



A multisensory approach to strengthening the development of multicultural identity: A support for Parents.

Taisekwa Sigobodhla

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences

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The purpose of this functional thesis was to develop the use of the multisensory method in supporting the formation of a child's cultural identity. The practical part of the thesis involved planning and carrying out six multisensory sessions, in a mother- baby group: Kiva Aamu Klubi. Which is a peer support group that is part of Graniitti-Klubi, a project supported by TAIKE (Taiteen edistämiskeskus) The Centre for the promotion of Arts.

The multisensory spaces took place over a period of 2 months in the fall of 2018. The aim of the spaces was to explore different aspects of culture that were relevant and important to the participating mothers. That they felt they wanted to pass onto their children. The group and I would then create a multisensory experience around these different themes.

The theoretical framework of the study was made up of culture, cultural identity formation, supporting of parenting, the multisensory method and sensory learning. Participatory observation, feedback from participating parents and the coordinator of the group, as well reflective documentation, served as methods of evaluation.

The study results highlighted the benefits of using the method as a facilitator for important discussions around parenting and cultural identity formation. As well as the adaptability of the method for use in similar mother- child or peer support groups.

Keywords: cultural identity formation, multisensory method, supporting parenting

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1 Introduction

Culture is a complex phenomenon. One that is ever changing yet central to our identities as individuals. This is a relevant topic currently as according to Familia Ry (2016) during the period 2008-2014 the number of dual culture couples and families in Finland had grown by 26% to 71 316; that was a growth of about 15 000. These figures included different relationships in which one of the partners was born in Finland. The figures for families in which both parents have an immigrant background are also growing.

This issue is one that different sectors of society; government, municipalities and the third sector have been placing an increased focus on over the years. Familia Ry (2016) also estimates that in 2014 about half of these dual culture families included children. In line with this Väestöliitto (no date a) also states that the trend is upward of multicultural families; here referring to cases in which partners are from different cultures or partners have the same ethnicity but one of them may have been born or lived elsewhere. They estimate a growth of about 3000 couples a year.

These couples create a type of “third culture” (Väestöliitto no date b); one that is as unique as the couple and family that exist within it. That third culture consists of aspects of the parent’s culture that they hold dear and find important to pass onto their children. Part of this process of creating this “third culture” includes reflecting on one’s own culture and cultural identity. This study hopes to support the role of participating parents by allowing them an opportunity to reflect on their culture through the building of and participating in multisensory spaces that explore different aspects of culture that are relevant or of interest to them.

Parents with an immigrant background living in Finland need support in their role. As they are the primary teacher of this culture to their children. This role as teacher or facilitator of cultural learning to one’s child takes on an additional challenge when one’s home or current place of residence is somewhere other than your “home” country or place of origin where one would be immersed in the culture.

As a future Kindergarten teacher this topic is important as early childhood education is part of an ever changing and diverse society (Ministry of Education 2016,30). In the future I will be certain to work with multicultural children and their families, as such it will be beneficial to me to have a good understanding and appreciation of themes of cultural identity development and cultural heritage. The Early Childhood Education curriculum (Ministry of Education 2016,22) also highlights cultural competence as a part of holistic learning. Through this thesis I was able to work with parents and find ways to support them in their role; this is supported by thoughts from the early Childhood curriculum that collaboration with parents should be client oriented and interactive (Ministry of Education 2016,32).

2 Purpose and Aim of the Study

My personal connection to the subject grew from my own background of growing up in a dual culture home and wondering about my cultural identity as an adult. Professionally my interest has grown in the multisensory method throughout my studies. I was drawn to its client-oriented approach; as well as the sensory experience that one can create and how it can facilitate important discussions and reflection. Having built and planned different multisensory spaces, for different purposes and around different themes, I have personal experience of how empowering the process can be. For these reasons I expect this method to be suitable for the goals of the study as well as beneficial for the target group involved. I hope to find practical ways in which the method can be developed in its use for similar purposes.

As a result, this study grew around the idea of using the multisensory method as a way of supporting parents with an immigrant background in their role. The objective of this thesis is to develop the use of the multisensory method in supporting the formation of a child's cultural identity. The thesis will aim to provide a framework that answers the questions:

- In what ways can the multisensory method be adapted/incorporated as a tool in working with families that have children who have a multicultural identity.
- Also, in what ways can the method be developed to better suit this purpose? What were the perceptions of the families involved?

The thesis will look at the use of the multisensory method and how it has been used in similar settings and for similar objectives. This method was developed at Laurea; with the idea of shared stories as a central theme. The method engages the different senses and experiences to make learning suitable for different target groups and types of learners. Initially I had hoped to have a shared focus on using the method as a support for both parents and children; but after challenges in finding participants of the target group of families with children aged between 3 and 6. I found participants in a mother and baby group club; after which the focus of the study changed to one where the focus was more on supporting the role of parents.

The thesis will begin by exploring the central themes to the study; which are culture, identity and the multisensory method. After which I will look at the working life partners involved in the study, the ethical issues relevant to the study, as well as the implementation methods,

the feedback and evaluation process as well as the results of the study. Finally, I will reflect on the thesis writing process as well as my personal professional growth.

2.1 Functional Thesis

This study will take the form of a Functional thesis. Candy (2006) characterizes practice-related research as practice-based and practice-led research. Although these terms are used to replace one another Candy (2006) presents that the aspect of practice is central to both, but she draws her distinction between the two by arguing that in practice-led research one looks at the nature of the practice with the aim of finding advanced knowledge about or within the practice (Candy 2006). This study is practice-led research, in that the focus is to get advanced knowledge about a practice (Candy 2006); in this case the multisensory method. The activity part of the thesis will take the form of multisensory spaces that will be built together with participants at Graniitti-klubi.

Vilkka and Airaksinen (2003,9) present that a functional thesis is one of the options when researching for an undergraduate thesis. They argue that it is an activity-based research work that is then reported on. They argue that having a critical point of view is important at the reporting stage. Functional thesis activities may take the form of instructing, guiding or organizing activities or organizing events such as conferences or museum exhibitions. It is highlighted that there is always a concrete “result” or aim to a functional thesis and this should be evident in reporting as well (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003,5). It has also been stressed that in a functional thesis it is important that the reader of a report be able to easily discern the process of how the study was carried out, what results and conclusions arose from the work. Vilkka & Airaksinen go on to state that it is important that a functional thesis is working life oriented, practical in its approach, is research based and reflects professional skills and knowledge (2003,10).

In their guide Vilkka & Airaksinen (2003,19-22), reflect on the importance of having a Thesis-diary. Which is a personal diary that details the process of the functional thesis from the point of view of the author. This can use text or pictures or other visual aids like mind maps. In this study I will use mind maps in the planning of multisensory sessions as well as a personal diary that will be particularly beneficial for evaluation purposes. They argue that as the thesis writing process is long and complex this practice ensures that important details are remembered.

The thesis reporting and the functional part of the work depend on the notes that are taken during the process so Vilkka & Airaksinen (2003,19) suggest that it is not indifferent how and

what is documented. They therefore recommend documenting all ideas and reflection on the thesis theme, as well as all books and articles pertaining to thesis. In addition to this the goals as well as challenges that have been met and that have affected set goals and their implementation should likewise be considered.

Vilkka & Airaksinen (2003) also suggest documenting central ideas or themes and realizations that may come up during the multisensory spaces, as well as discussions that have been held with clients or working life partners. On this basis I have decided to also take notes during planning of sessions with the coordinator of the Kiva Aamu group. Also, during the multisensory sessions and after spaces; where practically possible. In addition to this I will reflect in thesis diary after each session.

When looking at the evaluation of a functional thesis Vilkka & Airaksinen (2003, 154-159), highlight that a key basis for evaluating a thesis is the idea, and this includes the description of the idea and the goals set. Linked to this is the achievement of goals and the critical review of these. In light of this this study aims to set out goals for each session (Table 1). I hope to measure the achievement of these goals through discussions with working life partner and discussion with participants. During these discussions I will also document and reflect on what aims were not achieved, possible reasons why, also look at what aims changed during the process and why? (Table 7).

Throughout the study I will aim to ask feedback from participants for objectivity (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 157). They recommend asking for comments about the session or activity for instance in what ways it succeeded, it's usability and functionality. These thoughts will be reflected in the feedback questions that will be presented to the participants. Vilkka & Airaksinen (2003) also highlight that it is important that a functional thesis is professionally interesting and is of some significance to the target group (Vilkka & Airaksinen 2003, 157). Therefore, when seeking feedback from working life partner I will pay attention to having these factors are reflected in the questions asked. Also, by focusing on how the goals we set for the multisensory sessions can be brought more in line with the overall aims of the Kiva Aamu group.

2.2 Description of Working life partner

E.L.O Project (Elämysillä Osaksi Yhteiskuntaa Hanke) project is the working life partner during this study. It is funded by the European Social Fund. The project is running from 02.2017 to 01.2019. The project partners in E.L.O are Laurea University of Applied Sciences, the City of Espoo, the Red Cross as well as Vantaa City. The aims of E.L.O project are to improve the participation of immigrants who are outside the workforce, as well support those in a weak labor market position and promote their work ability by using the multisensory method in utilizing open learning environments. As well as to develop municipality, third sector and learning institutions cooperation network. New operating models that promote the participation of immigrants. It also aims to develop client-oriented procedures and services that support participation.

The target group of the E.L.O project is directly unemployed immigrants that are outside of the labor force and indirectly Laurea's Social and Healthcare services students, volunteers and staff at libraries. The models of operation of the project include working on and developing materials on multisensory and experiential material for language teaching and activities that support integration. As well as themed workshops; that is small groups for workshops for immigrants that are held by Laurea students and Red Cross volunteers. And other low threshold activities for language and social awareness workshops. As well as self-motivated use of the multisensory method and space by participants.

E.L.O project collaborates with Graniitti- Klubi. Graniitti is part of the network that make up the target group of the E.L.O project and it is also where the multisensory spaces that are a part of this study will take place. Graniitti-Klubi is a project supported by TAIKE (Taiteen edistämiskeskus) The Center for the promotion of Arts. The aims of the project are to promote cultural diversity and fight against racism.

The project runs activities out of the premises of The Finnish Russian- Speaking Central Organization in Pihlajanmäki, Helsinki. Activities are open to everyone and the club advertises to local residents as well. Most activities are free, sometimes requiring only enrolment. Graniitti-Klubi offers different workshops and groups such as the Multicultural play yoga, Finnish language discussion groups, "Multicultural Finland" art clubs. As well as Global Kitchen workshops. Kiva Aamu where the multisensory spaces will be taking place, is a mother-child group held on Mondays between 10:30 -12:00.

3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Background of Multisensory Method

Räty (2017) describes the method as one that evokes emotions. The method does this by creating a multisensory experience and an environment for interactions and dialogue to take place. As the name suggests the method engages all senses. Räty (2011) states that the multisensory method is an “easily modified space where participants can experience landscapes, sounds and objects of different cultural environments. It is a method that is suggestive, stirs up feelings and memories. Räty & Wikström (2017) state that the multisensory method can be viewed as an open learning environment. Which is inspired by shared stories, and that it initially grew from the concept of providing an opportunity to travel back in memories through all senses in a safe and pleasant atmosphere for encounters.

This method was developed and used at Laurea University of Applied Sciences since 2007. The idea of the multisensory method is to build a space together around a specific theme. The building process and making of the phenomenon multisensory helps participants reflect on the why the phenomenon is significant, in addition it is empowering and promotes wellbeing. The completed space serves as both an experiential learning space and environment, helps focus and create engrams through different senses.

In Laurea the space itself is a classroom with 2 walls that images can be projected on, speakers, a screen that serves as a third wall, a storage area that has various artefacts that allows for the space to be decorated to suit the theme at hand (Image 1). Scents and smells and food have also been brought to the room to complete multisensory spaces. The space also includes a mobile multisensory tent that is a 3m x 3m pop up tent: that has one wall is a screen through which to project. (City of Espoo no date)



Image 1. Multisensory space in Laurea

Räty (2017) states that the multisensory method promotes multiculturalism. She also argues that the method is a way of making different cultures seen and can be an aid in identity negotiations, sharing of memories, doing things together, and promoting wellbeing. The method also promotes a sense of community. In her writings on the method Räty 2017 also identifies socio cultural empowerment as an aim or result of using this method.

At the core of the method is client orientation and a focus on the needs of participants. In that the aim is to decide together on the theme that they want to explore, who the space will be built for; as the spaces can either be built for ourselves, it is also possible to invite loved ones or even members of the public (Images 2 & 3). This method can also cater to the different aims of the participants, these could be sharing memories or promoting a sense of community, educational, informational. In the case of this study it will be the passing along of cultural heritage.



Image 2. Multisensory space built with theme of nature and relaxation



Image 3. Artefacts used as part of a Zimbabwe themed multisensory space.

Incorporating sensory learning has many benefits and these can be applied to various settings. Shams & Seitz (2008) argue that the human brain has likely evolved to where it develops, learns and operates optimally in multisensory environments. It is their argument that training/instruction or learning that engages multisensory learning rather than uni sensory stimulus is more effective for learning. Shams & Seitz (2008) also present that the brain is multisensory in nature with numerous brain areas and pathways for multisensory interaction. They argue that all processing stages in brain regions can involve multisensory processes.

They agree with the long-held views of other educators that believe that multisensory training enhances learning and engages individuals with different learning styles. Likewise, the Montessori school of thought also focuses on integrated visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetics approaches in most subject areas. (Shams & Seitz 2008:5)

According to Shams & Seitz (2008) information entering the system through multiple processing channels will bypass the obstacles of limited processing of individual channels, therefore more information can be processed and spread between multiple senses. These benefits will fit well with the target group of this study as participating parents and families are Russian and have a varying level of the Finnish language, so the multisensory experience will limit some of the challenges posed by the language barriers. The other key participants in the study are the children, that may all be participating simultaneously in any given multisensory space, so the multisensory learning environment will ensure that regardless of their language or developmental stage they can participate in the spaces. All senses are activated therefore learning is enhanced.

The method makes abstract things more concrete and easier to process. Rätty & Wikström (2017) also present that the method supports discussions of individual/ group identity. Through the method participants can make their own ideas or learning visible to others and it becomes tangible through our senses. It is a creative environment with interactive communication (Rätty & Wikström 2017).

In Rätty et al (2015:24-30) the process of building a multisensory space as a group is reviewed. Here the process of communally building and planning a space, as well as discussions and being and doing together are highlighted. Also, the learning and coming to new realizations. These are ideas and thoughts that will be at the core of the multisensory spaces that will be built during this study.

3.2 Culture

In a similar way; Spencer-Oatey (2012) highlights the complexities of culture as a concept. Different aspects of which are highlighted through different definitions. For instance, Tyler (1870 cited in Spencer- Oatey 2012,3) looks at culture as being made up of knowledge, beliefs, morals, art, customs, etc. Whilst Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952 cited in Spencer- Oatey 2012,3) takes the view that culture is a sum of implicit and explicit patterns of behaviour passed on through symbols, traditional ideas, and the values that have been attached to these.

On the other hand, Hofstede (1994 cited in Spencer-Oatey 2012,5) sees culture as a “collective programming” of a group’s way of thinking which is distinctive to that of others. And Matsumoto (1996 cited in Spencer- Oatey 201,16) says that culture is a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours that are shared but that are also different for each individual and is communicated from one generation to the next. From these different definitions the core concepts around culture seem to be that it is both implicit and explicit, there is a generational and learned aspect to it; also, culture is something shared and distinctive.

The different aspects as set out in these different definitions relate to the focus of this study. In that at the core of the multisensory method is the client-oriented approach and the participants in this case, the parents and families. Perhaps here with an emphasis on the parents will decide what aspect or aspects of their culture they would like to explore. In view of the complexity of the term culture and it’s understanding these will likely differ among participants.

Spencer-Oatey (2012,4) explains that culture can be observed in three distinct levels, which she identifies as the observable artefacts which can be dress code, the manner in which people address each other, smells, feel, emotional intensity, books etc. (Shein 1990,111 referred to by Spencer-Oatey 2012,4) Secondly values and lastly basic underlying assumptions. In line with this Hofstede (1991,8) also stated that culture is made up of “physically visible” components that have a cultural meaning that is invisible.

Observable artefacts are easy to observe but require some interpretation as to the underlying reasons why they are a part of that culture. This interpretation requires one to look at the values which guide the behaviour. And in order to gain an even better understanding of these values we must look at the underlying assumptions; that is the unconscious motivators and things that are taken for granted. (Spencer-Oatey 2012,5)

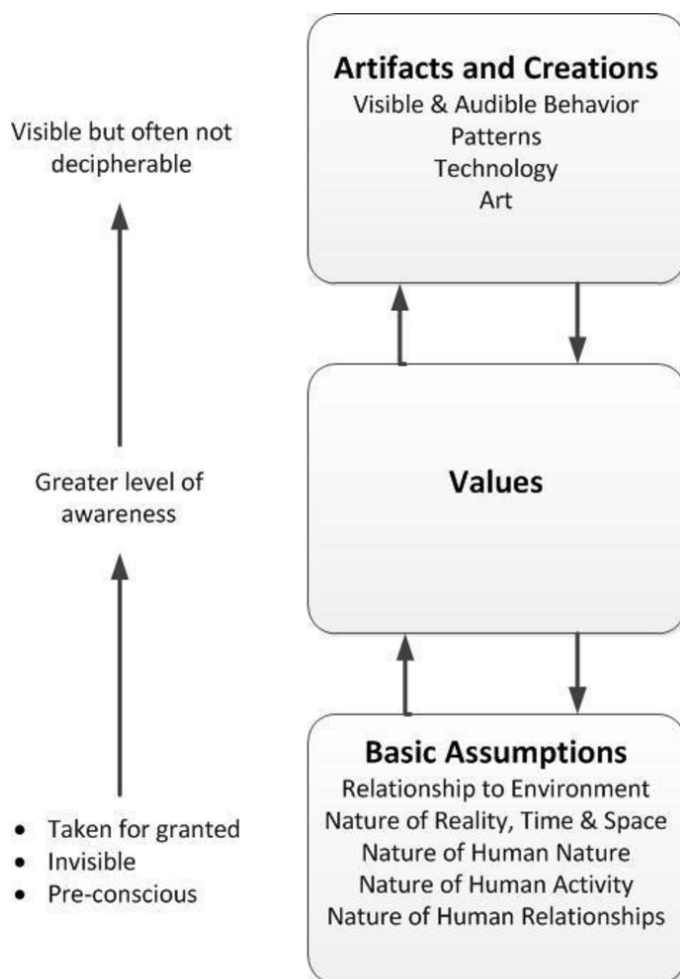


Figure 1: The Levels of Culture & their Interaction (Spencer-Oatey 2012,5) as an adaption of the original by Schein (1984,4).

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Culture can also be explored through another aspect; the three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming shown in Figure 2 (Hofstede 1994) argues that culture is learned and derived from our social environment. Here the aspect of culture being learned as a function of participating or belonging to a specific group is of interest to this study. As the participating mothers in the Kiva Aamu group all have a Russian background and some of the cultural learning that their children are exposed to happens within the context of that group.



Figure 2 Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming (Hofstede 1994:6)

3.2.1 Cultural tools

Another aspect of looking at culture are cultural tools. Cultural tools include language, pictures, models as well as ways of doing things that are passed on generationally. In their writing on the topic of cultural tools, Doyle & Palmer (no date) refer to Vygotsky's thinking and writing on "true education" which he argues comes about by children being given a set of cultural tools for thinking and creating, through which their learning abilities develop. Here Vygotsky also argues that by using cultural tools children develop psychological qualities and abilities. And the development of these abilities leads to the development of a child's personality. Shabani (2016,2) further highlights Vygotsky's thoughts in regard to learning and development being based on social interactions. Likewise, in this regard the children of the participating families gain some cultural learning in the Kiva Aamu group.

This argument shows that cultural tools are essential to the development of not only a child's identity/ cultural identity but also their personality. In his sociocultural theory Vygotsky argues that "learning has its basis in interacting with others" (Shabani 2016,2-3). It is a theory that also explores how cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how learning takes place that is cognitive development (Cherry 2018). So, Vygotsky means that through these social interaction's children begin to appropriate ways of thinking. In line with these thoughts, this study will provide an intentional space for such social interactions between parents and children.

3.2.2 Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is an additional aspect of culture, it has been described as the different ways in which people live that is expressed and passed along generationally. It includes customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expression and values. (Culture in Development, no date) states that cultural heritage is expressed in tangible and intangible forms. That is to say there are tangible representations of value systems, beliefs, traditions and lifestyles. Intangible heritage will take the form of traditions, oral history, popularly through cuisine, clothing, forms of shelter, traditional skills and technologies, religious ceremonies, performing arts, music, dancing, storytelling, therefore these tangible and intangible cultural heritage forms are bound together inseparably.

What stands out in different aspects of looking at culture is the concept of generational inheritance, elements of belonging to a community and this facilitating a sense of identity. Also, as touched upon previously the tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage that linked inextricably. It can therefore be argued that the multisensory method is suitable for looking at cultural heritage and appropriate for the target group. Who on individual developmental levels can appreciate the tangible aspects of their cultural heritage which are representative of value systems and beliefs of their culture. (Culture in Development, no date).

3.2.3 Cultural process

In her book Rogoff (2003,3) argues that the process of human development can essentially be described as a cultural process. In the sense that; through cultural tools such as language we become indirectly linked to the lives and experiences of past generations. She also highlights that as a result of current circumstances like globalisation and migration for various reasons; cultural heritage changes from generation to generation. Linked to this, this study will look at how parents with an immigrant background living in Finland can use the multisensory method and space to create a multisensory space or experience. That will be based on some aspect of their culture. This will be done as a means of supporting the development of their child's cultural identity through the parent having an opportunity to reflect on those aspects of their cultural identity.

Cultural processes can be defined as the ways of doing things; and in essence the way of living that we have become accustomed to (Rogoff 2003,3). Her main argument is that human development occurs as a result of participation in cultural communities. These cultural

communities and their approaches to living will vary widely amongst cultures worldwide as regards all manner of living. For instance, expectations of when and how children participate in certain activities or the developmental timetables associated with raising children; for example, in regards adult supervision, chores or caregiving of and by siblings. In regard to this; the study will explore with participating parents how they think their cultural identity has been affected by living elsewhere.

Rogoff (2003,11) also argues that we are surrounded by cultural processes that are to a large extent taken for granted. These are implied ways of doing things that we do not consciously pay attention to all the time. Parents participating in the study; as well as their children are not surrounded by their culture as they would be if they lived in their country of origin and therefore may have to reflect in a more in-depth way on these cultural processes than they otherwise would.

Further Rogoff (2003) points out that children in particular are keenly alert and sensitive to learning these tacit cultural processes. In her writing about cultural processes Rogoff (2003,13) touches on the fact that engaging with and immersing oneself in a culture that differs from our own usually results in a heightened awareness of one's own culture or community's way of doing things/living that is so often taken for granted. It will be interesting to note whether this has an impact on the aspect of their culture that parents choose to explore with their child, through the multisensory method. This study looks at whether there are some particular things that parents have wanted to pass on to their children from their culture.

3.2.4 Cultural Identity

Chen (2014) describes cultural identity as “identification with a certain group based on cultural categories”, that is to say a sense of belonging. Culture identity is a sense of belonging to a group and the extent to which one feels that they are a representative of a given culture behaviourally, communicatively, psychologically and sociologically. It consists of values, meanings, customs and beliefs. Chen (2014) further argues that it is constructed and maintained through a sharing of collective knowledge which in this case is traditions, heritage, language, norms and customs.

Chen (2014) presents that cultural identity is a complex and multifaceted concept, the idea of which has changed through the years from the view that cultural identity is something

stable and obvious; but in light of globalization can now be argued to be something that is in a constant state of negotiation and challenges. Which happens through different communication practices. Chen (2014) highlights that cultural identity studies that have been carried out have to date mainly focused on what are considered more multicultural societies, where the United States and United Kingdom have been at the centre of theories.

Identity is how one describes themselves, it is a person's point of reference that is to say how they perceive themselves. Chen (2014) also presents that we construct our identities through essential connections that are made up of language, social structures, gender orientation and cultural patterns. There is therefore also a complex relationship between culture and identity. It is also demonstrated by Chen (2014) that one's cultural identity is constantly changing based on one's own view of their identity in relation to others. That is to say that the negotiation of, co-creation and reinforcement of cultural identity takes place through social interactions. (Chen 2014)

There is the element of common characteristics and ideas which may be markers of a shared cultural identity but there is also the concept of how that culture defines itself in relation to or opposition to other cultures or groups.

3.3 Supporting parents

As the Familia Ry (2016) report highlights a majority of the multicultural families in Finland have children and as such the topic of multicultural children and the development of their multicultural identity is one that is relevant in general but also specifically to early childhood education. As such the early childhood education curriculum of Finland (Ministry of Education 2016) views multiculturalism and different forms cultural diversity as a resource that is worth investing in. This is because the curriculum recognises the right to one's own language, religion and culture as a fundamental right for the child but also by extension the parents. In line with these views, when I considered the aspect of supporting parents, I aimed to ensure that the collaboration with parents was interactive and client oriented in that it catered to the diverse needs of the family (Ministry of Education 2016,32-33).

According to Väestöliitto (no date b), these multicultural families are not founded on a union in which two distinct cultures would coexist side by side but rather these multicultural families form a third culture. One that is made up of the parts of each partners culture that they find important and cherish the most. In line with this it is important that parents of multicultural families be supported in exploring the parts of their culture that are important to them and in what ways they would want to pass these onto their children. As such the Graniitti

Klubi as a peer support group was fitting to the aims and objectives of this thesis, as well as the process of supporting parents.

4 Implementation

I held 6 multisensory spaces in total in the Klva Aamu group. I did most of the planning for the sessions. The coordinator of the group and I had time to discuss the sessions before they began and after the families left. We usually used the morning discussion to go through my final idea for how the session would go, the aims and goals set, and we also agreed on what her input would be. This was also an opportunity to make any last-minute changes we felt were necessary. After the families had left, we would evaluate the session and make a quick plan for the following session; as well as agree on any tasks that needed to be shared and carried out over the following week before the next session. Our roles throughout the process remained more or less the same. The role of the participating mothers varied somewhat over the course of the sessions.

4.1 Planning the multisensory spaces.

Part of the planning for the multisensory sessions included setting out goals, these have been set out in Table 1 below. These would also make evaluation of the sessions and the process possible later on. In general, I set these goals and discussed them with the coordinator of the group before the session; where I could get her feedback on them.

Session and Theme	Goals
Introduction	Meet the moms and babies that participate in Kiva Aamu. Introduce myself and tell them more about my thesis work and what I would like to do with them in the next 5 Kiva Aamu sessions. Brainstorm together with Kiva Aamu coordinator and roughly plan upcoming sessions.
Role and responsibilities of mothers, coordinator, myself	N =1 mother+ 1 baby Coordinator: introduction and planning meeting Me: Introduction and planning meeting

<p>Zimbabwe: Parts of my culture</p> <p>-Introduction to multisensory method</p> <p>-Example of Zimbabwean culture</p>	<p>Get familiar with the method. See it in practice. Introduce myself Start discussion and planning around upcoming spaces</p>
<p>Role and responsibilities of mothers, coordinator, myself</p>	<p>N =1 mother+ 1 baby + 4 Graniitti staff members Mothers: Input on next session. Idea for porridge.</p> <p>Coordinator: Help in putting together the multisensory tent on the day. Idea for theme.</p> <p>Me: Planning and carrying out of the multisensory space. Leading the discussion around different aspects of culture and what the multisensory space is. Discussion and planning for the next session.</p>
<p>Storytelling</p> <p>Story of Goldilocks and the three bears</p>	<p>Reflect on the role of storytelling in our cultures. How are stories told? Who tells them? In what setting? Memories of storytelling? Role of storytelling with you and your children To a lesser degree: In your culture what is the relationship with forests/ nature?</p>
<p>Role and responsibilities of mothers, coordinator, myself</p>	<p>N =3 mother+ 3 baby Mothers: Input on next session.</p> <p>Coordinator: Help in putting together the multisensory tent on the day. Translating during session.</p> <p>Me: Planning and implementation of space. Leading discussion.</p>
<p>Storytelling (continued)</p> <p>Story characters, themes, settings in different stories and different cultures</p>	<p>Reflecting on typical characters that we come across in storytelling (travellers and their tales, guardians, the beautiful damsel, “princes” that save the day, step mothers); the characteristics/ characters that different animals have in stories in different cultures. Looking at typical Russian storytelling what kinds of characters and lessons arise from these. Participants views on these.</p>
<p>Role and responsibilities of mothers, coordinator, myself</p>	<p>N =5 mother+ 5 baby</p> <p>Mothers: Input on next session.</p> <p>Coordinator: Help in putting together the multisensory tent on the day. Translating during session. Idea for next session. Feedback.</p> <p>Me: Planning and implementation of space. Leading discussion.</p>

<p>Music and musical play</p> <p>Traditional Finnish, Russian, Zimbabwean songs and musical play with instruments.</p>	<p>Participants were interested in looking into the differences and reminiscing about traditional children's musical play from their childhood.</p>
<p>Role and responsibilities of mothers, coordinator, myself</p>	<p>N =5 mother+ 5 baby</p> <p>Mothers: Input on next session. Ideas on theme. Sharing songs from their childhood.</p> <p>Coordinator: Help in putting together the multisensory tent on the day. Translating during session. Brainstorming for next session. Feedback. Leading the Russian songs and musical play.</p> <p>Me: Planning and implementation of space. Leading discussion and English, Finnish and Zimbabwean songs. Leading brainstorming for final session.</p>
<p>Russian New Year Celebration</p> <p>How Old New Year and New New Year is celebrated</p>	<p>Participants were interested in looking at how the Russian New Year period is celebrated (period from Christmas to new New Year. The traditions in the country, in their families whilst growing up in Russia as well their celebrations and traditions now with their families living in Finland.</p>
<p>Role and responsibilities of mothers, coordinator, myself</p>	<p>N =3 mother+ 3 baby</p> <p>Mothers: Bringing something for the multisensory space. Ideas on what the space will look like. Answering questions. Sharing about their experiences. Sharing music. Feedback.</p> <p>Coordinator: Help in putting together the multisensory tent on the day. Translating during session. Traditional Russian bakery treat.</p> <p>Me: Planning and implementation of space. Researching Russian New Year celebrations. Putting together a presentation that would guide the discussion where participants would take the lead. Feedback session.</p>

Table 1. Themes and Goals for the multisensory sessions.

Session 1: Introduction

The plan for session 1, was to go to the group and have an introduction meeting where I would introduce myself to the mothers and explain to them what I would like to have their participation in. I also tried to explain the method to them. For this purpose, I took pictures of previous multisensory spaces to show them. I also brought some artefacts that I was planning to use in the next session. There was only one mother and her baby attending this session. It was the first session after summer and this mother in particular was a regular to the group from the previous year. She had previously studied sensory learning and expressed interest in participating. She promised to invite her friend to the next sessions which she did.

Session 2: Zimbabwe: Parts of my culture

For this session we had 2 mothers attending. Both of them were new to the group. As it was the first time that we built the multisensory tent at Graniitti- Club, the staff were interested to see it and participated as well. For this space we setup the mobile tent in which I set up the space with the theme of Zimbabwe.

For this space I used my own reflections on the different aspects I feel are important to me from my culture. I used many different ones such as food, stories, celebrations (weddings and funerals), dance, music, religion, life in rural areas in comparison to urban areas, soccer and cricket, markets as well as how people spend their free time. I decided to this because I wanted to show the mothers that the aspects, we could explore together in the upcoming sessions could be varied and personal to them and their interests. All the participants showed interest in the space and we had long discussions. They also asked a lot of questions.

At the end of the session I tried to ask the mothers if there were any topics that they would like us to look into in the next session. They did not come up with a theme and so the coordinator and I decided on storytelling. This seemed to help the discussion, and after a while the coordinator decided on using the story of Goldilocks and the three bears as the theme of the multisensory space. One of the mothers suggested we make porridge as the sensory aspect of taste as she connected it with childhood in Russia and storytelling.

<p>Taste</p> <p>-Oranges</p>	<p>Sounds</p> <p>-Music (Zimbabwean artist Oliver Mtukudzi)</p>
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<p>Sight</p> <p>-Slideshow of pictures depicting different aspects of the culture (community, food, barbeques, cricket and soccer, markets, rural life v urban life, music, instruments, dance, weddings, storytelling, nature, religion.</p>	<p>Smell</p> <p>-Aqueous cream -Herbal cream -Spices</p>
<p>Touch</p> <p>-Dashiki dress, braiding hair, beads, handbags -cooking stick, baskets, materials, woven baskets</p>	

Table 3. Plan for session 2: Zimbabwe: Parts of my culture

Session 3: Storytelling

For this multisensory space we also set up the collapsible tent and recreated scenes from the story of Goldilocks and the three bears inside it. The session began with participants having a free discussion with their porridge. We then moved to the multisensory tent where I used the PowerPoint slideshow with pictures depicting scenes from the story to go over the story for the children; but also, to begin the discussion about the role of storytelling in different cultures.

For this session there were 3 mothers and their children in attendance. They seemed very interested in the topic and the discussion flowed easily around different topics. Such as who did the storytelling in their families, what memories they had of being told stories in their childhood. What role does storytelling have in how they raise their children today? Other aspects also came up in the discussions such as what is the relationship with the forest or nature in your culture and how this is evident in storytelling.

We also discussed censorship in storytelling; that is whether children hear the same stories or same versions of stories that adults do. The aspect of acceptable, expected or appropriate behaviour of audience in storytelling in their culture, for instance are interruptions allowed. There was also a long discussion around the different characters in stories; and as a result of this the theme for the next multisensory space seemed to grow organically to be that of a more in-depth look at storytelling.

Taste -Manna porridge -Milk Cinnamon and sugar Apple sauce	Sounds -Forest sounds (YouTube)
Sight -Slide show on forest sceneries -3 bowls of porridge (table set) -3 chairs -3 beds (pillows and throws) -Library books (Storybook and book on bears) -Toy set of bears and story setting	Smell -Forest smells Damp earth in a container, green leaves, pines, bark, green moss, leaves, pine tree essential oils -Cinnamon sticks
Touch -3 bowls of porridge (table set) -3 chairs -3 beds (pillows and throws) -Library books (Storybook and book on bears) -Toy set of bears and story setting	

Table 4. Plan for Session 3: Storytelling

Session 4: Storytelling continued

For this session there were 5 mothers and their children participating. The theme of the space was an in-depth continuation of storytelling that looked at characters in stories like animals and the characters they are usually assigned and how this differs from culture to culture. We also explored travellers' tales, guardians, the role of the simpleton/ fool, stepmothers, beautiful damsels that need saving. These served as common features in storytelling and were the base of discussions. We discussed how these features differ between cultures but also how they have changed over time as a result of things like feminism. The mothers used typical/ traditional Russian stories as the basis in the discussion. We also looked at the lessons communicated by stories and how the mothers viewed these.

Taste -Rice porridge -Cinnamon sugar	Sounds -Music (instrumental soundtrack of children's movies)
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<p>Sight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Slideshow of pictures of different aspects of storytelling aspects like animals, travellers and their tales, guardian figures in stories, characters like simpletons, fools, beautiful princesses and princes that save the day, evil step mothers. - Storybooks -Throws and blankets for a cosy setting 	<p>Smell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rice porridge -Cinnamon
<p>Touch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Storybooks 	

Table 5: Plan for Session 4: Storytelling continued.

Session 5: Music and Musical Play

For this session there were 5 mothers and their children in attendance. The theme for this space was one the coordinator of the group wanted to explore in particular because one of the aims of the Kiva Aamu group is also to provide activities that cater to the children that come along. We agreed not to set up the collapsible tent for this session but rather set up the space with yoga mats and instruments. So that there would be space to sing and dance, and also there would be more space for the children to play whilst the mothers participated in the discussion.

The theme was musical play from Zimbabwe, Russia and Finland. We used videos of song lyrics and dances on the projector, which helped with participation, singing and dancing along. Whilst we went through the songs, we discussed similarities and differences between cultures in terms of musical play, the mother's favourite songs and musical play from their childhood, who had taught them, their memories of playing and singing these, as well which ones they had begun teaching their children and the ones they hoped to. Since there was some age difference between the mothers and also the coordinator of the group, they were also interested in sharing the songs and musical play that was the same or that had changed. It was a lively discussion and the children also enjoyed it.

In the end of the session I made more time for a discussion around the final space that we would be built as I was hoping to encourage as much participation from the mothers as possible. The mothers suggested the theme of the Russian New Year celebrations, and as I did not know much about it, they explained some basics, so I was able to start my research and put

together a presentation that we could build the discussion on. They also came up with suggestions of how to decorate the space and what we could eat.

<p>Taste</p> <p>Fruits (Zimbabwe)</p> <p>Porridge (continuation of childhood memories)</p>	<p>Sounds</p> <p>Traditional English children's songs and nursery rhymes.</p> <p>Zimbabwean Children's songs</p> <p>Russian children's songs</p> <p>Instruments</p>
<p>Sight</p> <p>Videos</p>	<p>Smell</p> <p>Fruit</p> <p>Porridge</p>
<p>Touch</p> <p>Instruments, including some from Russia (spoons) and Zimbabwe (hosho and mbira), as well as a frog instrument from Thai land.</p>	

Table 6: Plan for Session 5: Music and Musical Play

Session 6: The Russian New Year Celebrations

For this session there were 3 mothers and their children participation. For this final session, I put together a multisensory space around the theme of the Russian New Year celebrations. Some of the aspects that we looked at were food, decorations, the many traditions around the celebrations and how they differ from region to region, also the difference between rural areas and urban areas, as well as differences in how the mothers in attendance and their families carry on these traditions. There was discussion around the history of the celebrations and the religious element.

I asked the mothers about their earliest memories of celebrating the New Year and that holiday period overall. And what the celebration looks like for them now, also how that differs from what it was like in their childhood as well as that of their parents. The traditions that are important to them, how they learnt about these, the traditions that they hoped to pass on to their children. One of the mothers that did not speak English was not in attendance, so we spoke in English and this addressed part of the language barrier issue. The mothers took great pride in sharing their personal stories around the celebration as well as explaining and

teaching different aspects of their culture in regards the New Year Celebration. The discussion was in depth and seemed interesting to everyone.

After the session we had a feedback session, which I will discuss further in the next chapter. Here I asked the mothers;

1. What did you think about the activities?
2. Did you get to think about your culture and what you would like to teach your children about it?
3. What would you change about the method?
4. What did you like most about the method?

As a continuation of the discussion before, the mothers were very open and reflective in their answers. The coordinator of the Kiva Aamu group was translating for one of the mothers that did not speak English or Finnish, and so for the most part I was able to discuss these questions with the mothers directly. This discussion led to one of the mothers that had raised older children that were now adults in Finland sharing her experiences about some of the challenges she had personally faced teaching her children her culture. This opened up a long discussion between the mothers and coordinator.

<p>Taste</p> <p>Satsumas Chocolate Coffee Traditional Russian treat.</p>	<p>Sounds</p> <p>Music traditionally played at Christmas and New Year (Tchaikovsky) Sample of New Year's speech by Russian president. Part of the movie The Irony of Fate or Have a Nice bath (1975)</p>
<p>Sight</p> <p>Pictures Yolka (Russian Christmas tree)</p>	<p>Smell</p> <p>Satsumas Coffee Traditional bakery treats</p>
<p>Touch</p> <p>Yolka, candles</p>	

Table 6. Plan for session 6: Russian New Year celebrations

4.2 Feedback

4.2.1 Feedback from parents

As part of the final multisensory session I asked the mothers four feedback questions that aimed to address the questions that this study set out to answer. The first two questions looked at how the mothers perceived the method as it pertains to the idea of passing on some aspect of their culture to their children. The last two questions tried to answer the research question of how to develop the method to better suit the client group (families with children who have a multicultural identity). The feedback session was open, and the coordinator translated where necessary. When asked about their general thoughts about the multisensory method; and activities that they had participated in< the mothers first mentioned that they thought it was great that the spaces were something that they could participate in with their children.

They also expressed that they thought it was a good way to explore different aspects in this case of culture as one picture lead to a discussion about many things that may not have been obvious or expected. One mother used the example of the picture of the forest from the session on storytelling that was built around the story of Goldilocks and the three bears. This picture of the forest had led to a discussion about Hansel and Gretel and how the story was basically about parents deciding to abandon their children in a forest. Which had led to us talking about how the mothers felt about such sensitive topics in storytelling.

The second feedback question was about whether the mothers felt the sessions had allowed them to think about their culture and what they wanted to share with their children. Here the mothers said that they felt that the discussions during each session had provided an opportunity to do so. The mothers felt that they would improve on the sessions by letting more people know about them. They would have hoped for more people to join the sessions as they would have been interested in listening to different points of view and hearing about how things are done in other cultures.

When asked what they particularly liked about the method they said they liked having the screen with pictures. And the portion of the session which had been a “presentation”, that is

the pictures, story or songs combined with questions that guided the discussion. One mother said she enjoyed talking and sharing experiences.

4.2.2 Feedback from Coordinator

I got ongoing feedback from the coordinator of the Kiva Aamu club, in our discussions before and after the sessions. She gave me practical tips for instance about allowing more time for stories and pictures. Also, she gave me suggestions on different ways of incorporating the instruments in the musical play session. In addition to this form of feedback after the final multisensory session, she answered a modified version of the reflective questions based on Candy (2006,8) and Vilkkä & Airaksinen (2003,22), that I also used for reflection. These answers she emailed me were her evaluation of the whole process in general.

The coordinator felt that having the discussion based around the different points of view or differences between cultures helped to open up the discussion. And that it also helped to look at the issues in a different and sometimes new way. She felt that our cooperation had worked well, and that we had managed to address the challenges that had come up well; for instance, in with the use of the collapsible tent and how to motivate the mothers to participate more in terms of their input to planning.

She also highlighted the topics that the mothers had mentioned in the discussion on how the method had allowed the mothers to think about their culture in regard to what they wanted to pass on to their children. Some of the issues included the mothers thinking about how children choose or develop their relationship with/ to a culture. Also, what affected what aspects children accept or value in one culture as compared to another. The mothers had also considered how parents, day-cares, schools and society affected this process. As well as to what extent a child should be guided to appreciate their parent's culture.

4.3 Evaluation

Whilst I worked on the multisensory spaces, I kept a thesis diary for each meeting and session for the purpose of reflective documentation. As well as this I will go over and evaluate the goals of the session. Throughout the process, discussions were held with the Kiva Aamu coordinator. In general, we had time for a discussion before the sessions whilst setting up and then after the families had left. The discussions were not structured but they were similar in content as the reflective questions that I went through myself at the end of each session.

Candy (2006) highlights in her guide to carrying out practice-based research that reflective documentation is a tool that is beneficial. In line with her suggestions I kept a notebook throughout the sessions where I jotted down the main points of discussion and observations, as well as aspects that I thought needed to be discussed with the coordinator or made adjustments to. Candy (2006) also sets out model questions that can aid in the reflective process (Candy 2006:8). I combined these thoughts with ideas from Vilka & Airaksinen (2003:22) into a set of reflective questions that I used to evaluate each session. In addition to these reflective questions I referred back to the aims and goals set out for each session to evaluate the sessions.

These same questions were the background for my discussions with the Kiva- Aamu coordinator. In addition, they were the ones we used for her feedback on the process as a whole.

Questions for reflection

- What was discussed, proposed, carried out?
- What were the challenges? How were these addressed?
- Ideas (where they workable, interesting, challenging)?
- What were the goals? What kind of things lead to goals being clarified?
- What new decisions had to be made? Why did you make these?
- How did the collaboration work out in practice?
- Reasons for outcome?
- Did solutions work out or not? Why not?
- Were there differing viewpoints (working life partner/participants)?
- Lessons learnt?

Table 7. Reflective documentation questions based on Candy (2006,8) and Vilka & Airaksinen (2003,22).

I did not do an in-depth reflection for the introduction session as I had gone to meet the coordinator and families. My role was more of a visitor though I had a short presentation. My main aim for the session was to get to know both the coordinator and the families. In this regard I felt the session went well as this mother in particular that was attending did bring a friend along, who ended up participating in most of the remaining sessions. Also, we got an opportunity to brainstorm with the coordinator.

Reflection for Session 2:

The coordinator and I had discussed that it would be good to have an introductory space, where I could plan and put together a multisensory space where both the staff at Graniitti-club and the group mothers could get to know more about the method itself, including how a space is built. The staff in particular asked many questions about the method but there was a lot of discussion which opened up the idea of culture further.

One challenge of this session was that it was rainy and cold weather, which the coordinator feared would affect turnout. And she happened to be correct as the regulars were not in attendance but fortunately, we managed to get one new mother. Putting together the tent was easy, there were just issues with the placement of the projector which we were able to address by changing the position of the wall that served as the screen. Unfortunately, there was no remote for the projector, so I had to sit behind the screen, outside the tent, which I felt disturbed the normal flow of the discussion. As the mothers and coordinator sat inside the tent during the sessions and I was outside the tent. Also, I felt the language barrier as the coordinator had to translate what everyone else was saying and I missed big parts of the conversation. Also knowing when to move the discussion along was difficult whilst outside the tent and also because of the language barrier.

The ideas for the space were interesting to the visitors. My aim and idea were to create a sensory experience and hoped for discussion to grow naturally from that. This did happen. Participants asked many questions (what life is like in rural areas, religion, my family's experience) and were genuinely interested in the culture and my personal experience of issues of cultural identity. This really served the purpose of introducing both myself and the method to participants. Graniitti-club staff seemed interested in using the multisensory tent in other activities. As part of the discussion I shared more about my personal life than I had thought

about or considered but I felt that this helped with the others sharing their own thoughts as well.

In terms of the collaboration with the working life partner, it worked well. For instance, we needed 4 people to assemble the tent and staff were happy to help. We put together the plan for next session after the mother and her baby left. Also, the mother in attendance gave her input on serving porridge for the next space, I was pleased about this as one of the aims was also to encourage the mothers to participate in the planning of the sessions.

I found that having the computer there was very useful during the session as I could look up additional things that came up during the discussion easily. For instance, during the discussion a question came up about a Blair toilet and about location of a place, in this case it was easier to show a picture of that and map, especially when there was a language barrier as well. The last part of the session felt rushed and I found that with the mother trying to dress her child it was difficult to get her input on planning the next session. So, I planned to structure the space and time better so that there is time for an intentional discussion and planning for the next session.

Reflection for Session 3

The coordinator and I decided on building a multisensory setting of Goldilocks and the three bears story as the background or backdrop for the theme of storytelling. The space itself came together well and was in line with our plan. One of the challenges we faced this session was also the number of participants. The day that the Kiva Aamu group was held was changed the previous week from Wednesday to Monday and the coordinator felt that this would affect attendance. Three mothers and their children participated. During this space I was again outside the tent as I needed to switch between a few things on the computer and again it felt like it hindered the natural flow of conversation. The element of the language barrier was present. During this session that it was beneficial to allow more time for the discussion and “presentation”, difficult to gauge if we need more time for the discussion or not because I was sitting outside the tent and also, I do not understand Russian.

Although I structured the session differently and allowed more time for planning together in the hopes of getting input from the mothers on planning the next session. It was difficult to

get the participants to contribute to the planning. Part of this was because the children got restless in the tent and so we had to set up a play area for them outside the tent, where it was challenging to plan. I planned to address this by trying to assign a portion of time of the session when participants are still in the tent to use for that discussion.

Reflection for Session 4

We had hoped to take a more in depth look at storytelling, as the mothers had been interested in it and discussed the topic at length after the previous session. And the Kiva Aamu coordinator had hoped to further the discussion more to look at what feelings the different aspects of storytelling and memories from hearing these stories in their own childhood may have for the participating mothers. As a result, we decided to have a simple and cozy setting for the discussion and carried the theme of serving porridge during the session as one of the mothers had suggested this for the previous session as well. I felt that this worked well.

Although there were more mothers participating this session (5 mothers and 5 babies). There was more of a language barrier now and more of a need for the coordinator to translate during the session and discussion. I was also behind the tent controlling the slideshow as we did not have a remote and leading the discussion from there was challenging. We addressed this by reconsidering the need for the pop-up tent as we could achieve the same multisensory space in the whole room without it and also remove the barrier of the tent, both for the discussion but also so that the babies could wander around more freely.

The idea itself was interesting to participants as they discussed the different aspects of storytelling presented and asked questions and had mini discussions. Also, the different way things are viewed in different cultures was of interest to participants, as well as the idea of how storytelling is changing, with modern storytelling having more messages of equality and empowerment as well as diversity. The coordinator expressed her wish to have a space that would cater more to the children for the next session, we agreed to have musical play. The mothers seemed excited by this and made suggestions about taking the view of comparing Zimbabwe, Russia and Finland. The mothers shared more of their thoughts and wishes for the next session than they had before.

Reflection for session 5

Participating mothers expressed interest in exploring children's songs and nursery rhymes from Finland, Russia, Zimbabwe as well as traditional and more contemporary English ones. This space consisted of song videos, dances and lyrics projected onto a wall, many gym mats laid out on the floor and many different instruments for the children to explore, rather than the multisensory collapsible tent. This I felt worked well, not only by eliminating the physical constraints of the tent. But the biggest difference was in the flow of the session, as I could be a part of the group all the time unlike when I had to sit outside of the tent as we did not have a remote control to control the slides. The set up better catered to the babies and mothers by making use of the space the room provided to spread out mats on the floor.

Mothers as well as the children seemed very interested in the session. Especially as the theme of the space came from the client. Also, because this theme allowed for greater involvement by the children. Working life partner also expressed goal of including some aspect that would also appeal to and entertain the children during the session. It was quite challenging to do with the other sessions as the children were about a year old.

But during this session we managed both to cater to the children fully whilst also focusing on supporting their mothers through the discussion. This was easy to do as the songs and instruments were appealing to the children and there was always a suitable interlude to discuss children's songs and childhood memories. From a practical perspective the instruments were of great interest to this age group of children. Also having the lyrics of the music on the screen helped mothers participate more as they could sing along.

Reflection for session 6

The idea for the final session on the Russian New Year came fully from the mothers. I felt that this met our goal of their participating in the planning of the space itself. We decided not to use the mobile tent and rather set up the space so that the children could play more freely, and mothers could take part in the discussion and watch over them simultaneously. This worked well as it had before, and discussion flowed easily.

The previous week when the mothers had started to plan the space, I had wanted to ask them to bring something small as an artefact for the space, but the coordinator felt that the mothers may feel pressure to do so and would rather not as she wanted to keep it as a low threshold for participation. The coordinator felt that asking the mothers to bring artefacts like Christmas trees and decorations may have been too much of a pressure for the mothers. The mothers were able to participate by sharing music, movies and shows that they watch during

the holiday period from the internet. This session also saw the most participation from the mothers.

We held this session in English which meant I could communicate directly with 2 of the mothers. This also helped the level of discussion as it removed the language barrier. The fact that we knew each other better now was evident in the conversation, as I had set out questions around their memories and what traditions were important to them. We did not need the presentation as much as we had before as the discussion flowed naturally around these thoughts. Also, in the end one of the mothers shared her personal challenges around raising her children in Finland and teaching them her culture. This led to a long discussion. This I felt showed that the space had met its goal of facilitating discussion where the mothers could get peer support.

5 Ethical questions and Reliability of study

Some of the ethical considerations I faced when working on this thesis included; ensuring that the participants were aware of what they were involved in. To do this I met with the Kiva Aamu coordinator before the initial meeting with the group; in this meeting I communicated to her what my thesis study was about, how I envisioned it and the participation I hoped from the club. She in turn shared the goals of the club and together we made a plan that best suited both parties. This was particularly important because the coordinator served as a translator and my connection to the participating mothers. So, the more she understood the better she was able to communicate to the mothers.

Also, in the first session with the Kiva Aamu group which was introductory I explained what I was studying with the one mother that was in attendance. Because we did not have the same mothers every session and also new mothers coming along, we had to refer back to this issue of what I was doing in the group a few more times.

Also, to ensure transparency, I always planned the sessions carefully and went over my plans with the coordinator. A few issues arose where we had to negotiate a solution with the coordinator. For instance, when I would have wanted to ask the mothers to bring a small artefact with them to the final multisensory space, but the coordinator felt that it may have been too

much to ask. Here it was important to respect the goals and ideas of the club and its coordinator.

As part of the introduction as well as in my discussions about my thesis work, I communicated to the mothers that in my writing about the multisensory spaces and the discussions that we shared. I would ensure confidentiality and their anonymity. By not including any personal information by which they could be identified. This was particularly important as the group was a peer support group and one of its goals was that mothers could share issues that are affecting them and their families openly and get help and support in the group.

A key part of my study was observation during the multisensory sessions. This was participatory in nature, as I was guiding the discussions as well as a part of the discussions. I always had a notebook where I took notes during the sessions. And I reflected on these observations as soon as possible. Ideally on the same day. This helped me to capture the most authentic thoughts and feelings from the session. During the reflection I tried to be as neutral as possible and keep in mind the subjective aspect of observation.

One key principle of the multisensory method is its client-oriented and in this instance child and family-centered approach. I took this into consideration in my planning of the spaces. Creating positive encounters was important to me during the spaces and in all my interactions at the Kiva Aamu club; one aspect of this was also being respectful and sensitive as we were discussing culture and to a large extent also childhood memories, as well as families. These topics are of a very sensitive nature. I also aimed to develop my professional knowledge by ensuring that the multisensory spaces were based on the theoretical framework.

The language barrier was also a consideration as it meant I did not have direct communication with the participants, except with the 2 participants for the final session. And even when we communicated in English this was not the mother's mother tongue. This also had an effect on my observations as well as method of collecting feedback as there was a need for translation.

The safety of the children was also important to consider. When setting up the space I had to be careful with the different artefacts and decorations that they would not pose a danger to the babies.

6 Results and Discussion

6.1 Personal learning outcomes

During this thesis process, I have been able to see my professional growth. For instance, one of the greatest challenges has been finding a target group that would be suitable and willing to participate in the study. I approached different places and met different groups before I finally got to join the Kiva Aamu group. This has made me have a greater appreciation for that part of social work that involves searching for clients to participate.

I also got to experience the uncertainty in social work projects, where an activity is planned but one cannot be certain of who will participate and in what manner. This helped me become more comfortable with being uncomfortable and uncertain. The language barrier also meant I did not always fully understand the situation or interactions that were going on. But during the final session when the mothers had a discussion that was directly related to the issue of teaching their children their culture and the challenges involved with this, I realized that even when operating in that uncertainty it is possible to achieve the goals that had been set out. In this case the multisensory space had served as a facilitator to that discussion where that mother had received support from her peers.

Linked to this my view and plan of the thesis also had to change somewhat after I finally found participants. This also highlighted to me the importance of flexibility and taking time to re align and refocus when situations change. The Kiva Aamu families were made up of mothers and babies aged around a year old, I previously had little experience with children in this age group and this thesis work has allowed me an opportunity to work with children under the age of 2.

As one of my key roles during the sessions was facilitating and guiding the discussions, my skills in this regard had many opportunities to grow and develop. I also feel more comfortable guiding similar sessions. I was also able to plan and implement the spaces independently, which helped my confidence to grow as there were many times when I considered how much easier to have done the thesis project with a partner.

Reflection was key to the multisensory spaces and is an important aspect of social work in general. I managed to practice reflection and see the benefits in terms of useful adjustments I was able to make in my plans. Also, when I reflected on the participation of the mothers as a goal I had set and how we achieved it by the end of the thesis project, the importance of time and establishing relationships stands out to me. In the last session the mothers shared a lot about their families, childhood memories and even challenges raising their children and I feel that this happened due to the relationship that had developed in the group over time and that there was a feeling of trust and that this was a safe place to discuss and get support.'

6.2 Learning outcomes regarding the method and objectives

One aspect of the multisensory method that was highlighted during the sessions that I held in the Kiva Aamu group; is that of shared stories. That was a big part of the sessions as we discussed a lot of personal things in the sessions. This sharing about one's self helped open discussions but also helped the group to grow to a place that they felt comfortable to share and support each other.

I found that it was important to allow for time especially in looking for growth or progress towards set goals, in regard to the aim of the mothers participating. I had initially hoped that they would have more of an input in the planning of the spaces, but this only materialized towards the very end of the thesis project. Linked to this I found that what I had considered or assumed to be my measure of participation was not necessarily what the mother's participation looked like in practice. Rather I would have gained more insight by looking at how meaningful the sessions were to the mothers and at their involvement in a more holistic way. Another consideration is also that participation is personal and for some participants just showing up may have been a big thing for them.

In terms of what I learnt about planning a multisensory space in this setting, was that a key aspect of the role was that of being a facilitator. Having made a small “presentation” and thought about some questions that would be good to discuss; it was still important to be present in the discussion and have a feel for what the participants were interested in discussing and supporting the development of these things. As was highlighted in the feedback from the participating mothers the method is suitable for children and can be adapted in different ways to be engaging to different age groups. For the one-year olds participating in the Kiva Aamu club they found the session with a focus on music particularly of interest.

For the multisensory spaces that I set up, I saw how beneficial the method was for reminiscing. This was highlighted as in our discussions there was frequently an element around the connection between one’s own childhood and who they are or see themselves as a parent.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study and the feedback from the participating parents show that this method can be adapted and used in similar mother- baby (child) groups. One adaptation possibility would be to have a multisensory theme or project around which the group works on over time. As in the case of the group I worked with in the study of 6 sessions, there was a lot growth in the group but also in their appreciation of the multisensory method. Carrying out better advertising and the effort into finding participants was also a factor that stood out from this thesis project. Having different points of view from different cultures was also one thing that participants pointed out to be something that opened up discussion and gave a different perspective to things.

This concept could also be possibly used by day-cares with families with older children. As it supports the child’s identity negotiation. It would also facilitate cooperation between the day-care staff and parents around supporting the child’s identity formation. And would be a concrete way for parents to be involved and participate in their child’s life at day-care. The other children in a child’s group would also be simultaneously learning about other cultures. The method also supports the concept of “small group” activities in day-cares. However, this would require time, resources and commit from day-care staff. Many studies have been carried out on supporting children with an immigrant background in the day-care system, and this method could be easily adaptable and inexpensive whilst having many benefits

The impact of culture on our identities and the importance of generational learning, was something I found personally interesting throughout this thesis project.

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