar situations and have life experience, which a professional non-LGBTIQ worker might not be able to offer. Sinuiksi aims to reach people in the online world and social media to inform about the service to those who might not find that information themselves, professionals and other organisations included. They also aim to create a databank of all the knowledge and experiences they have gathered through the years while getting calls and speaking to people in different problematic situations.

For this thesis, Sinuiksi service offered background knowledge and knowhow through two training sessions which were held in Jyväskylä on May 16th 2015 and in Tampere on December 5th 2015. During those training days the knowhow to function as an experience expert was received and a lot of information through discussions absorbed.

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Empowerment

Empowerment - a term which is currently used in youth and community work and throughout the caring professions as a strategy for including people into the decision-making processes of

organisations and communities. The extent of this inclusion can refer to participation on committees, to influencing decision making or to the control of resources. (Fitzsimons, Hope, Cooper, Russell 2001, 18) As stated before, empowerment is more than just a mere working method, it has a wider range of impact and extent of inclusion than other social inclusion theories. Empowering working practices seem to have a way of committing people in to the services offered by professionals. Thus it is an obvious choice as a theory to back up this group project. Fitzsimons (et al. 2001) also state that using empowering practices with youth have had especially heartening results.

Charles Zastrow (2004) defines empowerment as the process of helping individuals, families, groups and communities to increase their personal, interpersonal, socioeconomic, and political strength and influence toward improving their circumstances. Every person has some power and control over their lives up to a certain sense, but sometimes a life-changing situations and events render people powerless and hopeless, leaving them just despair. For example, someone who is in an opinion majority in his own environment may find himself confused and powerless when in another, new environment due to cultural and societal differences and so on. Of course, this might lead to feelings of loneliness and oppression if such individual lack the necessary peer support and information about institutional support.

Dalrymple & Burke (1995) describe empowerment in a similar way, as working towards social change in a larger concept. Their model however is divided into three stages: feelings, ideas and action. On the first stage, individual experiences are worked with through providing facilities for mutual trust and confidence, providing a safe and secure platform for self-expression and through demonstrating active and engaging listening skills. This way individual problem themes can be linked with wider social dilemmas. On the second level the aim is to make the clients' own feelings and abilities to control their own lives notable and visible. The process concentrates on the client's feelings of self-esteem, trying to develop and possibly completely change inner thought patterns and external living conditions. This journey towards self-understanding can cause different ideas and thoughts to be transformed while decreasing self-blame and immobility, thus provoking belief in the client's own individual power. The third and last stage in Dalrymple and Burke's model consists of the aspect of action. Here the inner and very individually guided elements are aimed towards external action, seeking and executing changes within an organisation or a community and addressing problems in social welfare productions.

All these three levels, however, do not work in any specific order. Instead, they affect each other simultaneously and more importantly if there is a change in one of the levels then this will in turn cause a change at the other levels. -- Empowerment is not something one achieves at one instant but as an alternative it is a continual process of growth (Dalrymple &

Burke 1995, 89). Once an individual has become empowered, it can be extended even to a whole group, which the individual is connected with. Dalrymple & Burke (2006) state that in turn, the increase in group power can enhance the functioning of its individual members.

The empowerment process is an on-going practice used by social workers as a systematic, individualized way to fulfil a specific goal. The worker and the client work together as partners in a relationship built on trust and directed towards maximizing the client's strength and maintaining his or her integrity. Empowerment programs are designed to achieve positive results such as education, health, social welfare and so on in the lives of those affected by the programs. For improvement to occur in a client's life, there has to be honesty, meaning the limitations that the client is facing are discussed in an honest manner, this help to build the client- partner relationship, and may involve documentation of a client's progress, hence the process of achieving the desired outcome. (Fetterman & Wandersmand 2005, 56)

But when it comes to downright oppression, it is usually not accidental rather than unintentional by being woven into the fabric of societies at all levels and thus justified and supported by the institutions, may they be families, schools, law enforcement or social services, which then endangers societies and creates inequality. The multimedia project aims to fulfil the following benchmark of empowerment project as portrayed by Zastrow (2004): A project geared toward empowerment should ideally equip people with personal resources to take power, by developing their confidence, self-esteem, assertiveness, knowledge and skills. So, empowering projects should help remove blocks which act as inhibiting factors against integration into a community. These blocks are often located in the attitudes and beliefs of the clients themselves and consist of ideas about their own powerlessness and reluctance to act. Empowerment faces these feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness with an emphasis on the individual abilities of each person to address problems and solve them through self-reflection and -improvement.

Empowerment encourages clients to develop personal power to tackle their inhibiting factors and get to realise their strengths and opportunities through peer support and social networks. It bridges the gap of information by presenting the clients with arrays of self-expression in the language of media they understand and are comfortable with, through which they can make informed, perhaps better choices in life. Additionally, the essence of this empowerment project is the worry for the mental, social and emotional well-being of LGBTIQ people in Finland and to relieve that through offering themed peer group meetings and an outlet for their self-expressional needs.

3.2 LGBTIQ background

Homosexuals, with other LGBTIQ minorities, are one of the most stressed groups of individuals. The various stressful experiences which they face have been grouped under the term “minority stress” which takes account of the excess amount of stress experienced by individuals belonging to these stigmatised social categories, in particular sexual minorities. Homosexuals are faced with numerous stressors such as family reactions, the attitudes of society and the revelation of their homosexuality. This revelation is often a stressful experience, and the stress is accentuated by the possibility that it may lead to rejection. (Cavalcanti & Azevedo 2013, 153)

Affectional, erotic, and sexual orientation can be understood only within the social milieu in which the individual is embedded at a particular historical moment. Sociohistorical changes have transformed the meaning of homosexuality from its medical classification in 1869 by Benkert as one of many forms of sexual perversion. Fifty years ago it was conceptualized as a minority. More recently it has begun to be seen as a characteristic that defines a diverse, multi-ethnic, and multiracial community not only with a history but also with shared political and social concerns. (Garnets & Kimmel 2003, 23)

The status of LGBTIQ people in legal view has started to improve through legislation only as late as in the 21st century. The attitudes of the surrounding society have slowly started to adjust to the changing world in which a divergent sexual orientation or way of gender expression is much more visible in media as well as on the streets. In Finland, homosexual relations were legally a punishable crime until 1971 but special clauses were included in the penal code until 1998. From the COD register (Classification of Diseases) homosexuality was removed in 1981, which was one of the major milestones towards acceptance and equality. In the year 2000 the Finnish constitutional reform included an amendment which enforced legal equality and prohibited discrimination in general. This led to further improvement in the LGBTIQ status and in 2002 same-sex couples were allowed to register their relationship as a civil union, even though it did not get the same legal rights as marriage. A year later, in 2003, the status of transgender people improved quite a bit when an act about the recognition of the fixed gender of a transgender person came into force. The aim of the act was that the fixed gender could be legally acknowledged and that gender would be that person’s juridical and unambiguous sex. In 2009 the rights of a same-sex civil union increased. The act was changed so that adoption within the family became possible for couples in civil union. (Nissinen & Stålström 2005). In 2014 the Finnish Parliament voted about broadening the institution of marriage to pertain also same-sex couples. The act to come is set to be enforced in 2017-2018.

The primary advocate for LGBTIQ rights in Finland has to be Seta ry. It was originally founded on 1974 and is still functioning with 24 regional and national sub-organisations. Seta ry has always thrived to promote the subjectivity of a person, to strengthen the self-image of their members, and to empower the members of the LGBTIQ minority to make their voice heard. Self-determination has been one of their most important guiding principle. It is vital that these subjects are brought up in general discussion in the society and talked about using proper terms.

While working with a certain group of people, it is important to understand the concepts and terms that relate to this particular group. A project, which focuses on LGBTIQ members of the association, needs to clarify what kind of a group it is actually about, especially when some participants might not be a part of this minority at all. After all, the group in subject is open to all regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, religious background, ethnicity or any other defining matter, thus promoting discretion and tolerance. To further clarify, sexual minorities refer to people who identify themselves outside heterosexuality. This category is seen to include lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals (which in this sense refers to a person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to a transgender person), pansexuals and asexuals. The two latter ones are often causing questions, so explanations are required. A pansexual person is romantically and/or sexually attracted to a person, but doesn't mind the person's gender identity. This separates from bisexuality so that a pansexual person rejects the idea of gender binary, that there is only two genders: male and female, but broadens the scope to all gender identities. An asexual person on the other hand doesn't feel any sexual attraction at all. When it comes to gender minorities, that group is seen to include transgender people, who feel that they were born in the body of the opposite sex and might require body modification to fix their gender, transvestites, who have an inner need to express (usually) the opposite gender in their daily life through clothing, voice changing etc., but don't necessarily gain any sexual satisfaction from it, intergendered, who were born in an atypical state where their gender could not be determined by physical appearance, and others, which can describe all other gender identities which are not clearly included in the ones mentioned before or the person does not want to be categorised in to any of them. (Seta ry, online document.)

3.3 Multimedia and creativity

It could be said that we all live in a media culture from which we draw elements to build our own lives, identities and concepts of reality. That being said, the role of a modern person as a media consumer is not simply passive but it makes it possible to embrace different viewpoints in media and use media culture as a resource to create individual meanings, identities and life styles. For example, many diverse forms of counter-cultural and subcultural formats

have been born from a divergent viewpoint of a media consumer, often a young person who has thought something differently from the mainstream views.

Multimedia has been used by many social work professionals as a tool to express the diversity and creativity of their clients. This is usually done in face-to-face contact where the worker hands instructions, the participants carry out the activity and the results are then discussed. The internet, however, challenges such encountering work. In addition, the multicultural environment leads to a strong urge for renewal which has been unknown to the traditional group work. Thus, the field cannot rely on history as for how to tailor appropriate services to multicultural and digitally aware population. Instead, the active involvement will be developed in a dialogue-based approach together with various cultural groups (Salasuo 2007, 19). Even though the internet and other digital technologies have enabled a variety of different contextual changes in the lives of young people, it has to be noticed that the biggest changes relate to everyday functions moving in to the World Wide Web. The world all of us live in has always included both positive and negative things, happiness and sadness, good and bad experiences. When social work is moved to the online environments, the arising issues should be faced like other issues the clients are experiencing: by reacting, but not overreacting.

This project utilizes photography as the main visual medium because it has unique characteristics that make it a particularly powerful tool for visual self-expression. Photography provides us with a method which we can easily use to create new images that reflect upon our world. Images are transformed equally by the means with which we view them and the moments in which we view them (Campany 2008, 146). When you are behind the camera, you have a special role in the making of your own history. -- The act of capturing a moment, and then keeping a record of it, can add a dynamic element to the process of self-exploration. One aspect of photography that cannot be overlooked is point of view. It is important to understand how two separate people can view the same event and interpret it in entirely different ways. Point of view is flavoured by many factors— some of which have nothing to do with the event itself, but have more to do with our own personal histories. -- When we take a photo, we are editorializing, telling a story from our own subjective standpoint. This editorial stance may not be conscious on our part. But how we approach a subject with a camera— our camera angle, whether we are close or far from our subject, the environment, the time of day we choose to make the image, the kind of light that is available, how we interact with what we are going to photograph— reflects on us and our unique point of view. (Ramsay & Sweet 2008, 29-30)

There are many ways in which photography might be introduced. For example, a study of photography could be conducted through investigating the key institutions that use it: advertising, journalism and news, amateur and tourist photography, fashion, art and documentary,

police and military or even uses on the www. The sociological anatomy of these institutions might reveal the systems by which photographs are produced, the arteries of power and decision-making, or even the creative space that photographers are supposed to occupy. (Bate 2009, 1)

Another important aspect in addition to the physical tool of method in hand, is the psychological activity behind creativity. Mark Runco (2006) writes that creativity is an important and fascinating topic of study, but difficult one to define. This difficulty is due in part to its diverse expression; creativity plays a role in technical innovation, teaching, business, the arts and sciences, and many other fields. Many famous people have earned their reputations from their creativity; it is sometimes related to expertise. Other adults are highly creative, though perhaps in the everyday sense of coping, adapting, and solving novel problems. Although there is controversy about children but they, too, are creative. They may not be experts or even productive, but they are original and effectively expressive in their art, their dancing and singing, their imaginative play, and their perceptive questioning. It is even possible that children are more creative than adults, given their spontaneity and lack of inhibitions. Unlike adults, children do not rely on past experience, assumptions, and routines.

Creative activity is characterised by being imaginative, purposeful and original and is concerned with quality or value. We can assume, therefore, that the results of such activity would display elements of imagination and originality and would have some utility (in the broadest sense) that is of value. The level of utility and the nature of the value or quality of the outcomes of creative behaviour are to some extent determined by the individual but in the case of gifted individuals, these things would be determined by society at large. (Hickman 2005, 110)

Most research and writing on creativity has focused on individual creativity, the “lone genius,” with little recognition of the social and group factors that influence the creative process. Research on creativity has sought to understand the factors responsible for creative people and activities. Personality, developmental experiences, culture, motivation, and cognitive skills are just a few of the factors that appear to underlie creative behaviour. -- The lack of attention to group factors in the creativity field is consistent with much evidence in the literature that groups may inhibit intellectual activity or optimal performance. Groups may feel pressure to achieve premature consensus, leading to suboptimal and non-creative solutions. -- However, even in this literature there is a glimmer of hope. Research on minority influence in group contexts has discovered that exposure to minority points of view can increase creative thinking in other domains. (Paulus, Nijstad & Nijstad, 2003. p. 3-4)

3.4 Self-expression

Self-expression has a strong link to creativity and in many occasions one is not mentioned without the other. In their book *A Creative Guide to Exploring Your Life* (2008) Graham Ramsay and Holly Sweet write that at its most basic definition, self-expression is about someone presenting his or her own individual personality. The process of self-expression becomes an important means for self-discovery. Through this process we can learn about ourselves, how to present important parts of ourselves to others, and how to relate to others and to the larger world around us.

Thus, self-expression could be seen as a two-way street between ourselves and the people around us. The medium in between, be it photography, arts, writing or any other expressive performance, brings forth our thoughts and emotions for others to see. Deborah Plummer states that self-expression involves developing creativity and recognizing and celebrating the unique and diverse ways in which we each express who we are. It also consists of building and maintaining a sense of enjoyment and effectiveness in the act of communication. (Plummer 2014, 21)

It can be difficult to measure, contextualize, and understand the ideas and emotions stirring inside us, yet these feelings often represent the essence of who we are. Through the process of self-expression, we can organize thoughts and ideas that may have seemed chaotic, and give structure to that which was previously unstructured. Self-expression makes these things tangible so that we can better evaluate and understand them. (Ramsay & Holly 2014, 35)

Richard Hickman (2005, 104-107) reminds that while often the idea of self-expression is maligned when advocated as a desirable end in itself, is an important aspect of growing up. If an individual is denied the opportunity for self-expression, then emotional growth is stunted and less socially acceptable forms of expression are sometimes pursued. -- If we promote creative expression through art we are also promoting 'creative behaviour', which, by its very nature, can often be challenging. The 'artist as rebel' may well be a tired stereotype but, like most stereotypes, has its roots in some reality; the person educated to experiment, accept mistakes, try new ways of looking at and inventing things will also be someone who questions the status quo and contributes to the dynamism of society.

4 Objectives

Pirkanmaan Seta ry offers several different group activities but most of them are open, continuous groups with unstructured discussions and small activities, like playing board games, knitting or watching LGBTQ-related films. For this thesis the organisation requested a group

which could utilize a creative implement, such as photography, to bring the group together around a common method and goal. Thus the first objective of this project thesis was to support the empowerment of the group participants through creative photography exercises. The planned group model then aimed to effect on the group members and their personal skills and perceptions through empowerment and inspiring group activities both in the physical group and online features. A running theme throughout the project was positive and creative thinking and creating encouraging experiences for the participants.

Another objective for this thesis was to create and test a group activity model which combines physical group work with online-based discussions and exercises. Also the effects of scheduling the group for summer was to be observed, as most the organisation's group are on hold during the summer months. One of the aims was to create a model which could be partially or wholly used by the organisation or other facilitators in the future.

The final objective was to improve personally as a group leader so that interaction with the group would be free and natural without any inhibiting personal aspects, while supporting the other goals of this thesis. The aim was to further improve the skills required to lead a diverse group using multiple tools and methods, and aim to follow the theoretical guidelines of group dynamics and empowerment.

All objectives were to be evaluated through feedback gathered from the participants, written questionnaire and personal observations. One of the main parts in the questionnaire focuses on the group leader's skills. Also personal evaluation through comparing SWOT evaluations done before and after the project was to be conducted.

5 Project planning and implementation

Planning for the photography group project was started in early May, 2015. Discussions with Pirkanmaan Seta ry took place and thoughts about the theme for the group were gathered. Finally, a photography group was decided to be implemented, based on a preliminary plan for another similar project in Helsinki. The implementation of the group project was decided to take place during the summer 2015, more precisely starting on July 9th. Pirkanmaan Seta ry hoped for a group for the summertime as many other groups have a summer break and thus there would be a need for a summer group.

The group was planned to consist of 5-6 meetings, once a week. Each meeting would have a theme or a subject which would be talked about and practiced. The first 2 weeks would be about learning the basics of photography and on the first meeting an online photodiary would be launched where the participants could express themselves through photos. Each photodi-

ary week would have a theme: myself, surroundings, feelings and dreams. Every week the participants would take one photograph a day and post it the online forum with their thoughts and reflections. On the last two session, the photodiary method would be discussed and reflected upon. The last 2-3 sessions would also focus more on self-expression and aim towards a final exhibition where the participants' photographs could be portrayed to their friends and families.

Each meeting would also have a starter exercise to wake up the participants' creativity and thinking. For example, mood cards, chair photograph cards and other ice-breakers could be used to bring the participants in to a calm, safe place physically and mentally. Pirkanmaan Seta ry has very functional, but a bit small facilities for different needs so indoors spaces and outside surroundings could be utilized together to keep the group dynamics flexible but also to use the different spaces to create different moods and settings for photography.

To support the participants during the project, a discussion forum would be launched in some of the free forum platform available online for free. There the group members would have a possibility to discuss the exercises and ask for help if needed. Also assignments could be distributed there between meetings if required. The aim is to create a tight-knit, united group in which the participants could rely on each other while photographing.

The final goal of the project would be to create a photo exhibition if the participants would be willing to showcase their photographs. It could be made public or private, depending on how the participants feel about the idea. It is up to the participants to decide whether they want to participate in the exhibition or not, but making their lives known in an anonymous way might be a very empowering experience and show to the participants that their lives and experiences are just as valuable and valid as everyone else's. Few locations have already been considered but remain to be decided later due to the financial aspect of booking a venue.

After the exhibition there would be a final meeting where feedback is gathered from the participants and the overall feelings about the group project are gone through, discussed and documented. After that the final version of the actual thesis is written, proofread and submitted for presentation.

5.1 Role of the group leader

The group leader is in a very important role regarding how the group will function. It is his role to be the expert of the subject, the guide around obstacles, the listener of problems and success and the interpreter of situations and emotions - not primarily an authority. One of the

group leader's main focuses is to create and maintain a confidential, safe, open and supportive atmosphere in the group. At the beginning of each session, the group leader brings the group together to express their current feelings and thoughts about the upcoming session. In these "warm-up exercises" the group leaders' main goal is to get everyone into a safe, open mood and promote kindness and togetherness. All participants need to be noticed and their thoughts reflected.

Nichols and Jenkinson write that other than the administrative task of running the group, creating a membership, a working environment and time-keeping, the responsibilities of the group leader have to do with communication, care and helping the group to be productive. The leader must ensure that the group members know what it is all about, that is, what the group is for and how they are expected to behave. Any ground rules for the group should be made explicit and agreed early on; matters such as confidentiality need to be tackled in a matter-of-fact way, so that people know where they are. (Nichols & Jenkinson 2006, 64)

Before handing out any assignments and even before the first session, the group leader should get comfortable with his own history and its relations to photography. He needs to have some personal experience about working with cameras and photography as a concept. In an ideal situation, the group leader goes through all the assignments and exercises with someone outside the project to be able to reflect his experiences. It is also useful if the group leader practises to write comments about photographs as this teaches to see the different ways of interaction used in photography and how to pinpoint meaningful details in the photo. Many kinds of feelings and memories can rise from facing self-portraits and other photos so the group leader should be prepared to discuss them with the group. At first it might not be so comfortable to be the target in photography and the first self-portrait might look horrible to oneself, or it might show things that one did not want to see. Through personal experiences the group leader can understand the group members' reactions more easily and guide them in the processing of those reactions. But above all, through facing his own personal portraits, the group leader knows how to be sensitive and considerate towards others' portraits. When talking about self-portraits, sensitivity is the key word, negative comments towards a self-portrait becomes personal critique extremely easily - or at least that's how we hear it.

The manner in which the group is set up and ran is very important. The kind of person you are as a leader will be assessed by the group based on how they see you acting, what you do and say and the timing and manner of your delivery. Conclusions will be drawn and inferences made, based largely on your behaviour. This will have great significance because members who have no group experience inevitably will be searching for a 'role model', that is, an example of the behaviour required in a group. You need to give the appropriate example. (Nichols & Jenkinson 2006, 58)

It's also good for the group leader to prepare for the negative issues which may rise with this kind of a working method. When any negative points or issues rise, it is the group leader's duty to support that person and offer a verbal or an artistic outlet to the negative feelings. Although it is important to remember that nobody should be forced to open up about their issues, the group members can decide for themselves how much they wish to share with the group leader and other group members. The most important thing is to convey the idea of confidentiality inside the group so everyone feels safe to open up.

Photography as a working method in a group activity has lots of useful features from the group leader's perspective. Playing with photos and having fun in a group can have a very refreshing effect on the participants who might be used to the very formal and learning-focused setting of schools. In this project it is the group leader's responsibility to make that separation from the school world. The group leader is not a teacher but a reliable adult and a peer who helps the participants to express themselves by offering new methods and ways of taking pictures. Nichols and Jenkinson emphasize that it is very advisable for the group leader to participate in as many activities as possible to enforce the feeling of belonging together. Although playing with photography can be liberating, it cannot be the only aim of the group. The aim of using photography as a working method with the participants is to evoke their creativity, boost their self-esteem, and also to teach new skills and ways of looking at the world.

At the end of each session and finally the whole project, the group leader aims to bring the group "back to ground" and ready for getting home. Sometimes people who are doing creative work get into a flow state where time seems to fly by and outside world loses all interest. For creative work, it's a wonderful state but when the group has a limited time to use, it is the group leader's responsibility to always have small cool down exercises which brings the participants thoughts back to being more objective of what was done during that particular session and what's going to be done next time. This cuts the flow state and lets the participants to leave safely.

5.2 Group meetings

Before the group project could be started, a plan for recruiting the participants needed to be made. It was also important to decide the dates and times for the group meetings, so that they would fit to the organisation's own calendar. It was discussed with Pirkanmaan Seta ry that they could help the recruitment process by posting advertisements in their primary social media outlet, Facebook (Illustration 1), and their webpage. An advertisement poster and text were created using postermywall.com, a free online service for creating posters (Illustration 2). All contacts were asked to be sent to the group leader's personal email for quick response

purposes. The cooperation with Pirkanmaan Seta ry during the advertising period was seamless.

The aim was to get at least 4-5 participants to sign up and luckily, during the few weeks of advertising, six interested people contacted the group leader via email. Few days before the first session on July 9th 2015 the group leader sent an information email to all signed-up group members, which included the location of the group, duration and what to bring with to the group meeting. Everyone was asked to take with them a functioning camera but it was emphasized that the quality of the camera does not play a large role in the exercises, so even a camera phone would be suitable.

5.2.1 First meeting

The first meeting took place at the Pirkanmaan Seta ry's office in central Tampere on July 9th at 18:00-20:00. Six people had signed up but only five came to the meeting. As the group leader had informed the participants that he would be present at the office an hour earlier, a few participants came 15-20 minutes earlier and had something to eat before the group started. Discussion during this time was very casual and not relating to the photography group. The meeting was started with an all-around introduction where all the participants and the group leader introduced themselves shortly and told why they had come to the group and what expectations did they have. Everybody was then told to think about what colour could represent their current feeling and pick a colour card (Illustration 3) from the table. Then everyone showed their card and explained why they had chosen it.

After the colour cards the group leader explained about the group project and what would happen in the upcoming meetings. Also the participation in this thesis was discussed. Everyone was given a choice to leave and quit the group at any point without any consequences. If anyone chose to quit, all materials they had created, photographed or written during the group meetings would be destroyed and not used in this thesis. A few important ground rules were set: everyone are equals in the group, all feedback towards other participants is given in sensitive and constructive manner, all discussions and events in the group are confidential, and participation in the exercises is never mandatory. It was also emphasized for empowering purposes that the group leader was not a teacher but rather an instructor and a facilitator for the project and that the participants were in the focus.

Then everyone were asked to take out their cameras and snap a quick selfie (a self-taken self-portrait) to test their cameras and for the group leader to see that everyone was comfortable handling a camera. It was made sure that everyone knew their camera's main func-

tions such as, zooming, tilting and taking a picture. As everyone agreed to be familiar with their devices, the group leader decided not to use more time on that.

The photodiary exercise was discussed in the middle of the session. The group leader explained that the photodiary would be an ongoing online exercise where the participants would take one photograph each day for four weeks and each week would have its own theme. Different online platforms were discussed and the group decided to use Facebook because all participants already had an account and were familiar with its functions. The group leader reminded the participants about Facebook's legal rights and photo ownership but its functionality overruled possible security threats. The group leader would open a restricted Facebook group after the group meeting and send invitations to all six signed-up participants. Everyone seemed to be very excited about the photodiary method, few mentioned that they had never done anything like that before.

As the last exercise of that meeting was a post card exercise called "A card from who?". At the start of that exercise the participants were divided into pairs (one paired with the group leader as there was only 5 participants). Then they were told to tell their pair a meaningful event in their life that had positively changed their life path. 10 minutes per story was given and then each person would pick a post card best representing the story and write a post card from themselves to the person in that happy life event. Once everyone was ready, all post-cards were read out and they would be given to the right storyteller.

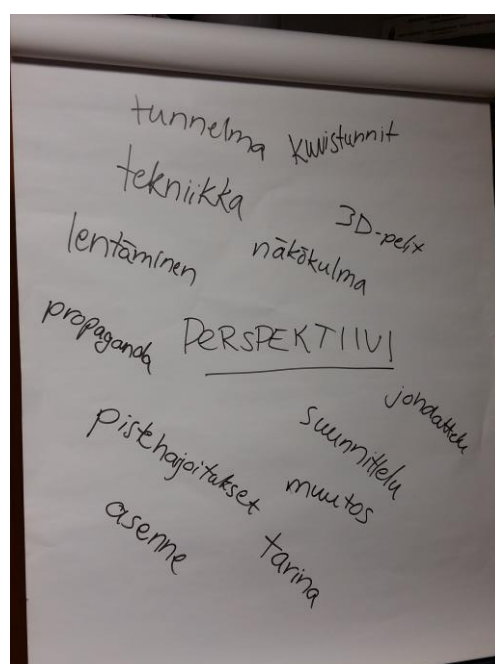
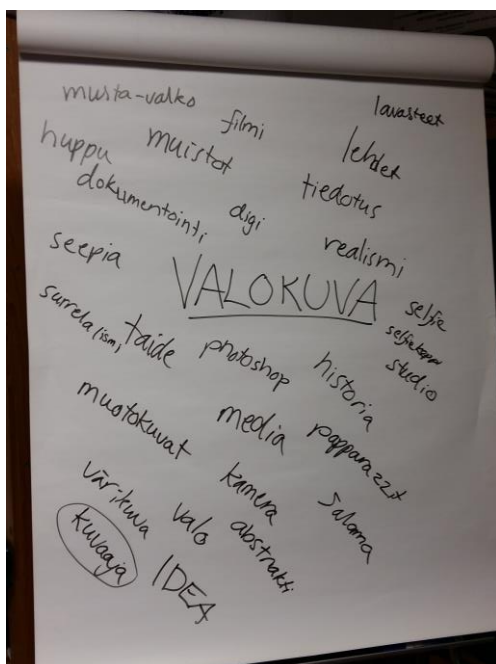
Lastly the group was gathered into a feedback circle where everyone could freely express how they felt about that meeting and what kind of thoughts it evoked. Many group members said that they were excited to get forward and learn more about photography, and that it was nice to have a diverse group with people from many age groups and subgroups in the LGBTIQ umbrella.

The goal of the first meeting was to bring the group together so everyone would get to know each other and the group leader. As the first meeting was bound have lots of informative content, the exercises were designed to interrupt that information flood and bring certain lightness to the meeting. After the meeting had ended, the group leader created the already mentioned Facebook group for the photodiary, sent invitations and posted pre-written photodiary instructions (Illustration 4) in that group. Also the sixth person who had signed up for the group, but didn't show up on the first meeting, was invited to join the photodiary group so s/he could introduce him-/herself to the rest of the group.

5.2.2 Second meeting

A few days before the meeting, the group leader had asked via Facebook that all group members would take with them a personal item to the second meeting. The item should fit into the palm of their hand and not be an electronic device. The participants should have a deep personal connection to the item. It could be something that a very close person had given them, for example. The participants were also asked to bring their camera, as usual.

The second group meeting took place at the same location as the first one, on July 16th starting at 18:00, and finishing at 20:00. Four participants came to the meeting. First the group was asked to pick a DiXit®-card (Illustration 5) from the table while thinking the question: “what does photography mean to me?”. DiXit® is a card game created by Jean-Louis Roubira and it has won several board game awards since its publishing in 2009. The DiXit® set used here is *DiXit 3 - Journey*® which includes 84 colourful and artistic cards about different subjects, most of them very imaginary and expressive. Everyone showed their card and explained why they chose it. After the exercise two words were written on a flap board: photograph and perspective, *valokuva* and *perspektiivi* in Finnish. Then the group members were asked to say what came to mind about those words. Below are photographs of each flap board.



Two particular terms arose from the first word, photography: an idea and a photographer. The connection between those two was discussed with the participants and several thoughts came up: does a photographer need an idea to take pictures?, where do ideas come from? and what inspires creativity in a photographer?. Also ideas like “a point of view” arose from the perspective part. These thoughts were asked to be kept in mind during the rest of the meeting.

Next, a projector and a large screen were set up to show the participants what the World Wide Web thought about photographs and perspective. Words photograph and perspective were one by one written into the popular search engine Google and the image results were discussed. The participants made thoughtful observations on how photographs can be used in so many different ways and settings to tell a story. Then it was discussed how the perspective from which the particular photo was taken, effects the story being told. Also photograph balancing and “the Golden rule” were shortly gone through.

After the theoretical part the group members were asked to take out their cameras and the items which were asked to be brought to that meeting. Everybody was asked to share why that particular item was important to them and insightful discussion arose about what made some items important to us and some not so much. The connecting idea in all was that the items were connected to an important person or an important event. All of those connections were positive and had a relaxing or soothing vibe for their owners. The items included things like jewellery, a wooden cross, a bag and even a sunglass case. With their items ready, the participants were asked to think about the surrounding space (Pirkanmaan Seta ry’s office), find a spot for their item where it would look like it belonged there and then take a picture of it. The exercise was to continue until they had taken five photographs. Then, they were told to find a place where the item would look most unfamiliar and strange, and take 5 photographs. The use of different perspectives and settings was reminded. Lastly, they were asked to pick 3 photographs from all that they had taken during that meeting and post them in the Facebook group as a collage, telling a story. Afterwards the exercise was discussed. All participants found the first part quite easy as they had seen their important item in different settings before, but looking at the item from another perspective and trying to find an unfitting place proved to be a bit more difficult. Many participants said that once they had taken a couple photos in the second part, it got easier, as their mind setting was changing to see the item differently.

Finally, the group was gathered together to discuss the meeting and how the first week of photodiary had been. Participants expressed that they were excited to continue and learn more about using photography in creative ways. It was also discussed, if the final photo exhibition was a good idea or not. Most of the group told that they didn’t feel comfortable with the idea of showing their pictures to other people, not even their friends or families. Many felt that the idea of an exhibition was effecting their photographing as they felt they needed to censor too much. It was then decided that there would not be an exhibition but some kind of another final project. The group leader suggested an exercise called “the Treasure map of My Life” as the final project and the participants agreed.

5.2.3 Third meeting

Because of the group leader fell ill with a summer flu, the third meeting had to be moved from July 21st to 30th. As before, the meeting started at 18:00 at the same location and finished around 19:45. Three group members arrived, the other two had informed the group leader of their absence. The exercises for the third meeting were planned based on the weather outside. If it were to be sunny, exercises were meant to be done outside but otherwise the meeting would have to be held indoors. The weather that day was awful, so we stayed inside. The meeting was started with colour cards, as the first one, and this time the participants were much quicker to decide on their cards. Quite bleak colours were chosen because of the weather and the fact that most participants had gotten wet on their way to the office. Luckily the office has quite good facilities for washing up and drying out.

As the first exercise to inspire their creative thinking, the group members were asked to take four small pieces of paper and write on each a word from four categories: colours, shapes, moods and letters. Then the papers were mixed in a bowl, each chose two and started taking pictures. The idea was to restrict the possibilities of photography subjects to promote creativity. The participants had to combine objects and different surfaces in the office to reach their goals. If the participants felt that combining two words was too easy, they were asked to pick a third and even fourth to make it more challenging. After a while some of the photographs were gone through together and appraised for thoughtful and creative combinations. It was emphasized by the group leader that the participants could use this simple exercise by themselves after the meetings if they felt like they didn't have any creative photography ideas.

After a small break, some tables were brought together and the group was seated around them. The group leader presented several moulding tools and random objects, like knives, bottle caps, brushes, stones, cutlery etc. Then, some kinetic sand was brought to the table. Kinetic sand is a product by a company called WABA Fun (based in the US and Sweden) which consists of 98% of pure sand and 2% of non-toxic silicone binding agents. It resembles moist sand, doesn't stain or stick to surfaces and thus is perfect for creative play indoors. Kinetic sand is mainly used in with children to build senso-motoric skills. (WABA Fun Kinetic Sand website) The participants were first asked to play freely with the sand and get familiar with all the available tools. Then the group leader gave topics like favourite food, a fruit, a place that calms you down, and each creation was to be photographed. Following are few examples of those photographs.



The participants commented that this exercise was something totally different they had expected to be doing and really made them think outside the box as the sand is very flexible material to build but even the slightest movement might cause the structure to crumble.

After clean-up the group was gathered in a feedback circle to unwind and talk about their thoughts during that meeting. Also thoughts about the second and third weeks of photodiary were gone through. The participants expressed that the first excitement about the photodiary had subsided and it was more difficult to take pictures daily. The group was encouraged to

continue as taking pictures daily would help them to see their surroundings from another point of view and force them gently to think about their live situations.

5.2.4 Fourth meeting

The fourth and second to last meeting took place on August 6th at 18:00, a sunny and warm evening. The meeting was finished by 20:00. Because the previous session was held inside, this time the four participants were asked to take their belongings to the office upstairs and only take their cameras. The meeting got to start a little bit late, as the person with the office keys arrived later than was expected.

The group meeting was started with a discussion about photographing outside, more specifically in a busy city centrum. Basic instructions about photographing other people was gone through and it was emphasized to always ask permission if any people were photographed so that they could be recognized in the picture. After the orientation the group was given a photography exercise known as “Two Dozen”. In that exercise the participants chose a direction to start walking to and after taking 24 steps, they took a picture. They were asked to focus on interesting details, continuity and repetition, which were talked about in the second meeting while learning the photography basics. After taking 10 pictures the participants would return.

As some participants took longer than others to complete the task, the ones returning earlier were given a few shorter exercises to do while waiting. These included taking pictures while focusing on a certain colour or a shape. After these short exercises the participants mentioned that they had never realised how much different colours were used in advertising and that many colours could be find in strange places. Below are examples of these exercises.



When taking pictures outside in a city environment, one is sure to attract the attention of other people passing by. It also happened this time as at one point some intoxicated, a bit

threatening-looking couple started yelling to our group that we are not allowed to photograph them. It was clear that the photography group felt uncomfortable in the situation even as they had not taken any pictures of these people. The group leader then took control of the situation and calmly explained that the group was there only to take pictures of the environment and small details, not of people. If by any chance a person would be photographed, the group members would always ask permission for the picture. The group leader agreed to show all his photographs taken that day to ensure that no pictures of that couple were taken. Thus, the situation calmed down and the couple moved on. Afterwards the group moved back inside to discuss the exercises and the events.

As the next meeting would be the last, the group was given instructions to start thinking about their treasure map. The group leader would provide colourful cardboards, markers, glitter, glue and other crafts supplies for the next meeting but before that the participants could spend the remaining time to cut inspirational and eye-pleasing pictures from magazines provided by the office. The idea of the treasure map is to imagine what would one's life be like after five or ten years, what kind of dreams does it include and what would help to get towards them. The participants were encouraged to think about the pictures they had taken during the meetings and at home so they could also use them in their maps.

Lastly, the group was asked to put all cut-outs to an envelope for safekeeping and gather into a circle. The photodiary's last week was just ended and some reflections were made about how the participants had learned that even if everybody's photographs were different, they all had that certain flavour of life to them. The photodiary discussion was decided to be kept short as two people were missing and it could be continued in the last meeting.

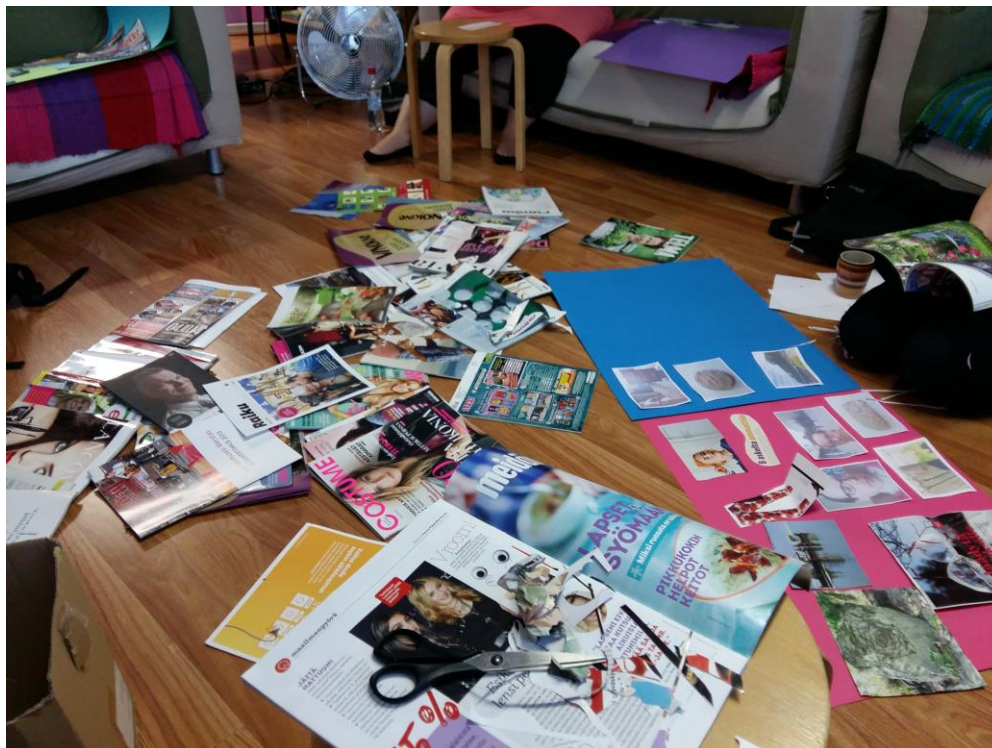
5.2.5 Fifth meeting

Before the last meeting, the group leader posted a message on Facebook asking the participants to bring something nice to share and eat for the last session, if they felt like it. It would be nice to chat casually and enjoy treats while working on the treasure maps.

The last meeting on August 13th at 18:00 had unfortunately only 3 participants. Once again, the participants were asked to pick a DiXit®-card to represent their feelings for this meeting. Many felt wistful and hoped that the group would still continue. The food and drinks were set up and enjoyed by everyone. The meeting had a more casual atmosphere than the ones before.

Everyone worked with their treasure maps and some even made several as there was lots of material and a bit longer time reserved for the group than before. Everyone discussed their

treasure maps quite openly while working, without any pressure or such, and once everyone was finished the maps were shown and explained more thoroughly. Below are photographs of the cutting session and a finished treasure map.



After the treasure maps had been discussed, the group leader asked the participants about their thoughts on the last session as well as the group project as a whole. They said that they

had enjoyed the photodiary even if it had been difficult at some points, the exercises during each session were very creative and thought-provoking, and the atmosphere in every meeting was positive and encouraging. The meeting finished around 20:45.

Afterwards, the group project was discussed with the Executive Director of Pirkanmaan Seta ry, Mikko Väisänen. Mikko praised the group of inventive ideas and implementation, creative use of the facilities and the fact that the group was organized during summer when there are only few groups running.

5.3 Photodiary

Halkola, Mannermaa, Koffert and Koulu write in their book *Valokuvan terapeutinen voima*, The Therapeutic power of photography, that it is significant that through photography it is possible to pay attention to things that bother inside one's own mind. Photography simplifies, brings things visible and awakes memories. In a therapeutic sense, photography has been used in different methods for quite some time. Photography and photographs act almost as a bridge to the past and enable a therapeutic process through empathy. (Halkola et al. 2009, 13). Photodiary can be seen as one of these methods that can be used in therapeutic work but in the context of this thesis, it functions more as a self-expressive and reflective tool for the group's participants. If any mental clarification or self-reflective healing is achieved, it is due to the participant's own efforts.

While planning the photodiary exercise for the photography group, it was very surprising to notice that there was very few theoretical studies about the method. The national database search portal for universities and universities of applied science, Nelli, was accessed several times with search words like 'photodiary', 'photo diary' and 'photography diary', but no relevant results were found. As such theoretical basis does not exist, this thesis is on its own part creating the methodological background for this method and its research, from an empirical viewpoint.

Before the first actual meeting of the photography group, the following instructions (Illustration 3) were posted to the group's Facebook page. The instructions were partly based on similar guidance from a project held by lecturer Reetta Savolainen, at the Laurea University of Applied Science.

Valokuvapäiväkirjan ohjeistus

[Muokkaa](#)

Tekijä: Joonas Rontu (8. heinäkuuta 2015 kello 15:53)

Valokuvapäiväkirja on henkilökohtainen projektisi, jossa päivittäin julkaiset sinulle merkityksellisen valokuvan tämän ryhmän Facebook-sivulla. Valokuvassa voit olla sinä itse, lempiesineesi, kaunis maisema, jonka ohi kävelit tai vaikka ikkunalaudallasi istuva kissa. Valokuvapäivis opettaa näkemään ympäröivän maailman aivan uudella tavalla, auttaa muistojen, ajatusten, tunteiden ja mielikuvien tallettamisessa ja helpottaa jakamaan elämäsi muille. Tärkeintä kuitenkin on, että valokuva, jonka täällä julkaiset, on sinulle itsellesi merkityksellinen. Valokuvien kautta opit tuntemaan itsesi ja muut ryhmäläiset paremmin ja pääset ilmaisemaan omaa persoonaasi.

Valokuvapäivis voi olla julkinen tai yksityinen ja täysin vapaamuotoinen. Oikeastaan valokuvapäivis voi olla esimerkiksi verkkosivu, perinteinen valokuva-albumi, kenkälaatikollinen paperivalokuvia, negatiivarkisto, osa isompaa verkkoprojektia tai mitä tahansa muuta. Tässä ryhmässä luomme valokuvapäivistä yhdessä. Täällä julkaisemasi valokuvat näkyvät vain ryhmäläisille, eivätkä ulkopuoliset pääse sivulle.

Ohjeet valokuvapäiviksen tekoon:

1. Aloita valokuvaaminen! Voit kuvata jokapäiväistä elämäsi ja kiinnostavia asioita, joita päivän aikana kohtaat. Voit käyttää digikameraa, web-kameraa tai vaikka puhelimesi kameraa. Kuvien laadulla ei ole väliä.
2. Julkaise päivittäinen valokuvasi tässä ryhmässä joka viikolle merkityssä albumissa. Pyri ottamaan ja julkaisemaan 1 valokuva joka päivä. Yksi julkaisu voi sisältää useammankin valokuvan, jos siltä tuntuu. Jos olet matkalla, tai muutoin estynyt käyttämään Facebookia, voit julkaista useamman päivän valokuvat kerralla, mutta lisää ne yksitellen erillisinä kuvina.
3. Kiinnitä huomiota niihin ajatuksiin ja tunteisiin, joita sen päivän valokuva sinussa herättää. Kirjoita ne valokuvan alle ja julkaise. Muista kuitenkin julkaista vain sellaisia kirjoituksia ja valokuvia, jotka haluat muiden ryhmäläisten lukevan.
4. Valokuvapäiväkirjaa tehdään yhteensä 4 viikkoa ja jokaiselle viikolle on oma teemansa, jonka pohjalta valokuvia otetaan. Teemojen ideana on ruokkia mielikuvitusta, ei rajoittaa kuvaamista ja luovuutta.
5. Kommentoi! Kerro toiselle ryhmäläiselle mielipiteesi hänen valokuvastaan. Jos haluat antaa kritiikkiä, tee se kohteliaaseen sävyyn. Valokuvapäiviksessä ei ole tarkoitus puuttua kuvien tekniseen laatuun tai käytettyyn tekniikkaan, vaan huomio tulisi kiinnittää kekseliäisyyteen ja siihen, mitä valokuva kertoo sen ottajasta.

Kun alat valokuvata, kiinnitä huomiota asioihin, jotka...

- ovat kiinnostavia ja merkityksellisiä juuri sinulle, kenenkään muun ei tarvitse ymmärtää miksi
- voimistavat sinua
- voivat auttaa voittamaan omia ennakkoluulojasi
- antavat uusia ideoita
- tuovat mieleen hyviä muistoja
- edustavat sinun tapaasi ajatella ja toimia

Kaikkein tärkeintä on pitää hauskaa ja nauttia valokuvaamisesta!

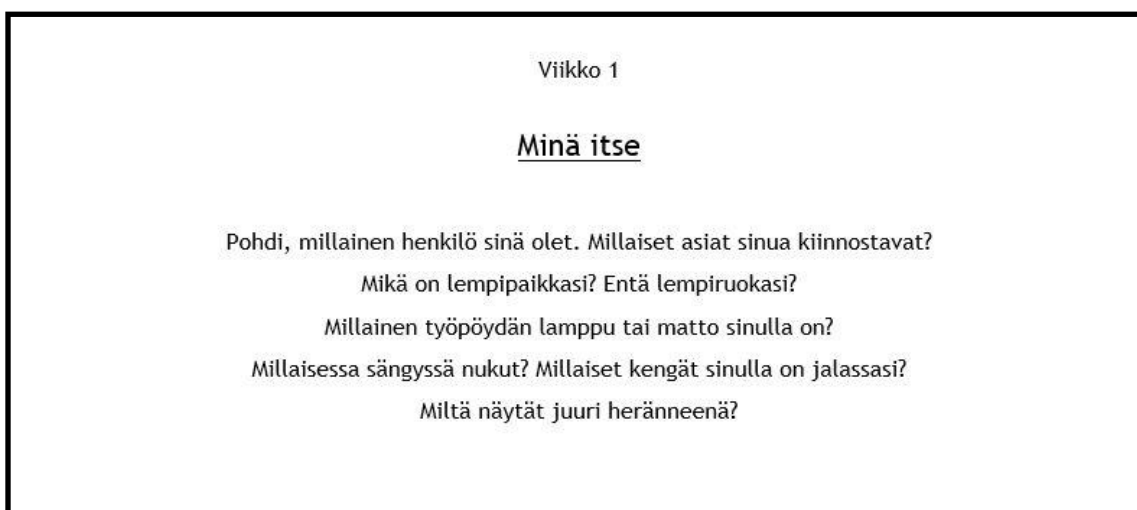
 Tykkää

 Kommentoi

In the instructions, the participants are asked to post 1 photograph a day in the Facebook group under a folder marked for a certain week. Each week would have a theme and photographs should be taken based on that. It is also emphasized that the themes are supposed to promote creativity, not inhibit it. Attention should be paid to what kind of thoughts each picture brings forth and if the participants so please, they could be publish with the photo. The Facebook group is strictly restricted only to the group members so no outside can see the pictures posted. As the photodiaries are very personal projects for each participants, no exemplary photographs are displayed.

5.3.1 First week: Myself

The first week of photodiary started right after the first meeting, on Thursday, July 9th and the picture below was posted to the folder marked Week 1.



Here participants are given an assignment to ponder upon their own person. What kind of interests, shoes, meals, surroundings and friends, for example, do they have? The assignment was written to have a few opening questions so if nothing else came to mind, they could post pictures just answering to those questions. The start of a new method being implemented should be easily accessible and as low-threshold as possible. During the first week, 39 individual photographs were posted in Facebook group and 32 comments were posted to them. The participants seemed excited and motivated to continue with the project.

5.3.2 Second week: People and items around me

The second photodiary week started after the second meeting was going to be about the people and items that the group members would meet and use in day-to-day life. The participants were asked to think about how all those people and objects effect on them and how they make the participants feel. They were also encouraged to bring forth pictures and stories that are not so pleasant but which have to be faced to get by. The following picture was

posted in a folder marked Week 2. It's also reminded that if they want to photograph anybody at a close distance, they should always ask for permission first.

Viikko 2:

Ihmiset ja esineet ympärilläni

Mieti, millaisessa ympäristössä ja millaisten ihmisten kanssa elät. Katso jääkaappiisi ja ota kuva ensimmäisestä asiasta, joka osuu silmiisi. Ota kuva sinulle läheisestä ihmisestä. Millaisia ihmisiä metrossa tai bussissa istuu? Muistatko niitä kasvoja, jotka eilen kävelivät kadulla vastaan? Miltä näyttää paras ystäväsi tai isovanhempasi? Mikä sinua ärsyttää eniten ympäristössäsi? Minkä asian poistaisit, jos voisit?

Läheisemme ja elinympäristömme muokkaavat meitä enemmän kuin aina tahtoisimme myöntää. Siksi onkin hyvä välillä kiinnittää huomioita niihin asioihin, jotka vaikuttavat elämäämme päivittäin. Ensimmäisellä viikolla näimme niitä tärkeitä asioita, joista itse pidämme. Tällä viikolla saa ja on suotavaakin, että joukkoon eksyy myös niitä ei-niin-mieluisia asioita, jotka tulevat meitä elämässä vastaan.

Muista aina kysyä lupa toisen henkilön kuvaamiseen! Jos läheisesi eivät tahdo kasvojaan kuvattavan, ota kuva vaikka mummon villasukista, jos ne muistuttavat hänestä. Muista myös ohjenuora julkisella paikalla kuvaamisesta: usean ihmisen joukkoa voi kauempaa kuvata, mutta lähikuvista on pyydettyä lupa.

Because the third meeting had to be moved a week later, the second photodiary week was going to be discussed together with the third week. 26 pictures were posted and 13 comments made during that week.

5.3.3 Third week: Feelings

Feelings and inner thoughts were the theme for the third week. The participants were asked to look deep into their own thoughts and emotions to figure out what made them happy or sad. They were asked to focus on both big and small emotions and to express how those emotions were visible in their actions and themselves. As perspectives and viewpoints were an important theme on the second meeting, the group members were encouraged to take pictures from new angles and perspectives. The picture below was posted in Week 3's folder.

Viikko 3: Fiilikset

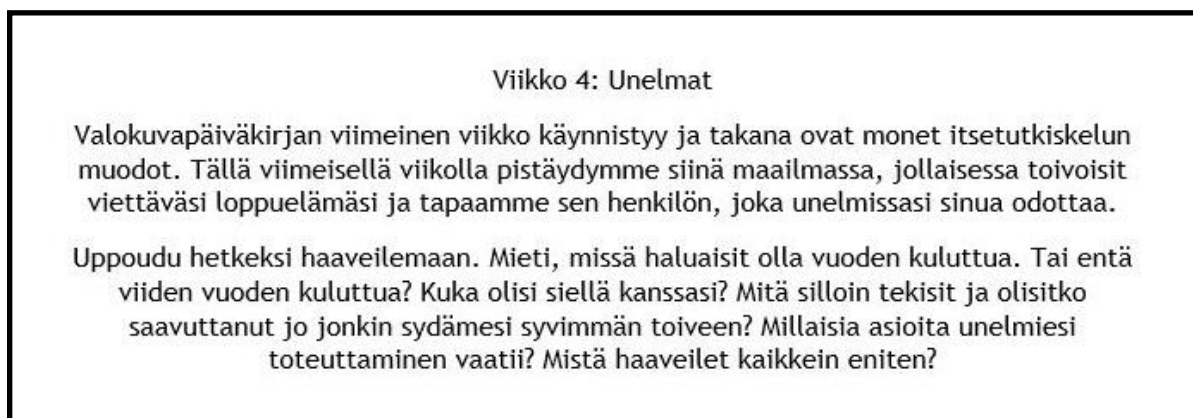
Valokuvapäiviksen kolmannella viikolla siirrytään ympäristöstä sisälle omaan itseemme. Fiilistele, miltä tämä viikko sinusta tuntuu. Mikä oli päivän paras hetki? Mikä maistui, tuntui tai tuoksui parhaalta juuri tänään? Entä mikä ei sujunut hyvin? Miltä sinä näytät, kun olet iloinen tai surullinen? Mikä tekee sinut onnelliseksi juuri nyt?

Kuvaa pieniä tai suuria tunteita ja keskity siihen, miten tuo tunne näkyy sinussa ja tekemisessäsi. Lähesty noita tuntemuksia eri kanteilta ja ota ryhmäkertojen oppeja hyödyntäen kuvia eri näkökulmista. Pohdi, mikä edustaisi parhaiten juuri sitä fiilistä, joka sinulle tuli, kun myöhästyit bussista tai pääsit kotona pitkän päivän jälkeen sohvalle. Yllätä itsesi ja muut ryhmäläiset luovuudellasi!

That week about emotions seemed to be a tough one, as only 17 pictures were posted. Whether the participants found the emotion assignment too complicated or challenging, was never clearly expressed in the discussions during the third meeting but based on the low amount of photographs it could be said so. This particular assignment could have opened a lot of paths for self-reflection but as it might not have been completely in sync with the topic of creative photography group, the participants' expectations didn't meet in this assignment.

5.3.4 Fourth week: Dreams

The final week of photodiary consisted of exploring the dreams and hopes of the participants. This theme was chosen to support their working on the treasure maps on the following meetings and to provide everyone with a supply of photographs to be used in that exercise. The following picture was posted in Facebook at the end of week 3, under the folder Week 4.



Connecting the previous weeks as a whole, the fourth week assignment was to end the project in happy, hopeful emotions and create a complete path from personal surroundings, through safety nets and environments, back to inner thoughts, future expectations and dreams. As the summer was closing an end and some participants were starting their studies and work, it was not realistic to expect a large amount of photographs for the last week. 15 photographs were posted, along with 8 comments. Most comments included thanks for the group leader and the other participants for letting all group members to take a peek into each other's lives.

6 Evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic investigation of the worth or significance of an object. Evaluation normally involves some standards, criteria, measures of success, or objectives that describe the value of the object. Evaluation can identify criteria for success, lessons to learn, things to achieve, ways to improve the work, and the means to move forward. (Zarinpoush 2006, 19)

Hypothetically speaking, one of the projects biggest aims was to address the need for a creative methods group in Pirkanmaan Seta ry during summertime. The group was be targeted mainly to young individuals through advertisements, but to promote openness, everyone was welcome to join. The project had two main goals: to empower the participants through photography and creative exercises and to create a new type of activity for the organisation. Reaching these goals and their requirements were to be evaluated before and after the implementation. A preliminary hypothesis was that the participants learn new skills in the field of photography, form a somewhat united group and get empowered through group work and other trust-creating and self-expressive activities. From the project's point of view; it was expected that a photography group would benefit from an online-based guidance and support forum and should be used in future projects as well. The activities that are required to reach the goals and fulfil the hypothesis include thorough project planning, careful and sensitive implementation and a comprehensive evaluation and discussion of the results.

6.1 Evaluation methods

Evaluation tools help you gather the information you need to answer your evaluation questions. They can be different from the tools you use to carry out the core activities of the project. For example, conducting workshops to train organizations about youth volunteers is a project tool; interviewing key participants to ask their opinions about the content and success of the training workshops is an evaluation tool. Evaluation tools can use both formal and informal methods for gathering information. Formal evaluation tools include focus groups, interviews, survey questionnaires, and knowledge tests. Informal evaluation tools include observations, informal conversations, and site visits. (Zarinpoush 2006, 72)

The evaluation of this project consists of three aspects: feedback circle discussion in the meetings, a questionnaire after the project and two SWOT analyses; before and after the project from a personal perspective. The questionnaire was built from different question types: two questions with scales from “Not happy at all” to “Very happy”, one question with scale from 4 to 10 and four open-ended questions. The questionnaire was kept short to maximize the number of responses. The questionnaire form was published in Google Forms as a closed form and then a link to it was sent to the participants after the last group meeting via Facebook. The group members were given two weeks to answer the questionnaire and they were reminded about answering before the closing time via Facebook.

6.1.1 Feedback circle

When you are coming towards the end of an event -- resist the temptation to bring things to a rushed close and in your planning for the day, factor in enough time for evaluation. Every

meeting costs time and money, so it matters whether or not it has provided value. -- The time you need for the evaluation will depend on purpose and style of the event. A short meeting might be evaluated in five minutes; a one-day event might need at least fifteen minutes. Review it from three angles:

1. How far has the event met the task objectives you and the group agreed at the outset?
2. How has it been for the group at the process level?
3. What feedback does the group have for you?

(Rogers 2010, 164)

At the end of each meeting at the Pirkanmaan Seta ry office, the group was gathered to a circle to discuss the past session and what kind of feelings or thoughts it brought up. Many times discussions spread from the guiding questions asked by the group leader. The following quotes were gathered from separate meetings and were loosely translated from Finnish to English.

“The group and its activities have shown how I can see my own life differently, from an outsider’s point of view.”

“...a great hobby that I will continue in the future.”

“It has been awesome to see that I can actually take nice photographs. Before I didn’t think that way about my pictures.”

“I got new inspiration to start photographing again. Especially the photodiary project opened new viewpoints. I wish I can keep doing that.”

“There should be a group like this ongoing always.”

The feedback circle method was not used only to gain immediate feedback of the past session but to also calm down the group after a couple of hours of activities. The atmosphere during those small feedback sessions was always very positive and calm. Discussions flowed quite easily and participants expressed their contentment. The group leader rarely had to “force” the discussion forwards, most of the time it was very spontaneous. The only feedback discussion which caused the group leader to change the project plan, was the one concerning the final exhibition of the project. Group members felt that a photo exhibition would be too revealing and they would be uncomfortable with it. If an exhibition was to be held, it would have caused the participants to censor their photographs too much which would have inhibited their personal progress and empowerment. It was then together agreed that everyone would make a personal treasure map about their lives and dreams and include some the photographs they had taken during the group. It felt a good option to the exhibition as this way the participants would have something to take with them when the group would end, as memorabilia to remind them the progress they had achieved.

As a method, the feedback circle felt like a natural way of getting feedback after each session. A paper form could have resulted in more detailed and better documented feedback but filling a form after each session felt inappropriate and incoherent to the otherwise active and mobile sessions. Also, the participants would have needed to fill the form on the floor as the office's lounge has several sofas but only one table, which is usually overflowing with snacks. Discussive feedback proved to be the better option for most participants as they were talkative and expressed their thoughts very openly.

6.1.2 Questionnaire

Sometimes there is a case for asking people to consider their views on paper. You will get a more thoughtful and in-depth response this way. Explain that writing down comments is a valuable way for the facilitator to get feedback. No one will see what they have written but the group facilitator. (Rogers 2010, 168) To get more detailed feedback after the group had ended, a questionnaire (Illustration 6) was designed and then sent to the participants. Out of active 5 participants, 3 answered the questionnaire.

In the first question "How pleased you were with the following exercises?" all main exercises were divided in a row and then a scale from "Not at all pleased" to "Very pleased", with 3 options in between them and "I didn't participate in this exercise" option included, was placed after each exercise. The participants had answered consistently either "Very pleased" or "I didn't participate..." to all eight entries. After this section, an open-ended question was placed asking "If you chose "Not at all pleased" to any entries above, please explain why." but no answers were received there.

The next question was open-ended: "Please describe in your own words, what new things you learnt in the group and what kind of an effect your participation in the group had to you." Two answers were received, which are here loosely translated:

"The best part was the photodiary and sharing ideas during the meetings."

"I found enough courage to challenge myself, to be on both sides of the camera, see things around me from a different perspective, and to appreciate also other people's photographs and life stories. The way I relate to my own everyday life also changed as I learned that also other people "fight" with chores at home etc. After the group I want to continue photographing in my daily life."

The fourth part presented questions concerning the group leader. The group members were asked to rate different group leader qualities and features with 5 options: “Failed, Room for improvement, Average, Good and Excellent”.

The rated features and their answers were:

“Leading the exercises” _____ 2 Excellent, 1 Average

“Reachability (email, Facebook etc.)” _____ 3 Excellent

“Activity while leading the group” _____ 1 Excellent, 2 Good

“Taking all participants into account” _____ 1 Excellent, 2 Good

“Presentation skills” _____ 2 Excellent, 1 Good

“Knowhow in photography” _____ 3 Good

Based on these results it could be said that the group participants felt quite pleased about the group leader and how the group had progressed. The answers on the last feature about photography knowhow was expected as the group leader is not a professional photographer but an amateur with a lot of interest for the field and education about social situations and group leading. After the scaled section, there was an open feedback box titled “Open feedback for the group leader”. The following feedback was given, and again is here loosely translated.

“Joonna, you were a very good group leader. You created an open and warm atmosphere. Working was laid back and the exercises felt nice. They really made us think. You also got a somewhat soothing effect on people. You gave clear instructions for the exercises and themes. BIG THANKS!”

“A nice experience. Maybe the idea of an exhibition had such an effect that it was more difficult to take pictures and share them in the photodiary, than what I really had in mind. It also felt difficult to ask other people for permission to take their picture. But otherwise the group was nicely organized, and the atmosphere was good.”

Lastly, the participants were asked to give a school grade for the group. Two people gave grade 9 and one gave 8. Before submitting their answers, the group members could write in a “Free word” box, which was not marked mandatory. One answer was received:

“The group should continue or similar activities be organized. I would be interested to participate. It was a bit regrettable that the number of participants kept changing between meetings. Maybe another time...? On the other hand, it was nice to have a group during summer.”

6.1.3 Personal SWOT analyses

The purpose of conducting a SWOT is to identify, organize, and prioritize weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (or SWOTs) that influence the development, implementation, and evaluation of almost any program or project. -- Identifying a list of SWOTs is a common brainstorming technique used in organizational planning. Developing a list alone, however, rarely provides the useful information required. -- Instead, you should combine the benefits of brainstorming with an approach that defines the relationships among the identified SWOT factors, and then you should use those relationships to guide decisions about what to do next. (Watkins, West Meiers, & Visser 2012, 129)

In this project's evaluation, the SWOT model is used two times to gain knowledge about the factors effecting on the group project success or failure, from a personal point of view. Through conducting the SWOT evaluation before the group starts, it is possible to identify problematic factors in the planning and to see what the strongest points in the project are.

The first SWOT table, before implementation, July 8th 2015

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time of implementation • Good advertising plan • Well planned exercises • Support from the organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity-focused group • Open for everyone • Personal experience in group leading • Personal experience in minority work 	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant empowerment • Personal professional growth • Group model is well generalizable • Group continues the project after implementation is finished
<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty in the amount of participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time of implementation • The possible inaccessibility of the office as a location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one group leader • Advertisement doesn't interest people • Participants do not respond well to the planned exercises 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking documentation • The project not being generalizable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility malfunctions • Equipment malfunctions • Personal absence (illness etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant absence

After the project had ended over a month later, a second SWOT fourfold table was created based on the thoughts that arose after completing the project implementation. Written feedback had been collected and all events were fresh in memory to be evaluated. Following is the second SWOT table.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time of implementation, possibilities indoors and outdoors • Support from the organisation, sufficient advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity-focused group, clear focus, creative exercises • Open for everyone, diverse group and diverse ideas • Personal experience in group leading 	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant empowerment, successful based on participant feedback • Personal professional growth, learnt more about group leading • Group model is well generalizable, remains to be seen • Group continues the project after implementation is finished, remains to be seen
<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant number kept changing, not committed enough? • More participants during the autumn? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inaccessibility of the office as a location, different location meant more participants? • Only one group leader, meetings had to be moved to another time due to illness 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback circle documentation could have been more thorough <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal absence (illness etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant absence • Future group leader lacks in knowhow

6.2 Analysis of results

The group project had several factors which could influence the project towards either success or failure. Most of these were participant-related so not much action could be taken to prevent any massive failures in that aspect. If people do not take interest in the group, it's impossible to force anyone to join. Thus the advertisement and advertising the group were in a crucial importance in order to get enough participants. It would not have been justified to run the project with just one or two participants, as it was first and foremost a group effort.

Timing the group to a summer was a big discussion between the organisation and the group leader. Two important aspects were placed in the scale: that whether the timing during summer would affect participation in the group negatively, and that the organisation had a need for a summer group. A promise of frequent advertising in the social media from the organisation's behalf convinced the group leader that the summer wouldn't affect the project implementation too much. Another possible issue that arose to question was the accessibility of the organisation's office in Tampere. The location is very central and potential participants might find it difficult to access the office in fear of being branded as an LGBTIQ community member. This proved to be a risk that had to be taken, as the organisation didn't have any other facilities that could be used for the group. Public locations like libraries and cafés were pondered upon but as a public place could negatively affect the open and sharing atmosphere of the group, the office was the only viable option.

Based on the feedback given during the feedback circles after each session, the participants were pleased with the group and its exercises and how the goals of learning more about photography was achieved. Participants expressed that their interest in photography and portraying their own lives had grown and that there was a need for similar activities in the organisation's activity repertoire.

The answers given by the participants in the questionnaire reveal that through participating in the group, the group members learned about sharing new ideas and seeing things in their lives from a different perspective, found courage for change and appreciation towards other people's life stories, which can be seen as an empowering change towards better self-understanding, self-esteem and growth of social skills. Also, the participants were aware of their uncomfortable thoughts about the idea of an exhibition at the end of the project and vocalized them together. This shows a certain level of commitment to the project and its end results. An issue to consider here is the relative lack of experience in questionnaire design. Some literature had been read on how best to create questionnaires that would produce reliable data, but on reflection more time should have been spent in considering the kind and number of questions asked.

Looking at the strengths section of the first SWOT, a lot of weight is put on the personal attributes and exercise planning skills of the group leader. While conducting a thesis project alone, there isn't anybody else whose skills weight could be put on, so trusting in one's own abilities and history in leading groups is vital. Without a bit of self-confidence one couldn't lead a group of this sort. As mentioned before, many weaknesses found in the first SWOT table were participant- and circumstance-related which could not have been affected on. In the opportunities section the thought was obviously positive towards a well-generalizable group model and both personal and participant growth and empowerment during the process. The threats mentioned in the first SWOT table consist mainly of environmental threats, such as audio-visual equipment or the facilities being faulty and not functioning. The few threats focused on the group leader were lacking documentation during the meetings and personal absences. As there was only one group leader, it was thought to be fairly difficult to document the feedback circle comments, exercises and other activities without risking the participants' anonymity and the natural flow of the meetings. Recording the feedback, writing it down during the meetings and taking video were all considered, but trashed due to what it might do for the easy-going atmosphere in the meetings.

The second SWOT table, compared to the first, shows that several factors in the strengths section proved to be accurate. Even though there was some debate on timing the group to the summer, it was a good choice as it opened up exercise opportunities both indoors and outdoors, depending on the weather. The frequency of advertising and the attractiveness of

the advertisement were found sufficient as the minimum amount of participants (5) was reached. Keeping the group open for all kinds of people achieved the goal of an open and diverse group: the average age of all participants was a bit over 30, ranging from twenties to a bit over forties. Also the group leader's personal experience in leading groups was of use as the meetings were carefully planned to include enough breaks, orientational and cooling-down sections and exercises that would interest the participants no matter what age or gender they might be.

As in the first SWOT table, participant absence was considered to be the major weakness of the project. As the numbers of participants attending kept changing from meeting to meeting, the exercises had to be planned so that they could be done in pairs, small groups or individually. In the optimal situation the attendance would have been perfect but realistically that wasn't even expected. Hypothetically speaking, if the organisation had been of a more general sort and not focusing only on a small section of people, maybe there would have been available a more accessible venue for the group and a bigger audience for the advertising, but as this particular organisation was of interest, the risk of a smaller group had to be taken.

Opportunity-wise, the group model could have a great future in the organisation, if a group leader could be found to take over leading it. As leading the group only requires amateur photographer skills and some creative thinking, it should not be too difficult to find a suitable person. Thus, the model could be quite easily generalized for other kinds of groups as well, as it does not rely heavily on the LGBTIQ aspect, but offers tools for empowering all kinds of people through photography. Based on the group members' feedback, especially the photodiary exercise was found to be inspirational and encouraging.

Lastly, the threat section in the first table proved to be accurate, as the documentation of the feedback circles could have been more thorough to get even more relevant feedback. The only option to record the most artless and free-spoken feedback would have been to record it without telling the participants, but that would have been unethical and might have caused serious trust issues between participants and the group leader. Thus, the documentation had to be settled on freeform notes written after meetings. Also one meeting had to be postponed by a week due to the group leader having a summer flu.

Based on personal observation, the SWOTs and the group's feedback, the group leader's group leading skills were improved during this project. As the meetings went by, it was easier to focus on interacting with the group. Fixing made mistakes and giving better instructions was learnt. It was also understood, that many kinds of activities can be empowering and the process of empowerment was made clearer. It was noticed that personal planning skills in scheduling, documentation skills and the visibility of goals throughout the project need to be

worked on and improved. All in all, the project was a success with some room for improvement.

7 Conclusion

Looking at the objectives of this thesis, the following main conclusions were made. Firstly, the group activity supported the empowerment of the participants by inspiring them to use the skills and talents they already had. It helped the participants to think “out of the box” while regarding their own life situations and encouraged them towards change. The activity was noticed to be meaningful for the participants and it gave methods to analyse their lives personally in the future. Secondly, using photography and an online-based photodiary worked well together and the participants found the activities interesting. And finally, personal group leading skills were improved during the project.

From a theory-related viewpoint, the group plan follows the structure of an effective group function in which the focus in the beginning is on bonding and promoting togetherness, in the middle it focuses more on empowering aspects and finally the finish line is reached in the treasure map exercise which combined all previous work together in the form of taken photographs, where the participants had a chance to showcase their own productions and be appreciated by their peers. They also got to take the treasure maps with them as reminders of the path they had walked and all the lessons they had learnt. There the participants should be able to see what kind of a journey they have made in participating in the activities and reaching inside themselves in search of creativity and better self-esteem. During that whole process they have had a possibility to gain a better control in their own lives and maybe they have found some understanding of why they function the way they do. Siitonen writes (1999, 131) that another person can be supported from the viewpoint of empowerment only to reach the goals set by that person himself, but in the end the person will always empower himself.

All three factors of Dalrymple & Burke’s (1995) empowerment model are fulfilled: different feelings are faces and confronted in a safe environment through many of the creative and self-expressional exercises. On the second level, different thought patterns and ideas are changed through discussions in the group and in the online service. As most group members were very flexible in using online services, it brought up more lively conversations than only discussing in the group would have done. The third and last stage in Dalrymple and Burke’s model consists of the aspect of action. Here all participants have a chance to make changes happen in their own lives and ways of functioning. It’s doubtful that a change in a larger scale, societal or other, would occur but at least the participants have a possibility to change how their families and friends see them and above all, how they see themselves. The meaning

of simple actions is often overlooked but in our modern society the meaning of togetherness and feelings of belonging should not be ignored as those are the glue that keeps us intact.

As mentioned before, the use of creative photography exercises in the physical group combined with the online support discussion and photodiary exercise worked well in this kind of environment, but the duration of the group project could have been longer to further support the participants in their process of empowerment and learning. Many, if not all, photographs taken by the participants can be seen as self-portraits, as they don't only portray the faces of the people who have taken them but their environments, thoughts and lives in general. Thus, the time used for photographing could have been longer because the personal nature of these photographs. It could have been wise to invest in a prolonged process to deeper study the photographs, but as this group aimed to be light and positive, such deep, insightful search could have resulted in too heavy and therapy-like sessions.

The group activity, compared to entirely individual activities, supported the participants' empowerment process from its own part, as it enabled the participants to reflect their thoughts and ideas to others' and share their experiences about photography and other important parts of their lives. A group form made it possible for the group members to feel accepted and appreciated, as group members were consistently encouraged to give constructive and positive feedback of each other's work. Dalrymple and Burke (2006) mention that the experiences of appreciation, acceptance, respect and safety contribute towards a person's empowerment. Peer support and tolerance are also the basic values of Pirkanmaan Seta ry.

8 Ethical consideration

Ethical issues are at the heart of a discipline such as social work. Social work is concerned with the care of people who have a variety of needs, with family relationships, with social responses to offending and with needs arising from structural causes (such as poverty). These are each, in different ways, moral concerns, embedded in the mores of society, and so are laden with social values. Herein lies the crux of the problem, because value-statements, being views about what is desirable in society, are highly contentious. They say 'what ought to be the case' and so open up the potential for disagreement between individuals on grounds of belief and perception (for example, of politics, culture or religion). (Smith & Hugman 1995, 84)

During the thesis project, some ethically concerning issues arose in discussions and other activities. During the first session, the group leader explained verbally that all feedback discussions and written feedback could be used as a part of this thesis and its evaluation. It was stated, that all participants would remain anonymous in the thesis and if any photographs

were to be taken, the participants would remain unrecognizable. Also, the idea of confidentiality was discussed with the participants during the first sessions. Everything that other group members were to say, write or otherwise express were to remain within the group and not be shared with anyone outside it. Garvin and his colleagues (2004) support this and they write that in groups, confidentiality is not limited to the social worker's behaviour, because members acquire information about each other. The worker cannot guarantee that members will protect each other's privacy. All participants were made aware that their participation in activities connected with this thesis project was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw their consent or leave at any time.

Another matter that had to be considered throughout the project process had to do with equality, discretion and sensitivity. None of the participants were asked about their sexual orientation or gender expression, but as assumed members of the LGBTIQ group, each participant had a higher possibility of having experiences of bullying, discrimination and even violence than an average person. Therefore, a higher state of discretion and sensitive expression had to be applied to all activities with the group. This doesn't mean treating everyone with silk gloves, so to speak, but being aware of using neutral, gender-aware language.

During the first meeting, an issue arose concerning the post card exercise. One of the participants took the instructions of writing about a positive personal life experience a bit deeply and once the time for reading the cards to the others came, that person got seemingly very emotional and said that s/he doesn't want to read the card. Other group members seemed to feel quite uncomfortable in that situation but the group leader then explained that person that it is completely OK not to want to do a part of an exercise for personal reasons and nothing would have to be explained later. The person seemingly calmed down and the exercise was continued but as the group leader, I felt that this situation would have to be discussed after the meeting. And as the meeting ended, I asked that person to stay behind after the others left, and told him/her that it was the right thing to do to say that something about the exercise was uncomfortable. I also encouraged him/her to do so in the future meetings if a similar issue should arise. The person seemed satisfied with the outcome and said s/he would continue to coming to the group with positive feelings.

The second potentially risky situation arose after the second meeting. One of the signed-up participants had not arrived even to the second meeting and had not informed the group leader of his/her absence. The issue was discussed with the other participants during the second meeting and the participants agreed with the group leader that some action had to be taken. Given the chance to arrive to two meetings and informing the group leader, but not doing so, it was then decided that this person had to be removed from the group and the closed Facebook group for confidentiality reasons. The person could not have been allowed to

continue with the online photodiary without a proper explanation for his/her behaviour, as s/he could have easily stolen photographs from other group members in the Facebook group. An email explaining the situation was sent to this person, and s/he replied that s/he understands why s/he is being removed from the group. The situation could have escalated into a disaster but with a calm, explaining approach the issue was dealt with peacefully.

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Illustrations

Illustration 1: Pirkanmaan Seta ry Facebook advertisement

 **Pirkanmaan SETA ry**
30. kesäkuuta 2015 · 🌐

Tule mukaan kesän 2015 luovan valokuvauksen ryhmään!

Itseilmaisuus keinona luova valokuvaus on yksi monipuolisimmista ja sen avulla omaa elämäänsä ja mielikuvitustaan voi avata muille. Kaikille yli 16-vuotiaille avoimessa ryhmässä harjoitellaan ensin valokuvauksen perusasioita ja jokainen osallistuja pääsee kesän edetessä kokeilemaan luovuutensa rajoja. Aikaisempaa kokemusta valokuvaamisesta ja kameran käytöstä ei tarvita. Oma kamera on kuitenkin tarpeellinen ryhmään osallistumiseen, mutta esimerkiksi kännykkäkameralla pärjää mainiosti. Osallistuminen edellyttää myös tietokoneen ja internetin käytön perustaitoja sekä mahdollisuutta käyttää internetiä, sillä osa ryhmätöinnistä ja harjoituksista tehdään verkossa.

Kesän 2015 ryhmän teemana on oman tarinan kertominen valokuvauksen keinoin ja ryhmäkertojen lopuksi järjestetään pienimuotoinen valokuvanäyttely osallistujien otoksista.

Ryhmä kokoontuu heinä- ja elokuun aikana seuraavasti:
to 9.7., to 16.7., ti 21.7., to 30.7. ja to 6.8.
Klo 18–20, ellei toisin mainita.

Sitovat ilmoittautumiset 5.7.2015 mennessä osoitteeseen joona.rontu@gmail.com. Ryhmään mahtuu 6 osallistujaa ilmoittautumisjärjestyksessä, osallistuminen on ilmaista. Ryhmä järjestetään osana Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulun opinnäytetyötä yhteistyössä Pirkanmaan Setan Sinuiksi-hankkeen kanssa.

"Valokuvaus on ympäristön havainnoimisen taidetta. Ei ole merkitystä, mitä asioita näemme, vaan miten näemme ne."
- Elliott Erwitt, yhdysvaltalainen valokuvaajamestari



KATO MUA!
LUOVAN VALOKUVAUKSEN RYHMÄ
LUOVUUTESI valokuvaamalla
PIRKANMAAN SETA RY
STARTING JUL 4 9th
www.pirkanmaanseta.fi

Illustration 2: Group advertisement poster

KATO
MUA!

LUOVAN
VALOKUVAUKSEN
RYHMÄ

LÖYDÄ
LUOVUUTESI
valokuvaamalla

PIRKANMAAN SETA RY

STARTING JULY 9th
www.pirkanmaanseta.fi

Illustration 3: Example of colour cards



Illustration 4: Photodiary instructions

Valokuvapäiväkirjan ohjeistus ✎ Muokkaa

Tekijä: Joonas Rontu (8. heinäkuuta 2015 kello 15:53)

Valokuvapäiväkirja on henkilökohtainen projektisi, jossa päivittäin julkaiset sinulle merkityksellisen valokuvan tämän ryhmän Facebook-sivulla. Valokuvassa voit olla sinä itse, lempiesineesi, kaunis maisema, jonka ohi kävelit tai vaikka ikkunalaudallasi istuva kissa. Valokuvapäivis opettaa näkemään ympäröivän maailman aivan uudella tavalla, auttaa muistojen, ajatusten, tunteiden ja mielikuvien tallettamisessa ja helpottaa jakamaan elämääsi muille. Tärkeintä kuitenkin on, että valokuva, jonka täällä julkaiset, on sinulle itsellesi merkityksellinen. Valokuvien kautta opit tuntemaan itsesi ja muut ryhmäläiset paremmin ja pääset ilmaisemaan omaa persoonaasi.

Valokuvapäivis voi olla julkinen tai yksityinen ja täysin vapaamuotoinen. Oikeastaan valokuvapäivis voi olla esimerkiksi verkkosivu, perinteinen valokuva-albumi, kenkälaatikollinen paperivalokuvia, negatiivarkisto, osa isompaa verkkoprojektia tai mitä tahansa muuta. Tässä ryhmässä luomme valokuvapäivistä yhdessä. Täällä julkaisemasi valokuvat näkyvät vain ryhmäläisille, eivätkä ulkopuoliset pääse sivulle.

Ohjeet valokuvapäiviksen tekoon:

1. Aloita valokuvaaminen! Voit kuvata jokapäiväistä elämääsi ja kiinnostavia asioita, joita päivän aikana kohtaat. Voit käyttää digikameraa, web-kameraa tai vaikka puhelimesi kameraa. Kuvien laadulla ei ole väliä.
2. Julkaise päivittäinen valokuvasi tässä ryhmässä joka viikolle merkityssä albumissa. Pyri ottamaan ja julkaisemaan 1 valokuva joka päivä. Yksi julkaisu voi sisältää useammankin valokuvan, jos siltä tuntuu. Jos olet matkalla, tai muutoin estynyt käyttämään Facebookia, voit julkaista useamman päivän valokuvat kerralla, mutta lisää ne yksitellen enllisiin kuvina.
3. Kiinnitä huomiota niihin ajatuksiin ja tunteisiin, joita sen päivän valokuva sinussa herättää. Kirjoita ne valokuvan alle ja julkaise. Muista kuitenkin julkaista vain sellaisia kirjoituksia ja valokuvia, jotka haluat muiden ryhmäläisten lukevan.
4. Valokuvapäiväkirjaa tehdään yhteensä 4 viikkoa ja jokaiselle viikolle on oma teemansa, jonka pohjalta valokuvia otetaan. Teemojen ideana on ruokkia mielikuvitusta, ei rajoittaa kuvaamista ja luovuutta.
5. Kommentoi! Kerro toiselle ryhmäläiselle mielipiteesi hänen valokuvastaan. Jos haluat antaa kritiikkiä, tee se kohteliaaseen sävyyn. Valokuvapäiviksessä ei ole tarkoitus puuttua kuvien tekniseen laatuun tai käytettyyn tekniikkaan, vaan huomio tulisi kiinnittää kekseliäisyyteen ja siihen, mitä valokuva kertoo sen ottajasta.

Kun alat valokuvata, kiinnitä huomiota asioihin, jotka...

- ovat kiinnostavia ja merkityksellisiä juuri sinulle, kenenkään muun ei tarvitse ymmärtää miksi
- voimistavat sinua
- voivat auttaa voittamaan omia ennakkoluulojasi
- antavat uusia ideoita
- tuovat mieleen hyviä muistoja
- edustavat sinun tapaasi ajatella ja toimia

Kaikkein tärkeintä on pitää hauskaa ja nauttia valokuvaamisesta!

👍 Tykkää 💬 Kommentoi

Illustration 5: Example of DiXit-cards



Illustration 6: The questionnaire



Kato mua! -valokuvausryhmän palautekysely

Hei, valokuvausryhmään osallistunut!

Ryhmänohjaajana toivoisin sinulta palautetta koskien ryhmässä tehtyjä harjoituksia sekä ryhmää kokonaisuutena. Toivon, että vastaat kyselyyn su 23.08.2015 mennessä. Vastaukset käsitellään anonyymeinä ja niitä voidaan käyttää materiaalina opinnäytetyöhön.

*Pakollinen

Miten tyytyväinen olit seuraaviin harjoituksiin? *

	En lainkaan tyytyväinen				Erittäin tyytyväinen		En osallistunut harjoitukseen
Postikorttiharjoitus (1. kerta)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sana-assosiaatioharjoitus (2. kerta)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perspektiiviharjoitus oman esineen kanssa (2. kerta)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kuvakokoharjoitus oman esineen kanssa (2. kerta)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kuva sanasta -harjoitus (3. kerta)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24 askelta -harjoitus ulkona (4. kerta)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Valokuvapäiväkirja	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oman elämän sarjekartta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen "En lainkaan tyytyväinen" johonkin kohtaan, kerro miksi.

Kerro omin sanoin, mitä uutta opit ryhmässä ja millainen vaikutus ryhmään osallistumisella mielestäsi oli.

Miten arvioisit ryhmänohjaajan toimintaa seuraavissa kohdissa? *

	Epäonnistunut	Parantamisen varaa	Keskiverto	Hyvä	Kiitettävä
Harjoitusten ohjaaminen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tavoitettavuus (sähköposti, Facebook jne)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aktiivisuus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kaikkien huomioonottaminen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Esiintymistaidot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tietotaito valokuvauksesta	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Avoin palaute ryhmänohjaajalle

Miten arvioisit koko ryhmän onnistumista kouluarvosanoin? *

- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Vapaa sana

Risuja, ruusuja, kommentteja, kehitysehdotuksia, jatkoideoita?

Lähetä

Älä koskaan lähetä salasanaa Google Formsin kautta.