BUILDING A PEER SUPPORT GROUP FOR FRENCH SPEAKING IMMIGRANT MEN IN HELSINKI

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis was development-oriented and the product was a peer support group model. The aim was to create a support group for French speaking immigrant men in cooperation with a non-governmental organisation called Miessakit. Miessakit is an association offering support services to men in different crisis situations.

Peer support groups are used to help people in similar life situations find solutions to their problems. The support group's purpose was to help immigrant men integrate into Finnish Society. The peer support group was related to community development work.

In the past Miessakit has organized support groups for immigrant men but never in French. A new concrete service was produced for their organization and a peer support group in French was started during the fall of 2015.

The peer support group model described the process of founding, implementing and evaluating the group. Data was collected to create the model. The data included practical training materials, diverse literature sources and theories. Practice and theories were combined throughout the process to show similarities and contrasts between practice and theory.

Materials were also created for the peer support group including advertising announcements, a to-do list guide, feedback and consent forms which are available in the appendices of the thesis. These documents were elements of the model. Observation notes from the actual group meetings and an interview with a peer support group professional were used as qualitative data for the group evaluation.

The result was a peer support group model in which was described all the steps undertaken to make a peer support group from conception to completion. The model also described the challenges that were faced during the process and offered recommendations for improvements to the group's structure and functioning. Ethical considerations and personal learning topics were also presented.

Key words: peer support, support group, group leading, evaluation

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mental and social support can provide significant help to a person who is coping with personal problems. Support is one of the essential positive resources of people's well-being (Timperi 2015). Peer support groups provide an opportunity to discuss personal issues with other persons who are in a similar life situation. The group interaction process allows participants to discover themselves and find inner peace.

The thesis is related to an actualized peer support group that was run during my Diak placement at Miessakit ry in the fall of 2015. Miessakit ry ('Miessakit') is a Finnish non-governmental organization that provides social services to men in need for mental and social support throughout Finland.

The association focuses on issues related to fatherhood, divorce, violence and the integration of immigrant men in Finland. The organization is also known for promoting the well-being interests of men on the national level. Their activities are reserved for men only and their target group is men of all age and origins.

The diverse supporting activities of the association offer different solutions to men with personal issues (e.g. support groups for separated/divorced men). Miessakit was organizing different peer support groups during my placement and I wanted to learn how to create and lead a support group in practice.

Being a native French speaker and an immigrant myself we decided, with the help of Miessakit, to create a service for French speaking foreign men in which they could discuss their daily lives and integration into Finland. This service was related to the Diaconia degree program of community development.

Miessakit is the partner organization for this thesis. The group was developed with the cooperation of Miessakit Vieraasta Veljeksi which is a unit in charge of enforcing the

integration of immigrants by creating new forms of intercommunication and cooperation between immigrant men and native Finnish men (Miessakit ry 2016). The group was led by a foreigner which was a different approach. The idea was to attract new service users and complement the association's existing knowledge about their support group activities for immigrants.

This thesis is product-development oriented and the product is a peer support group model. It describes in details the process of making the peer support group from its foundation, implementation and final evaluation.

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (2012) defines a product-development oriented thesis as a product development (also called production) that usually involves a single, relatively short process, the purpose of which is to complete an output or service for a certain user group while developing tools for practical work. Product development includes the design and construction processes of the product or service, the trial or implementation of the product, and the assessment and sometimes even the marketing of the product (Diaconia University of Applied Science 2012, 34.)

Several literature sources and training materials were analyzed to describe the building of the peer support group. Practice is presented along with theory throughout this thesis. Theory and practice are interrelated and some of the links between them are shown. Certain theories may overlap with regards for example to leading, group dynamics and group structure.

Several documents were created during the group development phase and these documents include announcements, feedback and consent forms and a to-do list guide. These documents are available in the appendices. Observation notes from the group meetings were written to present what happened during the leading implementation of the group. An interview with a professional peer support group trainer was also carried out and used as qualitative data for the group evaluation.

The group participants could come as they were. Miessakit emphasizes the importance of establishing a low-threshold access to their activities, especially because men can have prejudice seeking for help. Seeking help can be interpreted as weakness or incompetency, which later can threat one's own masculinity (Peitsalo 2008, 17). It is important to have 'low threshold' meeting places where people just can drop-in (Nylund 2000, 41).

Certain men are interested in receiving help from other men who seem better qualified to understand and respond to their problems. According to the Finnish national institute for health and welfare, women accounted for 90.4 per cent of the personnel working in municipal health and social services in 2014 (Terveyden Hyvinvoinnin Laitos 2015). Miessakit offers support provided by men for men. According to the Miessakit organization's practical experience, male workers are able to understand the experience or situation of their client from a man's point of view (Timperi & Peitsalo 2015).

Peer support group participants express themselves and interact differently in same-gender groups than in mixed groups. This is for example due to the fact that if there is, say, only one man in a group otherwise composed of women, he may become the repository of attitudes towards men in general. The same point can be made, of course, if there is just one woman in an otherwise all male group (Whitaker 2001, 75-76).

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2 PEER SUPPORT GROUP

2.1 Definitions & Characteristics

There are many definitions for the terms *group* and *peer support*. It is important to define them, in order to fully grasp the meaning of the expression *peer support group*. A group can be defined as a number of persons bound together by common social standards, interests, etc. (Collins English Dictionary 2016).

It becomes a support group when the participants have a common factor which gives them reason to take part to the group (Peitsalo 2008, 21). A support group is a group of people who have similar experiences and concerns and who meet in order to provide emotional help, advice, and encouragement for one another (Merriam-Webster, 2016).

Self-help groups are also forms of peer support groups. They can be defined as groups with such 'peers' as members who share a similar life situation or a concern apart from family, relatives, friends, and neighbours. Similar to volunteers, self-help group members also join groups formed out of free will and without a membership payment (Nylund 2000, 19.)

Thus, both peer support and self-help groups gather participants sharing common interests and problems in order to help and support their members. The core idea of peer support is that persons in the same life situation help each other by telling their experiences (Suomen Pakolaisapu ry 2011, 6). The support group is about mutual help (Nichols & Jenkinson 2006, 25).

Widely known groups include support groups for persons addicted to alcohol (e.g. Alcohol Anonymous), substance abuse or suffering from mental health disease such as for example depression. There are many types of peer support groups and the reasons lying behind their creation involve as many subjects as there are issues. A group may

concern persons suffering from long-term unemployment, social stigma, divorce, death of a relative and many other issues.

Support groups are used to help persons depending on their life situations, background and characteristics. Certain persons may be in life transition, suffer anxiety, low self-esteem or have common physical health problems. Some groups are open to persons sharing a common religion, culture, hobby, social status and gender for example. Participants can be also categorized based on age (children, teenagers, older adults etc.).

The members decide to gather in the setting of their choice. The group may sit in a circle and have open-conversations or discussions based on themes. They may also gather during social and sport activities (e.g. trekking, cooking, sports).

The groups are usually led by a group leader whether formally or informally. The latter may be a professional (e.g. group therapist) or a volunteer (e.g. supervising a peer support or self-help group). The group leader may be called group worker, group facilitator, group supervisor, group counselor, group practitioner and other names.

It seems that there is always a form of leadership with at least one leader or more. A group's successful beginning requires a leader in the group (Peitsalo 2008, 43). Self-help groups are known to be autonomous without any formal leaders. In most self-help groups the leadership emerges rather than being designated (Corey, 2004, 12). Nevertheless, some professionals think that it does not matter whether or not there is a professional or a peer leader; the main thing is that people receive support (Nylund 2000, 53).

Formal and informal group leaders share common characteristics. A group leader is in charge of the set-up of the group, selection of participants, promotion, membership etc. But the main objective is to use the group for the benefit of the participants. The group leader's goal is to enable and assist each individual in a group to achieve personal benefit through making as full use as possible of the potentials of the group as a

medium for help (Whitaker 2001, 4). Roles and skills of support group leaders are discussed in more details in chapter 4.

2.2 Relevance of Peer Support Groups

I founded the peer support group for French speaking immigrant men because this form of activity is known to be an effective medium to help people. The popularity of the groups and their diversity in nature prove that they work. There is a great deal of evidence that group participants and the community benefit from this type of social activity.

Miessakit (2016) reported that experience based on several years of development and background work shows that men's group activities can also serve as an important preventive operational model in health care and social politics (Miessakit ry 2016). On the individual level, groups for men at Miessakit have been mainly called *growth groups* (Peitsalo 2008, 29).

Corey (2004) refers to Bednar & Kaul who affirmed that a survey of more than forty five years of research provides an abundance of evidence that group approaches are associated with clients' improvement in a variety of settings and situations (Corey 2004, 54).

The charity association Nesta (2015) from the United Kingdom studied the impact of peer support and summarized evidence from more than one thousand studies. According to this organization, there is evidence that peer support can help people feel more knowledgeable, confident, happy, and less isolated and alone (Nesta 2015, 1). Many studies have found benefits from one-to-one, small group and larger group approaches (Nesta 2015, 17).

The key point is that groups can provide certain direct personal experiences that can be extremely valuable in terms of personal development or personal support and, further, that such experiences are hard to come by other than through the group process (Nichols & Jenkinson 2006, 17).

For Corey (2004), the group approach is frequently more effective than the individual approach. This effectiveness stems from the fact that group members can practice new skills both within the group and in their everyday interactions outside of it. Moreover, members of the group benefit from the feedback and insights of other group members (Corey, 4.)

This activity model supposedly works, even though the reasons for its effectiveness maybe unclear. Corey refers to Horne and Rosenthal who, in their description of the research history on group work, indicate that we have learned much about the complex nature of group work. They state that the efficacy of group treatment appears to have less to do with a specific theoretical orientation than with finding an optimum combination of pre-group training, client characteristics, therapeutic factors, group structure, and stages of group development (Corey 2004, 54-55.)

2.3 Benefits to the Participants

Support group participants benefit mentally and psychologically from attending support groups. The group structure generates an interaction process in which members review their personal thoughts, emotions and attitude. It allows members to discuss and examine their concerns together.

Yalom & Leszcz (2005) enumerate a list of therapeutic factors to the participants including instillation of hope, universality, imparting information, altruism, the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group, development of socializing

techniques, imitative behavior, interpersonal learning, group cohesiveness, catharsis, and existential factors (Yalom & Leszcz 2005,1-2).

Support groups offer a possibility to share one's own experiences, thoughts and feelings which frees person's resources and makes it possible to be accepted the way you are (Peitsalo 2008, 21). An immigrant man finding a group meeting his needs and interests will get strength, motivation and a feeling that he is in charge of his own life (Korpela & Pietarinen 2011, 35).

Whether the participant is going to benefit from the group experience is not necessarily related to the level of active cooperation or the length of the group period. A long-term group may not necessarily bring more benefits than a short-term group. Some kinds of gain, important to those concerned, do not require a vast time span, and not all groups need to be long term (Whitaker 2001, 193).

Some members may be less active and stay quiet during discussions. Remaining silent in a group is particularly possible if the other members are actively participating. Nevertheless, being silent does not mean not learning from the interaction. A group member can listen and relate what is said to his/her own life.

It is important to note that some people may gain very little from the group experience and even be harmed. Certain participants may not find the group experience suitable for their needs and leave the group at an early stage. Observations made in a group context may be taken personally by other(s) individual(s). For example, they may find the personal exposure and direct feedback of the group somewhat threatening and respond accordingly (Nichols & Jenkinson 2006, 36).

This implies that peer support group leaders have a responsibility to be vigilant in order to detect whether an individual member might somehow feel hurt or overwhelmed due to peer interaction.

3 FOUNDATION

Setting the foundations for the peer support group for French speaking immigrant men implied preparing for future group stages. In my experience, there are three main development stages taking place when running a peer support group:

Table 1. Group development stages
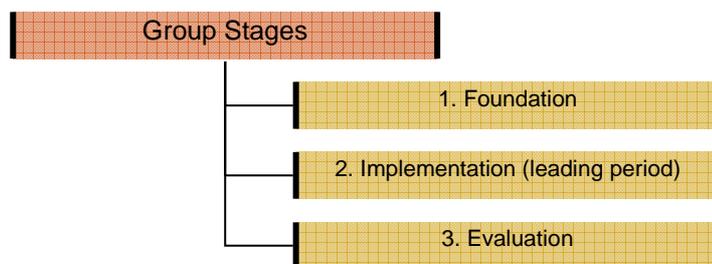
The foundation was the first phase of the development process. It meant making practical decisions about the group objectives, participant selection, timetable, group structure, promotion and so on. All the decisions were made with Miessakit. Practice and theory are combined throughout the chapter to explain the elements of the foundation with different perspectives.

3.1 Group Function & Target Group

Miessakit (2016) identified that foreign men needed support to integrate the Finnish society. So far, activities to support immigrants with focus on men have been very scarce in Finland (Miessakit ry 2016). One can claim that immigrants have a limited

social network as their families often stay in their country of origin. Some foreigners may also suffer from traumatic experiences (e.g. refugees).

The objective was to create a peer support group to contribute to the integration of immigrant men. The aim was to help them deal with everyday life challenges, share life experiences from life in Finland (e.g. professional life and hobbies), discuss Finnish culture, integration process and share useful advice.

The target group was French speaking immigrant men who had recently moved to Finland or had already been living in the country for many years. The participants were expected to be very diverse, including expatriates, asylum seekers and refugees originally coming from French speaking countries in Europe, Africa and Asia. The target group's residence area was the Helsinki region (Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa municipalities included).

French speaking foreigners were actually a minority in the Helsinki area. In 2013, only 1,069 out of 50.661 foreigners living in Helsinki spoke French, accounting for only 2,1% of the total number of languages spoken (Helsingin Kaunpungin Tietokeskus 2013, 9).

The availability of peer support groups in the French language was limited. Peer support groups for immigrants are usually known to be held in more common languages such as Arabic, Russian, Somali and English for example (Veto-verkosto 2016 a.).

3.2 Group Size & Participant Selection

The ideal number of participants must be discussed. There are differences of opinion in the literature as to how big is too big, and how small is too small, but usually a membership of six to nine or so is regarded as about right (Whitaker 2001, 73-74).

According to Corey (2004), for ongoing groups with adults, about eight members with one leader seems to be a good size (Corey 2004, 84).

Peitsalo (2008) for Miessakit explains that a group's stability requires at least 5 to 8 men willing to commit to the group (Peitsalo 2008, 33). Therefore, we decided to take up to 8 group participants.

A group may be led alone or with a co-leader. For example, the Finnish Refugee Council (2014) functions as a dual model and the supervising pair involves at least one person speaking the native language of the participants (Suomen Pakolaisapu ry 2014, 8). A benefit from having a co-leader is to receive another opinion on the leading of the group. It was decided that I would lead alone because Miessakit usually runs groups with only one leader.

Professional guests may be invited to the meetings. Guests may be social workers, nurses, policemen, union workers, psychologists, lawyers etc. They are experts in their field and they can answer to questions depending on the subject of interest of the participants. A professional coordinator from the Finnish Refugee Council was invited to one meeting. Indeed, some of the participants were refugees and this person was an expert to assist them with their questions.

The selection of participants may be carried out based on a first-in first-served method. The members were not selected in advance because the group was founded on short notice. The participants came to the first sessions without providing earlier notice. There were no criteria for the selection of participants (low threshold access). Whether participants were legally or illegally residing in Finland was not a criterion for admission.

Another selection method consists in interviewing directly potential members. It allows the screening of the candidates to make sure that they entirely understand the concepts, objectives and guidelines of the peer support group. The supervisor can answer their questions and this contributes in reducing their original apprehension. It can help the

future members have positive expectations from the group as well. This method was not used due to the limited timetable.

3.3 Timetable, Place, Guidelines

The timetable for the meetings was set to start on the 28th of October and end on the 9th of December 2015. A reminder of the group's closure was scheduled two sessions before the last meeting.

There is always the possibility to continue the group after the end of the group period. This should be discussed in advance by the group supervisor with the cooperative organization. It was convened that the group would not be continued after the 9th of December 2015.

The calendar of the meetings is found in the table below:

Table 2. Timetable of the meetings

Date	Session
28.10.2015	1st Meeting
4.11.2015	2nd Meeting
11.11.2015	3rd Meeting
18.11.2015	4th Meeting
25.11.2015	5th Meeting
2.12.2015	6th Meeting
9.12.2015	7th Meeting

There are different views over the ideal frequency and lengths of the meetings. For example, Peitsalo (2008) recommends a frequency of ten meetings of one to one and a half hour with one meeting every week or every two weeks (Peitsalo 2008, 42). The

Finnish Refugee Council recommends group meetings of two hours once a week over a period of twelve to sixteen weeks (Suomen Pakolaisapu ry 2011, 14-15). For Corey (2004), a two-hour group each week is long enough to allow for some intensive work (Corey 2004, 85).

We agreed with the cooperating organization to hold meetings once a week every Wednesday over a total period of seven weeks. Each meeting was set to last two hours from 5 to 7 pm.

The meetings are usually held in places where there is privacy and comfort. The adequate place to run a meeting should be a place where privacy can be fulfilled, in an appropriate location and in which chairs can be put into a circle or near a table (Peitsalo 2008, 42).

A room was reserved at the office of Miessakit in Helsinki during the duration of the peer support group. The room had chairs set in a circle and tables could be added at the discretion of the participants. Some people feel safer and less exposed if they are sitting at a table. Others can tolerate an open circle (Whitaker 2001, 74.)

Guidelines and norms needed to be set. Guidelines and norms concern both the group leader and the participants. The term norm refers to behaviors regarded by members as either acceptable and appropriate, or unacceptable and inappropriate (Whitaker 2001, 32). The guidelines and norms were explained at the beginning of the first meeting sessions.

The group creates common guidelines that are among other things related to the length of each meeting, meetings' frequency and member's trust and confidentiality (Peitsalo 2008, 44). An emphasis was put on the rules of confidentiality. Other guidelines included reminders about punctuality and what to do in case of absence or lateness.

The partner organization's values were also introduced from the beginning. Men's group values included trust, openness, respect and equality (Peitsalo 2008, 36).

3.4 Advertising

The decision to create the peer support group was made at the beginning of October 2015. The first meeting was scheduled on the 28th of October 2015.

The following timetable presents the key dates for the promotion:

Table 3. Timetable of the advertising period

6.10.2015	7.10.2015	9. 10.2015	12.11.2015
Decision to make the group and advertising	Drafts of the announcements both in French and Finnish	Sending the announcements	Decision to send reminders of the announcements

Advertising is crucial when founding a peer support group. Announcements were created in Finnish and French after the group objectives were clearly defined. The advertising announcements included essential information of the group's main purpose, the target group, the meeting location, timetable and contact details (Miessakit ry 2015 a. and b.). Copies of announcements in both languages are available in appendices 1 and 2.

The announcement included as much information as possible including pictures, in order to make them attractive. They also included the logo of Miessakit, Vieraasta Veljeksi and a picture of the Francophonie flag (flag representing all the countries in which French is spoken officially or promoted for other purposes). In addition, it was mentioned that the participation to the group was free of charge.

The advertisements were uploaded on the 9th of October 2015 to the organisation's webpage, Facebook and Twitter accounts. I also posted the announcement in French to a Facebook social media group gathering French immigrants in Finland. In practice you

have to provide information using as many different channels as possible to reach numerous cooperating organizations (Peitsalo 2008, 43).

Announcements were also sent by e-mail to the Veto-network ('Veto-verkosto' in Finnish). This network regroups about seventy associations from the public and third sector (e.g. Finnish Red cross, Helsinki, Vantaa and Espoo municipalities) which organize support activities for immigrants in the Helsinki region (Veto-verkosto 2016, b.). The network is a springboard for advertising a peer support group to immigrant service users. Several organizations had service users potentially interested in coming to the group.

Sending advertisements does not mean that the recipients will forward the information. It is recommended that a call is made to the organizations after you send the announcement in order to improve the advertisements' visibility. It is also recommended to ask participants to spread the word. I gave copies of the announcements to the participants during the first meetings and encouraged them to spread the information. Indeed, word of mouth is a very effective tool for advertising.

3.5 Summary

The foundation is the starting phase in which you plan and implement key tasks. In my experience, the main elements to be remembered when founding a support group are:
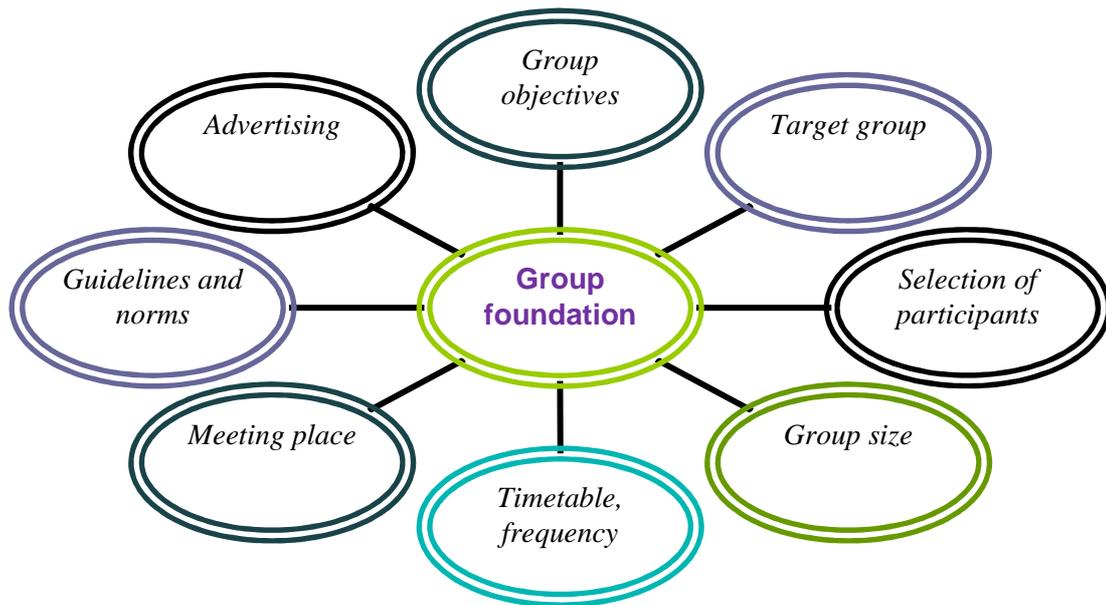
Figure 1. Tasks to be carried out during the set-up

A to-do list was developed for the partner organisation. It summarizes the main tasks and serves as a guide for future workers who are planning to found a peer support group at Miessakit. The to-do list guide is available in appendix 3.

4 IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation phase took place after the design and promotion of the group. It consisted in holding and leading the meetings with participants. As mentioned in section 3.2, I was in sole charge of the leading.

Observations were written after each meeting. The notes assisted me in finding links between different theories related to leading/group dynamics and the practice of group leading in respect to my experiences. Some of the links and observations are mentioned in the chapter 5. A brief summary of each meeting is available in section 4.3.

Leading the group required knowledge of the diverse roles and skills that characterize peer support group leaders. It was important to be aware of group dynamics as well. These topics are discussed in the next two sections before the summary of the meetings.

4.1 Leading a Peer Support Group

Men's group supervisors at Miessakit have pointed out that peer support group leaders share the characteristics of being courageous, diplomat, limit-setter, initiator, activator, equal to all members, good listener, mature, empathetic etc. (Peitsalo 2008, 45-46).

An important leader's function consists in ensuring that the group is safe enough for participants to disclose sensitive information. Confidentiality in the group means trust towards group secrecy and mutual respect (Peitsalo 2008, 33). A leader is required to keep the confidences of the group members and has the added responsibility of impressing on the members the necessity of maintaining the confidential nature of whatever is revealed in the group (Corey 2004, 60).

Leadership includes summarizing, encouraging participation, testing for consensus, supporting morale, dealing with intra-group conflict, providing information, keeping members focused on the task, and so on (Whitaker 2001, 38). Group leaders usually summarize the content of the discussions at the end of each meeting. Summarizing helps participants reflect about what happened during the meeting and how to apply what they experienced in their everyday lives.

The objective is to make members think by themselves and not to give them ready-made answers. The group leader holds a mirror before the group members and asks them to determine, with the help of another person, whether their lives are the way they want them to be (Wubbolding 2000, 111). The aim is to facilitate interaction and make members develop their own goal-setting plans which can later be translated into concrete action.

The leader has to decide about the extent of his/her involvement as a peer inside the group. The role of the men's group supervisor is difficult because he is at the same time a peer and a supervisor (Peitsalo 2008, 45). As a matter of fact, the leader acts more as a peer in smaller groups where active participation is more limited.

Finding the right balance between empathy and work is an important aspect of group supervising. One should pay close attention to one's own resources and vulnerabilities. The leader must be able to relate to the personal lives of the participants while maintaining a certain emotional distance.

The support group may be multicultural. One may claim that multicultural group leading requires further knowledge and flexibility than homogeneous groups. The group was highly multicultural because both participants and the supervisor were immigrants with different nationalities and backgrounds.

When the supervisor is foreigner in a multicultural group, his/her role is to function as a cultural interpreter (Suomen Pakolaisapu ry 2011, 24). The leader should research about the cultural background of the participants during the sessions and outside the group

perimeter. Knowledge and understanding of racial/ethnic identity is a valuable asset in multiethnic groups in assisting the group toward positive interethnic group relations and tolerance for diversity (DeLucia-Waack et al. 2004, 204).

Self-awareness is much needed when leading members from different cultures. Each member must be perceived in the context of his or her cultural background and generalizations avoided. It is crucial to be aware of racial and ethnic groups as well as one's own emotional reactions when leading a multicultural group. Group workers must also acknowledge their own racist attitudes, beliefs, and feelings (Corey 2004, 43).

4.2 Group Dynamics

The supervisor must pay attention to what is happening inside the group. Group dynamics, as a field of study, focuses on the properties of groups and on interactive events which occur within groups (Whitaker 2001, 31).

The interactions between the group participants have an impact over the group atmosphere. Group moods and atmospheres are expressed in what is said, how things are said and how people behave non-verbally. A mood or atmosphere builds up from the interactions of members (Whitaker 2001, 34.)

Group participants interact in different ways. Possible reactions to interacting with other members include having contradictory feelings, needs and aspirations, hope and fear, tiredness and need for safety (Jauhiainen & Eskola 1994, 29). Individuals respond to others with sympathy, impatience, boredom, anger, bafflement, and much else. The general atmosphere may be depressed, excited, sullen, flat, or other (Whitaker 2001, 97.)

Group members may not be conscious of their own reactions and feelings during discussions. Dealing with one's own feelings may be challenging and one may not

know how to react to his/her problems. For example, a participant may show a negative attitude resulting in bringing tension into the group atmosphere.

Body language has also an impact over the group atmosphere. It might be difficult to interpret the body language of other group's members and non-verbal actions can actually disrupt the dynamic of the group. The leader and participants interpret the body language of others. Yet, interpretation is subjective and may be fallacious. Keeping one's arms crossed during a discussion may not mean that the person is closed for instance.

In the beginning, the group is in a forming phase. Members take time to get to know each other and build relationships. The participants are dependent on the leader who clarifies the aim of the group and answers questions. At the initial sessions members tend to keep a 'public image' that is they present the dimensions of themselves they consider socially acceptable (Corey 2004, 90).

The group atmosphere becomes attractive to members when certain stability and cohesion are reached. Group stability mainly means psychological stability, which can be also called group's inner attraction (Peitsalo 2008, 33). The optimal phase takes place when there is mutual communication between all the members.

Group cohesion occurs when individuals feel a sense of acceptance, belonging, appreciation and support. Men who interact in groups emphasize common life experiences, language and life situation, which leads to similar feelings and eases mutual interaction (Peitsalo 2008, 34). A group marked by low cohesiveness will develop differently from a highly cohesive group and indeed may fail to 'develop' at all, though it certainly will change (Whitaker 2001, 37). The group is mature when trust and cohesion are established and participants able to move forward together.

The supervisor holds roles in the group and so do participants. Being able to identifying these roles is an asset. A role is a function held by an individual in the group and this role determines how he/she relates to the other members. The individuals usually find a

position for themselves inside the group. They can be for example a criticizer, withdrawer, attention seeker, mediator, clown, doer, idea generator and initiator (Suomen Pakolaisapu ry 2011, 18).

It is important to notice that the roles are not fixed and that the dynamic of changing roles and positions change the group environment. For example, a member may go from being very withdrawn in the first meetings to very talkative after few sessions. The group is dynamic and a constantly changing unit (Jauhiainen & Eskola 1994, 32).

Conflicts are also part of group dynamics. They affect a group's structure and its atmosphere. Groups usually go through transition phases during which the members deal with their anxiety, defensiveness, conflict, and ambivalence about participating in the group (Corey 2004, 97). A member may try to take the lead of the discussions and contest the leader's role for instance. Such event may nonetheless show that the participants are confident enough and have reached a certain autonomy. There is less dependence on the leader and the group is reaching a maturity phase.

4.3 The Meetings

The first meeting for the peer support group for French speaking immigrant men was held on the 28th of October 2015. Observation notes were taken after the end of each session. The notes were meant to describe what happened during the meetings, the number of participants, discussion subjects, group atmosphere etc.

The content of each meeting is presented briefly in this section. The participant names were not disclosed and the content of the discussion was written in a general manner. Links between practice and theories are apparent in the discussions of the next chapter.

Meeting 1, Wednesday 28th of October 2015, 17:00-18:00

Number of participants: 2

The discussion started in a meeting room of the Miessakit organization's main office downtown Helsinki. Two men came for the first meeting. One participant was a middle aged man from French speaking African country and the other one was a refugee young man from the Middle-East.

I introduced myself, the organization and the purpose of the peer support group which was to discuss about Finnish culture and integration into a new country. I emphasized that the content of our conversation was meant to be kept confidential.

The participants introduced themselves and discussed their life stories with each other for about twenty minutes. I asked them which discussion themes interested them. They said that they were ready to talk about any subject but did not mention any in particular.

The participant from the Middle-East neither understood nor spoke French. The discussion quickly changed to English, although the other participant continued to speak in French.

One member told that Finnish people were in general 'open' and 'organized'. I asked about positive and negative aspects concerning immigration to Finland and the topic of racism came out. One participant said that he had been victim of racism twice. Apart from these events, he was satisfied with his life in Finland.

The discussion lasted for one hour.

Meeting 2, Wednesday 4th of November 2015, 17:00-18:00

Number of participants: 2 (new)

The two participants from the first meeting did not come back for the second meeting. Two new persons came. They were both refugees from conflict areas in Central Africa.

The discussion started in the same meeting room used for the first meeting. I introduced myself, the organization, the purpose of the group, rules and reminded them of the confidentiality rules.

The participants had arrived recently in Finland and they had limited knowledge of the country. They introduced themselves and discussed life in Finland with topics ranging from the cost of life, hobbies and social services.

Then, they started to talk about war experiences from their countries. One participant was talking more than the other and revealed that he suffered the loss of relatives. The other participant kept his head in his hands most of the time. They exchanged their phone numbers at the end of the meeting because they were originally from neighbouring regions.

The discussion lasted around one hour.

Meeting 3, Wednesday 11th of November 2015, 17:30-18:00

Number of participants: 2

The two same participants from the previous week came thirty minutes late.

We discussed about their countries, culture and refugee camps. I asked them to talk about their travel to Europe and they started to tell about their journeys in details. They shared personal details about the refugee camp experiences as well.

The discussion lasted about thirty minutes.

Meeting 4, Wednesday 18th of November 2015, 17:00-18:15

Number of participants: 2

The participants who were present during the two previous meetings came. They wanted to stay in the cafeteria because it was more 'informal' than in the meeting room.

The major theme of the discussion was war and conflict. One participant shared his point of view about racism in general. We then changed subjects and talked about football. One participant was more talkative than the other one who was mainly looking at his phone. I asked questions about their future aspirations and they told me about their life and work ambitions.

The discussion lasted about one hour and fifteen minutes.

Meeting 5, Wednesday 25th of November 2015, 17:00

Number of participants: 0. I waited one hour but no one came.

Meeting 6, Wednesday 2nd of December 2015, 17:00-18:00

Number of participants: 1 (professional guest)

No one came to the meeting except a professional peer support group coordinator from the Finnish Refugee Council who had been invited as part of the programme. We discussed about the peer support group's challenges, attendance issues and group promotion.

Meeting 7, Wednesday 9th of December 2015, 17:00

Number of participants: 0. I waited one hour but no one came. This was the last meeting which was meant for evaluation.

The attendance at each meeting is summarized in the below table:

Table 4. Attendance during the meetings

Date	Attendance
28.10.2015	2 participants
4.11.2015	2 participants
11.11.2015	2 participants
18.11.2015	2 participants
25.11.2015	0 participant
2.12.2015	0 participant / 1 professional guest
9.12.2015	0 participant

5 EVALUATION

5.1 Feedback

The end of the group period is a time for reflection and evaluation. The personal feedback of the participants is valuable to the group leader and cooperating organization. The feedback is also useful to the participants who evaluate if the group has been useful to them or not.

Feedback forms or questionnaires are important for research purposes as Miessakit learns from its own practical activities and uses the data to improve the planning of their future peer support groups. Miessakit always provides participants with a questionnaire after the end of their group activities.

The organization's questionnaire was modified and translated into French. It asked to rate how convenient it was to come to the group, how easy it was to express oneself, to what extent the discussions were interesting etc. A copy of this document is available in appendix 4.

Unfortunately, the questionnaires could not be distributed to the participants and their feedback could not be collected. One participant orally told me at the end of the fourth meeting that he was 'satisfied about the group because it was a free space'. The two regular participants also told me that they were interested 'in having more participants to make the group bigger'. Regrettably, there was no further feedback.

Feedback from colleagues and other professionals help assess one's own work. An interview with a professional peer support group trainer from the cooperating organization was carried out on the 4th of December 2015 before the last group meeting.

The interview acted as an informal evaluation in order to evaluate the group as a whole and my performance as group supervisor.

The interview was implemented in a semi-structured manner. Hawtin and Percy-Smith (2007) define a semi-structured interview as an interview that could be based around a checklist of questions or issues that you want to cover in the course of the discussion without the precise wording of those issues being formulated in advance. An advantage of this method is that it generally leads to a more informal dialogue, which should mean that the interviewee is more forthcoming (Hawtin & Percy-Smith 2007, 86.)

During the interview, the respondent pointed out that the limited number of participants was a difficult situation to manage and that it would have been easier if more than four participants in total would have come. Nevertheless, some persons attended the group so the group was meaningful to them. A certain trust was built.

The timetable was too tight and there was a need for more time dedicated to recruit the participants. A solution would have been to solicit possible participants in the centers for asylum seekers and refugees for example. This would have required a bigger personal investment.

Leading with a pair could have been easier for me, although Miessakit usually runs groups with only one leader. A co-leader could have been useful especially when participants were refugees who suffered from trauma and violence.

The interviewee also mentioned that it is not easy to attract foreigners to peer support groups. According to the partner organization, they too find it challenging to attract Finnish men to come to the groups. Foreign men represent a smaller proportion of the male population in Finland, and this is even more the case for the male, French speaking immigrant community. Therefore, it is clearly more difficult to attract them to the group due to these reasons.

5.2 Challenges

The lack of participants was the main issue. Only four persons participated in total and two dropped out after the first session. There were only two regular members after four meetings halfway before the end. As the group period was seven weeks, it seemed difficult at half way to get new participants because the group was already ending.

It seems that the advertising was not effective enough. The advertising was done according to the standards laid down by Miessakit. We used the Veto network channel which encompasses a large number of organizations which were likely to reach the target group. The advertising period was probably too short to be successful.

The participants had difficulties in committing to the group. Two members at the beginning dropped out after the first session. The group had two main members who came to three consecutive sessions (meetings 2, 3 and 4) before dropping out altogether in the middle. In some groups, attendance is so irregular and coming and goings so frequent that the group is, effectively, fragmented and has little continuity (Whitaker 2001, 132). The group could not really develop properly.

The location was perhaps not practical for the target group. The meetings were run in Miessakit facilities downtown Helsinki. It seemed practical and easy to access but this location may not have been practical for all. If men live in different parts of the city, it is good to find a rallying point for example in the centre of the group member's living areas (Korpela & Pietarinen 2011, 29). It was difficult to find a place that is located at the intersection of the Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa municipalities.

It was particularly challenging not to know in advance who was attending the meetings. The group members were not selected in advance and I did not know how many persons would attend. This was particularly challenging when the two main members confirmed their presence to the last three meetings but did not come. I waited one hour three times in vain. It required patience and commitment.

It was sometimes difficult to remain interested in all the participants. During the first meeting, the group was meant to be led in French but one member spoke in English. I may have avoided the latter to favor the person who spoke French. A group worker may lose interest in a particular group member or feel angry or disappointed or dismissive of him or her (Whitaker 2001, 225). Another example was one participant who mainly looked at his phone during a discussion. I was focusing on the other active member who was more interested in the conversation.

The discussion was sometimes heartbreaking. Two new participants talked about war experiences during the second meeting. My objective was to remain focused and to continue leading while acknowledging potential negative thoughts coming to my mind (self-awareness). I also tried to give time and space to the participants. The essence of the supporting skill is in knowing when it will be facilitative and when it will be counterproductive (Corey 2004, 35).

The silence of members during discussions was difficult to manage as well. The participants were sometimes very silent. I was trying to keep the conversation alive by behaving as a peer. Questioning using close-ended questions was done but the responses were close-ended and this did not really activate the discussion.

The participants were interested in having more members for the discussions. A group can actually become actually so small that it lacks useful diversity. It becomes too easy for members to collude in some self-protective way of going on. Little give-and-take, little challenging, little introduction of alternative points of view occurs (Whitaker 2001, 136.)

A participant made an offensive comment towards a certain group of people during the fourth meeting. The other member did not really react and I did not really know how to react neither. Some tension was released in the group atmosphere. It seemed awkward to continue the conversation after hearing something very negative.

Personal feedback from the group participants was missing. The last meeting on the 9th of December 2015 was meant for evaluation but no one came to the last three sessions and the questionnaires could not be handed out. The partner organization could not know about their personal experiences and feelings about attending the group.

5.3 Recommandations

Advertising could probably have been more productive if it had started earlier. Starting promotion perhaps two months before the first meeting session would have provided enough time to go and meet possible future members and convince them to attend the group. Indeed, face-to-face promotion could have brought about more participation.

Making direct contact with persons from the target group is essential. A brochure only is not necessarily sufficient (Peitsalo 2008, 43). The idea was to meet people, introduce the group and personally hand out announcements. Interviewing them would have been mutually beneficial in order to clarify if the group is for the person and answer questions about the group.

Face-to-face work in the places where people are is essential (Kerkkänen 2015). Direct contact could have been made in institutions and organizations where French speaking immigrant men are likely to be present. Examples of such places include schools of Finnish language for adult foreigners, refugee and asylum seeker centers.

The announcements were written both in Finnish and French. However, I received several comments that an English version could have helped for the group promotion. The announcements were meant for organizations in which the workers spoke Finnish and for the target group individuals who spoke French. It could have been a good idea to create an announcement in English.

The group's purpose in the announcement could have been narrowed down and made clearer. The group was meant for participants to share life experiences in Finland, get to know the Finnish culture, talk about integration process, get to know other persons and provide mutual information. Perhaps the wording of the advertisement should have been clearer. One person called at the beginning to ask whether the group was a place for French speaking foreigners to meet.

The group was in a way described as a group for therapeutic purposes (e.g. talk about integration and discrimination) whilst also being a group where participants socialize and meet other French speaking foreigners. Maybe the theme about integration acted as deterrent. The social function of the group could have been highlighted instead.

The frequency for the meetings could have lasted longer. The peer support group had only seven meetings. A group is forming and the formative phase goes on for four or five to six sessions (Whitaker 2001, 126). If so, this meant that the group had only two sessions allocated for the established and termination phases. The gathering, commitment and trust building between immigrants take time. For this reason, it is not recommended to start a group which will meet less than ten times (Suomen Pakolaisapu ry 2011, 9.)

The group should have gathered more than seven times, maybe at least twelve to sixteen weeks until a sufficient number of participants would have been reached (at least five regular members). Korpela & Pietarinen claim that the typical group period lasts four months but if the member's needs and goals are not fulfilled during this time, the group can be extended two to four months (Korpela & Pietarinen 2011, 26).

The meetings could have been held from 5 pm to 6.30 pm instead of 5 to 7 pm every Wednesday. A person seeing the announcement may have felt that the group ended too late in the evening. Moreover, the allocated time was too long as the group participants attended for a maximum of one hour in average. We were running out of discussion topics by that point.

The group could have been run with a co-leader. Leading the group with an experienced co-leader could have been practical, especially for the first time. Ideally, no-one should run a group without having had first-hand experience of participation in a group, without having acquired a relaxed familiarity with the group atmosphere and without having found his or her confidence with the usual activities in groups (in particular, presenting personal issues and exploring the feelings associated with these) (Nichols & Jenkinson 2006, 39).

A co-leader could have helped design the group, clarify the function of the group, search for participants, make evaluations etc. In addition, co-leading could have helped me being aware of the group dynamics at work during the meetings. While one leader is working with a particular member, the other leader can scan the group to get a sense of how other members are involved (Corey 2004, 49).

Feedback could have been collected if the participants had been met individually after the end of the group period. A follow-up session outside the group perimeter could have been organized to get the questionnaires filled in and to receive further feedback (e.g. personal interviews could have been conducted).

Additional experience of peer support groups is needed. The number of participants was too low to fulfill its function and the group was not representative of what a peer support group with an optimal five to eight members would have been for example. I could attend peer support groups as a participant or as a co-leader to analyze how other group supervisors handle the discussion and dynamics inside the group.

Studying further professional literature on the subject could help. A group leader can stay updated with the current issues related to support groups by reading articles specialized in group work. For example, the Journal for Specialists in Groups Work can keep group leaders informed about the latest practices from the field.

Finally, I would suggest the creation of a database in cooperation with the Veto-network. The database would regroup information of all the persons who have attended

peer support groups from the Veto organizations earlier. It would be easier for support group founders to get the contact details of possible participants for their groups. However, gathering personal data of these persons is a legal issue that would need to be investigated further.

5.4 Ethical Issues

The peer support group raised ethical questions and dilemmas. The issue of confidentiality is extremely important in social work. One major point in leading peer support groups was to keep the content of the discussions confidential.

I presented in this thesis some information about the participants' stories, although I did not always receive their consent to do so. Confidentiality is defined as the social worker's obligation not to disclose client information that is gained in a course of a professional social work relationship. Under the principle of confidentiality, personal or other information that is gained in the context of such relationship cannot be used in a different context or for a different purpose by the social worker, unless legally permitted, or required to do so (Bowles et al. 2006, 155.)

I orally received permission from two members to write about their stories but nothing written. Two other participants were not consulted. Written consent forms were ready to be distributed to the participants but they could not be reached (a copy of the consent form is available in appendix 5). As a result, I decided to write my notes from the discussions in a very general manner without revealing names or personal details.

It is difficult to evaluate the peer support group when feedback from the main actors is missing. The peer support group is therefore evaluated based on feedback from my supervisors and from my own experience. The participants provided some feedback about the group experience but nothing in detail. The questionnaires are missing and it would have been more ethical to have the questionnaires filled in afterwards.

Another issue is the limited number of participants. Is feedback received from only two of the most active group members sufficient to evaluate the peer support group? Is feedback received from two participants who only came to the first meeting relevant for the evaluation?

Another point concerns the validity of the peer support group as a group. There was only attendance during four meetings out of seven with three participants at most in each meeting (two persons and the supervisor). The group was composed of only four participants in total. One may claim that this is too small to be defined as a *group*. In addition, one may ask whether leading two persons can even be considered leading a group. A group of three persons can be referred to as a trio. One of the definitions provided by the Dictionary (2016) defines a *trio* as any group of three persons or things (Dictionary 2016). According to this definition, we were considered a group.

The term *immigrant* is translated as *maahanmuuttaja* in Finnish. The peer support group was meant for immigrant men but translating the term to French was difficult. In my opinion, the word *immigrant* may sound stigmatizing in French. The term was therefore changed to the French word *étranger,* namely *foreigner*. The goal was to attract as many persons as possible.

The terms *foreigner* and *immigrant* have a different meaning. A foreigner may not necessarily be a person who migrates to another country for residence. The announcements clearly mentioned that the group was meant for French speaking foreign men who had just arrived (moved to) in Finland or been living in Finland for several years. However, this remains an ethical issue because the direct translation from Finnish to French was not accurate and other persons may not find the term *immigrant* as stigmatizing. This was a personal interpretation.

6 CONCLUSION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The thesis has presented some of the characteristics of peer support groups as well as their relevance today. Support groups help participants grow personally through interaction, socialization, support and mutual learning.

The purpose of the thesis was to make a peer support group model out of an actual peer support group that took place at Miessakit during the fall of 2015. The process of creating a peer support group from scratch was described in details from design and implementation to assessment.

Theory and practice were combined throughout the process to present elements of the model with different perspectives. The aim was for the reader to make his/her own relations between different practical and theoretical models.

Several documents were created during the creation of the group and the documents were part of the model. They included announcements, feedback forms, consent forms and a to-do list which was developed in order to summarize the key tasks to be implemented before setting-up a group. The to-do list is meant to help the future group supervisors of the partner organization start up their support groups.

Data was also collected during the group period. Observations notes of the meetings and the content of an interview were written in order to be able to reflect on the group process.

Creating a group implied cautious planning and making decisions with the partner organisation. Decisions made during planning cannot guarantee a viable and benefit-

promoting group, but they can influence probabilities in a positive direction (Whitaker 2001, 80).

Considerable support was received from Miessakit at every stage of the group development. Nichols & Jenkinson (2006) refers to this as consultant supervision which is a process whereby the actual practice of a support group leader is examined closely by that leader, working with the assistance of an experienced colleague (Nichols & Jenkinson 2006, 141).

Main foundation tasks included for example finding a clear function for the peer support group. One of the main functions was to help the participants deal with their everyday life challenges in Finland.

The group size was also discussed beforehand. Miessakit and other authors such as Corey and Whitaker state that a group functions ideally with a minimum and a maximum number of participants (from 5 to 9). The group expected up to 8 members but it had only two main members which was considered insufficient according to both practice and theory.

The decision was to lead the meetings alone. Miessakit operates its groups usually with only one supervisor. However, other organizations and authors such as Nichols and Jenkinson have recommended leading with a pair especially for the first time. As a beginner, I would recommend working with a co-leader because a co-leader can bring valuable support and confidence.

The timetable was also a major element to take into account during the foundation. Many theories were written on this subject with regards to the frequency of the meetings and the length of the group period. I agree with the presented theories that seven weeks allocated for the group was insufficient. The group could not develop in such short period of time. It stayed in its embryonic stages at the formative phase.

Advertising was also a predominant part of the group set-up. The announcements were meant to be as clear and concise as possible. However, there is evidence that the focus

should have been placed on face-to-face promotion. This would have required active personal involvement and additional time allocated for finding participants.

Leading came after the group creation phase. Some characteristics of group leaders and dynamics were presented. Many authors such as Whitaker and Peitsalo present clear descriptions of the roles and skills of what constitutes a good group leader. The latter is multitasking and is a considerable support for the members. He/she must provide a clear structure, timetable and psychological safety. The skill of self-awareness is also an important attribute.

Group dynamics impacted the leading as well. The atmosphere in the group played a role in the development of the individuals and of the group itself. The dynamics helped explain what happened during the interactions and moments of silence for example.

This group experience reveals the importance of showing enthusiasm and commitment for the group. The group leader must not give up although attendance is irregular and the group apparently not developing well. For this reason, a leader's deep belief in the value of the group is essential.

Evaluation came at the end of the group period and it was a time for analysis. Evaluation is usually executed using feedback from group members and from professional colleagues. Feedback is useful to the participants, the leader and the organization. Unfortunately, the evaluation could not be fully executed because feedback from the group members was missing.

Evaluation led me to review the different main challenges of the group development process. The evaluation was an opportunity to issue recommendations on improving the group. The result of this experience shows that the creating process would have needed more time to build the support group.

The peer support group was an experiment for the partner organisation. The resulting support group model is meant to increase the organization's knowledge on peer support groups for foreigners.

The implementation of the group helped me increase my professional expertise and develop professional methods for running and leading peer support groups. I have read many books on the topic and now have in-depth knowledge about how to start a peer support group, lead it and make evaluations.

I found the process of creating, leading and evaluating the peer support group straightforward. I received support and training throughout the group experience. Mistakes were probably made during the course of this experience but the most important was to learn and be able to make suggestions to improve the peer support group as a whole.

From my experience, leading went quite smoothly and it was probably due to the small size of the group. There were only two participants at most and I acted both as a leader and active group member. I was very conscious of my inner self-talk during conversation. It was sometimes not easy to handle but I managed to remain calm and focused when there was a tense atmosphere.

Personality plays an important part in role leading and I intend to develop my own leadership style for future peer support groups. The key to success as a group leader is the commitment to the never-ending struggle to become more effective as a human being (Corey 2004, 26).

This experience has taught me that I have the skills and knowledge to make and lead my own peer support group. However, I still need more experience. Participating to other support groups as a co-leader or participant should be beneficial to me. This will help me analyse the actions of other experienced group supervisors and relate to all the theories I have read on group work.

I hope that the content of this thesis has been easy-to-read and that this work might be useful for anyone who is planning the building of a peer support group.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Announcement of the Peer Support Group in Finnish & English

The announcement was originally written in Finnish. It is here also translated in English.

Miessakit ry | Vieraasta Veljeksi | Helsinki

Ranskankielinen miesryhmä maahanmuuttajille / *Man's group in French for immigrants*

Miessakit ry:n Vieraasta Veljeksi -toiminta tarjoaa ranskankielisen keskusteluryhmän miehille. Osallistujat saavat mahdollisuuden jakaa kokemuksiansa elämästä Suomessa. Ryhmä on tarkoitettu maahanmuuttajamiehille, jotka puhuvat ranskaa ja ovat tulleet Suomeen vähän aikaa sitten tai asuneet Suomessa pidemmän aikaa. **Ryhmään on vapaa pääsy – ilmoita kuitenkin etukäteen, jos olet tulossa mukaan! /** *Miessakit ry:n Vieraasta Veljeksi offers a discussion group in French for men. Participants receive possibility to share their life experiences in Finland. The group is meant for immigrant men who speak French and have just arrived in Finland or have been living in Finland for a longer period of time. Free attendance, please let us know in advance of your participation!*

Frankofonian lippu / *Flag of 'Francophonie'*

Ryhmä on tarkoitettu miehille, jotka / *the group is meant for men who:*

- haluavat jakaa kokemuksiansa elämästä Suomessa (työelämä, suomenkielen kurssi, harrastukset, jne.), / *want to share their life experiences in Finland (working life, Finnish language course, hobbies etc.)*
- haluavat tutustua suomen kulttuuriin (helppoudet ,haasteet, jne.),/ *want to get to know the Finnish culture (easiness, challenges etc.)*
- haluavat keskustella integraatioprosessista (identiteetti, assimilaatio, syrjintä, jne.), / *want to talk about integration process (identity, assimilation, discrimination etc.)*

- haluavat tutustua eri ihmisiin ja kulttuureihin, jotka puhuvat samaa kieltä, ja / *want to get to know other persons and cultures, who speak a common language*

- haluavat auttaa toisia ja jakaa hyödyllistä tietoa elämästä Suomessa. / *want to help each other and share practical information about life in Finland*

Jokaisessa tapaamisessa keskustellaan yhdestä teemasta avoimesti. Osallistujat valitsevat teemat. / *One theme will be discussed openly during each meeting. The participants choose the themes.*

Paikka ja aika / *Place and time*

Miessakit ry:n toimisto, Annankatu 16 B 28, 2. kerros

28.10.–9.12.2015 keskiviikkoisin klo 17.00–19.00 / *every Wednesday from 5 to 7 pm*

Lisätietoja ja ilmoittautumiset / *Additional information and registration* Julien Monsauret 04XXXXXXXX   Julien@xxxx.fi.

Tervetuloa mukaan! Welcome!

Appendix 2: Announcement of the Peer Support Group in French

Miessakit ry | Vieraasta Veljeksi | Helsinki

Groupe de soutien pour hommes étrangers francophones

Miessakit ry Vieraasta Veljeksi vous offre la possiblité de venir partager en français vos expériences de vie en Finlande. Le groupe est ouvert aux hommes étrangers francophones qu'ils soient nouveaux arrivants ou bien déjà installés depuis plusieurs années en Finlande. **La participation au groupe est gratuite– merci de bien vouloir nous notifier à l'avance de votre présence!**

Drapeau de la francophonie

Le groupe est ouvert aux hommes étrangers qui souhaitent

- partager ensemble leurs experiences de vie en Finlande (vie professionelle, apprentissage du finnois, passe-temps préférés etc.),
- parler de la culture finlandaise (facilités, difficultés…),
- discuter du processus d'intégration (identité, assimilation culturelle, discrimination etc.),
- rencontrer des personnes d'autres cultures partageant la même langue, et
- s'entraider mutuellement et partager des renseignements utiles pour la vie en Finlande.

Chaque session débutera avec un thème qui sera ensuite suivi d'une discussion ouverte.

Les thèmes de discussion pourront être choisis par les participants.

Date et lieu

Miessakit ry, Annankatu 16 B 28, 2ème
étage du 28.10 au 9.12.2015 les
mercredis de 17:00 à 19:00

Information et inscriptions

Julien Monsauret   04XXXXXXXX   Julien@xxxx.fi.

Bienvenue!

Appendix 3: To-do List Guide

The to-do list was originally written in Finnish. It is here also translated in English.

Muistilista vertaisryhmän perustajalle / To-do List

when Founding a Peer Support Group

✓ **Ryhmän suunnittelu /** *Planning of the group*
Mieti seuraavia kysymyksiä ennen ryhmän perustamista: / *Think carefully about the following questions before founding a group:*
- miksi tätä ryhmää tarvitaan? / *why is this group needed?*
- kenelle ryhmä on tarkoitettu (kohderyhmä)? / *To whom is the group for (target group)?*
- mitkä ovat ryhmän tavoitteet (ryhmän sisältö)? / *what are the group objectives (group content)?*
- onko keskustelu kohderyhmän äidinkielellä? / *is the group to be held in the native language of the target group?*
- vedätkö ryhmää yksin vai haluatko vetää työparin kanssa? / *are you planning to lead the group by yourself or with a pair?*
- mistä ryhmäläiset löytyvät? / *where can you find participants?*
- kuinka monta jäsentä ryhmään pitäisi ottaa (pienryhmä 4-10 henkilöä)? / *how many members should take part in the group (small group 4-10 persons)?*
- pitäisikö asiantuntijoita kutsua ryhmään vierailulle? minkälaisia? (yhteystyöverkosto)/ *should experts be invited to the group? Which experts? (cooperation network)*

✓ **Aikataulu ja tilat /** *Timetable and place*
- Kuinka monta kertaa viikossa kokoonnutaan ja mihin asti (10 tapaamista?) / *How many times a week are we gathering and until which date (10 meetings?)*
- Kuinka kauan tapaamiset kestävät (1.5-3 tuntia?) / *How long each meeting should last (1.5-3 hours?)*

Muista myös varata tilat ajoissa etukäteen. Miessakit ry:n neuvotteluhuoneet 1 ja 2, sekä koulutussali ovat käytettävissä. Varauskalenteri löytyy Miessakit ry:n nettisivuilta: http://www.miessakit.fi/fi/miessakit_ry/koulutustilat. / *Remember to book the meeting room in advance. Miessakit meeting rooms number 1, 2, and the training room are available. The calendar for booking a room can be found from this link http://www.miessakit.fi/fi/miessakit_ry/koulutustilat*

✓ **Ryhmän mainostaminen / Group advertising**

Tee ryhmästä selkeä mainos (A4) suomeksi, kohderyhmän äidinkielellä ja tarvittaessa englanniksi. *Make a clear A4 format advert in Finnish, in the target group's native language and in English if needed.*

Mainoksen pohja löytyy Vieraasta Veljeksi -kansiosta. *The template for ads can be found in the Vieraasta Veljeksi -folder*

Mainoksesta on hyvä löytyä seuraavat asiat: / *It is good to include the following information in the advert:*
- selkeä otsikko (esim. 'Ranskankielinen miesryhmä maahanmuuttajille') / *clear title*
- kohderyhmä / *target group*
- ryhmän tavoitteet ja teemat (valitsevatko osallistujat teemat?) / *the group's objectives and themes (do the participants choose the themes to be discussed?)*
- osoite, ryhmän ajankohta (kellonajat ja päivämäärät) / *address, group information (timetable and calendar)*
- yhteystiedot (järjestäjän, ohjaajan) / *contact information (organisation and supervisor)*
- maininta vapaasta pääsystä / *mention that participation is free of charge*
- kuva (valinnainen mutta tehokkaampi) / *include a picture (optional but more effective)*

Mainostamista kannattaa tehdä ajoissa kirjallisesti ja suullisesti. Kasvokkain mainostaminen ja puskaradio ovat tehokkaita! Laita mainos Miessakit ry:n nettisivuille ja sosiaaliseen mediaan (esim. Twitter ja Facebook). / *Advertising should be done in writing and orally on time. Face-to-face advertising and word of mouth are effective! Add the advertisement to Miessakit webpage and to Miessakit social media accounts (e.g. Twitter and Facebook).*

Lähetä mainoksia myös niin monelle taholle kuin mahdollista (kannatta hyödyntää Veto-verkostoa). On myös hyvä mainostaa suoraan tahoille, joilla on esimerkiksi kohderyhmäläisiä asiakkaana. Mainosten lähettäminen ei aina riitä, ja siksi on hyvä soittaa ja vahvistaa, että mainosta on jaettu eteenpäin. / *Send also the advertisement announcements to as many organisations as possible (take advantage of the Veto-network). It is also good to advertise directly to the organisations which have for example target group service users. Sending ads is not always sufficient; for this reason it is good to call and confirm with the organisation that the ads have been distributed on their side.*

✓ **Käytännön neuvoja /** *practical information*

- Palautelomake. Palaute on tärkeää, koska sillä arvioidaan kuinka tyytyväisiä ryhmäläiset ovat olleet. Jaa palautelomake ryhmäläisille toiseksi viimeisellä

kerralla. / *Feedback form. Feedback is important because it is used to evaluate how satisfied the group members have been. Distribute the feedback form to the group members during the second to last session.*

- Kerää ryhmäläisten yhteystiedot mahdollisimman ajoissa ja lähetä heille muistutus aina ennen ryhmän tapaamista (ainakin päivä ennen kokoontumista). / *Collect the contact information of members early and always send them a reminder before each group meeting (at least one day before the gathering).*

- Jos ryhmän ohjaaja sairastuu ja tapaaminen täytyy peruuttaa, ilmoita heti ryhmäläisille. Jos et tavoita heitä tapaamispäivänä, laita ovelle ryhmän äidinkielinen lappu, jossa lukee että tapaaminen on peruttu ohjaajan sairastumisen vuoksi. /*Contact immediately group members in case the group supervisor is sick or if the meeting must be cancelled. If you cannot reach them on meeting day, leave a note on the door which states that the meeting is cancelled because the supervisor is sick.*

- Miesryhmäohjaajan koulutukseen ja vertaisryhmiin liittyvää kirjallisuutta on saatavilla Miessakit ry:stä (ryhmädynamiikka, ryhmätapaamisen kulku jne.) / *Literature on peer support group and men's group supervising are available from Miessakit (group dynamics, the group meeting process and so on)*

Appendix 4: Feedback form

The feedback form was written in French. It is here also translated into English.

Formulaire d'évaluation / *feedback form*

Groupe de soutien pour hommes étrangers francophones à Helsinki / *peer support group for French speaking foreign men in Helsinki*

Votre âge / *age*:_____

Situation actuelle / *current occupation* :_____

Noter les affirmations suivantes de 1 à 10 (1 étant la plus mauvaise note et 10 la meilleure) - *Rate on a scale of 1-10 the following statements with 10 being the best rate and 1 the worst)*

Il était facile de venir participer au groupe / *it was easy for me to come to this group*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Le groupe a répondu à mes attentes / *the group met my expectations*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Il était facile de s'y exprimer / *it was easy for me to express myself*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

L'horaire était convenable / *the timetable was suitable for me*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Le lieu et la salle étaient convenables / *the place and the meeting room were suitable*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Les discussions était intéressantes / *discussions were interesting*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

La durée des discussions était suffisante / *time allocated for discussions was sufficient*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

L'organisateur du groupe a réussi dans sa mission / *the group supervisor did a good work*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Le nombre de participants était suffisant / *the number of participants was sufficient*

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Qu'est ce que ce groupe vous a concrètement apporté ? / *Which benefits did you get from this group in concrete terms?*_____

Que faudrait-il améliorer? / *What could be improved?*_____

Souhaiteriez-vous participer plus tard à un groupe de soutien et, si oui, à quel genre de groupe? / *Would you like to participate to another peer support group in the future ? If yes, to which kind of group ?*_____

Merci ! Thank you!

Appendix 5: Consent form

The consent form was translated from French to English.

Consent form

I am a student of Diakonia University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki campus. I am studying a degree program in social services and in the process of writing my Bachelor's thesis which is part of my learning process. I seek to explore the following topic: *peer support group for foreign men*.

For the purpose of this thesis study, I may use notes taken from our discussions. All the information collected during the discussions will be treated confidentially and participant's identities will not be revealed. The information in the notes will be destroyed after the study is completed and published. Participants can freely participate in this study and are free to withdraw anytime.

For further information feel free to contact me at Julien@xxxx.fi.

By signing, I confirm that I understand and agree to the information mentioned above.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Signature: _____