Dance movement therapy training: Challenges of interculturality and cross-cultural communication within a diverse student group

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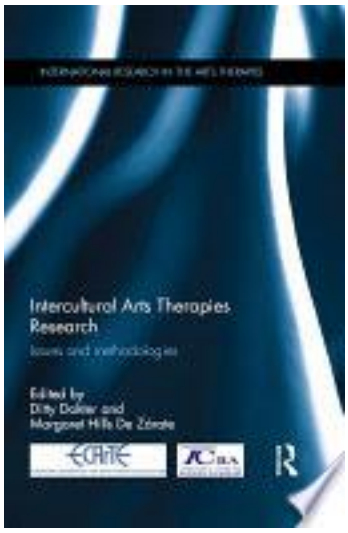

Abstract:
For many years, the Dance Movement Therapy masters and postgraduate training at the Autonomous University of Barcelona has been running within the complex cultural and political bi-linguistic setting of Catalonia in Spain. Throughout, our student and teacher bodies have been made up of more than 20 different nationalities from Europe, South and North America, Africa and Asia. All year one and year two students of the current study meet on a monthly basis in a large verbal group, conducted along group analytic lines by an experienced group analyst, within which they are free to discuss any issues of concern to them. This paper describes some of the outcomes of a study of this group, looking specifically at emerging intercultural themes. Using a phenomenographic research methodology, all of the student participants in the group were asked to give a free written description of one single session. Informed consent was sought so the material could be analysed and published. The findings show that a diverse group, working within a complex academic context, tends to evolve a microculture, manifest within the large group, in which cultural differences are not expressed and are perhaps avoided by the students. Instead, groups and sub-groups are formed around different criteria within the university setting. It is thought by the authors that cultural differences tend not to be made reference to, but rather to be sublimated or avoided by the students, as they are experienced as either threatening or irrelevant to their core academic and training goals.

Introduction

Our masters and postgraduate diploma in Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) have been running since October 2003 within the complex cultural and political bi-linguistic setting of Catalonia in Spain. Throughout, our student and teacher bodies have been made up of more than 20 different nationalities from Europe, South and North America, Africa and Asia. This tendency towards internationalisation is still rising, parallel with an increased mobility of students, academics and knowledge, not only at our university, but worldwide (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development - OECD, 2007; Uvalie-Trumbie, Daniel, & West, 2007). Some of our students over the past years have been commuting regularly from, not only different parts of Spain, but also Portugal, Switzerland, Germany, France, Ireland, Greece and even Russia. Others leave their home countries behind to come and live in Barcelona, causing the local Catalan students to be a clear minority.

Amongst the different experiential sessions, which constitute the core of the training, students of the first and second academic year of the course meet on a monthly basis in a large verbal group, conducted along group analytic lines by an experienced group analyst, within which they are free to discuss any issues of concern to them. The following chapter presents the preliminary findings from a study carried out on this large group, which involved asking all the student participants to give a free written description of the same single session[1]. Using a phenomenographic research

[1] Informed consent was sought so the material could be analysed and published.

methodology (Marton 1981, 1986) the collected narratives were scrutinized in the light of interculturality[2].

Interculturality

The Council of Europe (COE), in a project promoting interculturalism in cities, stressed the need for each distinct culture to survive and flourish while defending the right of all cultures to contribute to the cultural landscape of the society in which they are present. The COE contrasts interculturalism with assimilationist approaches, which seek to obscure and ultimately eradicate diversity. This is supported by Samovar, Porter and McDaniel (2011) who point out the limits to cultural diversity and the importance of belonging. Similarly, Scollon, Scollon and Jones (2011) propose to replace the concept "culture" with the concept "discourse systems," in order to eliminate problematic overgeneralizations and oversimplifications. Scollon et al. also replace "intercultural communication" with "interdiscursive communication" since, according to these authors, cultures do not interact, but individuals and discourses do.

In addition, the COE contrasts interculturalism with multiculturalism, which has, according to COE, overemphasised diversity. Similarly, Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010) provide a critique of multiculturalism when emphasised as a singular, fixed ideology or dogma, announcing its slow death. Many immigrants, encouraged by multicultural orthodoxy, retreat into their differentness, they claim. Thus multiculturalism fosters separateness and refuses common values.

[2] Peter Zelaskowski was the group analyst of this particular large group, the two researchers the other authors of the chapter: Researcher 1 Heidrun Panhofer and Researcher 2 Iris Bräuninger

The COE thus proposes the development of a cultural sensitivity, encouraging intercultural interaction and mixing as an essential aspect of a society:

> Interculturality derives from the understanding that cultures thrive only in contact with other cultures, not in isolation. It seeks to reinforce inter-cultural interaction as a means of building trust and reinforcing the fabric of the community (Intercultural city, 2014, October 28).

In the light of COE definitions, we would describe our intended approach as intercultural, aiming to include a sociocultural dimension in our training.

> Without first critically examining subtle forms of racial, ethnic, or cultural bias that exist in DMT education and practice, there is a danger of foreclosing communication among socioculturally diverse students and educators, between therapists and clients, and among community participants and facilitators of community-based healing arts events (Chang, 2009, p. 300).

The combination within our training of experiential groups, a broad range of supervision and theory classes, as well as the more informal spaces typical of the block training model, provides multiple spaces within which inter-cultural exchange can occur. This study deals with one particular experiential space, the large group, which we will be described as follows.

Intercultural communication and subgrouping

According to Agazarian's system centred approach to groups (1987) the underlying dynamic common to the maturation of all human systems, as small as a cell and as large as a society, is the functional discrimination and integration of differences, from the simple to the complex. This model provides a useful framework for describing and making sense of the processes involved in intercultural exchange. Applying Agazarian's model to the context of our training, each cultural group can be thought of as a subgroup of the larger group-as-a-whole and it is through the

on-going process of subgroup interaction that groups engage with their differences and, as a consequence, develop.

> Functional subgrouping is designed to influence the way that systems function, and it puts into practice the assumption that all living human systems survive, develop, and transform through the process of discriminating and integrating differences. (Agazarian, 1987)

Within this systems-centered model it is the subgroup, not the individual member, which is the basic unit of the group. For Agazarian (1999), subgroups serve a clear function, which is to keep the group stable by "containing" conflicting differences in the group while the group-as-a-whole learns how to integrate them. In this sense, in a diverse multi-cultural training, the quality of the intercultural communication that occurs between the various cultural subgroups is the cornerstone of the development and growth of the individuals, as well as to the large group (in the case of this study) and the training as a whole.

Large groups and culture

Large and median group theory has been an area of ever expanding interest within the field of group analytic psychotherapy since the development of large group theory and practice pioneered by Kreeger (1975), De Mare (1972, 1985) and De Mare, Piper & Thompson (1991) drew our attention to the issue of culture at the heart of the group. In the large group the family in which we grew-up is not the core concern. The transference of familial and primitive early patterns of relating is a concept belonging to therapy in small groups. The wider cultural and social context of the individual and the family is more likely activated in the large group. For De Mare (1985) the large group links psychology to sociology. Context (Hopper, 1985) is now the fundamental problem and is no longer excluded (De Mare, 1985). Instead of transference, De Mare (1991)

speaks of transpositions from previous cultural contexts, which is to say we carry our culture into the large group in the form of macrocultural assumptions, which become transformed in the miniculture of the large group through a process of dialogue. While, for De Mare, it is only in large and median groups that questions of culture can be properly addressed, Weinberg (2003) talks of all group sessions (small, median or large, therapeutic or experiential) as inter-cultural encounters. Culture grows out of groups; it fills the existential void between the self and others and protects us from primitive anxieties.

While the use of experiential groups in therapist training has significant support in the literature, e.g., Hutten, 1996; Panhofer, García, & Zelaskowski, 2014; Payne, 1999, there has been much less written about large groups in a training context. A significant exception being Jones and Skaife (2009a & 2009b), writing about a large group within an Art Therapy training. They stress the potential for institutional and political learning as well as the importance of art in its social and political context.

Culture, Context and Language

A more recent development in group analysis (Hopper & Weinberg, 2011) has seen the emergence of a body of theory supporting a concept used by Foulkes (1950), the social unconscious; a complex concept which is at the heart of the group analytic project. Among other things it asks us to pay close attention to the social, cultural and political context in which experience occurs. In other words, what does it mean that this group session took place here in this university, in this city, in this culture? Similarly, Dosamantes (1992), drawing on psychoanalytic theories of individuation and

separation, outlines the different stages of group development within a DMT setting, describing how the patterns generated by the body in action reflect the emotional inner life of the person within a particular social context.

In order to provide some sense of the cultural context for the particular group experience in this study, we would like to mention two significant components of the local social unconscious. Firstly, “el pacto del olvido”, the pact of forgetting (Tremlett, 2006, p.71), a collective unwritten agreement among the Spanish population which bolstered the 1978 Spanish Constitution, considered to be the key in the post-Franco transition to democracy, a determination to leave the past behind and bury historical conflicts and tensions in order to fulfil the democratic objectives enshrined in the constitution. In this sense, a tendency to avoid is as much about leaving out cultural and political issues, in order to leave the past behind, as it is about moving on. The second component is language. Whether it be the second language acquisitional issues of those for whom Castilian Spanish is their second or third language, or the interlinguistic issues brought about by the variety of Castilian Spanish users - mother tongue Spanish, Mexican, Argentinian etc. and all other national variations. This diversity is equally present within the student group as it is within the staff group. In addition, some Catalan students may struggle to change the language of their heart when they drive the couple of kilometres it takes to get to the university of the Catalan Capital and attend the DMT course. Linguistic immersion in Catalan is a both a policy of the Catalan state as well as a guiding principle of Catalan culture (Badia i Pujol, 2010). Furthermore, Portuguese students mix their mother tongue with the closely connected *Castilian*. Finally, the technical - often English - jargon of psychology, psychotherapy and DMT is regularly translated into a Spanish form, thus helping to construct a new sociolinguistic reality amongst the students of the course.

Culture, as a learned and shared system of meaning and understanding, is primarily communicated through the means of natural language:

> These meanings and understandings are not just representations about what is in the world; they are also directive, evocative and reality constructing in character (D'Andrade's, 1990, p. 65).

Wittgenstein (1953) pointed out the inseparability of language and context, underlining the social event which happens between the users of a language. He compares language with an old town that grows over time with its lanes and squares, new and old buildings from different époques, surrounded by different suburbs with their straight and linear streets (Wittgenstein, 1953, § 18). The meaning of language to him is a complicated phenomenon that is woven into the fabric of our lives; just like the life of our training and the inter-cultural exchange it provides at all times.

Phenomenography as a research methodology

The methodological framework used, which is broadly speaking phenomenographic, stems from a basic original objective, which was to describe a single session of an experiential group from the point of view of all of its participants (Larsson & Holmström, 2007). The phenomenographic research method seemed particularly appropriate, given that firstly, it is grounded in the exploration of how specific phenomena are experienced by those taking part, and secondly, given the basic objective of elucidating and categorizing variation in ways of experiencing the same phenomenon. Developed by Marton (1981) the phenomenographic method explores the similarities and differences in ways of experiencing learning. It was thought that understanding any variations in how learning is experienced by students would help

> facilitate educators to improve students' learning outcomes, and provide a foundation for developing more appropriate curricula or instructional approaches (Hung-Ming Lin, 2011, p.2).

According to Marton (1981, p. 180) the aim of phenomenography is

> (…) to find and systematize forms of thought in terms of which people interpret aspects of reality - aspects which are socially significant and which are at least supposed to be shared by the members of a particular kind of society.

With this research we were interested in bringing together these different aspects of reality, allowing the different members of the group from their different cultures to share their part of the experience of a large verbal group.

Procedures

The original research goal was to generate a multi-subjective description of a single learning experience. In order to make sense of the subjective experiences of our students a 5-step model was developed, which will be described here: The 46 participants of the

group were asked to give a free written description of the session following the 9th large verbal group session in a series of 10 sessions within one academic year of a DMT training (Step 1) (See Appendix I for the exact instructions given to students). These texts were written immediately after the one hour large group session, thus reducing the possibilities of interpersonal contamination of subjective descriptions and hopefully maximising the variety and individuality of perspective, i.e., facilitating each individuals subjective remembering and describing (Step 2). Subsequently, two of the authors analysed the material as described by Wolcott (1994, 2001): The vast amount of qualitative data was transformed through categorization as a precursor to identifying possible trends and the development of typologies.

One of the authors scrutinized the texts with the basic information on age, sex and nationality of the writer, and identified some initial categories such as personal or group images, pure descriptions, emotions, personal reflections etc., allowing different text-types to emerge (narrators who described the session from an observer's point of view trying to keep a distant, objective view, emotionally involved narrators who spoke from a first person position, always in touch with their personal feelings or physical sensations, mixed types, etc.) (Step 3). The other author worked without this basic information and looked for comments relating to national belonging and for emerging intercultural themes: Where writers made reference to their own belonging to a specific sub-group; where they identify other groups; or where they refer to the group as a whole, etc. (Step 4)? Subsequently, the first author scrutinized all writings for intercultural themes (Step 5), allowing both authors to compare their findings (Step 6).

The following interpretation of the key factors and patterns according to Wolcott (2001, p. 33) was not

> (…) derived from rigorous, agreed-upon, carefully specified procedures, but from our efforts at sense making, a human activity that included intuition, past experience, emotion - personal attributes of human researchers that can be argued endlessly but neither proved nor disproved to the satisfaction of all.

Theses qualitative procedures provided us with a means of reflecting on the diversity of the lived experience of our students. Initially this investigation was not directed at the phenomenon of interculturality as such, but through the use of phenomenographic methods certain variations in the students' ways of addressing cultural themes became apparent (Larsson & Holmström, 2007).

Table I shows the applied 5-step procedures:

Step 1 DATA COLLECTION	**Step 2 DATA COLLECTION**	**Step 3 DATA ANALYSIS**	**Step 4 DATA ANALYSIS**	**Step 5 FINDINGS**
Large group	Participants in large group write narratives	Researcher 1 searches for key themes and patterns, knowing the basic information of age, sex and year of the student: emotional statements, reflections and interpretations, descriptions, physical sensations, personal movement description	Researcher 2 searches for intercultural themes: Where did writers make reference to their own belonging to a specific sub-group, where did they identify other groups, refer to the group as a whole etc.?	Comparison of the findings of Co-researcher 1 and 2, interpretation of the findings
			Researcher 1 searches for intercultural themes: Where did writers make reference to their own belonging to a specific sub-group, where did they identify other groups, refer to the group as a whole etc.?	

Table I: Flow chart to illustrate the pathway through the research process

Findings

Previous research (Crapanzano, 1980; Panhofer, 2011) comparing written accounts by therapists and patients shows the incredible divergence between accounts, at times even giving the impression that therapist and client had been in different spaces. Similarly in this research, the accounts of one single group session were at times very different, varying in length (from 144 words min. to 1100 words max.) and quality: from aloof third person descriptions to very private accounts, including personal reflections, emotions, physical states and images. Given the large number of writings (35) the researchers who had not been physically present in the session and who analysed the written material were however able to form a broader, multi-subjective picture of what had happened during the session.

The group as a container

The process of organizing and reporting of the data beyond the purely descriptive account allowed us to identify certain key factors and patterns, as well as the relationships between them. During step 3 of the procedures the first common pattern emerged: Most of the imagery was concerned with inside and outside, making reference to a container and one's personal position regarding this container, for example "the setting like a uterus[3]" (Student 29),"forming part of a species" (Student 33), "the group as a womb" (Student 24), "the barrier between me and the group" (Student 1), "feeling outside" (Student 1), "wanting to break through my own boundaries" (Student 2), etc.

A common thread described the container as a construct of values set up by the group, in the context of a large verbal group, many times connected with either talking or

[3] All original Spanish writings were translated into English language by the authors of this chapter.

remaining in silence: “the session started, as usual, with a silence” (Student 2), “there was a period of about 20 minutes of silence” (Student 4), “I think the initial silence took longer than usual” (Student 6), “ the usual silence starts to invade the space and the facial expressions“ (Student 1), “I wanted to say it but breaking the silence is difficult” (Student 8), “I wanted to ask the group (…) but I didn’t. I thought that perhaps they did not want to share in such a large group if they were not doing well” (Student 25), “for a moment I disconnect from the conversation withdraw into myself” (Student 24), “the group has taught me on a more practical level - being able to speak, deal with the silence, being able not to speak” (Student 25), “I think I still have not understood or digested my own silence” (Student 2), etc.

National identity

Only very view comments actually spoke about national identity:

> After a few coughs, a colleague expresses that in her head she has an image of a large beer and refers to her culture, she is English (British). (Student 26)
>
> The first person intervenes (…) with an extended comment on a personal fantasy about beer, football and her nationality. (Student 24)
>
> I managed to keep listening and to understand what people were saying even though this is not my language. (Student 11)
>
> In this moment a Chilean woman responded. She was sat right behind me and just by hearing her tone of voice (she had already done it before in this session) I felt a movement in my belly, similar to a boiling kettle. I did not know what would be her “contribution” and I am putting this into brackets because generally I feel that this girl never contributes anything, she only complicates the flow of things and seeks attention. (Student 14)

These few comments either pick up statements from other group members (student 26 and 24) or make reference to one’s personal limitations due of a lack of linguistic skills (student 11). Only in one case is a particular person pointed to in a negative way, adding her nationality as some kind of specific information on her personality (Student 14).

However, the student does not extend her negative statement to "all Chileans", rather she uses nationality as a means of identifying, instead of naming, a particular person.

Intercultural themes

During step 4 of the data analysis both researchers highlighted a series of intercultural themes understanding culture as a system of meanings and symbols, which is historically transmitted (Geertz, 1973). The researchers looked at themes of shared identity and common meanings and selected text whenever students made reference to their own belonging of a specific sub-group, where they identified other groups or referred to the group as a whole. Both researchers coincided with their chosen material in 71% of the selected writings, showing some differences mainly in themes around the group facilitator (one researcher included these as belonging to "intercultural themes" whereas the other did not). Here are a series of examples of material chosen by both researchers:

> I connect to the notion that the group needs to re-connect itself every single time it meets because it only exists, at least in my experience, in this space and time physically and symbolically.(Student 19)
>
> Like every weekend when it was time to attend this class I thought: no! Again, I have to meet with these people in this space, this narrow place, but perhaps what I feared most was not the people, nor the experience. Given that when you feel well and you speak well this place and these people can turn into something entertaining.(Student 9)
>
> Today the group spoke about individuality and collectivism. The group that exists and is parts of us, no matter if we are present or how we experience the group. The group leaves a trace for every individual, the individual forms part of the group, even if absent. (Student 32)
>
> They ask her about her attachment to the large group and she says she has no particular fondness for it. My sensation is similar, I get the experience but there are peers with whom I haven't yet attached. (Student 3)

Sub-group identity

Sub-groups were often defined in terms of first and second year students: “the girls in the back from the first year” (Student 15), “I think that the roles of the first and second year have been very present during the entire year” (Student 12), “my sensation of the group is that the division between first and second year had diluted a bit” (Student 31), or

> I wanted to express my thoughts concerning the continuity of the group, directing myself to those from the first year, but I didn’t, in order not to enter into a first-and-second-year-dichotomy. (Student 34)
>
> Several people knock with the back of their fists on the chair and it is mentioned that this code has been established by the sub-group of first-year students to show that they share the opinion or emotion of somebody. (Student 24)

Most importantly, a common theme of those who speak and those who don’t occurred, describing different sub-cultures of the large verbal group:

> He (*the facilitator, note of the authors*) made reference to a sub-group that has been created, situated where I found myself sitting today. He said he had been aware of this already for a few sessions and exactly today, when I find myself in this very place, he names it.(Student 7)
>
> I became nervous and felt the tension generated in the group. At the beginning of the course I used to sit there intending to hide because I did not want to participate; I feel that today I am re-living this sensation and I am happy to see that it has gone and I now feel part of this group. (Student 10)
>
> (…) Just like the subgroup that hides within the group through its silence. (Student 3)
>
> These people who do not speak, this special ghetto or slum, are they included among the people? Or are we one divided country where only those who speak are listened to? (Student 22)
>
> I thought: Why is he putting pressure? Why discriminate? Why make differences and name people who do not speak as a “suburb”? Is this not dividing and separating? Are we not supposed to be one group with a large range of personalities, interests and differences? I felt that suddenly we belonged

> to a "type" of group where my free choice to be as I am was not respected, and that we had to enter pre-designed dynamics. (Student 18)
>
> X. (who was in this suburb) asks Peter directly (*the facilitator, note of the authors*) if he too actually hides. I sense that she does this, moved by the threat to her suburb. (Student 17)
>
> When the person responsible for the "slum of silence" spoke , it was like saying that the words were so important that they have power for every person. (Student 29)

A central and constant theme within the large group of speaking or remaining in silence, as well as the importance of the spoken word, emerged.

Shared norms

Sometimes students referred to an established set of values and the sense of being judged according to the group's norms:

> I identify a lot with the ideas of some regarding the complexity of interaction in the large group, it is something that provokes physical and psychical effects in me. When I think about the impossibility of the other understanding my subjectivity, I get anxious and isolate myself. In fact, this is one of my apprehensions about the large group and it is this idea, which blocks me when it comes to participating in the group dialogue. (Student 19)
>
> I only added to what I had said, that it was part of my vision, a phrase I am lately using more and more frequently and firmly in order to defend myself and my form of existence. Why do we have to defend ourselves? Why do I have the feeling and the image that today's session was like a tribunal, a judgment where everybody feels the necessity to defend themselves and to judge others? (Student 23)

The emerging set of values and the sense of being judged may be linked to the group culture, but may also address the complexity of working experientially within an academic context (see Panhofer et al, 2014; Payne, 1999) where free expression of feelings may collide with traditional academic values, which overvalues the quantifiable and objective measure at the expense of the qualitative and subjective.

Discussion

The above vignettes are suggestive of a tendency for students to avoid referencing themes indicative of cultural diversity (whether national, linguistic or otherwise) and by extension sidestepping any concomitant cultural tensions. This could also, however, be connected to language and setting. Despite the culture of linguistic immersion predominant in Catalan institutional life, the vehicular language of the course is Spanish, *Castellano* as referred to in Spain, from *Castilia*, the very heart of Spain. In our case, this means an intercultural encounter between a variety of forms of Spanish/Castilian, involving: Spanish students from many different parts of Spain; Latin Americans from Central and South America; Catalan students who speak mainly Catalan as their mother tongue and Spanish as a second language. But, the group also contains international students from a range of other places who are using Spanish as their second or third language, finding themselves sometimes in the paradoxical situation of still having to learn a language in order to communicate and to communicate in order to learn (Roberts, 2014).

The common Spanish language in our course facilitates cultural interaction and promotes assimilation and adaptation, but may at times iron-out or homogenize cultural difference. Undoubtedly, some of the micro and macro conditions of discourse present in the writings of the students were lost, too, either during the course of its first translation into Spanish (some international students chose to write in their mother tongue and were asked to translate their writing into Spanish), or during the second translation into English, realized by the authors for this book chapter. Thus a lot of the original linguistic and cultural richness was certainly “lost in translation” (Hoffman,

1989, title) an important characteristic and certainly a limitation of this study. However, the writings allowed us to have a trace of the students' multi-subjective description of a single learning experience. Our training being a master and postgraduate degree in Dance Movement Therapy, there are many other learning spaces where experience depends much less on verbal communication. A series of lectures and experiential classes, connected to the dynamics of DMT or movement observation and analysis, focus solely on the embodied experience and nonverbal communication. This study however does not allow us to look at intercultural themes from a more nonverbal viewpoint. Examples of further related literature would be: Chang, 2006, 2009; Dokter, 1998; Moore & Yamamoto, 2011; Pallaro, 1997; Pylvänäinen, 2008; Stanton-Jones, 1992.

The tendency to not mention or sublimate intercultural themes may also be connected with the social unconscious of the majority local culture, as well as 'the need to fit in' and to avoid attracting attention by remaining within the confines of academic conformism. One student mentioned:

> The response of the group shows me that nobody wants to emphasize the differences in order to "keep the party in peace", without complications, tensions, crisis. Once again I feel that people tend to avoid crisis. (Student 28)

Another student emphasizes even more the necessity to adapt:

> As if they do not participate in the group because they are not interested in it, or because they don't want to show themselves. I don't like to show myself either but I follow the instructions of the group. I try to adapt. The facilitator has drawn attention to the area in the group as being like a cultural suburb. What came to my mind was the culture of the group this year of keeping the door open and disorganizing the space. (Student 27)

The image of "embracing the difference within the group" emerges:

> We said that the same happens here, we are all very different. One peer refers to the fact that there are many differences in the group, but they have not emerged.

> Another colleague says that perhaps it would be better to "embrace our differences". (Student 26)

This image of embracing the differences is also picked up and referenced by others (Student 17, 26, 34) and seems to express a desire to co-exist peacefully, respecting the differences amongst the group members.

Instead of an open intercultural confrontation, cross-cultural communication becomes sublimated and expressed through other more immediate and less culturally and politically sensitive sub-groups, such as generational identities (first and second year groups), professional identities (dancers/movers or psychologists, contemporary or classical trained dancers, etc.), those who speak in the group and those who do not, etc., promoting withdrawal into cultural and not national sub-groupings.

> In the end I sat next to my friends who are my group of reference and who give me confidence, security and even identity as a member of the large group. (Student 4)

> When I saw this in a colleague who formed part of my subgroup I felt as if it had been me who had been talking (Student 9)

> For me it is hard to speak in groups (…) and this is why it is easier to cut myself from the group and have my own subgroup so I don't have to notice what is going on. That way I don't have to face the struggle if I should or should not speak. At least this way I don't have to feel this dilemma, not to feel the physical struggle of constriction, tension and control (Student 15)

By identifying with specific subgroups some of the potential benefits of intercultural (as distinct from multicultural) communication are eroded.

Chang (2006, 2009) statesthat cultural consciousness in DMT education and training is generally not sufficiently addressed. She demands a deeper exploration of one's sociocultural identify in order to be able to work successfully with clients, colleagues, and community members from different backgrounds. We agree with Chang on the

importance of addressing and working through one's own cultural identity and exploring one's personal habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) during the course of a DMT training. From our experience however we also see that intercultural issues cannot always be addressed in a directive manner but may need to emerge via different themes of subgrouping. Weinberg (2003) warns how groups can become blocked and stuck in the differentiation phase of development. The effectiveness of groups with people coming from many different cultures is determined by how much its members feel free to discuss their feelings about the group. Only when members of the group feel free to express criticism or caring for each other the group can advance effectively (White, 1994).

Qing, Schweisfurth, and Daya (2009) confirm the co-existence of belonging and alienation for international students who are exposed to intercultural experiences. Learners initially fear and then appreciate the new ways of learning. In order to survive successfully, students must create a coherent trajectory out of these fragments and contradictions: "The cross-cultural is not only within the intercultural: it is within themselves" (Qing et al, 2009, p.14).

During the particular large group session assessed, important themes such as talking or remaining in silence emerged, and sub-cultures related to who do or who don't speak were clearly identified amongst the group. This has clearly helped many students to identify these intercultural themes within themselves, for example, when one student explained eloquently:

> I am saying good-bye with words because thanks to words I can bring all this into an order, thanks to words I can live in "slums", knowing that one day I can move to another part of the town, knowing that I won't need to hide in these ghettos any

> more (…), but I hope the moment will come when I will be able to express myself. (Student 9)

Even though this is a training in DMT, the capacity of students to express themselves and to communicate verbally is of course an important value in academic culture, as it is specifically within this large verbal group.

Conclusions

The examination and analysis of the students' writings have shown clearly that intercultural themes tended to be avoided, i.e., not directly confronted, but were, nonetheless, present having been sublimated and disguised in other forms. We argue that most probably this is an indicator of these issues being either too threatening or considered irrelevant by the students to their core academic and training goals, whether because of the academic setting or the constellation of the training group. Instead, other themes of subgrouping emerged around criteria connected to the university background, such as generational, professional, verbal and non-verbal etc. identities. Bearing in mind intercultural aspects as we encounter them in our training and within the Catalan reality is certainly vital, however we also value that they can be worked through via other issues of personal and subgroup identity, suggesting that the cross-cultural does not only exist within intercultural exchanges, but within every individual and can be worked through any group and individuation process.

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APPENDIX I

Time (one hour) was set aside in the schedule for the post-group data collecting activity. Directly after the session students were given two sheets, the first containing the following:

> Today, you are taking part in a piece of research, which is focused upon bringing together in a single jointly told narrative the subjective experiences of all (or most) of the participants in a single session (the ninth out of ten) of the large group. The aim of this project is to contribute to the understanding of group analytic large groups, particularly within the context of DMT training. My aim is at some point to publish our jointly told narrative. All participants would be credited as co-authors. I am deeply grateful for your interest and participation in this project.
> Please describe, in as much detail as you can, today's session of the large group. Include your own perceptions, i.e., what you heard and observed, thoughts, feelings, sensations, fantasies and bodily experiences.
> With thanks.

The second sheet contained two lists of commitments and responsibilities of both researcher and student in participating in this research, PLUS permission form for the students to sign giving the researcher permission to make use of their contribution.

The students were given a maximum of 45 minutes to handwrite their description of the session. The descriptions were then handed over to the researcher.

At a later date, the researcher scanned the hand written sheet and sent each student their version. Their task was then to transcribe the hand written version to a word processed version without making any changes. Those students who hand wrote the original in their mother tongue were asked to also translate their version to Spanish. Only a total of 35 writings were transcribed by the students and send to the researcher. This raw data of 35 writings was processes by the authors.