

# **WHAT MORE CAN WE DO?**

Developing a Multicultural Action Plan for the Girls' House,  
A Meeting Place for Girls and Young Women in Helsinki

## JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
<p>Girl work, which means work with or among girls and young women, is a quite new field in Finland. Girl work with the focus on multiculturalism is as an area that has not yet been given much attention. The main goals of this case study were to define multiculturalism within the “Girls’ House” (“Tyttöjen Talo”) and to develop an action plan for its further development. The Girls’ House is a youth center open for girls and young women between 10 to 25 years. This study was made within the framework of action research, emphasizing collaboration and active participation both by the participants, staff members, and by the researcher. The researcher worked at the Girls’ House as a trainee for four months in the fall of 2003 and she actively participated in the everyday activities of the center. The research methods included participant observation and interviews. Theme interviews were held with the six staff members who worked at the Girls’ House at the time of the study.</p> <p>Interviews, field notes and a personal diary were analyzed by themes and the approach of the analysis was inductive. The research findings and analysis of the data resulted in a proposal for a multicultural action plan. The action plan includes practical recommendations for developing multicultural activities at the Girls’ House. The action plan proposes, for example, employing staff members with immigrant backgrounds; training in intercultural issues both for the staff members and for the girls visiting the house; various channels of marketing; and continuing the multicultural girls’ groups. The research findings indicate that the prerequisites for developing multiculturalism at the Girls’ House are good. However, there are many areas that could still be improved. This case study was focused on the organization and in future studies it will be essential to also include girls and young women who visit the center as active participants.</p>	
Asiasanat: Multiculturalism; multicultural organization; action research; girl work	
Säilytyspaikka	
Muita tietoja	

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract	
<p>Suomessa tyttötyö on varsin uusi alue ja etenkin monikulttuurinen tyttötyö on alue jota on tähän mennessä tutkittu vähän. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli määritellä käsite ”monikulttuurisuus” Tyttöjen Talolla, sekä laatia toimintasuunnitelma monikulttuurisen työn kehittämiseksi. Tyttöjen Talo on Helsingissä sijaitseva kohtauspaikka 10-25-vuotiaille tytöille ja nuorille naisille. Tutkimus tarkastelee monikulttuurisuutta organisaation tasolla sekä erään monikulttuurisen projektin toteuttamista syksyllä 2003. Tutkimus toteutettiin toimintatutkimuksena, jonka tärkeimpinä menetelminä olivat osallistuva havainnointi sekä teema-haastattelut. Toimintatutkimuksessa osallisuus ja yhteistyö ovat avainasemassa. Tutkija itse osallistui harjoittelijana Tyttöjen Talon jokapäiväiseen toimintaan neljän kuukauden aikana syksyllä 2003. Osallistujat, Tyttöjen Talon työntekijät, olivat jollain tavalla mukana tutkimuksessa koko tutkimusprosessin ajan. Tutkimusaineisto koostuu tutkijan kenttähavainnoista sekä kuudesta teemahaastattelusta, joihin osallistui kuusi työntekijää jotka työskentelivät Tyttöjen Talolla eri aikoina tutkimuksen ajankohtana.</p> <p>Aineisto analysoitiin jakamalla aineisto teemoihin ja lähestymistapa oli induktiivinen. Tutkimustulosten sekä niiden analyysin perusteella syntyi monikulttuurisen toimintasuunnitelman ehdotus. Toimintasuunnitelma antaa käytännön ehdotuksia monikulttuurisen toiminnan kehittämiseksi Tyttöjen Talolla. Toimintasuunnitelmassa ehdotetaan esimerkiksi seuraavia toimenpiteitä: maahanmuuttajataustaisen työntekijän palkkaamista; kulttuurienvälistä koulutusta; eri markkinointikanavien käyttämistä; sekä monikulttuuristen tyttöryhmien työn jatkamista. Tutkimustulokset viittaavat siihen että Tyttöjen Talolla on jo hyvä perusta monikulttuuriselle työlle joskin sitä edelleen tulee määrätietoisesti kehittää. Tässä toimintatutkimuksessa työntekijät olivat pääroolissa. Tulevaisuudessa on olennaista ottaa mukaan Tyttöjen Talon tytöt ja nuoret naiset aktiivisina toimijoina.</p>	
Asiasanat: monikulttuurisuus; monikulttuurinen organisaatio, toimintatutkimus, tyttötyö	
Säilytyspaikka	
Muita tietoja	

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<p>Sammandrag – Abstract</p> <p>Arbete med flickor eller tjejer i fokus är ett rätt nytt område i Finland. Speciellt mångkulturellt flickarbete är något som det hittills forskats väldigt lite i. Syftet med den här forskningen var att definiera termen ”mångkulturalism” samt att utveckla en verksamhetsplan för att vidareutveckla det mångkulturella arbetet i Flickhuset. ”Flickhuset” (”Tyttöjen Talon”) är ett ungdomscenter endast för flickor och unga kvinnor i åldern 10-25 år. Det här arbetet granskade mångkulturalism inom organisationen och följde med hur ett mångkulturellt projekt genomfördes i centret under hösten 2003. Forskningen genomfördes som aktionsforskning, en forskningsgenre som betonar samarbete och deltagande. Forskaren arbetade som praktikant på Flickhusets under fyra månader hösten 2003 och deltog aktivt i centrets verksamhet. Forskningsmetoderna var deltagande observation och temaintervjuer. I intervjuerna deltog sex kvinnor som arbetade på Flickhuset under olika skeden under forskningsprocessen.</p> <p>Intervjuerna, fält- och dagboksanteckningarna analyserades genom att dela in materialet i olika teman. Forskningsresultaten och analysen utgör grunden i förslaget till en mångkulturell verksamhetsplan. Verksamhetsplanen ger praktiska förslag till hur Flickhuset kunde utveckla den kulturella mångfalden inom organisationen och inom verksamheten. Planen föreslår till exempel att Flickhuset skall anställa en arbetstagare med invandrarbakgrund, ordna interkulturell utbildning, både för de anställda och för flickor som besöker huset, använda olika metoder att utveckla marknadsföringen samt att fortsätta arbetet med de mångkulturella tjejgrupperna. Enligt forskningsresultaten är grunden för det mångkulturella arbetet i Flickhuset bra. Trots det finns det flera områden som i framtiden målmedvetet kunde utvecklas. Den här forskningen var fokuserad på arbetstagarna och på organisationen. I framtiden är det viktigt att ta tjejerna och de unga kvinnorna som besöker Flickhuset med i forskningsprocessen.</p>	
Nyckelord: mångkultur; mångkulturell organisation, flickarbete, aktionsforskning; mångkulturella tjejgrupper	
Förvaringsplats	
Övrig information	

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## 1. Introduction

Girls' studies, with the focus on multiculturalism, is a field that has not yet been given much attention to in Finland. With increasing immigration, however, new models of youth work and girl work need to be developed. At a global level, the human rights of girls and women are important themes that are frequently discussed. One of the United Nations Millennium Goals is to promote gender equality and to empower women (United Nations, 2001). In Finland, emphasizing women's and girls' human rights have been in focus in the Government's policy of human rights, both at an international and a national level. Special areas of interest have been, for example, the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights, the elimination of violence against women and, women's and girls' education. (Valtioneuvoston selonteko, 2004, 88-89).

Today, the concept of globalization and discussions about an increasingly multicultural world have become part of everyday life and it is hard to avoid the concept of multiculturalism. State, communities, officials and people generally all use the concept of multiculturalism, but they might all mean different things when using it and it is often not at all clear what the term really means (Rex, 1994, 30; Socialstyrelsen, 1999, 23). Originally, the multiculturalism concept was developed in Canada into a political strategy and, from there, it spread to Australia and Europe during the early 1970s (Schierup, 1994, 10). I will discuss the concept in a larger context later on in this thesis. In Finland, however, multiculturalism in public discussion has been used to describe cultural diversity in a positive sense, where the emphasis is placed upon equality and partnership. It may be noted also that the Finnish Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (493/1999) speaks of a multicultural society.

The aim of the present study is to examine the process of developing an action plan for making the "**Girls' House**" ("**Tyttöjen Talo**") more multicultural. The Girls' House is a youth center situated in Kallio in Helsinki and it is open to girls and young women, aged 10 to 25 years. In this study the concepts "girl" and "girls" refer to both girls and young women. I have chosen to use this broad definition of "girl" because of its historical background within the field of "girl work" in Finland. The concept of girl work refers to work done with and among girls and young women and, the concept of "girls' studies" refers to research on and studies among girls and young women.

The Girls' House is mainly visited by girls who live in the Helsinki region. The majority of the visitors are Finnish girls and approximately 10 to 15 percent of the visitors are girls with immigrant backgrounds. Any girl or young women may visit the center at will and there are no restrictions whatsoever on visitors. The main goal of the center is to support girls in their personal development by the provision of different kinds of activities. The activities provided by the center are, for example, long-term support groups, sexual education and free time activities such as dance and arts groups. One of the center's aims also is to provide activities for immigrant girls who do not attend "normal" youth centers, for example, because of religious reasons.

Even though this study is not done within the framework of studies of girls, which also can be called girls' studies, it will also possibly give some new insights in that field. Girl work is quite a new concept in Finland and few studies have so far been made within the different girls' centers that have opened during the last five years in the country. The Girls' House in Helsinki was the first one to introduce the work method in Finland in 1999. Jaana Lähteenmaa, one of the well-known researchers within the field of girls' studies, has asked the question: why is there so little action research in feminist research? According to her, action research might be the only morally correct way to enlighten and emancipate girls, because it forces the researcher and the researched to participate in an equal dialogue (Lähteenmaa, 2002, 282).

An underlying assumption in this study is that in order to promote multiculturalism, an organization needs to have a clear view of what it wants. In the Girls' House there had never been any previous study focusing on multiculturalism at an organizational level. Katz and Miller (1995) point out that in order to achieve a multicultural organization, there must be a clear and direct vision on how to make the workforce more diverse and the work culture more inclusive. Katz and Miller criticize "diversity for diversity's sake" and call for a clear strategic plan. Such a plan did not exist at the Girls' House and one of the aims of this study was to develop that strategy in collaboration with the employees at the Girls' House. The concept of *multiculturalism* therefore needed to be defined by the organization as an important part of this process.

### **1.1 Background to the study**

Research has revealed that immigrant girls run a greater risk of marginalization than immigrant boys (Silvennoinen, 2001, 120; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000, 115). In the



youth centers established by the City of Helsinki one can see a dominance of immigrant boys, when reviewing the typical attendance of the centers (Ilves, 1998, 204). Both municipality officials and researchers therefore stress that youth work should try to reach out to immigrant girls in a more extensive way (Silvennoinen, 2001, 120; Ilves, 1998, 204). Director Mari Uusitalo at the Girls' House said that "this is one of the main challenges in multicultural work that the Girls' House faces today" (Pro Memoria, 26 May 2003).

According to Harinen, Keskisalo and Perho (2001, 230) youth centers are central places for youth work and important places for many young people. This is why they are in a key position for promoting multicultural youth work. Multicultural youth work should be focused upon both young Finns as well as to young immigrants. So far, Finnish adolescents as well as adults have been given insufficient attention when it comes to studies on multiculturalism. When multiculturalism and immigration have been discussed, the focus has most often been on immigrants and on how they adapt to a new culture. Therefore more attention should now be given to the majority culture and how immigration affects members of this dominant culture (see e.g. Liebkind, 2000, 19; Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2002, 127; Berry et al., 2002, 352; Sam & Oppedal, 2002, 5).

In August 2003, the Girls' House started to focus more on multicultural activities within a project, which was carried out in collaboration with Kalliolan Kansanopisto and the Adult Education Center of the City of Jyväskylä. The project had obtained founding from the Board of Education (Opetushallitus) and Kalliolan Kansanopisto realized its part of the project at the Girls' House and at the Kivikko Youth Center. (Hakemus, 2002.) The aims of the project in the Girls' House were to support and strengthen the identity of immigrant girls, to activate immigrant girls' families and to increase the participation of immigrant girls in the Girls' House open activities. Another aim was to make the Girl's House more familiar to immigrant girls' families. (Maaperä, 26.5.2003.)

This project created a need to study how the new activities were carried out in practice and to analyze the new work methods being used. One aim of this present study is to answer those needs. In 2003, another study related to multicultural issues was made at the Girls' House. Pirita Puukko (2003) wrote her bachelor thesis for Laurea Polytechnic Espoo Institute, with the title "What is a Good Professional Multicultural Girl Work?" Puukko interviewed four immigrant girls that had regularly visited the Girls' House in order to obtain their views of what good multicultural work is. Puukko's study gives a view on what the participants think

about the Girls' House, the girls' thoughts of living in two cultures and what kind of activities they would like the Girls' House to offer. However, Puukko's study does not provide clear recommendations or areas of development for the Girls' House as an organization. This study and the study by Puukko complement each other and provide the Girls' House with information that can be used in developing its activities in the future.

My own interest in the Girl's House has its roots in the year 2000, when, I as a journalist wrote an article about the newly founded Center. Even then, I paid attention to the fact that the House aimed at attracting girls with different ethnic backgrounds. I was also confused by the terminology used by the staff. When one of the staff members talked about a multicultural girls' group, she talked about a group where both the girls as well as the instructor had a Russian background. For me, multicultural meant something else; I associated the term with interaction between several cultural groups. In 2003, when I started to think of a place where I could do my internship, I came to think about the Girls' House. I wanted to know how the activities in the Center had started and how the aims of promoting multicultural girl work were advancing. I contacted the Director, Mari Uusitalo, and she told me that there would be a specific emphasis on multiculturalism during the fall of 2003. There would be one project worker committed to developing multicultural activities and Uusitalo suggested that I would work as her partner.

I decided to combine my internship with my thesis as I wanted to study how the new multicultural emphasis was carried out in practice. I chose action research as my framework, because it is an approach that both allows and supports the influence of the researcher. It is also an approach where you can have explicit ideological aims that guide your research. I saw the Girls' House is an ideal place for promoting interaction between Finnish girls and girls with immigrant backgrounds and I wanted to find out if there was any basis for my thoughts.

Salo-Lee (1998, 7) acknowledges that our cultural backgrounds affect our observations, what we see, and how we interpret our observations. My academic background lies in journalism, communication and intercultural communication, which is the field that at the moment has the strongest influence on me. Questions about identity, culture and minorities have always interested me. As a Swedish-speaking Finn, and therefore part of a minority, these questions have been part of my everyday life since I was a child.

## **1.2 Research questions**

The research questions focus on the underlying factors of the process of developing an action plan for a more multicultural Girls' House. The first main question looks at how the concept of multiculturalism is defined within the organization. The second main question focuses on the process of developing a multicultural action plan.

1. How is multiculturalism defined within the organization?
  - 1.1 Can multiculturalism be found in the organizational culture?
  - 1.2 How is the concept of multiculturalism defined by the staff members?
  - 1.3 How is multiculturalism realized in practice?
2. Developing an action plan that promotes multiculturalism
  - 2.1 How was this action plan developed?
  - 2.2 How was the multicultural project realized in fall 2003?

The first question and its sub-questions are essential for getting to know the Girls' House as an organization and the prerequisites for doing multicultural work there. The second question deals with the research process and the reporting of it. The possible answers to the second question and its sub-question are not as explicit as the answers to the first question. The development of an action plan is a process that advances chronologically throughout the research process. A concrete result will be the proposal for an action plan, which is presented in Chapter 7.

This study was not conceived within the frameworks of organizational communication/culture, girls' studies or social psychology, even though it touches these areas. The research questions that we, the staff members at the Girls' House and I, have posed and that we wish to understand, are complex and need to be looked at from different aspects. This study does not include the girls as active participants as was the original plan. One reason for this was the limited time span of the study, which did not allow for a thorough advance preparation of the study with the girls. In addition, once the research started the staff did not want the girls to feel watched or observed and therefore I changed my focus of the study. I will return to this theme later on in the study. Another reason for not including girls relates to the choice of focus of the study, which is basically on the organizational level and on the staff of the Girls' House. In further studies it will be essential to include both Finnish girls and girls with immigrant backgrounds.

### 1.3 Action research

The study was made within the framework of *action research*. I will here briefly present action research as a method and later I will discuss it in more depth. As a research strategy, action research aims at interaction between practice and theoretical research (Aaltola & Syrjälä, 1999, 13). Eskola and Suoranta (1999, 128) define action research as including all research approaches in which the purpose is to achieve change in the research object in one way or another, in other words, an intervention through research methods. Action research can therefore be described as research where the researcher acts within a community, participating in its activities. In this community, individuals reflect and develop their own work, analyze how their action has developed into what it is today, develop alternatives in order to resolve problems and achieve goals and through this action, they produce new information or a new theory. (Heikkinen & Jyrkämä, 1999, 25.)

Action research often has clear goals and ideological motives (Kuula, 1999, 219), which this research also has to some extent. One pre-assumption, which has directed the whole study, is that cultural diversity can promote cultural richness and be a source of broader understanding of one's own culture and of other peoples' cultures. In order to achieve cultural diversity and genuine multiculturalism – which, in this study, is defined as equality between, and mutual respect for, different cultures - action is needed. The aim of action research is to make a social change and that is why this method was chosen. Action research is based on the pre-assumption of participation and collaboration, which means that the researcher's role can be seen as a facilitator, not as an outside observer (Greenwood & Levin, 2000; Stringer, 1999). Action research is a communitarian process and the researcher participates in the activities of the community studied and aims at resolving some specific problem together with the community. (Kiviniemi, 1999, 64; Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 130.)

Action research has been used before in developing youth work. For example, in the years 1998–2002 Harinen, Keskisalo and Perho (2001) undertook an action research study, in which the aim was to prevent racism and racist behavior especially among young skinheads in Joensuu. Multiculturalism was the basis of the project. Harinen et al. (2001, 210) say that multiculturalism and its promotion it is not only a matter of different people living in harmony with one another, but it involves constant learning, solving difficult ethical problems and reaching compromises for all parts. Within the framework of action research, the researchers wanted to develop new strategies and forms of action for youth work, where

theory and practice would be combined. To reach this goal, researchers and youth workers in the field were involved in intense cooperation. (Harinen et al. 2001, 212.)

The method of working in groups and belonging to groups is essential in the Girls' House. In the EXIT Project, focusing on group methods was supported by the argument that differences become natural in the interaction of a small group. The danger with short projects or theme days on tolerance is that they only scrape the surface or come to show the different, the unknown. It is important to promote information about different cultures and about immigrants, but without personal contacts, the "information campaigns" might not have any effect. (Harinen et al., 2001, 212.)

## **2. Different perspectives on multiculturalism**

The concept of *multiculturalism* can be found in many different contexts today. Although it is somewhat unclear what the concept stands for, and the use of several parallel words and other concepts such as cultural/ethnic diversity, cultural/ethnic pluralism can make the confusion even bigger (Socialstyrelsen 1999, 23). In this chapter I will present the history of the concept and review different contexts in which the concept has been used. I will also define the framework in which multiculturalism is used in this study. I will then look at intercultural communication as a means of achieving multiculturalism.

### **2.1 History of the concept**

The concept of multiculturalism spread from Canada to Australia and Europe in the early 1970s. Multiculturalism, which defended the preservation of the immigrants' own culture, challenged the old traditions of immigration strategies that were based on assimilation, which assumes that immigrants should "melt into" the majority culture. Various liberal and new left groups started to use multiculturalism as a metaphor that appealed for tolerance and humanism. These values were set into a political program that viewed modern society as a place where different cultures could co-exist in peace. (Schierup, 1994, 10.)

When multiculturalism is seen as ideological and political ideals for a society, equality and justice conditions for all members of society regardless of origin, ethnic identity, religion, culture or appearance, are of a great importance. A society that has a policy (action plan, program, activities and measures) that aims at strengthening and defending cultural and ethnic diversity can be called multicultural. (Socialstyrelsen, 1999, 25.)

In Canada, multiculturalism was clearly stated in the Policy of Multiculturalism in 1971. Berry (1994, 52) regards the Canadian policy of multiculturalism a huge social experiment, which was actually the only realistic policy that Canada could choose, considering historical and contemporary ethnocultural demography. Berry (ibid) also stresses the importance of asking questions about the policy mentioned. What do individual members of society think of such a policy, and its implications? Is the goal of integration accepted? How does the promotion of pluralism affect a sense of national unity and identity? Are levels of prejudices low enough and tolerance high enough to support such a policy? (Berry, 1994, 52.) Answers to these questions will help governments to promote and sustain pluralism in society.

Sweden is the only country in Europe where multiculturalism has developed into what could be called a genuinely state-sanctioned political ideology. Sweden has become known for its ambitious program to accept and integrate refugees and for its official policy on multiculturalism, which has its roots in a government decision taken in 1975 (Socialstyrelsen, 1999, 35). Welfare ideology objectives are based on equality (jämlighet), freedom of choice (valfrihet) and partnership (samverkan) (Schierup, 1994, 11). According to the Swedish Board of Health and Welfare, Sweden is still far away from reaching its multicultural goals, in spite of nearly twenty years of “multicultural policy”. Racist violence has increased and ethnic discrimination both at workplaces and in other parts of society still exists. (Socialstyrelsen, 1999, 26–27.) According to Schierup (1994), multiculturalism has started to be interpreted negatively by the general public and by the mass media. The previous perspective of multiculturalism as a positive asset of modern society has changed towards seeing the foreign presence as a threat to a social security system that is declining. However, the Swedish view on multiculturalism inspired the formulation of official policies in international migration and ethnic relations in neighboring Denmark and Norway. (Schierup, 1994, 13.)

Finland has been a little slower than its Scandinavian neighbors in formulating its integration policy, but in 1999 Finland passed the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (494/1999). The Finnish law is not as extensive as the Swedish one, but it acknowledges the need for supporting and preserving immigrants’ own culture. Therefore, it can also be interpreted as promoting multiculturalism in a larger society. The goals of multiculturalism in Sweden also implied that the general public would accept multicultural aims (Schierup, 1994, 12), a notion that has not been emphasized in the Finnish Act.

In the Finnish *Government action plan to combat ethnic discrimination and racism*, multiculturalism is defined as the equal coexistence of various cultures. Culture is defined as a system based on knowledge, beliefs and values through which people process their experiences and observations, operate and make choices. (Ministry of Labour, 2001.)

## **2.2 Multiculturalism and acculturation strategies**

In the field of intercultural psychology, *multiculturalism* is often discussed in the context of immigrants’ adaptation. Berry et al. (2002, 375) have defined multiculturalism as *an orientation that accepts both the maintenance of cultural identity and characteristics of all ethno cultural groups and the contact and participation of all groups in the larger plural society*. Berry et al. also examine the concept from within the field of intercultural psychology

and they have identified how groups and individuals orient themselves and deal with the process of different cultures coming into contact. According to these authors, therefore one could think of intercultural psychology as being cross-cultural psychology in culturally diverse societies. (Berry et al., 2002, 346.)

The definition of multiculturalism, in the field of social psychology, has its roots in acculturation and acculturation strategies (Berry et al., 2002, 353), which describe how people wish or choose to live in contact with another culture. *Acculturation* has been defined as the process an individual undergoes in response to a changing cultural context (Berry et al. 2002, 349). Berry et al. quote Redfield, Linton & Herkovits (1936), who gave the original definition of acculturation as: ...*"those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, which subsequent changes in the original patterns of either or both groups..."* (Berry et al., 2002, 349). Liebkind (1994, 25) describes acculturation as a process that takes place when different cultures come into contact with each other and it involves changes in both minority and majority cultures. In the acculturation process, changes occur in people's beliefs, feelings, attitudes, values and behavior and it concerns both minority groups integration in the majority culture, as well as how members of the majority culture view members of cultural minorities (Liebkind, 2000, 13).

In the same way as individuals can prefer different strategies to cope with acculturation, society as a whole can choose which strategy it prefers. When cultural diversity is an objective and certain preconditions are established, it can be called multicultural. These preconditions are as follows: *widespread acceptance of the value of a cultural diverse society, relatively low levels of prejudice, positive mutual attitudes among ethnocultural groups and a sense of attachment to the larger society* by all individuals and groups. There should also be a sufficient number of one's ethnocultural group that wish to maintain the group's cultural heritage. (Berry et al., 2002, 353–356.)

The concept *integration* has been used to describe how individuals or groups both have an interest in maintaining one's culture of origin and in having interaction with other groups in society (Berry, 1997, 9). In several studies, integration has been seen as the most successful strategy for adapting to a new society (Berry, 1997, 24; Liebkind, 2000, 21). The integration strategy has also formed the basis for Finland's immigration policy, which is directed by the *Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers*.



The objectives of the Act are as follows: *...to promote the integration, equality and freedom of choice of immigrants through measures which help them to acquire the essential knowledge and skills they need to function in society... For the purpose of this Act, integration means*

- 1) The personal development of immigrants aimed at participation in work life and functioning of society while preserving their language and culture; and*
  - 2) The measures taken and resources provided by the authorities to promote such integration.*
- (493/1999.)*

This Act implicitly forms the basis for developing a multicultural society. Nevertheless, it does not take into consideration the Finns' need for adapting to increasing immigration. A multicultural society is achieved when equality and interaction between all people living in Finland is natural and when it benefits everybody (Coonan, 2000, 157). When different cultures meet, changes must occur within all the parts involved. Usually, the pressure of change lies on the minority culture, which is expected to change in order to adapt to the majority culture. In a multicultural view, changes are also expected from the majority culture, in order to adapt to multiculturalism. (see e.g. Liebkind, 2000, 171.) Finns' adaptation to immigrants has been given much less attention than immigrants' adaptation to Finnish society (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2002, 127).

### **2.3 Questioning multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism has not only been seen as a positive phenomenon that promotes cultural diversity and enriches the everyday lives of all people. For example in Sweden, the multicultural policy has been seriously questioned during the last few years. Current interpretations of *equality* are giving rise to an unequal ethnic division of labor, *freedom of choice* as legitimizing segregation, and *tolerance* as supporting new forms of racism (Schierup, 1994, 13). In the Scandinavian countries, where multiculturalism was introduced twenty or thirty years earlier than in Finland, scholars are now talking about abandoning or reformulating the concept. Universalism – emphasizing universal human rights and needs – is attracting more and more support (ibid., 1994, 26).

Molina and Tesfahuney stress the importance of looking at power relations in society and ask: who sets the agenda for multiculturalism? (1994, 110). They describe multiculturalism as a *doppelgänger* (phantasmal double, kaksoisolento), which at once hides the real power

structure, while it pretends to serve all without regard to class, race and gender (Molina & Tesfahuney, 1994, 110).

In this study, I base my definition of multiculturalism on the original ideology supported in Canada in the 1960s, in Sweden in the 1970s, and on Berry's definition of the concept. For me, multiculturalism means an orientation that accepts and supports the maintenance of cultural identity, which is based on equality, respect, freedom of choice and solidarity. Multiculturalism requires changes both from the majority culture and from minority cultures. I believe that multiculturalism can support and enhance interaction between different ethnocultural groups in society and that cultural diversity can promote enrichment. I am aware of the critical voices against multiculturalism as an ideology and way of action. However, multiculturalism as defined above is seen as an ideology that can enhance understanding and interaction between different cultures.

#### **2.4 Intercultural communication and multiculturalism**

Hardly anybody could deny the need for accepting cultural diversity and for increasing the understanding of other cultures. Conflicts due to powerrelations, and access to resources and misunderstandings because of different cultures, arise every day. Some of these conflicts are global while some might only concern two individuals. Intercultural communication does not only take place in international settings; it can also happen within our own culture. This is pointed out by Salo-Lee (1998), according to her, people are not only members of one culture, they belong to various cultures at the same time. Every day we act within different cultures: at home, at work and within our free time activities. Intercultural communication is therefore taking place within our own national culture and this type of communication is often called "intracultural communication". (Salo-Lee, 1998, 7.) We cannot avoid all the conflicts that arise due to cultural differences, either at a global level or at a personal level. But we can try to diminish them and endeavour to make the consequences less severe. Intercultural communication aims at diminishing misunderstandings due to cultural differences. In my opinion, intercultural communication can thus be used as a means for achieving multiculturalism.

In the field of intercultural communication, increased migration and interaction between people of different cultural backgrounds constitutes one of the central themes predominating in the entire academic field. Samovar and Porter (1999, 6) write that the concern about cultural diversity has given rise to the marriage of culture and communication in the unique

field of study of *intercultural communication*, which investigates those elements of culture that mostly influence interaction between members of two or more cultures. They also stress that we must be prepared to accept and tolerate the potential conflicts embedded in cultural differences, if we value cultural diversity and accept a multicultural village orientation (Samovar & Porter, 1999, 15). This pre-condition emphasizes a society where diversity is permitted to “flourish” without prejudice and discrimination, as these factors will harm members of the whole of society. Intercultural communication has existed as long as there has been human life, they also state that intercultural encounters today are far more numerous and of greater importance than in any previous time in human history. (ibid., 1999, 5, 15.)

In this study, the framework of intercultural communication will be used at different stages. Firstly, it partly reflects the way I look at the world and how I interpret what I see and experience. I believe that intercultural communication can be a way of increasing understanding between people and a way of diminishing misunderstandings due to cultural differences. I observe some everyday experiences at the Girls’ House in the light of intercultural communication and use them as practical examples when trying to explain certain phenomena. Secondly, I used aspects of intercultural communication when I was engaged in developing multicultural activities within the multicultural project in fall 2003. Thirdly, I will be using intercultural communication in analyzing the material and, fourthly, I use intercultural communication in setting up the guidelines and my recommendations for the future.

The goal of my study is to present a proposal to improve multiculturalism at the Girls’ House. Therefore, I will discuss those elements that effective intercultural communication could include and what would be needed for successful communication in intercultural settings? Chen and Starosta (1999) have introduced the concept of *intercultural sensitivity*, which they claim to be one of the most important abilities that help us to live successfully in culturally diverse societies. Intercultural sensitivity is defined as an individual’s ability to develop positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences in order to promote appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 1999, 407 and 408). They also call for greater understanding, sensitivity, and competence among people from different cultural backgrounds (ibid., 1999, 407) in order to achieve a meaningful and harmonious life in an increasingly pluralistic world. Genuine multiculturalism at the individual level has goals that could be considered synonymous with intercultural sensitivity. Interculturally sensitive persons must have a desire to motivate themselves to

understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures and to produce a positive outcome from intercultural interactions (ibid., 1999, 408).

The goal of the Girls' House is to meet every girl as an individual in a sensitive way, and to offer her an opportunity to sense the support of the community. The staff members vow to take care to see that every girl that comes to the House can feel safe, and therefore, the staff are supposed to interfere in any kind of downplaying, annoying talk or adverse actions. (Loppuraportti, 2000-2002, 10.) These principles in themselves present the thought that staff members should be sensitive when interacting with girls that visit the center. But does this happen in practice? Is there, for example, a need for being more interculturally sensitive or for providing intercultural training? These two questions form part of the research questions presented earlier.

## **2.5 Benefits of multiculturalism**

Immigration is increasing and people are moving, voluntarily or involuntarily. Societies are becoming more plural and the challenge is to create equal opportunities for individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Liebkind (2000) has made several studies on immigrants' acculturation and on Finns' attitudes towards foreigners. Many studies have pointed out that a tolerant multicultural atmosphere will help immigrants adapt into a new culture (Liebkind, 2000) and that it also prevents violence and hostility between different cultural groups. Berry et al. (2002, 364) quote Murphy (1965), who has argued that societies that support cultural pluralism provide a positive settlement atmosphere for two reasons; they are less likely to enforce cultural change or exclusion on immigrants, and they are more likely to provide support both from the institutions of the larger society and from the continuing and evolving ethnic communities.

Within youth work, Harinen, Keskisalo and Perho (2001, 215-216) stress the various benefits of a true multicultural activity where different ethnic backgrounds are not obstacles, but the difference becomes a positive, allowed and achievable thing. Promoting personal contact between people from different cultures has been found to be one of the most effective ways to decrease racism and increase positive attitudes towards immigrants (Jaakkola, 2000, 40). In a study made by Jaakkola in 1998, it was noted that Finns that personally knew foreigners living in Finland were clearly more positive towards refugees and foreign workers than persons who did not know any or knew only a few foreigners (Jaakkola, 2000, 41). These kinds of results relate to the *contact hypothesis*, which was first presented by Allport in 1954

(Berry et al., 2002, 374). The contact hypothesis claims that, under certain conditions, intergroup contact will reduce the prejudice between groups. These conditions being that the groups in contact should have roughly equal status; that they should share some common goals; that they should be in contact voluntarily; and that there should be some support for the contact (rather than prohibiting it). (Berry et al., 2002, 374.) The positive outcomes of the contacts are seen to be results of the fact that people through them get more information about the other group and learn to understand the behavior of its members (Jaakkola, 2000, 29). The most important precondition for the contact hypothesis is, according to Liebkind and McAlister (2000, 159), the social support and the support of society. They also say that in Finland, there is a clear lack of this kind of social support (ibid., 2000, 165).

Lepola (2002) is another researcher that stresses the importance of the surrounding society. She points out that the majority of the population plays an essential role in achieving the success of integration, and attitudes as well as an individuals' willingness to interaction and ability to communicate also affect how immigrants sense everyday intercourse (Lepola, 2002, 14). On the level of everyday life, it has an impact whether one believes that Finland really can be a multicultural and ethnically equal country, or whether one still imagines it to be a culturally uniform country of ethnic Finns, where those belonging to both old and new ethnic minorities have only the role of strangers (ibid., 2002, 15).

The benefits of multiculturalism can be viewed within a smaller context, such as in the framework of the Girls' House. Therefore, one can assume that the same benefits that a multicultural society enjoys can also enrich the activities in a smaller community or organization such as the Girls' House. However, the Girls' House does not exist in a vacuum and there is also a need to look at the surrounding society and the general attitudes that Finns display towards immigrants.

## **2.6 Preconditions for multiculturalism**

Preconditions for multiculturalism emphasize tolerance and a low level of prejudice. How are they found to be in Finland, is multiculturalism achievable in a larger context? As is stressed in Finnish legislation, Finnish society tries to achieve a tolerant atmosphere with natural interaction between different cultural groups (493/1999). In order to reach these goals, however, Finland should pay more attention to Finnish attitudes towards foreigners. According to several studies (see e.g. Jaakkola, 2000, 45; Liebkind 2000, 172), these attitudes

are generally quite negative or even harsh and there is still a lot of improvement to be made to reach a tolerant atmosphere.

Jaakkola (2000) has studied Finns' attitudes towards immigrants between the years 1987 and 1999. According to her, in 1999 it was still common to view people that looked "different" in a negative way (Jaakkola, 2000, 45). Even though attitudes towards foreigners have become more positive since the economic recession of the 1990s, they are still not as positive as they were in 1987. At that time there were still very few foreigners living in Finland, some 18 000 persons, of which half were drawn from Western Europe. (ibid., 2000, 28, 31.) In 1998, almost 50 percent of the Finns thought that people belonging to a certain race did not belong in a modern society and every fourth Finn thought that some peoples were more intelligent than others (ibid., 2000, 36). Attitudes towards different ethnical groups vary considerably and an "ethnic hierarchy" has been constructed. Ethnic groups that differ the most from Finns, in appearance and culture, are placed at the bottom of this hierarchy, as for example Somalis, Arabs and Russians. At the upper end there are people from the other Nordic countries and Western Europeans. (ibid., 2000, 33-34.)

The concept of *immigrant* is used in different ways, depending on the context. In this paper, I will use the concept to describe all persons living in Finland who have a foreign background and who have moved to the country permanently. Liebkind continues this definition with the words "...permanently, in order to earn his or her livelihood" (Liebkind, 1994, 9), but I would not like to so restrict the definition. The concept of immigrant includes refugees, asylum seekers, guest workers and students, but it does not include children who have been adopted or children of whom one of the parents is Finnish. I will use the concept of young immigrant or immigrant girls to describe young people who have moved to the country themselves as well as children of immigrants. Another concept used is that of a child or young person with an immigrant background, because it explains the background of the person in a better way (Sam & Oppedal, 14). In Finland, the state and very often the municipalities as well as non-governmental organizations use the concept of young immigrant.

## **2.7 Young immigrants in Helsinki**

In Finland, the discussion on multiculturalism, immigration and intercultural interaction is present every day. When the Girls' House is focusing on working with multicultural issues and on attracting more immigrant girls to the center, it has to take into consideration the trends in the larger society and especially in the Helsinki region. During the year 2002 the

number of foreign residents living in Finland exceeded the 100 000 mark, totalling 102 098 persons (Soränen, 2002, 2). Approximately one-third of the immigrants living in Finland live in Helsinki, and almost a half live in the Capital region, which includes Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen (Helsingfors stads informationscentral, 2001). At the beginning of the year 2003, almost 41 200 persons with foreign background lived in Helsinki of which approximately 28 800 were foreign residents. Thirty percent of the foreign residents were under the age of 25 years. (Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus, 2003.)

The integration of young immigrants and the problems of integrating into the Finnish society is a topic that has been discussed in the media, in schools and within the ethnic communities. The danger of marginalization exists and has been acknowledged by teachers, social workers and by the police, as integration seems to have failed in many cases (Kosonen, 2000, 149). In schools it is easier to support young immigrants, but the problems seem to arise when it comes to continuing education after primary education, when the children are in the ages of 16-18 years. Kosonen calls for more free-time activities for the immigrants, in order to prevent gangs from being formed and for securing their continued education. The immigrants also need support from their families and ethnic communities (Kosonen, 2000, 149). According to the 1999 Act of the Immigrants Integration (493/1999), the role of the municipality is important in supporting immigrants in their integration. As immigrant youth seem to like spending their free-time in the same way as many Finnish adolescents, the municipality should support those activities. Information about free-time activities and places where such activities take place should be made available in the immigrants' mother tongue and youth centers should have bi-lingual staff in order to support immigrants and to affect the attitudes of young Finns positively (Kosonen, 2000, 156).

The number of young immigrants living in the Helsinki region is increasing all the time. The number of young immigrants that visited municipal youth centers grew, especially in the 1990s, but the variation between different regions was large. The biggest separate group visiting the centers is of Somali origin and, in general, it seems that immigrant boys have found their way to the youth centers. Immigrant girls, especially from distant cultures, have not attended the youth centers as actively as have the immigrant boys. (Ilves, 1998, 204.) Ilves (1998, 204) says that immigrant girls run a high risk of experiencing more discrimination. Niemelä (2003) and Helander (2002) have studied Somali girls in Finland and they point out that immigrant girls might have special needs and questions due to the fact that they are often living in two cultures.

According to Niemelä (2003, 99), Somali girls differ more from Finnish girls than many other immigrant girls. They differ from Finnish people by skin colour and by their typical clothing of Muslim women, and they speak a language that only a few persons know in Finland. They also have a strong religious faith, which sets rules in their lives, rules that do not guide Finnish girls. Islam sets the guidelines for the girls' everyday life and affects many decisions concerning their life in general. (ibid., 2003, 99.) Helander (2002, 110) points out that the majority of the Somalis living in Finland have come to the country as refugees. Being a refugee is one factor that makes Somali girls the treasures of their culture and carriers of the cultural characteristics. All the ten girls Helander interviewed were proud of being Somalis and it is important for them to know from where they come from. Language and culture play an important role in the girls' lives and many of them were worried about forgetting their language. (Helander, 2002, 111.) It is important to remember that there are great differences between the Somali girls in Finland and in their backgrounds. These views can therefore not be generalized, but it a commonality for the Somali girls is that they need to strike a balance between the demands of their own individual choices and the demands of the community. (Helander, 2002, 114.) This is not only the case with Somali girls; all children growing up in more than one culture might have to go through this balancing between their respective cultures. Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that there are great differences between the immigrants living in Finland and between their cultures and that one should avoid generalizations. However, the Girls' House could be a place that supports immigrant girls and girls who run the risk of marginalization.



### 3. Organizational Culture

The concept of *organizational culture* developed in the field of organizational communication and has since become popular both in the academic field and in everyday life. After my first week at the Girls' House, I felt that I had come to a world of its own, a place with its own values, rules and norms, ways of behavior and people. Could I say that the Girls' House has a culture of its own? My spontaneous answer was yes. But the answer depends on how you understand and interpret culture and, in this case, organizational culture. In this study I want to deepen the understanding about the organizational culture in the Girls' House. I will not try to explain why all the different elements of culture are what they are, nor will I focus on gender questions. Focusing on women's and girls' culture, would however be an interesting subject for further studies. In this chapter, I will look at the concepts of *culture* and organizational culture. I will also examine theories that combine multiculturalism and organizational culture.

I refer to *organization*, in this study as a community that consists of human beings who have common goals (Yhteisöviestinnän perusteet, 2004). *Culture* can be defined in as many ways as there are human beings who wish to define the concept and there is no single definition that everybody would agree upon. Even within the same academic fields researchers have worked with different definitions of culture. According to Edward T. Hall, who has studied non-verbal communication, culture is communication and communication is culture (Hall, 1990, 94, 186), and went on to say that "there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture (ibid., 1989, 16). Salo-Lee (1998) also acknowledges the strong connection between culture and communication. She observes that culture is learnt by communication, it is maintained by communication and it is affected by communication (ibid., 1998, 7).

Gudykunst (2004, 42) sees culture as the underlying norms and rules that guide our behavior and summarizes that "culture is our implicit theories of the 'game being played' in our societies". According to Gudykunst, we learn to be members of our cultures from our parents, from teachers in school, from our religious institutions, from our peers, and from the mass media. But culture is a broad concept and members of cultures do not all share exactly the same view of their cultures and each person has a unique view of a culture. The theories that members of cultures share, however, overlap sufficiently so that they can coordinate their behavior in everyday life. (Gudykunst, 2004, 42.) Hall (1989, 16) observes that anthropologists agree on three characteristics of culture. These three underlying assumptions will also guide this study. First, culture it is not innate, but learned. Second, the various

aspects of culture are interrelated – you touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected. Third, culture is shared and defines the boundaries of different groups. (ibid., 1989, 16.)

Eisenberg and Goodall (2001), who have studied organizational communication, see culture as a symbol. Within an organization, culture stands for the actions, practices, stories, and artifacts that characterize a particular organization and the study of organizational cultures involves interpreting the meaning of such symbols as topics of conversation, key vocabulary, jargon and environment, e.g. conference rooms. The culture of an organization induces its members to think, act and behave in particular ways. (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001, 114, 116.) According to Barnett (1995, 107), the elements of organizational culture are languages, values, behaviors, including rites and rituals, stories, myths and legends. Porter and Samovar (1997) define culture as “a deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, role, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in and through individual and group striving” (Porter & Samovar, 1997, 12-13).

In this study, culture is present in different contexts. A strict or narrow definition would not be adequate to describe culture in the different frameworks of organizational culture, intercultural communication, and girls’ culture or acculturation strategies. For my purpose, therefore, I will mainly look at culture through the lens of organizational culture, emphasizing the aspect of communication. I have used the definitions given above in formulating a definition of organizational culture that will be purposeful for this study. Organizational culture, in this study, is seen as the values, attitudes, hierarchies, religion and behavior, shared by a group of people within an organization. It also includes ways of communication, artifacts and environment such as furniture. This does not mean that all members of an organization would think and act in the same way. As Gudykunst (2004, 42) points out, each person has a unique view of a culture. But these views overlap sufficiently so that persons can coordinate their behavior in everyday life and, in this case, within an organization.

### **3.1 Culture in organizations**

Studying organizations as cultures emerged in the 1970s and 80s, beginning in the United States. Scholars of organizational communication became interested in the idea that an understanding of companies, universities, government agencies, or any form of institution or organization could be acquired through cultural analysis (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001, 291). The growth of this field of study was also a response to the global changes in society and in the

atmosphere created by an increased global competition in business (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001). Eisenberg and Goodall define organizational culture as “the result of cumulative learning of a group of people, and that learning manifests itself as culture at a number of levels” (ibid., 2001, 122). The definition I use in this study is based on Hall’s statement that communication is culture, combined with the definition by Uttal (1983, 66, quoted in Andrews & Herschel, 1996, 50) who state that “an organizational culture consists of a system of shared values (what is important) and beliefs (how things work) that interact with a company’s people, organizational structure and control systems to produce behavioral norms (the way we do things around here)”.

The main efforts in studying organizational culture have often been focused on big corporations and the aim of these studies has been to improve productivity or market competitiveness. I view the concept of organizational culture as being useful in describing an organization like the Girls’ House and that the methodology developed in this field can also be applied there. The most common method of study of organizational culture is, according to Eisenberg and Goodall, that ethnography, which can provide rich descriptions of organizational life and capture subtle points that are overlooked by traditional research (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001, 118, 120). Ethnography and participant observation are common methods within action research and will also be used in this study.

### **3.2 What does cultural diversity bring to an organization?**

Nancy Adler (2002) writes about the impact of cultures on organizations. Although she speaks mostly about organizations within the business world, I see that there are some points that can be applied in an organization such as the Girls’ House. Adler argues that cultural diversity, whether it is international or domestic, affects the ways in which we operate within organizations (Adler, 2002, 106). She also emphasizes that cultural blindness, choosing not to see cultural differences, limits the ability to benefit from diversity and reduces the ability to minimize problems caused by cultural diversity. It also prevents us from maximizing the potential advantages that cultural differences offer. To manage cross-culturally effectively, an effort must be made to recognize cultural diversity without judging it – to see difference where difference exists. (ibid., 2002, 107.)

Cultural diversity can also create different problems. According to Adler, diversity can cause problems, for example, when the organization needs employees to think or to act in similar ways, when people from different cultures do not understand each other and when they do not

work in the same ways or at the same pace (Adler, 2002, 108–109). Further, Adler stresses that diversity becomes most advantageous when the organization wants to expand its perspective, strategy, tactics, or approach. Diversity can become an advantage in attempting to launch a new project, create a new idea and develop a new marketing plan. (ibid., 2002, 110.)

Korhonen (2002) is another researcher who has studied culturally diverse organizations. Korhonen says that successful companies and employees are those who see cultural diversity as an opportunity rather than as a threat, as something that can be learned, managed, and made use of, as an opportunity for higher productivity and more profits, and who are willing to develop their intercultural competence. Interculturally competent employees, including immigrants, represent *added value* to companies and their shareholders (Korhonen, 2002, 35.) In this case, intercultural competence refers to sensitivity to cultural diversity, i.e. the ability to behave in an appropriate way, and to adapt one's communication and interaction according to the context (Korhonen, 2002, 32).

### **3.3 Pluralistic organization development**

For an organization to become multicultural, it is not enough to focus only on the activities currently provided. Together with employees at the Girls' House I wanted to find out to what extent they were ready to work for a more plural work environment, which would enhance multiculturalism at the activity level.

Armour (1995) has presented a model for organizations that wish to become pluralistic. The model is based on continuous learning and the five stages included provide a framework for the method of conducting diversity training. An organization that is in the process of becoming pluralistic needs to include a strategy of diversity learning, education and training (Armour, 1995, 4). I use Armour's model, presented in Table 1, as a guideline in my research.

**Table 1. Armour's stages of pluralistic organization development.**

<b>Monocultural</b>				<b>Pluralistic</b>
<b>Resistant...</b>	<b>Reactive...</b>	<b>Proactive...</b>	<b>Redefining...</b>	<b>Synergistic</b>
<i>No diversity programs.</i>	<i>Voluntary training programs.</i>	<i>Cultural assessments. Mandatory training programs.</i>	<i>Diversity beginning to be integrated.</i>	<i>Diversity fully integrated.</i>
<b>Exclusive...</b>	<b>Symbolic...</b>	<b>Responsive...</b>	<b>Transformative...</b>	<b>Inclusive</b>

Source: Armour, 1995, 5.

The five stages defined by Armour are shown in Table 1 and briefly described as follows:

- 1) **Resistant - Exclusive:** No diversity education and initiatives are taking place. Existing staff and management education and training programs do not include intentional references to diversity.
- 2) **Reactive - Symbolic:** The organization offers voluntary training programs. Common topics for the learning events are often culture-specific information, cross-cultural communication, prejudice reduction, anti-racism etc. Some of these subjects may appear in the next stage.
- 3) **Proactive - Responsive:** The organization as a system begins to learn about diversity and pluralism. Organization members start to acknowledge that they still have a lot to learn about this issue and how to manage it well. Essential for entrance to this stage is the organization's willingness to learn about itself by contracting for research that identifies issues related to diversity and pluralism. Short-, medium-, and long-term strategies are defined based on the outcomes of the research. Diversity training programs are obligatory and they often focus on introductions to the issues of diversity and pluralism for the organization, cultural self-awareness for individuals and on the organizational culture, managing diversity etc.
- 4) **Redefining - Transformative:** Diversity is beginning to be integrated into the organization and training is part of a larger strategy. New learning objectives and programs are continuously developed as required.
- 5) **Synergistic – Inclusive:** Diversity is fully integrated into all organization-learning policies, strategies, programs and processes. An internal committee continues to systematically review and assesses learning programs [...] so that the organization and its individual members continue their development of knowledge and skills related to diversity and pluralism. (Armour, 1995, 4–5.)

This model was not explicitly used in the everyday work at the Girl's House, but it affected the way I looked at what was happening around me. I also used this model as a loose base for developing the action plan at the end of the research. The aim of this study was not to transform the Girls' House into a complete pluralistic organization as defined by Monica Armour. This would not have been possible within the time limits of the study and also would have required additional resources. But I did use this model as a support for discussions with

participants in the study and as a help for designing a multicultural strategy for the organization. The aim was to develop a strategy that participants would find appropriate, important and realistic.

## **4. The Girls' House**

The Girls' House (Tyttöjen Talo) is a center for girls and young women, situated in Kallio in Helsinki. The main purpose of the Center is to support girls and young women in their development and growth. The aim is to help girls in their growing up and becoming women, in a supportive and respectful atmosphere that appreciates communalism and gender awareness (Toimintasuunnitelma, 2003, 2). The name "The Girl's House" is my own translation of the Finnish words "Tyttöjen Talo". When I started my study there was no official English name for the center that was in common use. The names *Open House for Girls* and *The House of Girls* (Puukko, 2003) had been used in different contexts.

In this chapter, I first present a brief description of the development of girls' studies from the 1970s to its current state in Finland. Then, the background to the foundation of the Girls' House and the basic values that direct the work and activities in the Center are presented.

### **4.1 Why only girls?**

The Girls' House was founded in the spirit of a new paradigm of girls' studies in Finland that had developed during the 1990s. Girls' studies have their roots in the 1970s where it first developed in Birmingham, Great Britain (see e.g. Lähteenmaa, 2002). At that time, much of the research in the field of the sociology of youth considered the way that young people "made sense" of the situation in which they found themselves (McRobbie, 1991, ix). McRobbie is a well-known researcher working in the field of girls' studies. She asserts that the early youth studies were almost exclusively focused on boys, and her aim was to study how teenage girls interpreted some of the structural determinations of age, class and gender in the context of their own lives (McRobbie, 1991, x). One of the primary aims of girls' studies was to support girls' emancipation. Lähteenmaa, who is one of the pioneers in girls' studies in Finland, points out that the Birmingham scholars were openly Marxist-feminist and that their goal was to uncover the oppressive structures of the patriarchy that dominated girls (Lähteenmaa, 2002, 274).

Girls' studies that developed in the Nordic countries in the 1980s had a different attitude towards girls' culture from that of the British tradition. In the 1980s, girls' culture was not studied in comparison to boys' culture, nor in the 1970s spirit of equality feminism. Instead, the motivation was to study the essence of and logic in girls' culture itself. Girls' studies in the Nordic countries, therefore, partly became a celebration of "essence feminism" (olemuskfeminismi), where being a woman and a girl in itself was seen as precious

(Lähteenmaa, 2002, 78). Women's ability to reproduce and their caring characteristics were especially admired. However, there were some contradictions in this new paradigm of girls' studies. Women in the Nordic countries traditionally are not seen as the ones that cherish and take care of the home, and girls' studies were implicitly reinforcing the understanding that the home and the kitchen were the right places for girls to be in. (ibid., 2002, 78.)

In the 1980s and 1990s girls' studies in the Nordic countries took a new path, which was now much less influenced by ideological feminism. Various studies highlighted the marginal conditions in which girls grow up, but they did not pity the girls because of these experiences. Instead, they pointed out the possibility that girls can learn something of growing up in a contradictory society. In 1990 Lähteenmaa and Näre brought together many Finnish researchers who worked in the field of girls' studies. As a result of the meeting and several discussions, the book "Letit liehumaan-tyttökulttuuri murroksessa", ("Let the braids swing - girls' culture in a breakthrough") was published. The main theme of the book is that there are many competences and abilities that can grow out of girls' culture, abilities that are needed in order to survive in modern society. (Lähteenmaa, 2002, 278–279; Näre & Lähteenmaa, 1992.)

#### **4.2 Background to the foundation of the Girls' House**

The development of girls' studies and the examples drawn from other Nordic countries also promoted girls' work at a practical level in Finland. The Girls' House has its roots in the "Upea minä" ("Glorious me") project, organized by the Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth Associations in 1998-2000, whose aim was to find the ways and means of how to support girls' development within the field of youth work. In 1998 the project organized a seminar on girl work, which can be described as work with, and among girls. One of the visiting lecturers was Lotta Gusterman, the leader of the Xist-tjejforum in Stockholm. Xist is an activity center open only to girls, which was founded in 1995. Xist offers a range of activities, a cafeteria and various information and support services. Xist then became the model for the Girls' House in Helsinki. (Nitovuori, 2002, 4–5.) In April, 1999 the Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth Associations applied for financing from the Helsinki City Partnership Fund for establishing the Girls' House. In the project plan of 30 April 1999 (Tyttöjen Talo Tirlittan), the reasons for why the Girls' House was needed were specifically expressed as were the aims and goals of the project. During the years since 1999 the basic values and goals have stayed the same – to support and strengthen girls' identities in different stages of their lives and help them to grow up to the women that they are. (Tyttöjen Talo Tirlittan, 1999, 4.) One goal that was explicitly stated was that the Girl's House aims to reach



and activate girls with immigrant backgrounds. The project believed that it would be easier for many immigrant girls to be permitted to participate in the house's activities when there were no boys present. The participation of immigrant girls was also seen as a step towards Finnish society's adaptation. [Towards people with different ethnic backgrounds?] (*Turvallinen tyttöjen oma talo voisi edesauttaa maahanmuuttajatyttöjen osallistumista toimintaan ja olla askel meidän yhteiskuntamme sopeutumisessa.*) (Tyttöjen Talo Tirlittan, 1999, 5-6.)

#### **4.3 The Girls' House - a partnership project**

The Girls' House is a partnership project including three different parties: the Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth Associations, the Kalliola Youth Association (Kalliolan Nuoret ry), and the Youth Department of the City of Helsinki (Helsingin kaupungin Nuorisoasiainkeskus). The Girls' House started its activities in November 1999 and the activities of the center are, for example, activity groups, interactive long-term groups and different events.

Three years after the Girls' House was established, Nitovuori (2002) made an evaluation study of the partnership project. The aims of Nitovuori's study were primarily to give an overview of goals, models and visions, to describe and evaluate the activities of the Girls' House. Nitovuori concludes that the Girls' House is a diverse project with activities that differ very much from each other. She finds that the staff displays a good ability to meet the girls as individuals and that the basic values (equality and acceptance of diversity) can be seen in the everyday work: the staff reflect their own values and womanhood and acts on the basis of these. The various partners were, according to Nitovuori, satisfied with the work at the Girls' House. (Nitovuori, 2002, 301–31.) The study gives a good general overview of the work done at the Girls House and an insight into the ideology and values that guide the everyday work. But, as Nitovuori acknowledges, there is room for further studies that would provide insight into specific areas of activity within the Girls' House (ibid., 2002, 3).

In the final report of the Girls' House of 2002, it is stated that the Center has managed to fill a gap that existed in the services offered by the City of Helsinki and that the future of the Center looks good. The partnership program is also considered important by the Girls' House in a larger context, as the Center describes itself as the cradle for “girl work that is aware of womanhood” (naistietoinen tyttötyö) in Finland. It has inspired similar projects around the country and functioned as a training center in girl work. (Loppuraportti, 2002, 18-19.)

#### **4.4 Basic values of the Girls' House**

The basic values of the Girls' House are these: equality, appreciation of diversity, individuality, uniqueness and communalism (Toimintasuunnitelma, 2003, 2). In Nitovuori's study, values that were emphasized in interviews with staff members were so-called women's values: respect for life, creation of something new, acceptance of diversity and individualism, importance of human relationships and acceptance of the dependence of others (Nitovuori, 2002, 10). These values also quite largely represent a combination of the values appreciated by the different partner organizations. The values of the Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth Associations, are as follows:

- Respect and acceptance of individual rights and differences.
- Trust in the ability of people and their communities to solve their own problems independently.
- Emphasis on acting locally.
- Equality independent of skin color, gender or culture.
- Commitment to help those in a disadvantaged position.  
(Toimintakertomus, 2002, 17.)

The values of the Youth Department of the City of Helsinki are as follows:

- Caring about each other (toisesta välittäminen), which means aiming at mutual trust between young people, co-workers and partners.
- Knowing (Osaaminen), by actively developing the skills and abilities both of young people and of youth workers.
- Knowing the aims. (Tavoitetietoisuus) The means of action shall be based upon the needs of the young people and these shall systematically be evaluated and studied. The basic aim of the field is to support the young people's participation in education, cultural life, work and decision-making in society.
- Purposefulness (Tarkoituksenmukaisuus), which means planned use of resources.  
(Nuorisoasiainkeskus, Laaturyhmä, Nuorisoasiainkeskuksen tavoitteet 2003–2005 pähkinäkuoressa)

#### **4.5 Activities provided for girls**

The activities and services provided by the Girls' House can be divided into eight different groups:

- 1) *Interactive girl groups*, which are seen as the most important activities that the Girls' House provides (Nitovuori, 2002, 18). The aim with these groups is to support girls' and young women's development in a rather closed and long-term interactive group. Two professional instructors, who plan the activities primarily according to the wishes and priorities of the girls, usually lead the groups. In the multicultural groups, the aim is that at least one of the group leaders has an immigrant background. The interactive girl groups meet regularly and some of them are clearly focused on therapy. In recruiting girls for these groups, the social offices, school psychologists and different organizations that help

young people have all been found useful. Interactive groups are, for example; multicultural groups, groups that focus on preventive drug use, preventive groups, girls that are restless in school disturbing other students, depressed girls, young mothers and girls that have been sexually abused.

- 2) *The open sphere and cafeteria* aims to offer an easy way to get to know the center and become part of it. The cafeteria is open from Mondays to Thursdays from 2 pm to 8 pm and there is always an adult woman present. The open sphere should be a place where the girls can relax, receive support, and have an opportunity to discuss things and to be heard. It should also be a way to be introduced to the other activities of the Girls' House.
- 3) *Afternoon groups for girls 10 to 15 years* aim to provide a safe and active afternoon in the company of an adult and to create interaction and discussion. The activity groups gather every day and are free of charge.
- 4) *Hobby groups* aim to provide different forms of activities, responding to the wishes of the girls. The hobby groups give the girls a channel to learn about themselves and to strengthen their identity. Competition and performance are not appreciated values in the activities of the Girls' House. Hobby groups can, for example, focus on dancing, creative writing and the arts.
- 5) *Sexual education* aims to offer a space where girls can think about and discuss different aspects of gender, sexuality and related subjects both on an individual and a community level. This is done through a "drop-in" service on sexual information, discussions, projects, public discussion, and production of material and provision of education.
- 6) *Activities and events* and theme evenings on varying subjects are regularly organized. The Path of Emotions is an experience-based activity that is organized some Saturday evenings during each semester. The aim of this activity is to provide an alternative way to spend the Saturday evening with the goal to support girls' emotions and stress the importance of listening to emotions. The International Women's Day the 8<sup>th</sup> of March is each year celebrated and every fall semester begins with an initial event.
- 7) *The House Council* aims to empower girls to feel responsibility for the Girls' House and to provide a channel to influence the day-to-day matters of the house.

8) *Education*: staff members of the Girls' House provide education and lectures on gender sensitive matters. Several adult groups visit the house to get acquainted with the methods of the house. A professional group of people involved in girls work gathers regularly to talk and share their information and experience. (Toimintasuunnitelma, 2003, 3-6.)

#### **4.6 Participation by girls of different ages**

In spring 2002 the number of visitors to the Girls House was around 1 500 per month. There were 34 groups that functioned regularly during the year, of which 20 were interactive girls' groups. According to a survey made by students Kati Jokinen and Katja Kemppinen (2002) (quoted in Nitovuori 2002, 16) the most typical visitor is 11–15 years old, but the ages varies considerably between the girls who attend the hobby groups and those attending the interactive groups. The visitors mainly come from nearby locations, but also from eastern parts of Helsinki, because Kallio is easily reached by the metro service. (Jokinen & Kemppinen, quoted in Nitovuori, 2002, 16.)

About 10-15 percent of the visitors in the Girls' House are immigrant girls (Nitovuori, 2002, 16; Uusitalo, meeting, 18 March 2004) and the action plan for the year 2003, (Toimintasuunnitelma, 2003, 8) states that immigrant girls are well integrated into the activities of the Girls' House. From the beginning in 1999 there have been established groups for both Somali girls and for Russian-speaking girls at the Girls' House. These groups are generally called multicultural and the aim is that at least one of the group leaders represents a minority culture. The groups have functioned well and the Girls' House stresses the importance of multicultural group leaders, who support the immigrant girls in their own culture and with whom the girls can identify. (Toimintasuunnitelma, 2003, 7–8; Uusitalo, meeting, 18 March 2003.)

## **5. Research Design**

The goal of the study is to realize a deep understanding of how multiculturalism is defined by the Girls' House and carried out in practice, in order to develop a multicultural action plan. Qualitative methods were chosen because they serve the research questions in the most appropriate way. Cresswell (1998) has listed some arguments that support the choice of qualitative methods: the topic needs to be explored, there is a need to present a detailed view of the topic, individuals are to be studied in their natural setting and there is a wish to emphasize the researcher's role as an active learner who can tell the story from the participant's view rather than as an expert who passes judgments on participants (Cresswell, 1998, 17). In this study, all these arguments are essential elements.

Several methods of data gathering were combined in order to give a broad picture of the issue studied. Interviews and participant observation complement each other and throw light upon different angles on the research questions. The methods used in this research are as follows: theme interviews and, participant observation, which includes informal discussions and the keeping of a personal diary. In this chapter, I first describe action research and the research process. Then, the research methods and a "typical day" at the Girls' House are discussed. And finally, the methods of analysing the data are reviewed.

### **5.1 Action research and the research cycle**

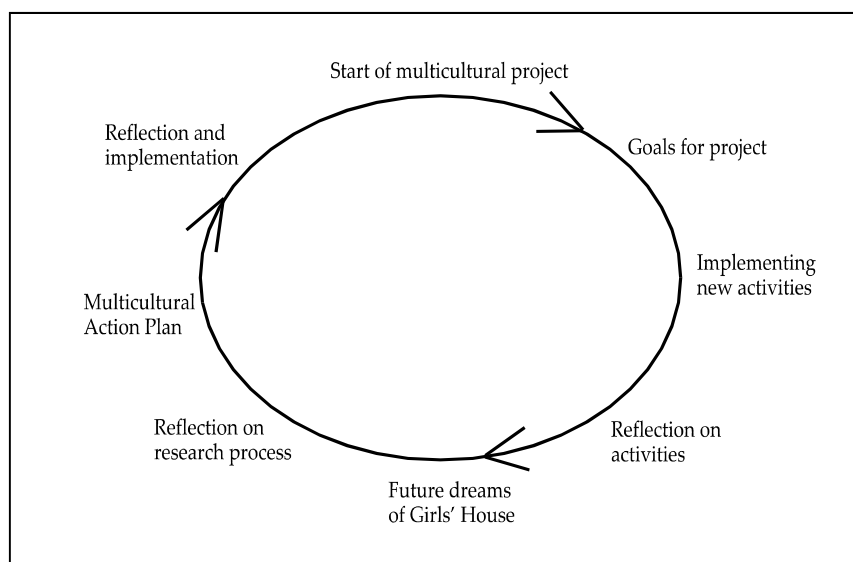
This study is carried out within the framework of action research. There is no single or precise definition of action research (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 129; Heikkinen & Jyrkämä, 1999, 25), but it could be described as a method with concrete goals that is driven by a will to resolve a real-life problem together with the members of a certain community. The aim of action research is to generate knowledge and action in support of liberating change (Greenwood & Levin, 2000, 94). I chose action research because of its participative nature and striving for change. Greenwood and Levin (2000, 96) describe action research as a collaborative communicative process in which all participants' contributions are taken seriously. Syrjälä et al. (1994, 34) describe the belief in democracy and cooperation as the starting point for action research. As multiculturalism is the key concept that has directed the whole study, action research, based on the principles mentioned above, was therefore a natural choice.

In action research, learning is acquired based on experience and reflection, and action and activities develop gradually and through several stages (Kiviniemi, 1999, 66). Central for

action research is a striving for reflective thinking and through that the developing of the action. The idea is that a person distances himself or herself from the situation and then looks at his or her actions and way of thinking from a new perspective. Action research is often described as a self-reflecting circle, where action, observation, reflection and re-planning follow each other. Kurt Lewin developed this idea in 1948 and since then the idea has been elaborated in several ways. (Heikkinen & Jyrkämä, 1999, 36.)

In this study, the research process is presented as a cycle (Figure 1). The aim of this study is not to compare the situation before and after the project. The aim is to look at the process itself and therefore I find the research cycle purposeful. The cycle is a simplified way of presenting the research and in reality the process was much more complex. However, the cycle gives an overview on how the research process proceeded, and the research cycle should be seen as part of a larger research spiral that is presented later in Figure 2. The research cycle (Figure 1) is elaborated from Kemmis and Wilkinson’s model (1998, 21) of the spiral of self-reflective research cycles. According to Kemmis and Wilkinson, action research is generally thought to involve a spiral of self-reflective cycles of the stages as follow: 1) planning a change, 2) acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, 3) reflecting on these processes and, 4) re-planning, and so forth (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998, 21–22). All these stages can be found in the research cycle presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Research Cycle**

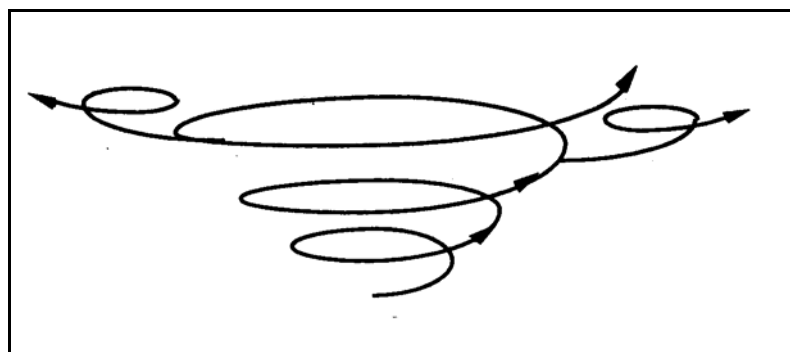


Source: Elaborated from Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998, 22.

The research cycle could also be seen as a project cycle because both processes were closely related to each other. The focus in the cycle starts at the point where the Girls' House was starting to plan a new multicultural project. Reflection and evaluation, and analyze were all the time natural elements of both the project and the research process. The multicultural project ended at the stage "Reflection on activities". (See also Appendix III, Timeline of research process.) From that stage onwards, I continued the research process with analyzing, and reflecting upon the experiences from the fall and started to focus on the future. I have summarized all the stages of the research cycle into an action plan and, if this plan is carried out, it starts another cycle of a new multicultural project. The research cycle advances chronologically, but the research process is not as simple as the cycle suggests.

McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996, 23) present a spiral (Figure 2) that takes into consideration the research process as a whole, including the new and unexpected turns that are a natural part of action research.

**Figure 2. Spiral of action research**



Source: McNiff et al. (1996, 23).

The side spirals allow other issues to be investigated and then the complex and creative business of real life can be accommodated (McNiff et al. (1996, 22–23). Heikkinen and Jyrkämä (1999) describe the side paths as a natural part of the research process. The side paths symbolize new unexpected problems and research objects that arise during the research process (Heikkinen & Jyrkämä, 1999, 38–39).

Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 128) describe action research as an open activity, where the aim of the study is explicitly explained to the participants, where participants are asked to collaborate with the researcher, and where the goal is to make a (positive) change in the lives of people. The researcher does not try to stay away from the object studied; on the contrary,

he or she tries to get involved (Eskola, & Suoranta, 1998, 128). Action research can be seen as a case study and it is characterized by flexibility, and therefore both the methods used in the study and the aims of the study might well change during the process (Syrjälä et al., 1994, 15).

In action research - as in all research - the researcher's role is essential. Why does a person want to do action research and promote social change? This is an important primary question in stating the researcher's role. (Kuula, 1999, 223.) I have chosen action research, because I believe in the benefits of multiculturalism and would like my study to benefit girls and staff members at the Girls' House in a positive way.

## **5.2 Interviews and participants**

During my internship, I conducted totally six theme-interviews with all the six staff members, not including the trainees. The first interviews were held in September 2003 and the rest in October 2003. One interview was held in December with a new employee that had started to work at the Girls' House at the end of November. These interviews were set up beforehand, taped and transcribed and then shown to the participants, to enable them to give their comments. I also held several more informal discussions with the various staff members, which I have used as source material in this study. I noted them down right after the conversation or at the end of the day and therefore they were not always as exact or as detailed as the taped interviews. Some of the regular Friday meetings were especially set up for discussing multicultural issues, and these are also part of the material as well as notes resulting from other meetings. The notes of informal discussions and meetings will be used as supportive sources but not as main sources, because of their weaker exactness.

Both the interviews and staff discussions were in held Finnish, which is the mother tongue of all the staff members interviewed in this study. I have translated the interviews from Finnish into English. The quotations of the participants are therefore not their exact words but my translations. Most of the extraneous words that are used in a natural conversation such as well, eh and, like (niinkun, mm, silleen, jotenkin) are left out, because they are not relevant for the content. The Finnish quotations are marked in italics.

The reason for choosing theme-interviews as one method of collecting data is that I wanted to deepen my understanding about the phenomena under study. This study was focused on the Girls' House as an organization and the thoughts and attitudes of the staff members therefore



constituted essential basic information for the study. The benefits derived from interviews are, for example, that the interviewee is seen as a subject, a constructor of meanings and an active partner in the study (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, 35). In Finland, as in many other countries, interviews are the most common source of data in qualitative studies. The aim of an interview is to find out what another person has in mind, and what his or her motives are etc. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 86). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) define the interview as a conversation, and stress that it is not a neutral tool, for the interviewer creates the reality of the interview situation. The interview is a method, which is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer including class, ethnicity and gender (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 36).

Five interviews were held during working time at the Girls' House. One interview was held at the participant's home outside working hours. The interviews were set up from one to two weeks in advance and the participants were told that it would be more of a relaxing conversation than a "traditional" interview. The interviews at the Girls' House took place either in the "Lounge Room" or in the "Rose Room", depending on which of these was available. At the time of the interviews I had already become generally familiar with the participants (staff members) as well as with the Girls' House as an organization. This initiated familiarity with the participants was an advantage in starting the discussions, because we already knew one another and the atmosphere was relaxed. But this familiarity might also have restricted to some degree what the participants told me. At the same time I was a co-worker, a trainee and "an outsider" that had come to find out something new about the organization.

The themes discussed were set partly on the basis of previous conversations with the staff members. (See Appendix I for a specific list of themes.) At joint meetings the staff had expressed a wish that the study would contribute to developing multiculturalism at the Girls' House. There had also been discussions on how each and everyone defined multiculturalism and what it meant for her. The themes discussed in the interviews were these:

1. The background of multicultural work at the Girls' House, because I wanted to find out what had been done previously and why.
2. The goals of multicultural work. Which were the short-term and long-term goals concerning multicultural issues at the Girls' House? Is there a need for training in multicultural issues?
3. What does multiculturalism mean for you personally/within the organization?

4. How are girls encountered at the Girls' House? Which of the partnership organizations' values are the ones that guide the work at the center? And how do you see the role of the Finnish girls in developing multicultural work?
5. The future: personal wishes and wishes about the organization as a whole.

Themes 1, 3 and 4 dealt with the current situation, background and values that would give me an understanding about the organizational culture generally and more specifically. Themes 2 and 5 dealt with development and with future plans. These questions would be helpful in yielding results for use the development of an action plan.

The six participants in the interviews were all female aged 23 to 40 years and they were working at the Girls' House at the time of the interviews. The women were all Finnish by nationality and by cultural background. They represented different professions, but the majority had an educational background in social science or in health science. The women had worked at the Girls' House for varying time periods. Two of the participants had worked at the Girls' House since the beginning from 1999 or 2000 and the rest had been working there between one month and one year.

The work community at the Girls' House was very intimate and by this description all participants can easily be recognized. In the following section, where I state opinions expressed by the participants and describe events that occurred at the Girls' House, I only use letters (participant A, B, C...) to mark who said or did what. Some of the data might still be recognizable. However, the participants have read through this part of the study and approved of its contents<sup>1</sup>. The six participants can be described by their professions as follows:

- Director. Has worked at the Girls' House since its foundation in 1999 and is a well-known promoter of girls' work in Finland. Educational background in psychology.
- Occupational therapist. Has worked at the Girls' House since February 2003.
- Child care/Family worker. Has worked at the Girls' House since November 2003.
- Apprenticeship student. Worked at the Girls' House since the beginning of 2000. She graduated as a youth leader in December 2003 and at the same she finished her work at the Girls' House.

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<sup>1</sup> On 18 March 2004, two participants attended a meeting at the Girls' House where we discussed the content and findings of the research. All participants had been invited to this meeting and those who could not attend received the same information through other channels, e.g. electronic mail.

- Mental health nurse. Worked at the Girls' House since November 2002 and finished in December 2003.
- Student of social science. Worked at the Girls' House as a trainee in 2001 and after that as a group leader. Between August and December 2003 she was employed as a multicultural worker.

In the fall of 2003, when most of the interviews were held, it was known that only two of the participants were going to continue their work in 2004. For a small work community this would mean a big change, and this was a question of which the participants were well aware. For me it also presented a major challenge. Would the project have a continuation? How would the experiences from the project and research be taken into consideration in the future? These were questions that could not be answered at the time of the study. But many of the participants believed that multicultural work would continue to be important at the Girls' House and we decided not to let these upcoming changes in the work community change the goals of the research.

### **5.3 Participant observation**

In this study participant observation was used throughout the research process. It is a method of collecting data where the researcher in one way or another participates in the activities of the community he or she is studying. The method has been widely used in anthropology studies and has also become popular for studying organizational culture (see e.g. Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001). For me, participant observation was a natural choice as I was part of the work team and took part in the everyday activities at the Girls' House.

As a trainee I was in a good position for conducting participant observation. I worked closely with issues concerning multiculturalism and took part in developing several new activities during the fall of 2003. I also worked in the open sphere and cafeteria focusing more on being a trainee than a researcher. I worked five days a week, usually from 1 pm to 8 pm, which are the normal opening hours when the girls have access to the center. During morning shifts starting from 9 or 10 am we worked on networking, marketing, planning activities etc. I tried to write my up personal diary every evening after work. I made notes on events that somehow raised my special attention that usually included some conflict or any matter that I found interesting for some other reason. All planning activity or discussions that explicitly concerned multicultural issues were noted written down.

Observation is a subjective human activity, where two persons might direct their attention on totally different things, but still their reports might contain interesting reading despite differences in content. Eskola and Suoranta see subjectivity as a richness, which describes the nuance of everyday life and richness of interpretations (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 103–104). Hirsjärvi and Hurme describe observation as a very demanding method of gathering information. Events usually occur only once, but in interviews one can return to the subject for clarifications. If one does not use a video camera, the flow of events can be so large that it becomes hard to register specific events. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, 38.) In action research it is important to acknowledge what kind of changes occur in the researcher and in the methods of data gathering and to report these developments in the final report (Kiviniemi, 1999, 79). The purpose of my personal diary and the field notes is to answer these needs and provide continuous reflection on the research process.

Eskola and Suoranta (1998) observe that, in participant observation, ethical concerns are important and the researcher has to think about the consequences of his or her action more than usually. It can be a difficult process to win the trust of the community, to be accepted within the group, and at the same time to be able to make interviews and observations (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 100, 102).

In my original research plan I had planned to focus both on staff members as well as on the girls visiting the center. The plans changed dramatically when I was told that I was not allowed to observe the girls and their behavior in such a way that they would be aware of it.

*“...Tytöt voi tutkimuksesta kärsiä, kun he ovat niin herkässä vaiheessa siinä ja tarkkailu on just mikä tuollaisessa iässä, ei siedä sitä että vanhemmat kyttää heitä [...] että pitää sen avoimen toiminnan tyttöjen avoimena toimintana ja ne kokemukset mitä sä saat siitä voit kirjata ylös mutta ei ehkä oo siinä sellaisella asenteellakaan että niin kuin tätä mä nyt oikein jään nyt katsomaan että mitä tästä tulee, että tästä mä saan ehkä nyt jotain.” (Osallistuja A)*

“...The girls can suffer from the research. They are in such a sensitive stage of their lives and they feel that they are observed all the time. They cannot stand that their parents keep an eye on them. [...] One should keep the open sphere as the girls’ open sphere and what you get out of it you can note down but you should not have the attitude that “now I stay and watch this situation and maybe I can get something out of this.” (Participant A)

This opinion by one of the staff members was shared by the rest of the staff. At first I felt upset and thought about how I could carry on with the research. Ethically, I could not think of making specific detailed explanations about conversations and events, if I was not allowed to

tell the girls that I was observing them in some way. I wanted to follow the rules of the organization and do the research together with the staff and therefore the research plan was changed to focus mainly on the staff. I told the girls that I was doing research in the Girls' House and I explained my topic, but we never discussed the research more thoroughly. Some events and conversations with the girls are used as examples, but the events are reconstructed to some extent so that the persons directly involved are not recognizable.

#### **5.4 The fall of 2003 and a “typical day”**

In the fall of 2003, the center had four permanent staff members and one student on an apprenticeship contract. In addition to these five persons, from August to December, there was also a multicultural project worker (a student of social work at Laurea Polytechnic School), and a trainee in intercultural communication (myself) and several other trainees that stayed in the center from two to eight weeks. There were also some 20 part-time group leaders that came to the Girls' House once or twice a week. (Muistio, 25 August 2003; Loppuraportti 200–2002, 17.)

I started my internship at the end of August 2003. The Girls' House organized two planning days at Vuorilahden huvila, where we planned the activities for the fall and talked about personal expectations. We also talked about some girls and then we decided on important dates. The center opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September after the summer holidays.

“The setting at Vuorilahti was very informal and I was taken by the open, warm and democratic atmosphere. The women hugged each other and talked about what they had been doing during the summer holidays. When it came to the goals of the fall of 2003, I made several suggestions considering the multicultural activities and many of them were taken into consideration. I felt that the staff was positive towards the research and we decided to discuss the research throughout the fall.”  
(Field note, 30 August 2003)

Every day was different at the Girls' House. The topics of the conversations in the cafeteria changed rapidly and the activities that took place depended on the day. However, there were some common elements that could be found every day. I will here describe a “typical day” at the Girls' House in order to give a picture of the everyday life at the center.

In the morning, there was usually the Director and some other staff members at work. The working hours shifted but the other workers mainly came at 1 pm, which was also the time for the afternoon meeting. The afternoon meeting was held every day between 1 and 2 pm. At

that meeting, the staff went through the events of the day, discussed special topics from the day before and talked about whatever came to mind. The meeting was held around the kitchen table and usually everybody had her lunch or coffee at the same time. On Fridays the open sphere and cafeteria were closed and the staff worked with administration, planning and the cleaning of the center. Every Friday there was a long meeting between noon and 3 to 4 pm. At this meeting everybody talked about personal feelings related to the past week. Difficult and good situations were discussed and staff members usually talked on a very personal level. Topics such as dreams, feeling bad about something or seeing a good movie were also common. From Monday to Thursday the center opened for the girls at 2 pm and was open until 8 pm. During the afternoon the activities mentioned in Chapter 4 were taking place. In the cafeteria and open sphere there were always at least two women present, of which one was usually a trainee.

Discussion is a central work method at the Girls' House and the staff meetings play an essential role in the work community. The girls' issues are thoroughly discussed and if one staff member is worried about a specific girl she talks about it with the others. The staff members are committed to professional confidentiality and the girls have been told that their concerns are shared by the whole work community. The meetings are experienced as tremendous sources of strength that support the staff members' well-being.<sup>2</sup> For me, the meetings represented a work method that was quite unfamiliar to me before I began this study.

“I came from a different professional field than all the other staff members and in the beginning the work methods felt very unfamiliar to me. It was hard for me to realize the importance of sitting in a sofa in the cafeteria and “only” being present. But the presence of an adult is important in the Girls' House. An adult should always be present, ready to listen to the girls, and ready to interfere in any situation that needs interruption e.g. for guarding the values of the Girls' House in practice.

In the beginning I also felt frustrated about the staff meetings and especially the Friday meetings. Sometimes we could talk about children or weddings and I felt that the meeting did not proceed at all. But mostly we talked about girls and about what had happened in the Girls' House during the week. Slowly, I came to enjoy the meetings even though I was not always familiar with the topics. The meetings considered the girls' issues at a very deep level but they were also social events that strengthened the work community and the well-being of the staff members.” (Personal diary, 15 December 2003.)

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<sup>2</sup> Topic discussed during meeting at the Girls' House 18.3.2004.

## **5.5 Method of analysis**

In this study, analyzing the data was a process that started at the beginning of the research and that continued throughout the whole research process. Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2001) point out that this is quite common for qualitative research. When data is collected with various methods, at various stages of the research, and often simultaneously, the analysis is not only done at one stage of the research process, but continuously (Hirsjärvi et al., 2001, 208).

The purpose of this study is to reach better understanding and not to look for the one and only “correct way” of developing multiculturalism. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000, 17) remind us that the truth is always socially constructed and that there is no absolute truth that is the same for everybody, except in the physical world. When we accept that our interpretations of reality have grown out of social interaction, and when we know that the same phenomena can have various (even contradictory) understandings at different times and in different cultures, it is clear that we cannot reach the absolute truth about the world around us. What the researcher and the researcher community finds as the truth changes during time. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, 18.)

In this study, the analysis of the data was a continuous process. However, the main part of the analysis was done after the internship and with some distance to the personal experiences at the Girls’ House. The approach to the data was inductive and I began the analysis by dividing the data into small sections. Re-arranging the data helped me to look for similarities and common structures. After going through the data, analysis was done with the help of themes. Thematizing felt as the most appropriate method because of the art of the data. Thematizing would also be a natural process in constructing the action plan, that was about to present a general view of the findings. Before this stage, I did not have a clear view of what the action plan would look like. Although, on the basis of my experiences, I had some ideas of what kinds of elements could be included.

I began the analysis of the interviews by reading through them several times. Then I looked for themes that were shared by several participants. The basis for my analysis was the themes given in the theme-interviews. The answers were divided into these themes and there were also some new themes that rose from the answers. Connecting elements, for example, similarities and regularities were noted. It was also important to find answers that differed from one another. I went through the same process with my field notes and personal diary

looking for events and discussions that supported the interview answers or that were contradictory. By combining the findings in the various data sources, the elements essential for constructing the action plan were obtained.

The participants of the study were not directly involved with the analysis of the data and it is important to remember that the themes discussed in the analysis are based on the researcher's interpretations of what the interviewees have said (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2000, 173). However, I have discussed the findings with five of the six participants and they have had an opportunity to give their comments on the findings and conclusion.<sup>3</sup>

The research findings are discussed in the following chapter. The findings and analysis of the data are divided into five themes that are discussed one by one.

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<sup>3</sup> I did not manage to reach the sixth participant for a discussion.



## 6. Research Findings and Analysis of the Data

In this chapter, I discuss the research findings, which have been analyzed through themes. The findings are divided into five themes, which are based upon my analysis of the data. Many themes can be found in the research questions and in the theme-interviews. Both interviews and participant observation are used to give light on the findings and to give light on different aspects of the research questions.

The first main research question and its sub-question focused on how multiculturalism was defined within the organization and how it was realized in practice (see also Chapter 1). In this chapter, I will begin with looking back at how multiculturalism was interpreted in the Girls' House before the fall of 2003. Then, the staff members' views on multiculturalism are presented. The second research question focuses on the development of an action plan and, on the development of the multicultural project that was carried out in the fall of 2003. In this chapter the findings are presented through themes.

### 6.1 Multiculturalism before the start of the project

Multicultural issues were not new or unfamiliar questions at the Girls' House. According to the participants, multicultural questions had already been important since the foundation of the center as was also pointed out by the Director.<sup>4</sup> Five of the participants noted that multiculturalism could be seen in the everyday activities from the moment that they had started their work at the center.

*"Se oli ihan alusta pitäen ajatus silloin kun Tyttöjen Talo syntyi, että monikulttuurisuus on yksi tärkeä asia. Se on tärkeä asia meille yhteiskunnassa ja se on tärkeä asia myös Tyttöjen Talolla koska maahanmuuttajatyttöjä tavoitetaan huonosti ja kuten Nuorisoasiainkeskuksen tutkimus näyttää, ja se on ongelma. Ja sitten ajatuksena oli se että Tyttöjen Talo voisi olla paikka joka esimerkiksi islaminuskaiselle tytöille voisi olla, perheiden puolesta semmoinen paikka että saisivat sinne tulla." (Osallistuja E)*

"It was from the beginning a thought when the Girls' House was founded that multiculturalism is an important issue. It is important in society and also in the Girls' House because immigrant girls are not easily reached, as is shown in the study by the Youth Department, and it is a problem. And then one thought was that the Girls' House could be a place for, for example, Islamic girls, where they would be allowed to come for their families." (Participant E)

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with the Director on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2003.

Since the foundation of the center, there have been at least two groups for girls with immigrant backgrounds: one group for Russian-speaking girls and one group in which the majority have been Somali girls. The group for Russian-speaking girls raised different thoughts among the participants. Some saw it as a problem that the Russian-speaking girls did not participate in the center's activities. Others did not see it as a problem and thought that the girls might need the special support from their own group and that they did not need other activities offered by the Girls' House.

*"No mun mielestä se (venäjänkielisten) ryhmä on ollut alusta lähtien ja tota se on ollut osa talon toimintaa mutta kuitenkin aika omissa oloissa että se on mun mielestä ollut haaste saada niitä avoimeen toimintaan niitä tyttöjä ja niin kuin osallistumaan tunnepolkuun tai tämmöisiin. Ja mun mielestä se on edelleen haaste saada sitä ryhmää niin kuin enemmän tänne Tyttöjen Talon toimintaan mukaan. Se on erillinen ryhmä." (Osallistuja D)*

"The group (Russian-speaking girls' group) has been here since the beginning and it has somehow been part of the house's activities but still it is quite in its own circles. It has been a challenge to get the girls to the open sphere and to participate in the Path of Emotion and so forth. And I still think it is a challenge to get that group to participate more in the activities of the Girls' House. It is a separate group." (Participant D)

*"...Okei, no venäläiset tytöt ovat kyllä hirveästi omissa oloissaan omassa ryhmässään, ehkä heitä ei hirveästi kiinnosta olla tässä muiden tyttöjen kanssa. Mutta se johtuu varmaan sitten heidän ryhmän kokoonpanosta ja sen jotenkin intiimiydestä ja tärkeydestä ja mitä saavat sieltä ja mitä he hakevat..." (Osallistuja E)*

"...Okay, the Russian girls are really much on their own and maybe they are not very interested to be here with the other girls. But, it probably depends on the structure of the group, its intimacy and importance, and what they look for..." (Participant E)

Participant E stresses that there are many girls that come to the Girls' House only to attend their groups and that all girls have different purposes for their visits. She continued to stress that some girls might not even be interested in interacting with other girls and their wishes needed to be respected.

## **6.2 Immediate goals for the project and research**

Planning for the multicultural project started in May 2003. During the planning days in Vuorilahti the goals for the fall became clearer and more concrete. The main goals of multicultural work for the fall 2003 were these:

- To increase the knowledge about multiculturalism and make it visible both in the open sphere and in the groups. Multicultural girls (girls with at least one parent of another culture than Finnish) are to be supported in their own culture and every girl should be treated as an individual despite her background.
- To introduce the Girls' House to the immigrant girls' parents and increase the staff members' readiness to encounter girls from different backgrounds and to create a multicultural group composed of participants of different cultural backgrounds, as well as Finnish.
- To increase the part-time group leaders' knowledge about common goals and increase their knowledge of multicultural issues.
- To find a new career trainee with an immigrant background? And to organize at least two multicultural theme evenings during the fall.

(Pro Memoria, 5 September 2003.)

These goals were discussed within the work community and everybody had a positive attitude towards them. The goals were also discussed in the individual interviews. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of September we held a discussion on the aims and goals of this research. I presented action research as the framework of the research and tried to underline the importance of everyone's participation. Four staff members were present, but the Director could not attend the discussion. The aim of the discussion was to ensure that every participant would have a chance to present her view of multiculturalism and express her feelings concerning the concept. We also discussed how the research would be conducted in practice and how it would be reported.

According to Heron and Reason (2001, 186) there are some central topics that need to be discussed among participants in the inquiry, at the very beginning of the research. They state that: people shall have an opportunity to define the inquiry topic, the criteria for joining the inquiry, the arrangements for meetings and related matters. It is helpful to decide at an early stage what the primary outcomes of the inquiry are expected to be. For *informative inquiries*, the primary outcomes will be presentational or propositional or some combination of the two. For *transformative inquiries*, the primary outcomes will be transformations of personal being, of social processes or of the environment, and of the various skills involved. The group also needs to decide on who will produce the presentation of the outcomes and give indicate the motivations for why this person was chosen. (Heron & Reason, 2001, 186.)

The participants wished the research to be both informative and transformative and that it should strive to promote the development of multiculturalism.

*Osallistuja A: "On tärkeää että kehitämme työmme mutta meillä on jo aika hyvä pohja. Muutos on liian vahva sana, se merkitsisi että luovumme jostain muusta."*

*Osallistuja B: "Tyttötyö on hyvä pohja jos haluamme tehdä monikulttuurisuudesta pysyvä osa Tyttöjen Taloa. Tämä merkitsee sitä että on muutoksia tulossa."*

*Osallistuja D: "Muutos on väärä sana. Kehittäminen on hyvä sana koska se merkitsee lisää hyviä muutoksia sen lisäksi mitä meillä tällä hetkellä on. (Kenttäpäiväkirja, 12.9.2003)*

Participant A: "It is important to develop our work but we already have quite a good basis. Change is a too strong word, which would mean that we give up something else."

Participant B: "I think girl work is a good basis if multiculturalism becomes a permanent part of the Girls' House. This means that there will be changes."

Participant D: "Change is the wrong word, development is a good word, which means more good changes to what we have at the moment."

(Field note 12.9.2003)

There was some disagreement on the words "change" and "development", as development usually implies changes. Finally, the group agreed that development was the right word for describing the goals of the research. Action research requires that the community studied is prepared for changes and to develop itself; it also requires an effort to evaluate the action performed by the community (Kiviniemi, 1999, 65). The participants' answers indicate that the work community was prepared for changes. However, as action research is collaborative, it is also important how the participants take part in data gathering and in reflecting and evaluating their own work (Kiviniemi, 1999, 75). When it came to reporting, the participants did not seem very eager to participate in the practical work, writing notes, leading discussions etc. Therefore, we agreed that I would be the person leading the discussions and documenting them but that everybody would have an opportunity to comment on the final report. In the interviews, the participants expressed their opinions about their not interfering too much with the research process nor with the multicultural activities.

*"...se (monikulttuurinen projekti) ei oo itselle semmoisena painolastina ollut. On voinut antaa sen olla, että tämä on nyt asia johon mun ei tarvitse voimia niin kuin laittaa, että tämä on nyt noitten käsissä ja hoidossa. [...] Että se on ollut helpottavaa siinä mielessä. (Osallistuja C)*

"...it (the multicultural project) has not been a burden for me. I really have been able to let it be and think that 'okay this is an issue I don't have to put my energy on and this is in their hands'. [...] Relieving in that sense." (Participant C)

*”...minusta sun tutkimus on tavallaan sun tutkimus ja sä teet tavallaan sitä mitä sä teet, että ei mulla ehkä siihen oo toivomuksia. Ja minusta on tärkeää että tässä on ollut joku tavallaan ulkopuolinen henkilö sitä niin kuin havainnoimassa sitä työtä. Ja minusta tuntuu että me saadaan itse siitä joku peili meidän työlle. Niin just ehkä sen takia ei halua hirveästi sillä tavalla vaikuttaa, vaan odottaa että mitä sieltä tulee ja sitten mitä ajatuksia se herättää...” (Osallistuja A)*

“...The research is in a way your research and you do what you do, so in that way I don’t have any wishes. And I think it is important that we in a way have had an outsider observing our work. I feel we this way can get a mirror for our work. Maybe that is why I do not want to affect the outcomes, but wait and see what comes and what thoughts it raises.” (Participant A)

*LL (Lina Laurent): ”Mitkä ovat sitten sun omat tavoitteet tämän syksyn aikana nyt kun projekti on lähtenyt käyntiin?”*

*Osallistuja E: ”No mä en tiedä onks mä niitä miettinyt. Mä oikeastaan odotan mielenkiinnolla että mitä uutta syntyy ja nousee. Ja jos syntyy jotain uusia työmuotoja ja metodeja niin mä odotan ilolla.”*

LL (Lina Laurent): “What are your goals for this fall now that the project has got started?”

Participant E: Well I don’t know if I have thought about them. Actually I wait with interest on what new will grow out and arise and if some new work methods are born, I wait on them happily.”

At an early stage of the research process I noted that the research would not be pure action research in accordance with some definitions (see e.g. Kiviniemi, 1999; Stringer, 1999). In action research that would include all the stakeholders, the girls attending the Girls’ House and the partnership organizations should be also included as active participants. One participant said that maybe this could have been done if the research had been planned at an earlier stage and if the girls had been involved from the very beginning.

*”...se (tyttöjen osallistuminen) olisi ehkä vaatinut jonkun pidemmän kypsyttelyprosessin. ”Että puolen vuoden päästä meille tulee tänne Lina” ja sitten me jo tässä vaiheessa yhdessä pohdimme tätä (tutkimusta) sillä tavalla, toki tiedettiin susta jo keväällä. [...] Tai, jos olisin vaikka saanut talotoimikunnan hyvin pyörimään jo keväällä niin esimerkiksi ne talotoimikunnan tytöt, niin se olisi ollut heille tällainen yhteinen juttu. (Osallistuja A)*

“...it (participation by the girls) might have required a longer time. Like “in half a year Lina will come here” and already at this stage we discuss this issue (the research) in that sense. [...] Or, if I would have activated the House Council already in the spring then, for example, it could have been a project for the girls in the House Council.” (Participant A)

### 6.3 Multiculturalism defined by the staff

Defining how the concept “multiculturalism” was interpreted at the Girls’ House was essential. It was important both for this study and for the project as a whole. As mentioned earlier multiculturalism is a popular word that is used in many different contexts. What do the staff at the Girls’ House mean when they talk about multiculturalism? In which contexts is the concept used and how do the different individuals reflect upon multicultural questions?

The staff members at the Girls’ House have had very different experiences in interacting with persons from different cultures, and the personal experiences of the participants often affected the way they saw multiculturalism.

*LL: ”Mitä tämä sana, mitä se sulle tuo ensimmäiseksi mieleen?”*

*Osallistuja C: ”Vaihtoehtoja, se on ensimmäinen sana joka tulee mieleen. Elikkä se tarkoittaa että on rikkautta ja värikkyyttä ja tietysti myös jossain kohtaan varmaankin myös ristiriitoja ja tän kaltaista vaihtoehtoja ja mahdollisuuksia.”*

*LL: ”Mitä se vois olla Tyttöjen Talolla, mitä se monikulttuurisuus täällä tarkoittaa?”*

*Osallistuja C: ”No, mä ajattelen että se on näille tytöille mahdollisuus nähdä ja kuulla toisenlaisia ihmisiä, tarinoita, toisenlaista olemiseen tapaa...”*

LL: “What does the word multiculturalism first bring into your mind?”

Participant C: “Alternatives is the first word that comes to my mind. That means that there is richness and colorfulness and also of course in some ways conflicts and these kinds of alternatives.”

LL: “What could it be at the Girls’ House, what does multiculturalism mean here?”

Participant C: “Well, I think it is a possibility for these girls to hear and see different people, stories, and different ways of being...”

*Osallistuja E: ”Se (monikulttuurisuus) tarkoittaa monien kulttuurien läsnäoloa ja tilaa niihin sekä ymmärrystä erilaisia kulttuureja kohtaan. Niin kuin on myös monikulttuurisia ihmisiä jotka elää monien kulttuurien kanssa ja mitä me voidaan heiltä saada. Ja sekä suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa että omassa elämässäni olen aika monikulttuurinen ja oma elämä ja oma lähiperheeni ja ystäväpiiri. Ja sillä tavalla se on myös asia joka on aina läsnä.”*

Participant E: “It (multiculturalism) means the presence of many cultures, space for them, and understanding of different cultures. And there are also multicultural people who live with many cultures and what we can get from them. And both in the Finnish society as well as in my own life I am quite multicultural because of my personal life and close family, so it is something that is always present.”

*Osallistuja F: ”Jollain tavalla rikkauden, jollain tavalla vaikeuden. Mun kokemukset kohtaamisista (erilaisten kulttuurien kanssa) työroolissa ovat olleet vaikeita, yhteyden saaminen on ollut vaikeata ja jotenkin, kahden eri osapuolten*

*tavoitteiden ilmaiseminenkin että miksi yritetään esimerkiksi yhteistyötä ja miksi yritetään ymmärtää toisiamme niin sekin on jäänyt tosi epäselväksi voisi sanoa.*

Participant F: “In some way it means richness, in some ways difficulties. My own experiences of encounters (with different cultures) in my work have been difficult. It has been hard to make contact and also to express the goals of two parties have been difficult. And it has stayed unclear why we try to cooperate and why we try to understand each other.”

The majority of the participants stressed the positive aspects of multiculturalism and referred to words such as differences, interaction, opportunities, languages and people from different countries. Two participants mentioned that a Finnish work community can also be multicultural even if the persons working there all have the same nationality and cultural backgrounds. One participant stressed the difficulties that can arise when people of different cultures interact. She especially pointed out the situations where Finnish officials and immigrants interact in official settings. This person had much previous experience of working with immigrants in official settings.

For some of the participants, the Girls’ House had been one of the first places, or an important place, for meeting people of different cultural backgrounds. For one participant it was new to reflect on multicultural issues.

*” Mulle se on uutta (monikulttuurisuus), sillä tavalla että mä en oo sitä hirveästi miettinyt tai mä oon ajatellut sitä varmaan viimeisen vuoden. Mä en oo varmaan koskaan pysähtynyt miettimään että mikä on monikulttuurisuus tai mitä se mulle merkitsee. Ja minusta on ihana tunnustella ja ajatella että mikä se ehkä olisi [...] Meillä on esimerkiksi kotona ollut sillä tavalla että mun äiti on ollut sellainen että pysykää poissa ja tänne ei tarvitse tulla ja viedä meidän työpaikat ja just tällöinen ja mä on kasvanut ja elänyt jotenkin siinä ilmapiirissä. Nyt mä oon alkanut vasta tämän työn ja näitten kohtaamisten kautta erottamaan mikä on sitä mun äidin viestiä ja mikä on mua...” (Osallistuja D)*

“For me it is something new, I have not really thought about it (multiculturalism) or it has come during the last year. I have probably never before stopped to think about what multiculturalism is or what it means to me. And I think it is wonderful to think about what it might be [...] At home it has been like, or my mother has been like ‘stay away, you don’t have to come here and take our jobs’ and I have grown up in that atmosphere. Now through this job and these encounters, I have started to see a difference between my mother’s opinions and my own...” (Participant D)

Participant D had hardly any previous experiences of interacting with immigrants when she started as a leader for a group with girls of immigrant backgrounds. For her, the new experience had been a learning process.

*Osallistuja D: "...En ajatellut sitä niin kuin erillisenä juttuna siinä alussa, että tämä on monikulttuurinen tyttöryhmä ja kuinka mun pitää näiden kanssa olla, vaan ihan samalla tavalla kun kenen tahansa tyttöryhmän kanssa. [...] Ja mun mielestä on ollut ihanaa että tytöiltä on voinut kysyä kun ei oo itse tiennyt niihin kulttuureihin liittyviä juttuja. [...] Ja tytöt ovat kysyneet sitten suomalaisesta kulttuurista ja siitä on voitu käydä keskustelua ja minusta se on ollut tosi antoisaa."*

*LL: "Oletko kokenut että sinulla olisi pitänyt olla jotain muita valmiuksia ennen tai olisi ollut hyvä tietää jotain (ennen kuin aloitit monikulttuurisen ryhmän ohjaajana)?"*

*Osallistuja D: "Joo, niitä tulee oikeastaan koko ajan pitkin matkaa. Oon mä miettinyt silleen että jos on semmoisia selkeitä juttuja mitä pitäisi tietää, kyllä mä mietin sitä että onko sellaisia. Mutta kuitenkin mä ajattelen että mä kohtaan ihmisen niin kuin, ihmisenä [...] sitä mä vaan pelkäsin että mä loukkaan niin kun omalla käytöksellä tietämättä että se on toiselle tärkeää tai henkilökohtaista. Mutta mun mielestä sellaista ei oo kyllä tullut."*

*LL: "Onko sitten ollut jotain heidän käytöksessään minkä sä olet tuntenut loukkaavaksi tai minkä sä et oo ymmärtänyt?"*

*Osallistuja D: "En ehkä loukkaavaksi mutta on ollut paljon varmaankin sellaisia juttuja mitä mä oon jäänyt miettimään että, hetkinen onko tämä kulttuuria vai onko tämä nuoren tytön käytöstä vai onko tämä mun vanhuutta vai ymmärtämättömyyttä?"*

Participant D: "... In the beginning I thought that it was a girl group as any other girl group. I did not think that this is a multicultural group, how should I act with the girls? [...] And when I have not known about some specific things related to culture, it has been wonderful to be able to ask the girls about them. [...] And then the girls have asked about Finnish culture and we have discussed these questions. I think this has been very rewarding."

LL: "Have you felt that you should have had some other abilities or that there would have been something good to know? (before you started the work)?"

Participant D: "Yes, actually I come to think about them all the time and I have been thinking are there some special things that I should know. However, I think that I encounter a person as a person. [...] But, I have been afraid of that I, with my own behavior, will hurt somebody's feelings, without knowing that it is an important or a personal issue for the other. But, I do not think there has been anything like that."

LL: "Is there then something in their behavior that you have felt offended by or that you have not understood?"

Participant D: "Maybe not offending but there have been many situations where I have ended up thinking: Did this happen because of culture? Was it the behavior of a young girl? Or, did it happen because of me being older or simply not understanding?"

In the same way as Participant D, other participants say that they think of immigrant girls as of all the other girls at the Girls' House and that they should not be given special attention



because of their cultural backgrounds. This raises contradictions in many answers. On the one hand, the participants want to treat all girls equally and not give special attention to any girls that do not wish to get attention. On the other hand, the participants want to make the immigrant girls visible, let them share with the other girls what they have that the others do not have (e.g. two cultures) and have the Finnish girls learn something new about different cultures.

*“...se on hienonvaraisuus siinä että kuka nuori haluaa tulla kohdelluksi sitä kautta että ‘mä olen nyt maahanmuuttaja’ tai ettei tee oletuksia ulkonäön perusteella. Että kuinka kauan on maahanmuuttaja tai kuinka paljon haluaa edustaa monikulttuurisuutta? Jotenkin semmoinen vapaus itse määrittää sitä miten haluaa tulla kohdatuksi.” (Osallistuja E)*

“...one has to be sensitive to what young person wants to be treated through ‘I am an immigrant’ or that you do not make assumptions on the basis of appearance. And, for how long are you an immigrant? Or, how much do you want to represent multiculturalism? There should be a freedom to choose and define how you want to be encountered.” (Participant E)

*“...jotenkin olisi makeeta kun he (maahanmuuttajatytöt) pääsisivät joskus loistamaan kanssa siinä mikä heillä on niin kuin muuta.”(Osallistuja F)*

“...it would be cool if they (the immigrant girls) could get to show their brilliance in what else they have.” (Participant F)

Many of the participants mentioned earlier events that they considered as being successful interaction where girls of different cultures had participated. Three participants talked about different events but it was common to them all that the interaction was seen as natural and not as anything made-up or exotic. The events mentioned were the Spring Party in 2003, an afternoon when one of the multicultural groups made Somali tea and cookies and sold them in the cafeteria and, the Starting Event in 2003. At the Spring Party in 2003, the immigrant girls performed a monologue where they talked about how it was like to come as a refugee to Finland. In the second event, the girls were also active participants as they talked about their own culture, sold homemade food, played African music and activated the other girls. The last event mentioned, in September 2003, did not directly aim to make the immigrant girls more visible or let them be in the spotlight. But it was an event where almost all the girls that were at the Girls’ House mixed and interacted. At the staff meeting the following day the atmosphere was also very positive, when we remembered the previous evening.

The atmosphere at the Girls' House was generally described as good, warm and supportive by the participants. The words "encounters", "support", "openness" and "acceptance" were used to describe the basic values of the center. The importance of the values was underlined by several participants, even if none of the interview questions concerned the values directly. The following answers can be used to describe the basic values that are shared by the staff member.

*"Talolla on sellainen suvaitseva ilmapiiri ja tasavertaisuus. Jotenkin hyvä ja turvallinen olo. [...] Pitää huolehtia siitä, että taloon tulee sellaisia työntekijöitä joille se monikulttuurisuus merkitsee tavallaan yhtä paljon kuin meille muille ja tavallaan ottaa sen talon ideologian myös omaksi ideologiakseen, että yhtä lailla kun naistietoisuus, tyttö tietoisuus, monikulttuurisuus. Ne on painoarvoltaan sillä tavalla samanarvoisia." (Osallistuja A)*

"There is a tolerant and equal atmosphere at the house. Here you can feel good and safe . [...] We have to care for the fact that we get new employees to the house to whom multiculturalism means as much as for the rest of us and that they take the ideology of the house into their own ideology. Female awareness, girl awareness and multiculturalism, they all have the same importance."  
(Participant A)

On the question about which of the partners' values can be seen in the Girls' House the Settlement movement was mostly mentioned.

*"Settlementityössä tasa-arvo on yksi tärkeä arvo riippumatta erilaisista asioista, joista yksi on kulttuuri ja toinen ihonväri. Monikulttuurisuus ja maahanmuuttajatyö varmaan ovat, myös NK:n (Nuorisosiainkeskuksen) yksi tärkeä arvo tosin kuitenkin sanoisin että aika paljon ollaan molemmissa paikoissa lapsen kengissä monessa kohdassa vaikka kummassakin paikassa löytyy hienoja projekteja ja juttuja..." (Osallistuja E)*

"In settlement work equality is an important value despite different things such as culture and skin color. Multiculturalism and work with immigrants is probably also an important value within the Youth department. However, I would say that they are quite at an early stage in both places, even if they have good projects."  
(Participant E)

"Every girl is welcome at the Girls' House" is one fundamental thought that was often repeated by the participants. Despite this basic thought there have been exceptions like bullying and picking on someone. Two participants mention cultural differences as one explicit reason for the bullying.

*Osallistuja B: "Heillä ei aina ole kauhean helppoa olla siellä talolla, koska siellä on suomalaisia tyttöjä jotka sitten huomauttavat tyttöjen maahanmuuttaja-taustasta. Ehkä se johtuu semmoisesta tiedon puutteesta ja taas tullaan siihen että työntekijöillä täytyisi olla valmiudet kohtaamaan nämä kulttuurikonfliktit siinä työpaikalla, eikä antaa sen suomalaisen osapuolen sitten kiusata tätä maahanmuuttajatyttöä joka tulee siihen Tyttöjen Talolle että täytyisi sellainen välitön puuttuminen olla."*

*LL: "Eikö sitä ole sitten?"*

*Osallistuja B: "Öh, ei. Vois sanoa että ei. On vaan todettu että siellä on huudeltu ilkeästi mutta siihen ei ole puututtu. Elikkä tulevaisuutta ajatellen niin jos tällaisia ilkkumisia, haukkumisia tulee niin nämä osapuolet täytyisi ottaa välittömästi, sekä se maahanmuuttajatyttö kun se suomalainen tyttö ja aloittaa keskustelu siitä. Että ei, ei voi ajatella silleen niin kuin että katsotaan tämä viikko että mitä tässä tapahtuu ja siinähan saattaa käydä, tulee varmaan käymään niin että se maahanmuuttajatyttö ei enää halua tulla Tyttöjen Talolle sen takia koska hän kokee sen että hän ei ole tervetullut sinne koska se on niin suomalaispainotteinen ja suomalaisille..."*

Participant B: "It is not always so easy for them to be there at the house, because there are Finnish girls who comment on the girls' immigrant backgrounds. It probably happens because of lack of information and things like that. And this again brings us to the point that the employees should be prepared to encounter these cultural conflicts there at the work place. There should be immediate interference."

LL: "Isn't there?"

Participant B: "Well, no. I could say that no. Somebody has noted only that there have been nasty shouting but nobody has interfered. In the future, if these kinds of nasty shouts occur, these two parties - both the immigrant girl and the Finnish girl - should immediately be taken apart for a discussion. You cannot think that 'let us see how this week goes' because it might be that this immigrant girl does not want to come to the Girls' House anymore because she feels that she is not welcome there. She might feel that the Girls' House is too Finnish and directed to Finnish people."

During the fall of 2003, there was one case where three girls with immigrant backgrounds were visiting the Girls' House for the first time and because of the bad behavior of some other girls they did not want to come back. In my opinion, the suspiciousness shown towards new girls did not only concern girls from different cultures. There was a group of girls that came to the Girls' House almost daily and some of them acted as if new girls were stepping on their toes. These girls, who regularly visited the House, could behave very nastily when new girls came in through the door. The Director described the atmosphere in the open sphere and cafeteria in the fall of 2003 more as an exception than as a continuous stage.

*"Syksyllä 2003 talolla oli poikkeuksellisen paljon rauhattomuutta. Oli tietty tyttöryhmä joka käyttäytyi rauhattomasti ja me todella yritimme työstää sitä heidän kanssaan ja olemme jatkaneet työstämistä." (Johtaja, 18.3.2004)*

“The fall 2003 was a period when there was exceptional restlessness. There was a specific group of girls that behaved restlessly and we really tried to work on it and we have continued to work on their behavior.” (Director, 18.3.2004)<sup>5</sup>

There was sometimes restless behavior displayed in the open sphere but, otherwise, I did not note many cases that one could describe as racist behavior. The word “racist” was voiced at some occasions and it seemed that the girls used it without knowing what it meant. I felt that the adults should have immediately interfered when words such as “racist” and “nigger” were said. However, they were sometimes ignored and the other staff members thought that the girls many times said things that they did not mean or only as a joke and that one should not take everything so seriously.

At one Friday meeting we were discussing the concept of multiculturalism. Then, at one point one of the staff members started to talk about a situation the previous day.

*Osallistuja B: ”Eilen minulle tuli sellainen olo kun yksi tyttö (maahanmuuttajataustainen) oli just mennyt naimisiin ja puhui siitä kavereidensa kanssa, niin ne suomalaiset tytöt ihmettelivät sitä kovaan ääneen.”*

*Osallistuja D: “ Siihen olisi pitänyt mennä heti väliin ja puuttua tilanteeseen”*

*Osallistuja B: “Niin, koska tyttö oli varmasti itse kiusaantunut mutta mä en tiennyt miten olisi pitänyt puuttua joten en tehnyt sitä.”*

*(Kenttäpäiväkirja, syyskuu 2003)*

Participant B: “One of the girls (with immigrant background) had just got married and was talking about it with her friends. The Finnish girls were really wondering about it loudly.”

Participant D: “There one should have had to interfere immediately.”

Participant B: “I know, and she was probably bothered but I did not know how to interfere so I did not do it.”

(Field note, September 2003)

This conversation throws light on the fact that there were probably many situations where the staff members thought that they should have said something but that they did not know what to say. Or then the situation might have been too noisy or chaotic to start a conversation on cultural issues or prejudice. I participated in one open hobby group where one girl at one point said to the group leader that she was a racist. The girl thought that she was treated differently because of her skin color, which was not the case. She had been quarrelling loudly and she was told to lower her voice. But she repeatedly accused the leader of being racist. The leader said to her that that was not the case, but did not discuss the issue any further. The group leader might have thought that the moment was not right for starting a deep

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<sup>5</sup> During a meeting on the research findings, the director commented the on restless atmosphere that was prevailed in the fall of 2003.

conversation on racism. I thought that she should have gone into the issue more deeply, because of the presence of eight other girls. But neither did I say anything at that moment. It was my first week at the Girls' House and I felt I did not have the authority to interfere in a situation of this kind at that time.

#### **6. 4 Developing multicultural activities**

Some of the suggestions for development mentioned in the previous chapter were immediately taken into consideration or implemented. When the work started at the Girls' House in the fall of 2003 there were two persons working on developing multicultural activities at the Girls' House. Pirita Puukko and I had a lot of freedom in planning our work and designing the multicultural activities. We worked mainly as a pair but we regularly informed the others on what we were doing and asked for their opinions. The freedom of the work was both inspiring and difficult. We could realize some of our own ideas as we wanted but at the same time we were insecure if the rest of the staff members were interested in the project.

At one of our first brainstorming sessions, Puukko and I outlined the two multicultural events that had been suggested at Vuorilahti. The first one aimed at building a network among other organizations and institutions that worked with immigrant-related issues and especially with immigrant girls. The second event aimed at attracting new girls to the Girls' House and at making the questions on culture and identity more visible in the center.

We participated in several seminars where our aims were to learn about what others were doing and to inform the other organizations about the Girls' House. At the seminars we got ideas for our own activities and hints on where to send invitations or where to ask for some specific information. When attending several events we got to know persons who worked with similar issues and it might have helped in making the Girls' House better known for its multicultural work.

In an attempt to get more immigrant girls interested in the Girls' House, we sent invitations to all preparatory classes for immigrants in Helsinki (secondary schools) and to some other schools. When we did not get any responses we called the contact persons and then, some groups came to visit the Girls' House. Some of the girls in these groups formed new interactive multicultural girl groups and so contacting preparatory classes was experienced as a successful channel in marketing the Girls' House.

One part of the multicultural project during the fall of 2003 included co-operation with the Monik Project at Kivikko Youth Center (see also Chapter 1). The project was, as mentioned earlier, coordinated through Kalliolan Kansanopisto. The multicultural project worker at the Girls' House was supposed to work half the time at the Girls' House and half the time in the Monik Project at Kivikko Youth Center. However, the cooperation with Kivikko Youth Center did not turn out as was planned in the beginning, even though parts of the plans were realized (see also Puukko, 2003b). Director Mari Uusitalo said in a discussion that the cooperation with Kivikko failed to some extent<sup>6</sup>, partly because of the very different organizational cultures. At many meetings in the Girls' House, frustration could be noted because of the cooperation with the Kivikko Project. It seemed as if the cooperation required more planning before the start of the project. It might also have been useful to discuss how difficulties due to differences in work methods and values could have been solved. In her final report, Puukko (2003b, 3) acknowledges the difficulties in the beginning. Puukko had a lot of experience in working at the Girls' House but none from Kivikko. The Director points out that she would think twice before starting a similar cooperation<sup>7</sup>.

#### **6.4.1 Combining research and work**

For the research work we had regular meetings on the research questions. I led these discussions and noted them down. Many times it was hard to find time for these discussions. At the Friday meeting, which was the most suitable occasion for discussions, people were usually very tired when we came to the point where all other obligatory issues had been dealt with. It was also unusual to have all the staff members present at the same meeting; very often somebody was missing. Participant observation was not done without complications. I review one incident that was experienced as problematic within the work community. It concerned me taking notes, which I had been doing at the staff meetings but not in other situations.

“Today one of the employees asked me to go aside to a closed room for a discussion. She told me that she was extremely bothered by me making notes in my red notebook and that she could not concentrate while I was making notes. She suggested that I could dedicate four hours a week to writing down my thoughts and that I should not do it on other occasions, especially not in the meetings when people talk a lot about personal matters. She motivated the suggestion with that in multicultural work, the situation can change very quickly and only at the end of the day can you get an overview of the events. I felt confused and sad and I totally disagreed with her. In order to get a truthful

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with the Director when we discussed the outcomes of the project (17 December 2003).

<sup>7</sup> In the same interview.

description of certain events and conversations, I had to make notes regularly. We decided that we would discuss the issue in the afternoon meeting the same day. I also told her that I was not interested in personal matters and that the notes I made were strictly about issues related to the research questions. Later on, in the meeting, we talked about participant observation and I told the others about what kind of issues I noted down. The discussion cleared some misunderstandings and I decided to be more sensitive on how I make notes in the future.”  
(Field note, 3.10.2003)

On several occasions I reflected upon my role as a researcher and as a trainee. In the everyday work the interaction varied from sitting quietly together on the sofa, helping some girls with cooking or using the computer, setting limits for the girls, and trying to calm them down or resolve some dispute. At one staff meeting in October, the Director told me that I should not get too close to the girls so that they do not get too attached. First I felt hurt. I had been trying to get close to the girls and build trust but now I was told that I should not get too close to them. Later on, I understood why the Director’s words were important and should be considered. The staff members told me that many of the girls had experienced rejections and that the trainees that come and go can make these feelings even stronger.

Some of the most enjoyable moments during my internship were connected to the cooking group that gathered once a week. The group was open for the first eight girls that signed up in the afternoon and it was led by a professional cooking instructor. My role was to be an assistant instructor, to help the girls with practical questions and to be there for their questions and topics of discussion. The cooking instructor had a multicultural family and brought up issues related to different cultures in a very natural way. She automatically planned the food according to different religious restrictions and many of the girls attending the group were girls with immigrant backgrounds. Even though the two hours of cooking and discussion were often chaotic and restless, I felt that there were many fruitful conversations. At the time of Ramadan, the Islamic traditions were discussed and the girls themselves talked openly about their different traditions. At Christmas time, the Christmas traditions in different cultures were discussed. The cooking group is a successful example of natural intercultural interaction in the Girls’ House. I believe much of this was due to the instructor, the general atmosphere and the cultural diversity among the girls.

One other important step in my personal development in multicultural work was when I was asked to be one of the two leaders in a multicultural group.

“Pirita is finishing as a leader in one multicultural group in December. Yesterday I heard that the girls had wanted me to become her successor and that warmed my heart. It felt good to get the trust of the girls and of the other group leader, and also to be able to continue my work at the Girls’ House. I also look forward to learning more about the girls’ everyday life and maybe to support them in questions related to the Finnish society.” (Personal diary, 27 November 2003)

#### **6.4.2 Seminar on multicultural girl work**

A seminar on multicultural girl work was held on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October. The aim was to invite people and professionals interested in multicultural issues to discuss multiculturalism from the viewpoint of a young girl. We planned the seminar together with Puukko and decided to focus on how it is to live as a bicultural or multicultural young woman in today’s Helsinki. The speakers at the seminar or discussions were all from immigrant backgrounds and their countries of origin were South Korea, Somalia and Sudan. Two of the participants were women under 25 years. The interest in the seminar was vast (considering the size of the room at the Girls’ House); over 45 persons had reserved a seat among them journalists and a representative of the Finnish Parliament. To our disappointment only half of them actually attended and we learned that you should always admit more people than can fit into the room. However, the discussion was interesting and the feedback we got both, from the participants and from the audience was positive. We learned a lot about practical matters when it comes to arranging big events and it was the biggest event ever organized at the Girls’ House for “outsiders”. Some of the participants became interested in coming to visit the Girls’ House with their own girl groups.

“Personally the seminar gave me a lot and I felt thrilled for several days afterwards. The girls at the seminar had shared very personal experiences with us and thrown light on positive aspects of living with two cultures but also on problems. I learned about leading a discussion, about trying to let everyone express his or her opinion and at the same time stick to the subject. At the afternoon meeting we talked about the seminar. The Director (who was the only other staff member participating) had liked the evening and brought up subjects that had been discussed. My work partner was really disappointed and pessimistic in her performance at the seminar and could not talk about the positive aspects. For the major part of the meeting we discussed other issues and I felt that the multicultural issues did not interest the rest of the staff.”  
(Personal diary, 16 October 2003)



### 6.4.3 Culture Path

Organizing a culture path was one of the other big, new events during the fall of 2003. The basic idea was to organize something related to multiculturalism. There were three of us working with the event and we all participated equally. The model for the culture path was taken from another regularly organized event at the Girl's House, The Path of Emotions (Tunnepolku) in which groups of girls walk through control points where they do things related to different emotions and feelings like anger, love and fear.

The planning of the event was mostly done through brainstorming. I proposed some ideas that I had acquired from the field of intercultural communication and my co-workers helped to elaborate them. Critical incidents (see, e.g. Salo-Lee, 1998) shaping your own identity (Who am I?) and telling the background of one's name were some of the assignments. The first Culture Path got very a positive response from the participants. We asked everybody for feedback on a paper where the questions were "What did you like at the Culture Path? What didn't you like? What thoughts did the Culture Path raise in you?" The participants were aged between 8 and 50 years and it was a challenging group. The first Culture Path in October had some 40 participants and that inspired us to organize a second one in December. The basic idea for the second path was the same but the content was somewhat different. For the culture path to succeed it is essential that the participants represent different cultures. This is so, in order to get different perspectives in the discussion and for the girls to be able to question each other cultural matters that they are concerned about.

"The Culture Path is over and I feel tired and relieved. The atmosphere was warm and the evaluative discussion was really good. I was responsible for the checkpoint with critical incidents. The participants were told to think about a confusing incident, where there had been two or more cultures involved. As an example, I started by telling how personal space differs in different cultures and by sitting very close to one or two of the girls. In some groups the girls spontaneously talked about critical incidents and we tried to think about different reasons for why there had been confusion. I noted that the assignment was very difficult for some of the girls, especially the younger ones, but that others enjoyed it. In the evaluation discussion all the groups met and talked about their feelings and thoughts on the evening. There was an interesting question where one Finnish girl asked the others on how it was to live as a Muslim girl in Helsinki. The girls talked a lot and many of the adult participants were surprised by the openness." (Personal diary 23.10.2003)

Some of the participants thought that the Culture Path would be about getting to know exotic cultures and were surprised but pleased that the focus was placed on one's own culture. When the Culture Path was organized in December the number of participants was not as high as at

the first path. In particular, the number of girls with immigrant backgrounds dropped, and that might have affected the conversations, which did not touch upon as many different cultural aspects as the previous time. It seems that the Culture Path will be organized again in spring 2004 for at least, the staff members have expressed their wishes about continuing with the event. In the future it will be important to engage persons of different cultural backgrounds in the organization of the event. This could bring new aspects to the event and again the girls that participate could also identify with the adults.

## **6.5 Future wishes and goals**

One important theme in the interviews concerned the future. The participants talked about their wishes for developing multicultural work at the Girls' House and about the future of the Girls' House in general. There were many similarities in the answers but also some ideas that were mentioned only by one or two persons and that differed from the most general answers. Three of the six participants would be there to realize the future plans and three of them would finish their work at the Girls' House in December 2003. Despite this fact, not one of the participants had difficulties in planning for the future and drawing up her own wishes about how she would have liked to develop the Girls' House.

The most common goals concerning multiculturalism had to do with attracting more girls of immigrant backgrounds to the center, employing a worker with a different cultural background and getting training in multicultural issues. These goals were shared by almost all participants even though the motivations and reasons differed. The latter two goals were described as more concretely and many methods were suggested. On contrary, there were not many examples given on how one would attract more immigrant girls to the Girls' House. Networking with organizations and more intense collaboration with families were often mentioned but not clarified as how this should be done.

### **6.5.1 Employees with immigrant background**

An employee or employees with different cultural backgrounds than Finnish was/were wished by all participants. In the hobby groups and closed girl groups some of the leaders have cultural backgrounds other than Finnish and the Girls' House has had short-time trainees with immigrant backgrounds, but no full- or part-time employee.

*"...olisi ideaalia jos olisi oikeasti vaikka vähemmistöjen edustajia vaikka meidänkin suomen pakolaisväestöä edustettuna, venäjänkieliset, somalit, kaikkea silleen yksi tai kaksi. Ensinnäkin auttaa heidät pääsemään yhteiskuntaan. Että*

*otetaan heidät mukaan ja käytettäisi niitä voimavaroina. [...] Jotenkin musta olisi tasapainossa jos ajatellaan mitä meidän tytöissä on ainesta, niin jotenkin se vastaavuus löytyisi jotenkin työntekijöistä, seksuaaliset vähemmistöt, maahanmuuttajataustaiset ja mikä [...] vaikka eihän täällä henkilöitymällä että yksi tekee vain yhtä mutta on enemmän kontaktia jos on helpompi samastua.” (Osallistuja F)*

“...it would be ideal if we really had representatives from the minorities, for example, persons from our refugee population. And then Russian-speakers and Somalis, one or two employees. Firstly, it would help to integrate into society and then we would take them with us and use them as resources. [...] Somehow there would be a balance if the staff members reflected the backgrounds of the girls. Sexual minorities, girls with immigrant backgrounds, and what more [...] of course it is not that one person only would do one thing but it is easier to get into contact if you can identify with someone.” (Participant F)

*“Olisi hienoa jos meillä olisi työntekijöitä muista kulttuureista, ilman muuta. Sehän olisi yksi resurssi ja voimavara lisää. [...] talon tapoihinkin tulisi uusia toimintamuotoja [...] ja silloin tulisi luonnollisella tavalla työryhmän sisälle joillekin asioille ymmärrys, jota emme saavuta ikinä kun katsotaan sitä samaa asiaa ulkoapäin.” (Osallistuja C)*

“Of course it would be nice if we would have employees from different cultures. That would be one more resource and strength. [...] and we would get new ways of functioning in this house. [...] and then the work community would get understanding in some things, in a natural way. That is something we can never achieve when we look at it from an outside perspective.” (Participant C)

The assets that this new employee would bring to the Girls' House were also described as richness and a link between immigrant girls and their families. It was stressed that this woman should be there for all the girls and not only for the girls with immigrant backgrounds, and that she should accept the ideology of the house as her own. What is interesting in these answers is that nobody mentioned the possibility of conflicts due to different cultures, even though conflicts and problems are mentioned in the questions that deal with multiculturalism. Maybe this is due to the atmosphere in the work community, which cares for the well-being of the staff members.

All staff members at the Girls' House, including the Director, wished to have an employee from a cultural minority, preferably a woman with an immigrant background. Still, nothing concrete happened during the time of the study in order to fulfill this wish. At the same time it was known that the Girls' House would soon be without a sufficient number of employees. To the question “Why has nothing happened?” the Director answered that the Girls' House had tried to hire immigrant women but that they had had bad luck with them. In the following quotation the director is named because of her position and the state of the information.

LL: *“Onko sen eteen tehty jotain tai ollaanko tekemässä? (monikulttuurisen työntekijän löytämiseksi)”*

Johtaja: *“Meillä on aika ajoin ollut (maahanmuuttajataustaisia naisia), lähinnä harjoittelijoita. Mutta vakanssien vähyydestä johtuen emme ole näille pysyville vakansseille sitten kyllä erityisesti haettu maahanmuuttajataustaista eikä ole kauheasti ollut hakijoitakaan. Mutta jos ei meille uusia vakansseja tule erityisesti monikulttuuriselle työlle, niin seuraava asia olisi oppisopimusopiskelijan löytäminen joka edustaisi jotain isompaa kulttuuria mitä meillä käy.*

LL: *“Have you done or are you doing something for it (finding multicultural staff members)?”*

Director: *“At some times we have had (women with immigrant backgrounds) mainly trainees. But because of the small amount of vacancies we have not especially looked for people with immigrant background for the permanent vacancies, nor have there been many applicants. But now, if we do not get new vacancies for the multicultural work, it could be the moment for finding an apprenticeship student, who would represent some of the larger cultures that visit us.”*

### **6.5.2 Training in multicultural issues**

Training was another major requirement that four employees wished to receive in one way or another. The Director answered the question by saying that she wished to hear the employees' opinions on this issue. When the participants talked about training they mainly looked at it from a personal perspective. They wanted training because they felt that they lacked information and skills and not because they thought that the other staff members needed it. Although, one participant talked only about the fact that the other employees were in need of training.

*”Olisi hyvä ja kivaa jos olisi esimerkiksi jotain koulutuksia tai muuta missä olisi tietoa eri kulttuureista. Vaikka ei se merkitse että aina kohdataan sitten samalla tavalla mistä ikinä sitten tulekaan mutta se avartaa paljon. Että tietää jonkun maan tai kansan historiasta niin minusta se aina avaa hirveästi. Ja kun itse tietää sen miten Suomessa sodat vaikuttaa vieläkin tän päivän yhteiskunnassa ja jotenkin sillä tavalla selittää ihmisten käyttäytymistä.” (Osallistuja A)*

*“It would be nice to have, e.g. some training or something else with information on different cultures. However, it does not mean that you always encounter a person in the same way despite her origin but it would help a lot. Knowing a country's history gives you a lot broader picture and if you think about how the wars in Finland still affect the society of today it can help to explain the behavior of the people.” (Participant A)*

Other issues that could be brought up in training were these: basic information on different cultures, methods of working with multicultural issues, a study trip to an African country, and deepening the understanding of the psychological processes that immigrants go through when

they come to a new country. One participant suggested producing a multicultural folder that would give information to both girls and staff members on different cultures, habits, foods, traditions etc. Two participants mentioned earlier training that they had found useful and literature within the field, but they also stressed the importance of learning more. Some participants were concerned about the fact that the work community was very small and that things were always discussed only within a small group.

*”Musta tuntuu että vaikka ihmisillä, työntekijöillä on hirveästi tietoa kaikesta niin joskus aina tarvitsee jostain sen boosterin, semmoisen niin kuin koulutuksen että joku asia nousee oikeasti pintaan ja sille oikeasti tehdään jotain. Että joku boosterikoulutus, saattaa olla että se tuottaisi sitä orientoitumista ja se saattaisi tuottaa jotain konkreettista ja näkyvää.” (Osallistuja F)*

“I feel that even if people, the employees, have a lot of knowledge about many things one still sometimes need that booster. A training that talks about an issue that is on the surface and where you actually do something about it. Maybe one booster training event would make people oriented and it might give birth to something concrete and visible.” (Participant F)

*”Kun on tällainen pieni työyhteisö, niin jos me täällä aina puidaan yhdessä näitä asioita siinä ei välttämättä tule uutta lisää...” (Osallistuja D)*

“This is such a small community and if we always think about these issues only among us, then we will not necessarily come up with anything new.” (Participant D)

Participant F brings up the responsibility of the Girls’ House to promote multicultural issues in a larger context. She stresses the importance of being a good role model both for the young people and for other work communities.

*”Jollain tapaa tietyt työyhteisöt ovat hirveen vastuuasemassa sellaisen avoimen keskustelun ja hyväksyvän ilmapiirin juurruttamisessa” (Osallistuja F)*

“Some work communities are in a terribly responsible position in keeping up an open dialogue and in implanting an accepting atmosphere.” (Participant F)

### **6.5.3 Focusing on the girls**

All employees were concerned about how to attract more immigrant girls to the Girls’ House and make them find the center. The employees also wished for more interactive and closed girl groups where there would be both Finnish and immigrant girls mixed together.

*”...että olisi jonakin päivänä niitä ryhmiä, ihan suljettuja tyttöryhmiä jossa olisi niin suomalaislähtöisiä tyttöjä kuin heitä, jotka on tänne toisaalta tulleet tai*

*edustavat jotain muuta kulttuuria. Niissä sen samanlaisuuden ja erilaisuuden tunne tulee sitten kirkkaampana helmenä kun voi niitä asioita miettiä. Semmoinen tuntuisi hyvältä.” (Osallistuja C)*

“It would be nice if there some day would be closed interactive girl groups with both Finnish girls and girls who have come from somewhere else or who represent other cultures. In these groups the feelings of difference and similarity would become clearer and that would feel nice.” (Participant C)

There were different views among the participants on how multicultural girls’ groups should be formed. One participant stressed, as mentioned earlier, the importance of the fact that the girls could have a place where they could meet girls of their own culture or girls that share a similar life situation. Another participant said that she would never again have multicultural groups consisting of only immigrant girls.

*”Olen oppinut sen, että eipä enää pistetä kahta maahanmuuttajatyttöryhmää pystyyn, semmoisia missä on pelkästään somalityttöjä. Jos puhutaan monikulttuurisuudesta, niin se sana moni siinä edessä tarkoittaa sitä että siellä on montaa kulttuuria. [...] Elikkä silloin on tarpeen pistää tällainen monikulttuurinen tyttöryhmä pystyyn, johon saisi sekä suomalais- että somalityttöjä. Ja mä luulen että sellaiset yhdessä tekemiset, yhdessä kokemiset, sen kautta, suomalaisille tytöille syntyy parempi kuva heidän kulttuurista.” (Osallistuja B)*

“I have learnt that we should not any more start two groups with immigrant girls where all participants are Somali girls. If we talk about multiculturalism the word multi- in the beginning means that there are many cultures present. [...] So it is necessary to gather a multicultural girls’ group where there are both Finnish and Somali girls. And I think that through shared experiences and activities, the Finnish girls would get a better picture of their culture.” (Participant B)

To summarize, future goals and wishes for the Girls’ House have their roots in the present work and activities that are taken place in the center. Three of the participants were satisfied with the work being done and did not want to add too many new activities. The majority of the participants wished that multiculturalism, in the future, would be a natural part of the activities in the Girls’ House.

*”Yhtenä tavoitteena on että se monikulttuurisuus tulee semmoiseksi luonnolliseksi osaksi työyhteisöä, ja sen kautta sitten jos työyhteisöstä välittyy positiivinen suhtautuminen monikulttuurisuuteen niin silloin se monikulttuurisuus varmasti tulee näkymään paremmin talon toiminnassa.” (Osallistuja B)*

“One goal is that multiculturalism becomes a natural part of the work community. And if one can sense a positive attitude towards multiculturalism then it will also be seen in the everyday activities.” (Participant B)

*”Minä toivon että on vähän enemmän metodeja hanskassa siinä, että miten näitä tyttöjä (monikulttuurisia) tavoitetaan uusiin ryhmiin ja ylipäänsä talolle. Että näiden kontaktien luominen ja verkostojen luominen maahanmuuttajayhteisöihin niin se vois olla se tärkein koska kyllähän meidän talolla on ollut koko ajan monikulttuurisia tyttöjä. Jotenkin sen jatkuvuuden takaaminen sitä kautta, koska muutenhan tällä syksyllä ei ole mitään merkitystä tavallaan sen enempää jos se on vain tämän hetken juttu. (Osallistuja E)*

“I hope that we would develop more methods in how to reach these (multicultural) girls for the groups and, in general, to the house. And the most important might be to create contacts and networks to immigrant communities. That could be important because we have had multicultural girls here all the time. Through these measures we could somehow secure the continuation, because otherwise this fall’s activities will not have any meaning at all if it is only a thing of this moment.”  
(Participant E)

The conclusions of the research findings are that the staff members at the Girls’ House wish that multiculturalism becomes, or continues to be, a natural part of the activities. The values that guide the work are in a central position and help in creating a good and safe atmosphere. According to the findings, multiculturalism could be developed through increasing the presence of girls with different cultural backgrounds, through employees with immigrant backgrounds and through increasing the staff members’ knowledge on multicultural issues with the help of training. There was also a wish for more networking and collaboration with other organizations and institutions that deal with multicultural issues. In order to realize these plans, the staff wishes to find more human and economic resources for employing new staff members and for guaranteeing continuation of the activities.

The research findings and the themes presented in this chapter form the basis for my proposal for a multicultural action plan. The action plan is presented in the following chapter Conclusion and Discussion.

## **7. Conclusion and Discussion**

The main goals of this case study were to define multiculturalism within the Girls' House and to develop a multicultural action plan. Within the limitations of the study, the main goals have been achieved. The head title of this pro gradu thesis is: What More Can We Do? The title refers to the positive perception that the staff members at the Girls' House have of their organization and work community. Many of the employees did not know what more they would like to improve because they thought that the work done at the Girls' House already was so various and good. However, the research findings indicate that the Girls' House could do even more, especially when it comes to developing multiculturalism and promoting intercultural interaction.

In this chapter, I first present the Proposal for a Multicultural Action Plan is first reviewed. Then, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are discussed.

### **7.1 Proposal for a Multicultural Action Plan**

The proposal for an action plan presented later on in this chapter (Table 2) is based upon several elements included in the research process. It takes into consideration the history of the Girls' House and the basic values that guide the work. And it is based upon the research findings and the analysis of the data gathered throughout the research process. The pre-assumption of the plan is that the basic values of the Girls' House continue to be equality, appreciation of diversity, individuality, uniqueness and communalism (Toimintasuunnitelma, 2003, 2) and that multiculturalism is seen to be important within the organizational culture. It is based upon experiences from the fall of 2003 when the Girls' House wanted to develop its multicultural activities through a specific project. My own experiences in the Girls' House as a trainee and researcher have influenced my interpretation of interviews with staff members and of everyday events that took place during the time of the project's implementation. Theories of multiculturalism, organizational culture and girls' studies affected the way I looked at the phenomena, as did also my own personal background.

The action plan is a model of one way to develop multiculturalism at the Girls' House. It is not the only way, but it might be one path of how to plan the multicultural activities in the Girls' House in the future. The overall goal of this action plan is to make multiculturalism a natural part of the Girls' House, where cultural diversity is seen as a resource for greater understanding and creative girl work. The action plan is based upon the staff members'



wishes that all the present work, experienced as good and successful, will continue to be featured at the Girls' House.

The action plan is divided into four different areas as follows: 1) Employment policy, 2) Intercultural training, 3) Networking and marketing, 4) Focusing on the girls. The first three areas focus mainly at the organization and its staff members. The fourth area comes with suggestions for developing multicultural girls' groups and including girls in developing activities. Nothing prevents the inclusion of girls in the other areas and it is also recommendable. In this part of the study I shall briefly discuss the four areas one by one and finally, I shall present a table (Table 2) where all the areas are briefly summarized.

#### 1) Employment policy

The Girls' House should carry out its long-time dream and employ a person or persons with immigrant backgrounds. It is not likely that there are several immigrant women that will spontaneously send their applications to the Girls' House because they might not have enough information on the center. The Girls' House should therefore inform employment offices and municipal authorities that work with immigrants that they are looking for new staff members. The Girls' House can also contact educational institutions and offer career trainee programs. More intense cooperation with the Helsinki City Youth Department might also be a channel for finding new employees or trainees. The Girls' House might have to put in a strong effort into finding employees with immigrant backgrounds but there is a strong will for it and therefore it should be done. By creating a cultural diverse organization the Girls' House will be able to offer different role models to girls of different cultural backgrounds. However, the Girls' House should also take into consideration the possible problems that might arise due to cultural differences within the work community. There might be differences in time management, language skills and ways of problem solving. Conflicts due to cultural differences should always be discussed and solved within the work community and intercultural training might offer a help in identifying cultural conflicts.

#### 2) Intercultural training

The research findings indicate that the majority of the staff members at the Girls' House were agreed upon the need for training in multicultural issues. The type of training wished for, varied from culture-specific lectures, through learning methods of multicultural education, to learning about acculturation processes. My proposition for training is *intercultural training*, that can be defined as educative processes intended to promote cultural learning, which means

the acquisition of behavioral, cognitive, and affective competencies associated with effective interaction across cultures (Paige & Martin, 1997, 36). Intercultural training should be given to all the staff members, including short-time trainees and part-time group leaders. Training should also be offered to the girls and it would be good if the girls could be integrated in some of the training activities. Some of the training, for example, managing cultural diversity, is aimed only for the staff members. However, taking into consideration the size of the work community in the Girls' House, it might be unrealistic to frequently hire outside trainers. Therefore, the organization could identify appropriate courses in intercultural issues offered at other organizations and institutions and promote the participation of staff members in them.

This study does not present a ready-made list of training activities that the Girls' House should implement because of the following reasons. First, the activities should be designed by the trainer and the participants. Second, the training needed depends upon the background of the participants and the current status of the Girls' House as an organization. However the training could include the areas as follow:

- Diversity training for the organization. For example, managing cultural differences, recognizing cultural conflicts and, promoting a positive understanding of difference and diversity.
- Stages towards developing intercultural sensitivity and intercultural communication competence.
- Intercultural relations and cultural differences. For example, discussing cultural differences that might promote or prevent successful intercultural action.
- Area studies. For example, increasing knowledge in the cultures that are represented at the Girls' House.
- Multicultural education for promoting interaction between girls of different cultures.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to outside trainers or visiting lecturers, girls and staff members from different cultural backgrounds could be encouraged in giving culture-specific knowledge to one another. In that way the Girls' House would use its existing resources and show that it supports cultural diversity. This culture-specific knowledge could be given through lectures, games or some specific activity, for example, cooking. These events can be open or closed,

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<sup>8</sup>See, for example, "Intercultural Education" (Kulttuurienvälinen kasvatus, 2000), published by the European Council in connection with the campaign "All different - All equal". The book was originally published in English in 1995.

depending on the method and on the wishes of the participants. The atmosphere should always be safe and supportive and an adult should be present in order to intervene in any case of insult. These occasions could be mandatory for the staff members and they should also be marketed to the girls in a positive way.

### 3) Networking and marketing

The Girls' House is a partnership project and used to cooperating with different organizations and authorities. The idea of an extended network that would include people and organizations that work with immigrant issues is therefore realizable. Networking might help in attracting new immigrant girls to the Girls' House. It might also increase the knowledge about the Girls' House in a larger context. At best, the Girls' House can be a pioneer in developing immigrant girl work in the same way as it has been a pioneer in spreading the knowledge about girl work in Finland.

It requires time and continuity for maintaining networks and it is a work that never ends. In the Girls' House each staff member has her area of responsibility. Networking and marketing should also be the special area of one employee, who can be any member of the staff or a (future) employee with an immigrant background. If the person in charge of the networking and marketing has difficulties due to language skills, or is unfamiliar with the field of youth work in Helsinki, she should be assisted by another employee. Long-term planning and goals are key words in the networking process. If there is continuous fluctuation among employees, there are always a lot of knowledge and human contacts lost. If fluctuation in the workforce takes place, the previous person in charge of the networking and marketing should give a good introduction to her successor. Documentation of events, contact persons, ideas and ways of acting are all important for the continuity. According to the Director,<sup>9</sup> the Girls' House has not been very good at the documenting of events, and good or bad practices.

The Girls' House should try to invite immigrant associations to visit the center. Through this action and through inviting parents of the immigrant girls, the Girls' House can raise the level of awareness about multicultural girl work among the immigrant community. Arranging seminars, where both girls and adults can participate, might be one way of raising awareness of immigrant girls' issues and of multicultural issues in general. The ideal would be if the events organized were not to be labeled exclusively as "immigrant" or "multicultural". The

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<sup>9</sup> Interview the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2003.

events organized at the Girls' House should continuously raise issues about girl and female awareness but they could also include different cultural elements.

Marketing is a problematic area. On the one hand, the Girls' House does not wish to be seen as a normal youth center where young people only come just to spend their time and neither does it want too many girls at the same time hanging around in the open sphere or cafeteria. On the other hand, the Girls' House wishes to attract many more immigrant girls, and for that, marketing is needed. Extensive marketing might lead to "too many" visitors and that is not what the organization wants. Here I list some appropriate marketing measures that might raise the awareness of the Girls' House among immigrant girls. They are as follow:

- Visiting places where it is known that young immigrants gather, for example, schools, youth centers, and religious places. Spreading of information should always be done in cooperation with local leaders. Visiting youth events such as the sex-step fair (an event focused on sexual education visited by all 9<sup>th</sup> graders in Helsinki).
- Frequent updating of the web pages, e.g. 1–2 times per month (at the moment of the study it was done 4 times/year). The updating of the web pages could be done together with a group of girls as a regular project.
- Visiting places and organizations where adult immigrants gather in order to attract their daughters or relatives to the Girls' House.
- Contacting representatives of the media to participate in different events and the advertising of these. The media and networks contacted could be, for example, Helsingin Sanomat, Hufvudstadsbladet, Uutislehti 100, Metro, Six degrees, Alueuutiset, Yleisradio, Radio X3M, Lahiradio, the Rasmus Network, Allianssi etc.

Networking and marketing need resources and especially a person or persons who can effectively do such work. Any additional resources, in other words funding, should be directed to employing more staff members. In January 2004 there was only the Director and additional two employees working at the Girls' House and this is too few for an efficient House operation. This observation has also been confirmed by the staff members themselves.

#### 4) Focusing on the girls

Examples of attracting new immigrant girls to the Girls House were presented in the previous section of this study. However, during the fall of 2003, various methods of attracting new immigrant girls to the Girls' House were tried out. These experiences were not sufficient to

enable a useful evaluation to be made of the direct consequences of the actions. Nevertheless, the experiences of multicultural girls' groups at the Girls' House are good. This has been said both by group leaders and by girls participating in the groups. Little research has been done that examines what the groups mean for the girls. Neither is there enough research on how the girls would like to develop multiculturalism at the Girls' House. Therefore, focusing on the girls is one of the most important subjects for future studies. Nevertheless, the Proposal for a Multicultural Action Plan includes some elements that focus on the girls as active participants. These elements are based upon the staff members' wishes and upon my personal observations and conclusions.

One goal within the area of "Focusing on the girls", is to attract more girls with immigrant backgrounds to the Girls' House. The immigrant girls should continue to be treated as individuals and they themselves have the right to define their own identity and how they wish to be met. According to the majority of the staff members, this was already the practice in 2003 and one of the basic values in the Girls' House. The Girls' House should also promote interactive girl groups for both Finnish girls and girls with immigrant backgrounds.

At the moment of the study, there were no available written guidelines about how to proceed when starting a new multicultural group. The group leaders who work with girls from different cultural backgrounds could gather and write down examples of good and bad practices. Some good advice, however, is to be found in the Swedish book "Som om dom inte fanns – invandrantjejer!"<sup>10</sup> ("As if they did not exist, immigrant girls!").

The summary of the Proposal for a Multicultural Action Plan is presented on the following page in Table 2. The action plan can be carried out as a whole or in parts. At the Girls' House, there is an interest to carry out the action plan and the staff members believe that the goals presented above are realistic and good.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Som om dom inte fanns – invandrantjejer!" gives a list of issues that could be taken into consideration when you start to work with an immigrant girl group. (Ericsson & Poikolainen, 1995.)

<sup>11</sup> Meeting on the outcomes of the research, the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2004 at the Girls' House.

**Table 2. Proposal for a Multicultural Action Plan for the Girls' House.**

Area of development	Goals	Activity
<b>Employment policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A culturally diverse work community where multiculturalism means including people of different cultures and using the variety of perspectives, skills and knowledge that they bring into the community.</li> <li>- Giving girls different role models and seeing cultural differences as resources and possibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employing women of cultural minorities (Might require searching for the employees).</li> <li>- Practicing equal and inclusive strategies in decision-making and in giving promotions.</li> </ul>
<b>Intercultural training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employees and managements increased knowledge in intercultural issues, in different cultures and in methods of intercultural and multicultural education.</li> <li>- Increased knowledge of managing cultural diversity, learning to see both possibilities and problems.</li> <li>- Continuous evaluation of multicultural strategies and their development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mandatory training in intercultural and multicultural issues for all organizational members.</li> <li>- Culture-evenings for staff and girls, using girls and staff members with different cultural backgrounds as experts and inviting visiting lecturers.</li> <li>- Promoting research on the multicultural strategies and their implementation. E.g. through action research, including all stakeholders.</li> <li>- Creating an information folder of current topics in multicultural issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Networking and marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long-term relationships with other organizations and people that work with immigrant girls and multicultural issues.</li> <li>- Improved knowledge and awareness about the Girls' House among immigrant girls and their families and, in the public discussion.</li> <li>- Improved collaboration with the girls' families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Naming a person in charge of multicultural issues and events.</li> <li>- Participation in relevant multicultural events.</li> <li>- Lobbying at a political level, intensifying cooperation with immigrant organizations.</li> <li>- Inviting preparatory classes in the Helsinki area.</li> <li>- Improving the web pages and information directed to other media.</li> <li>- Visiting the girls' homes</li> </ul>
<b>Focusing on the girls</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased interaction between girls of different cultural background.</li> <li>- Increased presence of immigrant girls in the Girls' House.</li> <li>- To enhance and strengthen the identity of girls with immigrant backgrounds.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing a safe atmosphere where racism is not tolerated.</li> <li>- Continuing groups for immigrant girls. Working for mixed groups where girls of different backgrounds meet.</li> <li>- Including girls in the planning of development of multiculturalism through events and (research) projects.</li> </ul>

The proposal for a Multicultural Action Plan is a concrete result of this case study. However, an action plan alone cannot make things change or develop new activities. The Girls' House and its partnership organizations need to have a will and interest to realize the plan to make it - or parts of it - come true. In addition, to carry out the entire action plan, the Girls' House needs human and economic resources. Nevertheless, many of the activities proposed in the action plan can be carried out without more resources.

The proposition for training should not frighten the staff members nor give them the feeling that they do not know how to develop multicultural work. The experiences of the participants in the study show that you do not need to have training or experiences in intercultural issues before you start to work with multicultural issues, as long as your values appreciate cultural diversity. For three of the staff members, the Girls' House had offered an opportunity to develop their intercultural sensitivity by giving them the opportunity to work with immigrant girls. These experiences were described as positive, enriching and as good learning situations. However, training could offer new insights in intercultural issues and could provide the staff members with new work methods.

The research findings indicate that the pre-requisites for developing multiculturalism at the Girls' House are good and that the organizational culture at the center supports cultural diversity. The basic values of the Girls' House appreciate equality, solidarity and cultural diversity. These values were strongly emphasized in nearly all the interviews even if I did not directly ask the participants about the values of the Girls' House. The research findings also indicate that the staff members at the Girls' House have developed or that they have good pre-requisites for developing intercultural sensitivity. In the interviews, all staff members showed that they appreciate cultural differences. In the everyday life at the Girls' House, the staff members' intercultural sensitivity could, in my opinion, be noted through the open and warm atmosphere. The staff members aimed to meet every girl that came to the Girls' House as an individual and let the girl herself determine in what way she wanted to be encountered. However, there were various situations where a specific group of girls behaved restlessly in such a way that they affected the atmosphere of the whole center.

If one looks at Armour's (1995) model on pluralistic organizational development (presented in Chapter 3), the Girls' House lies between the second and the third stage: between the reactive-symbolic (2nd) and the proactive-responsive (3rd) stage. At the time of the study the staff members could participate in diversity training outside the Girls' House, but it was not

mandatory, nor was there training offered within the organization. During the time of the research, events related to intercultural issues (e.g. a seminar on immigrant girls) were developed and multiculturalism was regularly discussed. In the third stage, the members of the organization acknowledge that they still have a lot to learn about diversity and pluralism and the organization contracts for research on diversity. As a result of the research, diversity strategies are developed. (Armour, 1995, 5.) This case study brings the Girls' House to stage three in Armour's model. The next step in developing multiculturalism at the Girls' House is to integrate diversity into the organization and make training part of a larger strategy. At the fifth and last step, diversity is fully integrated into the organization's learning policies, programs and processes. (ibid., 1995, 5.)

The research was made within the field of action research, a method I find very purposeful for this kind of developing activity. The need for the study arose from the organization and the research questions were formulated together with the work community. The staff members at the Girls' House were in some way involved with the research process all the time. Nevertheless, there are limitations to the study and they will be discussed in the following chapter.

## **7.2 Limitations of the study**

This case study was focused on one place, the Girls' House, during a specific period of time, four months. It does not provide one right way of how to implement multiculturalism in girl work or in youth centers in general. However, it strives to provide a better understanding of how multicultural work was implemented in the Girl's House in the fall of 2003 and might offer guidelines for similar contexts, where developing genuine multiculturalism is the core aim. In this section of the study, I shall discuss some elements that might bring limitations to the study.

“Multiculturalism” in itself is a concept that has been questioned by several policy makers and researchers (e.g. Schierup, 1994; Rex, 1994; Molina & Tesfahuney, 1994). These researchers stress the negative factors that can arise from multiculturalism and multicultural policy in a larger society. In this study, the paradox of the concept was not included in the research questions, regarding the pre-assumptions of the study. The aims were based on the positive pre-assumption of multiculturalism and on the original definitions of the concept. Therefore, the concept of multiculturalism might be defined differently in another study even within the same context.



In action research, the researcher's role might have an especially strong influence on the research and this fact might also bring limitations to the study. At the Girls' House I had two roles, one as a trainee and another one as a researcher. To combine these roles was not necessarily easy or done without complications. It was not very hard to win the trust of the community or to interview and observe the staff members. The hard thing was to win the trust of the girls without becoming too close, or being too strict. During my time as a trainee at the Girls' House, I learned much and I deepened my knowledge in girl work, in intercultural issues and in doing research. I also noted that it did not take a long time before I started to talk about "we" and "us" when I talked about the Girls' House to outsiders<sup>12</sup>. Feeling "at home" might, however, have led to the fact that I was not as observant of some events at the Girls' House. It might also be that I did not react to some events that would have interested another person or "an outsider". But, at the same time, as an outsider I would never have got so close to the work community and the girls as I did.

In the interview situations, the interviewee can choose what to tell the researcher and what she leaves without telling. In my opinion, I got good contact with the interviewees. However, my background as a journalist might have made me "too relaxed". I did not always stick very strictly to the interview questions, which led to the fact that the questions varied to some extent between the interviews, even though they all followed the same central themes.

This study does not include girls who visit the Girls' House, a fact that can be considered as one of the most important limitations of the study. My original research plan included both girls and staff members as active participants. The aim was to do action research, involving staff members and girls and participating on equal basis. I changed my plans because of the staff members' wishes (see also Chapter 5.5). I was not allowed to observe the girls in such a way that they would be aware of it. Therefore, I decided to focus on the Girls' House as an organization and on its staff members. I also wanted to narrow the focus of the study, in order to make it more concentrated and thorough in one specific issue, developing multiculturalism at an organizational level.

In action research, it is important to make clear how the participants take part in data gathering and in reflecting and evaluating their own work (Kiviniemi, 1999, 75). Originally, I had wished that all the participants and I would have gathered to discuss the research findings thoroughly. However, it turned out that we were not able to gather at the same time and the

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<sup>12</sup> Personal diary, 11 September 2003.

discussions I had wished for turned out to become brief meetings with one or two participants present. Nevertheless, at those meetings, the participants had an opportunity to comment on the contents of this study. I took the comments given by the staff members into consideration and their opinions and reflections can be found throughout this work. Some of the changes were related to how I had described the staff meetings, and others were about specifying facts. The participants of this study have approved the report's contents in general.

### **7.3 From here onwards**

Despite the limitations mentioned above, this case study gives an insight into developing multiculturalism at a practical level within the field of girl work. Similar studies within this area have not been made earlier in Finland. I hope, therefore, that this study will stimulate a discussion about the responsibility of organizations in promoting multiculturalism. When working with young people, the example and leadership have to come from the adults and from an organizational perspective. Therefore, in the future it will be essential to give more weight to developing multiculturalism at an organizational level. In future studies at the Girls' House, it is also important to include girls, staff members and representatives of the partnership organizations.

The various benefits of multiculturalism, intercultural interaction, and cultural diverse organizations have been reviewed in chapters two and three. Future studies within the field of girls' studies should, therefore, aim at improving interaction between girls of different cultural backgrounds. It will be essential to focus both on Finnish girls as well as on girls with immigrant backgrounds. This is also supported by Niemelä (2003), who stresses the importance of studying immigrants' attitudes and views on their new society and culture and not only the majority's attitudes towards immigrants. In order to build bridges between immigrant and Finnish girls, mutual information about the strange culture is needed as also knowledge of which factors can prevent interaction between two persons from different cultures. (Niemelä, 2003, 91.) In the field of girl work one could emphasize the common things that young girls share and the work could be guided by the same idea as guided the EXIT Project in Joensuu which was as follows: "constructive interaction between 'differences' does not happen spontaneously - you have to arrange it" (Harinen et al., 2001, 224).

The three partnership organizations, the Finnish Federation of Settlement Youth Associations, Kalliolan Nuoret ry., and the Youth Department of the City of Helsinki, all talk about

multiculturalism in different contexts and they all have several separate multicultural projects. Co-operation and networking continue to play essential roles in the development of multiculturalism. However, in the future, organizations need to leave the “project-thinking”, that is often attached to multiculturalism, behind and make cultural diversity a natural part of the everyday activities. Nevertheless, projects might be the only realistic way to reach to these multicultural goals but they should not become permanent or static.

Within the limitations of this study, multiculturalism in the Girls’ House is defined and there is an action plan for its further development. In the Girls’ House, multiculturalism is defined as the presence of various cultures, appreciation of cultural diversity and as opportunities to learn more. Some other study might offer other conclusions and suggestions for developing multiculturalism. However, I hope that this research will inspire organizations similar to the Girls’ House to develop their multicultural activities and policies. I believe that many of the activities that were carried out during the time of the project can be applicable in other contexts.

Among the staff members there is a will to carry out the action plan and to integrate multiculturalism in the Girls’ House. However, the action plan cannot be carried out as a whole without necessary human and economic resources even if the will to develop multiculturalism exists. This case study asks: What More Can We Do? The research findings and conclusions indicate that there are various answers and ways of developing multiculturalism within an organization like the Girls’ House. By asking themselves what more can be done, the staff members of the Girls’ House have taken an important step towards developing the Center into a culturally diverse organization.

Building contacts and friendship between girls of different cultures is already happening at the Girls’ House. In the future, it is essential to continue to support and promote this kind of interaction and a culturally diverse organization can be a good role model both for the young girls at the Girls’ House and for other organizations within the same field. As one employee stressed, organizations like the Girls’ House have a tremendous responsibility in promoting multiculturalism and preventing prejudice.

*“ Minä ajattelin että täällä esitettäisiin eksoottisia kulttuureja kaukaisista maista ja että saisimme maistella eri maiden ruokia. Mutta tämä lähtikin itsestäni ja omasta kulttuuristani sekä siitä miten minä katson maailmaa. Minä tykkäsin tästä paljon.” (Nuori nainen osallistuttuaan Kulttuuripolkuun)*

“I thought this event was going to be about presenting a lot of exotic cultures from distant countries and that we were going to taste food from various parts of the world. But this was all about myself, my own culture and how I look at the world. I liked it a lot.” (Young woman after participating in the Culture Path)

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#### **Other resources:**

Meeting (18.3.2004). Meeting with work community at the Girls' House 18 March 2004. Reviewing the research design, findings and discussion of part of the thesis.

## APPENDIX I

### Themes and follow-up questions in the theme interviews

- Educational and professional background of the interviewee/participant
- 1) What does the concept multiculturalism mean for you?
  - In the work community
  - In the Girls' House
  - In your personal life
- 2) Multicultural girl work at the Girls' House
  - Background and history of multicultural work
  - What kind of experience do you have of multicultural work both at the Girls' House and in other contexts?
  - Have you felt that you have needed some special pre-requisites?
  - How have earlier goals been achieved?
  - What are the goals of multicultural work at the moment?
  - What position do these goals have in the activities of the Girls' House?
  - What is the role of Finnish girls in the development of multicultural work?
- 3) Atmosphere and values
  - How would you describe the atmosphere at the Girls' House?
  - How are girls encountered at the Girls' House?
  - What kind of prerequisites are there for multicultural work?
  - What are the values of the partnership organizations that are represented in the activities?
- 4) Work community and staff members
  - How has the work community supported multicultural work?
  - Do the employees have enough readiness to encounter girls from different cultures?
  - In what way should multiculturalism be introduced in the work community?
  - Is there a need for new work methods?
- 5) Thoughts on the project, research and future
  - What is the future of multicultural work after the project?
  - In your dreams, what does the Girls' House look like in five years?
  - Do you have any thoughts on the action research? How would you like to affect the research?

In addition to this, I asked the multicultural project worker questions related to her final work: What is a Good Professional Multicultural Girl Work?

- You interviewed four girls, what can you tell us about their answers?
- How did they perceive the atmosphere in the Girls' House?
- How did they perceive the staff members?

And, an open question for everybody: Is there something more that comes to your mind that you would like to discuss?  
(26 September 2003)

## APPENDIX II

### Teemahaastattelun teemat sekä jatkokysymykset

- Haastateltavan koulutus- sekä työtausta.

1) Mitä sana monikulttuurisuus sinulle tarkoittaa?

- Työyhteisössä
- Tyttöjen Talolla
- Omassa elämässä

2) Monikulttuurinen tyttötyö Tyttöjen Talolla

- Monikulttuurisen työn tausta/historia.
- Millainen kokemus sinulla oli monikulttuurisesta työstä sekä Tyttöjen Talolla että muissa yhteyksissä?
- Oletko kaivannut jotain eväitä siihen työhön?
- Miten aikaisemmat tavoitteet on saavutettu?
- Mitkä ovat tämän hetken tavoitteet monikulttuurisessa työssä?
- Millainen sija niillä on koko talon toiminnassa?
- Millainen on suomalaisten tyttöjen rooli monikulttuurisen työn kehittämisessä?

3) Ilmapiiri sekä arvot

- Miten kuvailisit tunnelmaa Tyttöjen Talolla?
- Miten tyttöjä kohdataan Tyttöjen Talolla?
- Millaiset perusteet monikulttuuriseen työhön on olemassa?
- Miten eri yhteistyökumppaneiden arvot näkyvät toiminnassa?

4) Työyhteisö ja työntekijät

- Millainen on työyhteisön tuki ollut monikulttuuriseen työhön?
- Onko työntekijöillä riittävästi valmiuksia kohdata tyttöjä eri kulttuureista?
- Millä tavalla monikulttuurisuutta pitäisi tuoda työyhteisöön?
- Tarvitaanko uusia työmenetelmiä?

5) Ajatuksia projektista, tutkimuksesta sekä tulevaisuudesta

- Projektin jälkeen, mikä on monikulttuurisen työn tulevaisuus?
- Miltä Tyttöjen Talo näyttää viiden vuoden päästä, sinun unelmissasi?
- Onko sinulla ajatuksia toimintatutkimuksesta? Miten sinä haluaisit vaikuttaa?


Monikulttuuriselta projektityöntekijältä kysyin lisäksi kysymyksiä liittyen hänen lopputyöhönsä: What is a Good Professional Multicultural Girl Work?

- Haastattelit neljä tyttöä, mitä heidän vastauksistaan ilmeni?
- Miten he kokevat talon ilmapiirin?
- Miten he kokevat työntekijöitä?

Sekä kaikille avoin kysymys: Tuleeko sinulle itselle jotain mieleen josta haluaisit keskustella?

26.9.2003

### APPENDIX III, Timeline of the Research Process, Fall 2003

- 
- 25–26/8 Planning days at Vuorilahti
  - 1/9 The Girls' House opens
  - 2/9 Interview with project worker
  - 10/9 Interview with Director
  - 11/9 Opening Event
  - 12/9 Meeting on research
  - 18/9 UNHCR seminar
  - 22/9 Seminar at Caisa
  - 8/10 Interview with occupational therapist
  - 9/10 Interview with apprenticeship student
  - 15/10 Seminar about Multicultural girl work at the Girl's House
  - 18/10 Seminar at Fenix, Rasmusnaiset
  - 20/10 Interview with mental nurse
  - 23/10 Culture Path
  - 4/11 Meeting on research
  - 5–21/11 Lina Laurent in Uganda
  - 9/12 Culture Path
  - 17/12 Evaluation discussion
  - 17/12 Interview with child care/family worker
  - 15/12 Christmas party for the girls
  - 18/12 Christmas party for the staff members
  - 19/12 The Girls' House goes on Christmas holidays