A Quantitative Case Study of Well-being Support at Vantaa Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja

Uosukainen, Mia
Friman, Jennifer

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences
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Friman, Jennifer
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Jennifer Friman, Mia Uosukainen

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The purpose of this study was to determine how effectively the Vantaa Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja (WRCP) supports the well-being of their clients. Client experiences and the acquisition of a continuation path were examined in order to answer this question.

The study was based on concepts of well-being and effectiveness. These were used to determine a system of measurement for the data. Six components were identified as indicators of well-being support: Self-acceptance, Autonomy, Positive Relationships with Others, Purpose in Life, Personal Growth and Environmental Mastery. In addition, multicultural social work and empowerment theories were used to support our study.

The method chosen for this research was a quantitative case study. The data was obtained from the centre and consisted of records and feedback forms gathered by other researchers. The data was collected from 2009-2012 and included 106 clients. Frequency distribution was used to analyze client perspectives. Additionally, cross-tabulation was employed to investigate the relationship between gaining a continuation path and the length of client-hood.

The client data demonstrated all six indicators of well-being support. The continuation path data also complied with the indicators. The majority of clients reported skill and knowledge development. Also, confidence to participate at the centre was high. The findings also showed that a continuation path was gained by most of the clients. From this information, we concluded that the WRCP is effective in the well-being support of its clients.

This study has illuminated the importance of services geared towards well-being support for immigrant women in Vantaa. This topic was researched to develop services at the WRCP.

Key words: Well-being, Effectiveness, Empowerment, Multicultural Social Work, Immigrant Women

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1. Introduction

"I can promise you that women working together – linked, informed and educated - can bring peace and prosperity to this forsaken planet."
-Isabel Allende

Finland is still relatively new to immigration and immigration policy. Presently in Finland, the foreign population has been steadily increasing. As of 2011, there were 183,133 immigrants living in Finland, not including refugees and asylum seekers. (Ministry of the Interior, 2011) The number of immigrants in Vantaa is 14,775, making up 7.3% of the population. With this increase, comes the need for more services directed towards immigrant needs. Women account for nearly half of the immigrant population in Finland and this creates a need for women-specific programs. (Statistics Finland, 2011)

From 1987- 2011, 7,433 women have immigrated to Vantaa. (Statistics Finland, 2011) The Vantaa Women's Resource Centre called Pihlaja (WRCP) is a place where these women can go to learn and interact in a multicultural environment. This organization caters to immigrant women in Vantaa, assisting them in their integration process. Currently, immigrants are entitled to an integration plan within their first three years of residence. The plan primarily focuses on learning language and gaining employment. There is less of a focus on the holistic well-being of immigrants. The service-users who come to the centre are clients who did not find a path through the conventional integration plan. In addition to helping the women find a continuation path, the centre aspires to promote the well-being of the women by increasing their skill-set, knowledge base and social networks.

In this thesis, we are evaluating the effectiveness of the WRCP in the well-being support of their clients. To do this, we will be doing a quantitative case study. The factors we will be considering are client profile, client experiences of the centre, and a cross-tabulation of the length of client-hood in relation to the continuation path. This will be covered in depth in the Methods and Design section. To reach a conclusion on the effectiveness of Pihlaja, we will be analyzing the aforementioned aspects using our theoretical framework as our guide.

The theoretical framework for this thesis was selected with careful consideration of our research question. We also looked at the task presented to us and the factors that we would be examining. Therefore, our main theory consists of well-being, multicultural social work practice and empowerment. In addition, we explore literature on effectiveness to assist us in our research. We will also be investigating previous studies related to our topic.

We feel this topic is important because it gives us the opportunity to make a significant contribution that will potentially have a positive effect in the organization's provision of services.

2. Background and Purpose of the Work

We came to this thesis through a personal contact who is involved with the centre. She mentioned that they had various research projects available and that if we were interested, we would be able to do our thesis in partnership with them. Being immigrant women ourselves and having gone through a process of integration, it was an interesting topic for us to view from a different perspective. The centre was interested in evaluating their effectiveness, and well-being was one of the topics that could be researched. Since it has been such a prevalent subject in our schooling, we felt that it was highly suitable for a thesis study.

In this study, well-being is directly related to the integration process which can be narrow, hard to find, and does not necessarily cater to individual needs and capabilities. We are interested in the culturally sensitive model that the centre is working to develop. It differs from the commonly used employment-focused model of integration and explores well-being from a more holistic perspective.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an objective review of Vantaa Women's Resource Center Pihlaja and determine whether their services support the well-being of their clients. To do this, we will be reviewing theory related to the topic, the profile of the centre and its clients, as well as examining what the clients gain from their time at the centre. The goal is to determine the factors that contribute to the center's support of their clients.

2.1 Working Life Partner

The working life partner for this thesis project is the Vantaa Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja. The Centre was started in October 2009 under the Vantaa Nicehearts Association. They offer a place for learning and interaction for women from different cultures, age ranges, backgrounds and life situations. The main objectives of the overall organization are to, "Improve girls and women's well-being; to promote the integration process of foreigners and improve their regional participation; and to help girls and women build their self-confidence, promote equality and multicultural activities." (http://www.nicehearts.com. 2012)

The WRCP work to support clients' integration into society through providing an arena for multicultural social interaction. Their goal is to help women find paths to integration through employment, continuing education, or training programs. This is referred to as finding a 'Continuation path' or a 'jatkopolku' in Finnish. 'Continuation path' is a term we will be using throughout the thesis to describe this phenomena. Specific continuation paths can be, but are not limited to: language courses, schooling, apprenticeships, internships, income support or finding a workplace. (http://www.nicehearts.com. 2012)

Pihlaja works to develop cooperation between different actors. This cooperation can be seen between their different projects. There are three projects in the centre and while they all work together, they each have individual areas of responsibility. These projects are: Nice project, Kultsi project and Qutomo project. The Nice project was the first project to be implemented and began in October of 2009. The Vantaa employment office recommends individuals to Nice project if they feel they might benefit from the services provided there. The Nice project takes clients in for training programs and working life coaching. These agreements are typically arranged in three month blocks and extended as necessary. During this training time, the clients are taught civics skills, Finnish language, computer and communication skills, networking skills, employment and working life, health knowledge, domestic and crafting skills. The goal is to raise their language skills so they can apply for the general language examination (YKI-testi) and have better employment possibilities. They can take on fifteen trainees at a time and they work year round. The goal of these internships is to introduce the clients to working life in Finland. The clients are not pushed to achieve certain goals at certain times, but to go at a speed which is comfortable for them.
The clients are coached individually in finding work or another type of continuation path. Another aim of the project is to develop new working models between the public, private and third-sector parties. The internships take place at Pihlaja. The women are there weekdays from 9-14 and can work in catering or crafting services, as well as helping in the centre. The project is operated by a project director and a group leader. They take care of the operations

of the project. The aim of the project is to build general competence, health and promote holistic well-being, as well as, ease the transition into working life.

The Kultsi project was the second project begun in March of 2011. It was created to answer the needs of immigrant women beyond the Nice project or other Ministry of Labour programs. It works to develop a culturally sensitive social support working model. This project aims to support women from different cultures. They do this by identifying the strengths and areas for development, as well as special characteristics and needs of the client in order to come up with appropriate solutions. They also aim to develop new ways of working, they offer civics education, promote group activities and through those activities encourage the individual's participation and support their integration. Kultsi works together with clients, female volunteers and public, private and third-sector actors to create a cooperative learning environment and meeting place. The goal is to develop a new culturally sensitive social working model. This working method makes it possible to find solutions for existing problems through dialogue and helps to achieve the goals of the project. All the clients of the centre are welcome to join the centre's voluntary activities such as "Tea and Sympathy"; a crafting and discussion group, "Let's Read Together"; a casual Finnish learning group and other discussion groups and lectures offered by the centre.

Qutomo began in June of 2012. This project aims to work with various parties involved in immigration and integration policies and issues, to develop a new culturally and gender sensitive integration path. Their target groups are immigrants from non-EU countries (not including refugees), city officials, along with experts from different fields. These groups are brought together into a cooperation forum which is hosted four times a year. The forum topics cover integration and factors affecting integration. They also include cultural and gender sensitivity topics. An important principle of the forums is to promote face-to-face dialogue between participants and encourage the exchange of information and ideas. Qutomo and Kultsi are working together to create a culturally and gender sensitive integration path which connects the immigrants and the necessary service providers.

This thesis work is being implemented under the supervision of the Kultsi Project. It will be used to develop operations at the centre and will also be applied in various official capacities, such as applying for funding, in the year-end report and for research and development purposes.

2.2 Client Profile

The main clientele of the centre are immigrant women of varying backgrounds. They come from nearly every continent and fall into a variety of age ranges and education levels. The centre's clientele does not include refugee and asylum-seeking immigrant women. Pihlaja is also frequented by volunteers, both Finns and non-Finns that come to socialize and interact with the clients.

The resource centre's service-users come to the centre from many avenues and for varying reasons. While many come for the training and education, others may come for the social interaction and networking opportunities. Many women, particularly those who start out in the Nice project, are recommended by the Vantaa Ministry of Labor office or the Vantaa city employment services. They are sent to the centre because they perhaps do not fit the integration policy of the offices, or then the officials feel the women would benefit more from the training, education and life coaching that Pihlaja offers. Other Pihlaja service-users come to the centre through friends, or from information they found on the internet or other media outlets. Nice project requires a recommendation from the employment office, but Kultsi project is volunteer-based and open for all. Qutomo project receives its participants from public, private and third-sector parties, whom are active in immigration and integration issues, as well as from the centre's client base, universities and other third-country nationals.

The following charts will demonstrate the broad spectrum of clients at the centre. This information shows the data of 106 women that have been clients at Pihlaja from 2009-2012. The raw data was provided to us in two different sets, which we then combined to create the general profile of the clients. The two sets of data covered two time periods from 2009-2011 and from March to August 2012.

FIGURE 1: AGE OF PIHLAJA CLIENTS
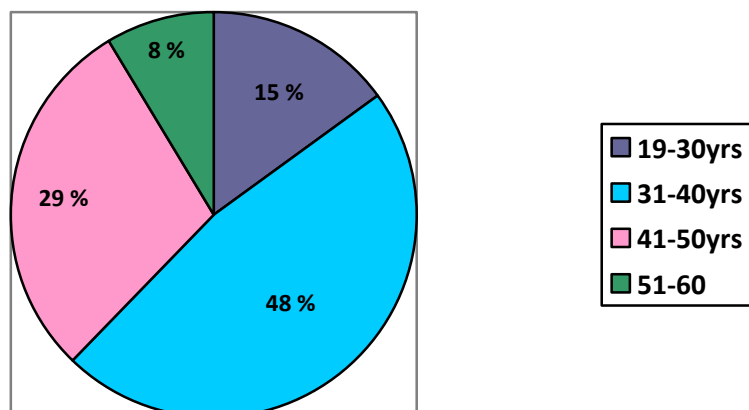
As can be seen on this chart, the age range is very broad at the centre. While the largest number of the clients represented here fall between the ages of 31-40 years old, more than half are outside that range as well. This is important to note since different age groups may have different needs. These age ranges are typically indicative of different stages of life, and when it comes to seeking a continuation path, that is highly relevant. Clearly the continuation path options for a thirty-one year old mother of two would be significantly different from those of a fifty year old woman, who may only have a basic level of schooling.

FIGURE 2: EDUCATION LEVEL OF PIHLAJA CLIENTS
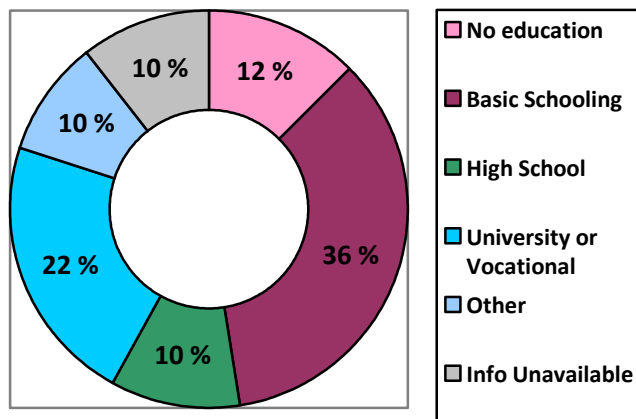
The education levels of the clients at Pihlaja are also quite varied. There are women with little to no education that perhaps do not even know how to read and write. There are also university graduates and people trained in specific vocations. This along with the other charts should show that having a narrow integration path, with limited options is clearly not suitable for all the immigrants coming to Finland. The centre aims to help these women find a continuation path that suits them and uses the knowledge and abilities they already have.

FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF YEARS LIVING IN FINLAND
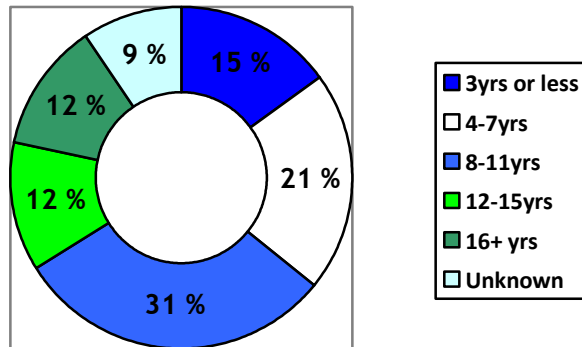
Most of the clients of the centre are long term residents in Finland, some living here as many as twenty years. There are many reasons why they come to the centre as clients. Some have come from being stay-at-home parents, others have had a change in their life and many are recommended through the Ministry of Labor. It can be seen from the chart that nearly all of the clients have been in Finland for more than three years. This can be linked in to Finnish integration policy and the integration plan that immigrants are entitled to when they come to Finland.

Finnish integration law gives every immigrant, when they meet the criteria, the right to an integration plan which is arranged between the individual and the employment office. An immigrant is only entitled to an integration plan within the first three years of residency in Finland. This can be extended by two years if it is needed. This is only in cases of illiteracy or if the person has not completed basic education, or in a case of medical limitations and parental leave. The plan is made to support integration and promote employment opportunities. This support can come in many forms, such as information services, civics education, language education, internships, education programs or skill training, basic education skills, translation services when needed and other factors that can be seen to forward the integration effort. (Finlex 493/1999, section 6-11)

The limitations of the integration plan have been criticized in multiple forums. The main problems highlighted in it are the time limits and lack of resources. Often there are not enough courses available, making for long waiting periods between courses. This affects the time allowed for the integration process, cutting into the three year limit. The lack of resources results in a lack of levels in language teaching and other course offerings. This creates a classroom filled with varying skill and education levels where one may be highly educated and another cannot read or write. (Heikkilä & Peltonen, 2002)

The chart shows that many of the women have been in Finland far longer than three years, making them ineligible for the integration plan. Nevertheless, they still need guidance and support to integrate into Finnish society and into working life.

FIGURE 4: AMOUNT OF TIME AS A PIHLAJA CLIENT
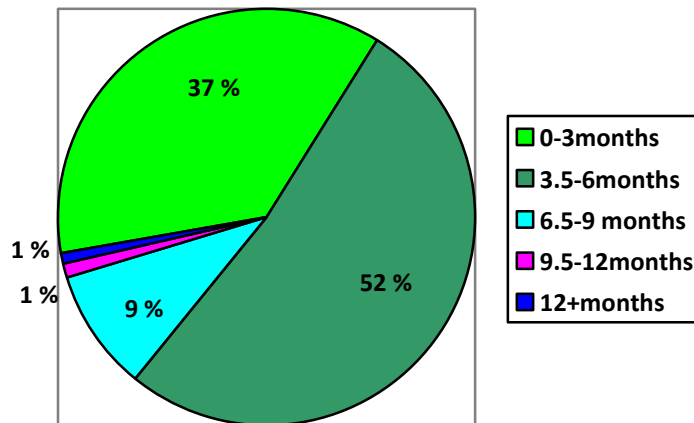
This figure shows the amount of time spent as a client of the centre for the 106 clients. In some cases a client came back to the centre a second time, in which case the two time periods have been added together and the total amount of months was calculated.

The service-users of the centre are typically registered, unemployed job seekers that have been unemployed for an extended period of time. Generally, their language skills are not developed, and they often have limited professional training or experience in working life. They do not always have the knowledge to manage everyday things like using the bank system, or civics knowledge. Some come to the centre to develop their social networks while others come for internships or language development. In general, the clients of the WRCP have come with the goal of improving an aspect of their life, whether by gaining new knowledge, easing the transition to working life, or just making new friends. If the centre helps the clients to reach these goals, it lends to the centre's effectiveness in supporting their well-being.

3. Theoretical Background

The main concepts we reviewed for this thesis were well-being and effectiveness. In addition to these, we also looked at literature on multicultural social work (MSW) and empowerment to provide a foundation for the study.

3.1 Well-being

Well-being is a complex concept to define as it has many broad definitions. There is no universal agreement as to what it is. However, most definitions include well-being as referring to what is good for an individual and/or group. (McGillivray & Clarke 2007) The lack of clear definition makes the concept of well-being difficult to quantify without specifying what we mean by it. For the purposes of this study, we defined well-being as the development of skills, knowledge and social networks, as well as, having found a continuation path. This was supported by the definition found in 'Understanding Human Well-Being' edited by Clarke and McGillivray 2007, which states;

 "The term 'well-being' is used to denote the quality of life as a whole and to evaluate life aspects such as dwelling conditions or employment chances." (McGillivray & Clarke 2007, 74)

There were other definitions of well-being that were beneficial in guiding our research. For example, "multidimensional well-being" takes the focus off of a purely economic and employment centered concept of well-being and broadens it to include a wider range of factors denoting the quality of life as a whole. This encompasses social aspects, the need to interact and adapt to norms. (Addabbo & Picchio, 2009) This facilitated the holistic approach that we took to this topic, where we looked at well-being as more than just finding work. To determine well-being, it is important to consider an individual's own evaluation of their situation. (Krueger 2009) For this reason, we used client perspectives of the centre and their experiences there, in this study.

Since we are examining the concept of well-being and looking at effective ways of measuring its components, we wanted to find out if there was some kind of measuring system in which we could do this. An article entitled "The Impact of Cultural Internalisation and Integration on Well-being Among Tricultural Individuals" from 2004 used six characteristics for measuring well-being. (Downie, Koestner, ElGeledi & Cree 2004) They adapted a model known as Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being to their study. This model consists of six elements used to measure well-being. These are: Self-Acceptance, Autonomy, Positive Relationships with Others, Purpose in Life, Person*al Growth, and Environmental Mastery. (Ryff & Singer, 1996)*

We felt these could also be applied to our study as a way to measure well-being. Ryff's scales are originally designed as an inventory of about 84 questions on a rating scale of one to six. We adapted and simplified for our purposes, using the components and equating them to our variable. If the components of well-being were present, then we can draw the conclusion that well-being is present.

For the purpose of this study, we used these six dimensions to determine whether the experiences of the clients and finding a continuation path were indicative of the centre supporting their well-being. While many of these principles were self-explanatory, we felt that it was important to define how we used them in this study. For the purposes of this study, Self-Acceptance referred to the level of confidence that the clients felt in order to participate in, and be part of the centre's activities. We looked at Autonomy in how it related to the client's ability to be part of their own decision-making process and affect their own path. This aspect also tied in nicely to the concept of empowerment. Positive Relationships with Others denoted the social interaction and networking skills of the client. We considered Purpose in Life to equate to continuation paths. Personal Growth indicated the development of skills and knowledge and social growth. Finally, we related Environmental Mastery to integrating into society and developing skills and knowledge for working life. (Ryff & Singer, 1996)

For the reasons mentioned above, we considered skill and knowledge development and social competence an integral part of measuring well-being. These are aspects of integration, which tie into the concept of multiculturalism. Multicultural social work is a part of multiculturalism and as such, the definition of multiculturalism can also be applied. Multiculturalism is defined as:

"…a philosophy that acknowledges and values diversity in society and describes the various tangible (that is, economic) and intangible (for example, social) benefits that result from different ethnic, cultural, racial and religious groups living together. Its goal is to support the full political, social and economic integration of all members of society."
(Gray & Webb 2009, 98)

If multiculturalism is a philosophy of holistic integration, it follows that multicultural social work shares those principles as it falls under multiculturalism. Therefore, it also effectively ties in with well-being as it is defined in this thesis.

3.2 Multicultural Social Work

The theory behind multicultural social work (MSW) is highly relevant to our thesis, as the WRCP works closely with culturally diverse women, with the goal of supporting their well-being and promoting their integration into Finnish society. They also seek ways to build on their knowledge and skills in order to guide their clients in attaining a better quality of life.The professionals at the centre strive to achieve cultural competence and aim to develop the effectiveness of their services. Becoming culturally competent and developing effective multicultural social work practices are also key elements of multicultural social work. (Sue 2006) Through the different projects at the centre, the WRCP aims to empower their clients to find a continuation path thereby empowering them to take charge of their own lives. One way they do this is by having outside parties such as thesis students review certain aspects of their centre. We felt this theoretical background would be most useful to us by providing guiding principles and helping us recognize the various elements of effective multicultural social work. Becoming culturally competent and developing effective working models are key elements of multicultural social work. Cultural competence also referred to as cultural sensitivity is a main pillar in the working model of WRCP. It ties into their projects, groups and general client workings.

"Cultural competence is the ability to engage in actions or create conditions that maximize the optimal development of client and client systems. Culturally competent social work practice is defined as the service provider's acquisition of awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society (ability to communicate, interact, negotiate, and intervene on behalf of clients from diverse backgrounds), and on an organizational/societal level, advocating effectively to develop new theories, practices, policies, and organizational structures that are more responsive to all groups." (Sue 2006, 29)

There are four goals of cultural competence. The first is "Becoming Aware of One's Own Assumptions, Values and Biases about Human Behaviour". This states that certain views can prevent the development of a good working relationship with clients. Assumptions that individual ideas are shared by all groups can lead to acts of cultural oppression. It is important not to let personal views interfere with client work. (Sue 2006, 24-28)

The second goal is, "Understanding the Worldview of Culturally Diverse Clients". In order to be culturally competent, it is important to be aware of personal worldviews and not to push them on someone else. Research supports the idea that worldviews are influenced by the group one belongs to. In addition, it is becoming more apparent that there are differing views between members of minority and dominant cultures. Worldviews are connected to cultural upbringing and personal experiences and it is important to be accepting of different

worldviews in a nonjudgmental way. One good way of doing this is by learning more about the cultural background of the client. (Sue 2006, 24-28)

It is important for social workers to be able to view the client both as having similar values as all people, but also to be able to look at the needs that may stem from individual or cultural background. These are important in recognizing and helping the clients achieve their goals. (Valtonen 2008)

The third goal is "Developing Appropriate Intervention Strategies and Techniques". This goal asserts that it is essential for social work to establish suitable and efficient ways of helping, teaching, communicating, as well as, developing effective intervention strategies when working with culturally diverse people. (Sue 2006, 24-28)

"Effectiveness in helping clients is most likely enhanced when the social worker uses intervention modalities and defines goals that are consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of clients." (Sue 2006, 27)

It is important to remember that sometimes equal treatment can be discriminatory treatment. There is a difference between equal treatment and equal access and opportunities. People are different and as such, different approaches are necessary in order to be compatible with individual experiences. (Sue 2006) The different projects at the centre aim to acknowledge the differences between their clients and they do not apply the same working methods to everyone or in all situations.

The fourth goal is "Understanding Organizational and Institutional Forces that Enhance or Negate Cultural Competence". Even if a social worker is culturally competent, it won't be very beneficial if the organization that they work for uses monocultural policies and practices. Oftentimes, organizational methods do not employ cultural knowledge or skills and some may even purposefully hinder multicultural expressions. "Ascertaining what the organizational culture is like, what policies or practices either facilitate or impede cultural diversity, and how to implement change is crucial." (Sue 2006, 24-28)

Cultural competence is a crucial component to this thesis, as the centre has, and is working to develop, a culturally and gender sensitive working model and integration process. This is evident in their projects. A worker who is actively and continually making the effort to develop his cultural competence will be more effective in providing quality guidance to their clients, thereby having a better chance at successfully promoting their well-being. Personal and professional growth are vital to developing cultural competence. (Sue 2006)

The three components of cultural competence are Awareness, Knowledge and Skills. Awareness refers to being mindful of one's own values and biases and valuing and respecting differing views. A culturally competent social worker is at ease with the differences such as those related to culture and gender and do not see those differences as abnormal. Knowledge of various culturally diverse groups can increase the effectiveness of social workers in their work with clients from different backgrounds. A culturally competent social worker must also encompass a broader range of skills in different counseling styles to accommodate clients who may not respond to the conventional methods. (Sue 2006) These components can also relate to an organization as a whole where the elements of awareness, knowledge and skills are present. More knowledge equates to a higher level of effectiveness and through our research for the centre, we are giving them valuable knowledge which they can use to be more effective for their clients.

As a social worker, being culturally competent is important in the kind of relationship that is formed with the clients and it affects how the work is carried out. If one is unaware of the assumptions, values and biases that one carries, then that increases the risk of being culturally oppressive. It is essential to be self-reflective and self-aware so that oppressive ideas and practices do not influence or interfere with the work. (Sue 2006)

According to the Cultural Competence and Social Diversity of the Code of Ethics, "social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups." (National Association of Social Workers. 1999 quoted in Sue 2006, 23-24)

A culturally competent facilitator will be more capable of providing gender and culturally sensitive services to better support the well-being of their client. When an organization encompasses all of the core competencies, clients will benefit. Workers will be more self-aware, have knowledge about their clients and possess the necessary skills in order to effectively guide their clients in an empowering way. (Sue 2006)

3.3 Empowerment

Empowerment is one of the goals of the work being done at The Vantaa Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja. According to their working model, the helpers work together with clients and consider their individual strengths and needs in order to come up with solutions for an appropriate plan.

Empowerment has been described as a goal, a process and even a type of intervention which caused some confusion for us, but the definition that we felt related best to our study was empowerment as a process in which the power of service-users is increased so that they can take control of, and better their own life circumstances. Empowerment aims to assist clients in acquiring power over making decisions and taking action in their own lives by lessening social or personal restraints to exerting power, by building the self-confidence and the ability to use power and by shifting power from outside sources to the clients. (Ewalt, Freeman, Kirk & Poole 1996)

"An empowering approach requires focusing on helping clients to gain more control of their lives, to become aware of, and use their own personal resources, to overcome obstacles in meeting their needs and aspirations, to have their voice heard in decision-making and to be able to challenge situations where they experience inequality and oppression. Empowerment requires making links between clients' personal positions and structural inequalities. This involves helping clients understand how things have happened to them and trying to find ways in which they can gain control over at least some aspects of lives." (Payne 1997, 259)

The empowerment approach is built on cultivating a strong and confident sense of self and building knowledge and competence, as well as developing the tactics and skills necessary to accomplish individual and community goals. (Payne 2005) These features are also present in well-being as it is defined here in our thesis.

As we discussed in multicultural social work, a culturally competent facilitator is better equipped to provide more empowering and effective guidance and services. (Sue 2006)

Effectiveness was a key concept in this thesis since determining effectiveness was the precise goal of this paper. In the following section, we will define effectiveness as it relates to this study. We felt that effectiveness tied in well with empowerment and so they will be discussed simultaneously throughout the paper.

"Despite much apparently straightforward use of the word, 'effectiveness' is not something which has an object-like reality 'out there' waiting to be observed and measured. Like any other data, empirical evidence about the effectiveness of social policies and programmes is a product of data collection procedures and the assumptions on which they are based. The concept of effectiveness derives from particular ways of thinking and makes sense only in relation to its context." (Cheetham, Fuller, McIvor & Petch 1997, 9)

One way of defining effectiveness from a social work perspective is simply by answering the question 'are the services of an organization making an impact on the service-users?' This view is from a more administrative perspective. Looking at the same definition from a client's view

point, the question being asked to determine effectiveness would be 'What benefit do I get from this place, and does it improve my life in some way?' These questions are evident of a client-centred approach to determine effectiveness and will be probed throughout this research. To define effectiveness, we reviewed the relevant literature, examined the aims of the centre and looked at what our working life partner considered to be effective. One of the centre's measures of effectiveness is the client's attainment of a continuation path. They also place importance on the length of time that it takes for a client to find a continuation path. In comparing these components with the data, we will determine whether or not the centre is effective. (Cheetham et al. 1997)

"The goal of effective practice is not coping or adaptation but an increase in the actual power of the client or community so that action can be taken to change and prevent the problems clients are facing." (Gutierrez, Glen, Maye, & DeLois 1995, 249-258)

Effective practice, as can be seen in the preceding quote, is tied directly to the concept of gaining power and client involvement. At Pihlaja, clients receive knowledge and training and other support services to increase their capacity and competence, thereby enabling them to take charge of their own lives. This falls precisely in line with empowerment and is supported by Payne in Modern Social Work Theory with the statement:

"Empowerment is a process through which workers support clients to identify the full range of possibilities which might meet clients' needs. The work centres on helping clients to make decisions which affect their lives." (Payne 2005, 306)

3.4 Previous Studies

According to statistics, and as mentioned in the introduction there are 183,133 immigrants living in Finland, excluding asylum seekers and refugees. (Ministry of the Interior 2011) Of these, nearly 15,000 reside in Vantaa, where they account for just over 7% of the population. With the ever growing number of immigrants in Finland, the amount of research about immigrants are increasing, and it is becoming a more prevalent and relevant topic in social research.

Much research in the field of immigrants in Finland is not gender specific. Often there is a focus on employment, current integration policy and language skills. While it is not challenging to find literature related to immigrants in Finland, research on their holistic well-being and cultural sensitivity in relation to them is limited.

Salla Tuori, a PhD in Sociology from Åbo Akademi University, has done several researches on cultural and gender sensitivity. This was beneficial in understanding the centre's aims better, as well as getting a better grasp on the concept of multiculturalism, which is another theme among her works. The main study from Tuori which we looked at was: Cooking nation: Gender Equality and Multiculturalism as Nation-Building Discourses (2007). This concentrated on gender equality and multiculturalism in a Finnish context. It explored how gender equality is considered an implicit part of Finnish society, while multiculturalism is seen as something that is outside or 'other'. The article proposes that gender equality and multiculturalism are in fact tied together and rely on each other. This is supportive of the cultural and gender sensitive model used in the centre, and in that sense it supported parts of our research.

Through The Migration Institute of Finland, we found other articles related to immigration which we used to inform our research and build on our information. The article "Immigrants and Integration in Finland" (Heikkilä & Peltonen 2002) provided us with a better understanding of the current integration policy in Finland. It offered a well-argued critique of the current system, citing lack of resources, too limited time span and a lack of options available as reasons why the current system may be ineffective. In addition to providing a better understanding of integration policy, this article was beneficial to our research on the client profile.

Another article related to immigrant research was "Labour Market Participation of Immigrants in Finland and its Regions" by Elli Heikkilä.(2012) As the name suggests, this was more geared towards employment and labour market research than well-being. However, it did give us some background information on comparative employment statistics between immigrants and Finns. We learned that Immigrants in Finland have an unemployment rate nearly three times higher than that of the Finns. This gave us some context for our thesis, although we did not use the article in our study.

In addition to these, the paper by Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder on Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being (2001) gave us a tie in for well-being and integration. It also helped us to understand the integration idea as it is conceptualized in Finland and other countries. The study pointed out how ethnic and national identity affected adaptation and well-being for immigrants in four different countries. It pointed out the four acculturation strategies which are assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. Finland was one of the countries examined in this study, and interestingly, the study mentioned that despite the focus on 'integration' in policy and law, Finland's acculturation strategy is actually much closer to assimilation than integration. Since it was not gender specific, nor did it delve into the Finnish context very deeply, it was only superficially related to our report,

but as with the previous literature, it gave us a context in which to work in and helped to make us more knowledgeable on the subject matter.

Among the material that was used to inform our study, we did find one essay that was highly relevant to our topic. It specifically looked at clients of the Women's Resource Center Pihlaja. The essay, entitled: 'Facilitating Integration of Immigrant Women in Vantaa: Examining the Case of the Women's Resource Center Pihlaja' discussed the topic of integration and acculturation and the challenges facing migrant women, specifically the clients of Pihlaja in these areas. (Sakilayan-Latvala 2012)

It is related to our own study because it focuses on the WRCP and their clients, although it differs in the approach and the topic of study. This particular study is beneficial in providing input on how the centre supports the integration of the clients and we are also using it to supplement data about the centre itself. Our work varied from this essay because we examined the well-being of the clients and how effectively the centre supports this. We are examining this using multicultural social work theory, well-being and empowerment. This essay provides valuable information about integration and acculturation which are integral aspects of the WRCP and the experiences of their clients.

All of these studies and articles helped to direct and inform our research and guided us to different source materials relevant to our thesis. This has been very helpful in providing a holistic perspective of the centre and was instrumental in helping us delve into the concept of 'culturally sensitive practice'.

4. Methods and Design

4.1 Research Question

The Women's Resource Center Pihlaja (WRCP) is working to develop the services of the centre to make them more effective for their clients. The Kultsi project is currently the project responsible for this. As part of this aim, they asked us to review the effectiveness of the centre in supporting the well-being of the clients. In light of this, our research question was: How effective is the Women's Resource Center Pihlaja in supporting the well-being of their clients? Since we were not associated with the centre, we were able to provide an objective answer to this question. We hypothesized that the centre would prove to be effective in supporting their clients' well-being. To test this, we reviewed the profile of the centre and clients, as well as the client perceptions of the centre. We took these variables and compared them with our theoretical background.

In order to answer whether the WRCP is effective in supporting their clients' well-being, we had to identify the factors that would best answer the question and determine whether our hypothesis was correct. In looking at the data, we examined the overall profile of the centre and the clients, to develop a canvas on which to illustrate the centre's effectiveness. The factors we analyzed from the data were the clients' perspectives on their skill and knowledge development through the centre and also the correlation between the amount of time as a client of the centre and finding a continuation path. These factors were then compared to the six indicators of well-being support.

4.2 Research Method: Quantitative Case Study

In order to answer the research question and resolve the hypothesis, a research method and study design were determined. For this study, the research method was quantitative research, and the design of the study was a case study.

Quantitative research is a method which involves gathering and analyzing data in numerical form. It is related to the concept that things can be measured concretely, and that the world is directly knowable. (Jupp 2006, 250) This method is useful for studying larger groups. According to the Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods:

"The defining factor is that numbers result from the process, whether the initial data collection produced numerical values, or whether non-numerical values were subsequently converted to numbers as part of the analysis process, as in content analysis" (Jupp 2006, 250)

Quantitative research is a deductive research strategy. A deductive strategy in research means starting with theory and what is known about the subject, and from that creating a hypothesis or educated guess as to what the outcome of the study will be. The hypothesis and theory are then used to direct the research. It narrows the focus of the study, so that the research questions are answered. (Bryman 2008, 9-11)

There are many different study designs which can be applied in quantitative research, but for this study, the most applicable was a case study. A case study is a detailed, descriptive analysis of a single group, community, individual, situation, phenomena or organization. In this case we were looking at a single organization; The Women's Resource Center Pihlaja. This study design can also be applied in qualitative research, but the wishes of our working life partner directed us towards a quantitative approach. There are different approaches to case studies, and for the purpose of this study we used a representative or typical case, meaning we were not studying a specific phenomenon or event, but rather the overall, everyday

results of the centre. We looked at the effectiveness of the centre in regards to client well-being. For the case study, we used survey data and statistics about the clients and their experiences. We also created a detailed profile of the clients based on two sets of data provided by the centre. Case studies are typically used to provide a comprehensive overview and to examine the specific case. They are not used to make broad generalizations. Case studies have a tendency to use different types of data in conjunction with each other. This allows for a more rounded view of the case. (Pole & Lampard 2002, 288)

Quantitative case study was the best fit for this research for several reasons. A case study allows for intensive analysis of a given organization, but the conclusions made cannot be used to generalize about all situations. In this case, that was a good thing, since our main research question was specifically about this organization and its clients. Quantitative was the best approach to take because it allowed us to process a lot more data, which in turn provided a more concrete answer to Pihlaja's effectiveness. Using larger amounts of data allowed us to generalize about the overall success of the centre. Also, having a number of respondents impacted the reliability of the information. In addition to these reasons for doing a quantitative case study, another compelling reason was that our working life partner had requested it, and the data they provided us with was quantitative as well. The issue they asked us to look at also lent itself more to quantitative research than to qualitative. This is because it required a broad statement of whether the centre was effective in supporting the clients' well-being. To determine effectiveness, if the results are to be reliable, we needed a large amount of data, and also a clear measurement. For these reasons, a quantitative case study was the most efficient methodology for this thesis.

4.3 Data Collection Methodology

The primary method for data collection in this study was the use of records and feedback forms which had been filled out by the clients prior to our involvement with the centre. The WRCP provided us with two different sets of quantitative data. One set represented data relating to the client's profiles, and also whether they had acquired a continuation path. This data contained the information of 67 Pihlaja clients and was collected from 2009 - 2011. The second data set consisted of 39 feedback forms that had been implemented by another researcher. These feedback forms were administered in written form. However, due to language barriers and in order to ease communication, in many instances, the feedback was conducted as an interview. In some cases an unofficial translator was used. The feedback contained data relating to client perspectives on different services at the centre. It also included information about how they felt they had developed, and what they had gained from the centre. This set of data also contained profile information and information about the continuation path. The data was collected from March to August 2012, and did not have

overlapping clients with the previous information set. Pihlaja had requested that we use that data for the analysis of the centre. In addition to this, we used different articles and descriptions of the organization to develop a profile of the centre.

4.4 Data Analysis

For the data analysis, we used several different methods to answer our research question. For the profile of the centre, we examined the literature and documents available about the centre, and what they do there. To determine the profile of the clients we determined the common variables within the two data sets and employed basic statistical methods. We then developed four different categories of the client profile: age, education level, time in Finland and length of client-hood. For each category, we grouped the women according to common features, for example, age ranges. We tallied the number of women in each of these categories in comparison to the total number of clients and calculated the percentage. We used charts to illustrate the proportions of the client set. The client profile information was then summarized by calculating the median and mode of the different categories. The perceptions of the clients in regards to their skill, knowledge and social development at the centre were analyzed using frequency distribution and percentages. The information was organized into charts, graphs and tables. Finally, we used correlation in order to determine the relationship between the amount of time spent as a client of the centre and finding a continuation path. We cross-tabulated these two factors to examine whether there was any kind of relation between them. After analyzing and presenting the data, we probed how it related to our theoretical framework, and how it might answer the research question.

5. Results

The data presented in this section was used to answer the main research question of how effectively the WRCP supports its clients' well-being. In this section, we offered a brief review of the client profile which was covered in detail earlier in this thesis. We also presented the data relating to the client perspectives of the centre. This information focused on skill and knowledge development, economic and health factors and self-esteem and group participation. In addition to these two elements, the cross-tabulation of continuation path and span of client-hood was also laid out. In the discussion, these components are combined to draw a conclusion and answer the research question.

5.1 Client Profile Averages and Overview

As can be seen from the more detailed client profile in the beginning of the thesis, the clients of Pihlaja are from very diverse backgrounds. They come to the centre through a variety of avenues including the Ministry of Labor and being recommended by acquaintances. Nearly half of women who come through the centre are between the ages of thirty and forty. The majority of the clients have lived in Finland for over four years, most of which fall into the range of eight to eleven years. Most of the women have at least a basic education level, with 36% listed as having some education and over one fifth of the clients having vocational or higher education. The median amount of time spent as a client in Pihlaja is 4.6 months. Only two clients were there ten months or longer.

5.2 Client Perspectives Data

All the information regarding client perspectives and what they gained from the centre was taken from Data Set Two-2012, which consisted of thirty-nine respondents. The questionnaires were developed by other researchers. According to the project supervisor at Pihlaja, the questionnaires were given in written form, but many were conducted in an interview situation because of language barriers. The questionnaire was read, and in some cases translated for the respondents, while the interviewer wrote in the answers. It should be noted that the questionnaires were not translated by official translators. Moreover, some of the questions were not composed in a clear manner. This created difficulties in understanding and made it challenging to interpret the data from these questionnaires. We used the raw data from the questionnaires to develop the tables and graphs that illustrate the feedback from the clients about the centre. These tables and graphs focus on the skill and knowledge development, economic and health factors, and also self-esteem and group participation. The combination of these factors has been used to determine the overall development and support of the clients' well-being, which will be evaluated in the Discussion section of this study.

5.2.1 Skill and Knowledge Development

According to the data provided, one hundred percent of the respondents have received some form of Finnish language teaching. They have received guidance in reading comprehension, spoken or written Finnish or possibly all three. There were no respondents that did not get language support, or that did not need the support. The clients were asked to evaluate how they felt their language skills had developed in their time at Pihlaja. The questionnaire used a simple 1-5 rating scale with '1' signifying no change in language skill and '5' representing a

very large development in language skill.

FIGURE 5: LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
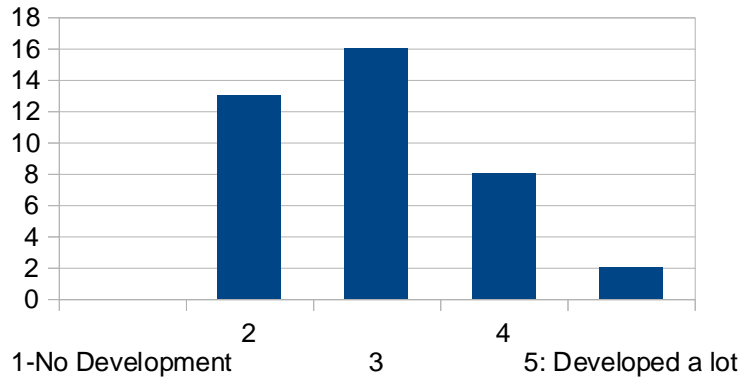
It can be seen that nearly all clients felt at least some measure of improvement in their language skills during their time at the center. It should be noted that the mean (average) time of client-hood in the center for this sample group was 5.3 months, and 4.6 months for the entire 106 clients. This may be a contributing factor to language skill development. The centre offers a broad range of activities and learning opportunities for the clients. Learning these new skills and developing their knowledge can lead to new interests, employment opportunities, and fuller participation in the Finnish society and culture. Computer skills, shown in the following table were learned by over half of the client sample. These skills are very important in entering the job market in Finland. (Finlex 493/1999) They can be put to use in everyday tasks like paying bills or strengthening social networks. The crafting skills can provide outlets for creativity, and perhaps provide a marketable skill for the women of the centre.

TABLE 1: SKILLS DEVELOPED THROUGH WRCP

	Amount of clients	Percentage
Crafting skills	25	64,10%
Computer skills	22	56,41%
Kitchen skills	9	23,08%
Cleaning skills	1	2,56%
Did not need any guidance	2	5,13%
Did not receive required guidance	0	0.00%

An important thing to note from both the previous and the following tables is the fact that, while two individuals felt that they did not need any guidance in developing skills or knowledge, there were no clients that failed to receive guidance when needed.

TABLE 2: KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPED THROUGH WRCP

	Amount of clients	Percentage
Finnish working culture	25	64,10%
Civic skills and knowledge	20	51,28%
Working life skills and knowledge	18	46,15%
Did not need any guidance	2	5,13%
Did not receive required guidance	0	0.00%

The above table shows the various areas in which WRCP offered guidance and education to the clients, and how many of the clients felt that they learned something in those areas. This combined with the chart below can be used to determine what kind of skills and knowledge the women gained, and how well they felt they developed in those areas. The civic skills and knowledge refers to a broad range of topics, including voting rights, freedom of speech and equality, and learning what rights people are entitled to in Finland.

The following chart refers to both of the above tables and is a graph of how the women of Pihlaja felt that their skills and knowledge had developed during their time as clients of the centre. The questionnaire used a 1-5 rating scale as they did with language development, with '1' equaling no development and '5' equaling a large development. It should be pointed out that a mark of one may not necessarily indicate that they did not learn anything. It may also indicate that they already knew much of the information and skills taught in Pihlaja.

FIGURE 6: CLIENT PERSPECTIVE ON SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT
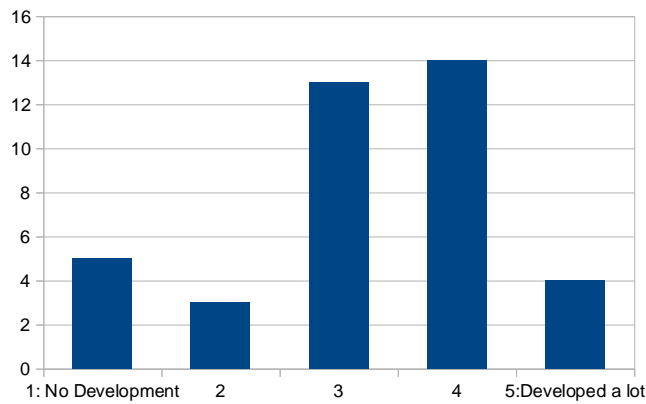

5.2.2 Economic and Health Factors

Economic factors play a big role in well-being and the ability to manage in day to day life. The WRCP offers guidance in these areas. The following table shows the services with which the clients of Pihlaja felt they got assistance. A large majority of clients did not need assistance with economic factors, like netbank or applying for support. Some received help in other areas, such as finding a computer course, in one case. In another case, a client got assistance in becoming the legal guardian for her aging parent. Other clients received assistance from other people in their support networks, like their grown children or their spouses. None of the respondents felt as though their needs had been neglected, or that they did not receive necessary help.

TABLE 3: GUIDANCE IN ECONOMIC ISSUES

	Amount of Clients	Percentage
Using Internet Banking	13	33.33%
Applying for Social Support	11	28,21%
Applying for an Apartment	8	20,51%
Did not need guidance	24	61,54%
Did not receive required guidance	0	0.00%

The questionnaire also looked at how the centre had affected change with the clients' economic situations. While no clients were in a worse situation than before, many stayed the same. On a side note, not all of the clients that filled in the feedback forms were former clients. Some were current clients of the centre, and waiting for continuation path options. This may have had an effect on their financial situations.

FIGURE 7: ECONOMIC SITUATION SINCE BECOMING A PIHLAJA CLIENT
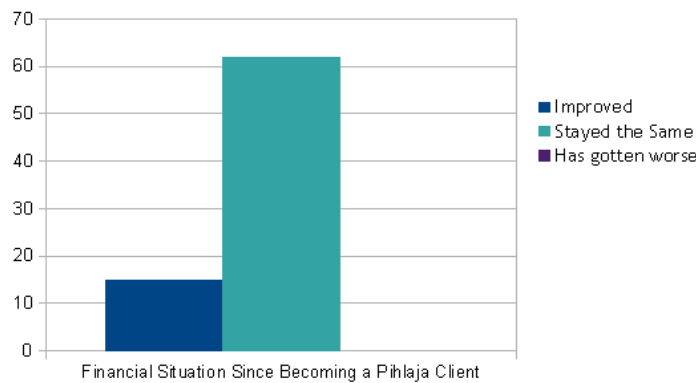
Health is another vital factor to an individual's well-being. Not knowing how to support your health or where to seek help when needed, can cause undue stress and negatively impact quality of life. (Hamboyan & Bryan; 1995)
While the WRCP does not offer health services, it does offer guidance in how to care for one's health, find health services, and deal with illnesses for those who need it, as part of their services. The questionnaire addressed whether or not the women got health related guidance from the centre, and also how they felt the guidance of the centre affected their overall health.

FIGURE 8: GUIDANCE IN HEALTH MATTERS
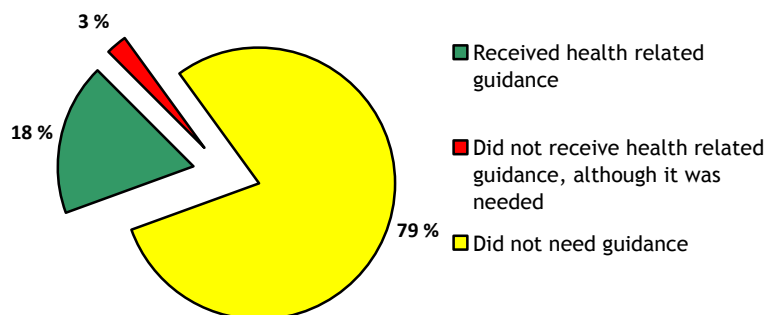
The preceding pie chart shows whether the women at Pihlaja received assistance in health matters. The 3% represents a single client that felt she did not receive the help she needed in regards to her health. The greater majority of clients did not need any kind of assistance related to health matters. However, seven out of the eight clients that did need help, received it.

FIGURE 9: EVALUATION OF HEALTH SINCE BECOMING A WRCP CLIENT
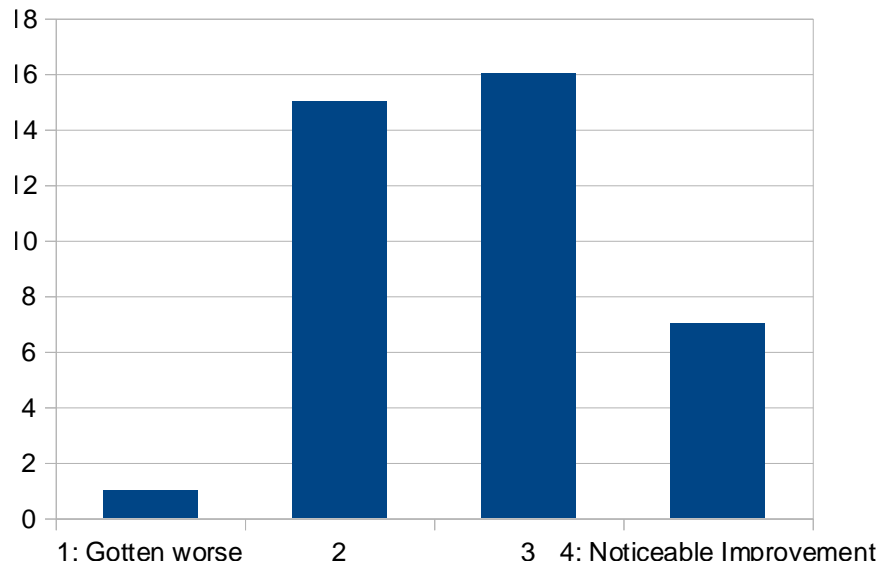
The clients of the centre were asked to evaluate how their health had been affected by the guidance they received at the Women's Resource Centre. They were asked to rate it on a 1-4 scale with '1' indicating that their health had gotten worse, and '4' indicating that they had seen a noticeable improvement in their health. Most answers were fairly neutral with little indication towards any change. Seven of the clients did notice a marked improvement in health, while one saw her health as getting worse. The one client marking a decline in health was not the same as the client who did not receive the help they needed from the centre.

5.2.3 Group Participation and Self-Esteem

The confidence and participation in groups are important things to be looked at. They are both factors that contribute to the success or failure of any kind of group or individual. Being able to build confidence to participate and be active in different groups, such as classes or social groups, is a way to prepare for working life. It develops the ability to deal with new people and build a social network, all of which are key factors in integration and well-being. (Creed, Bloxsome & Johnston, 2001)

FIGURE 10: GROUP PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL NETWORK
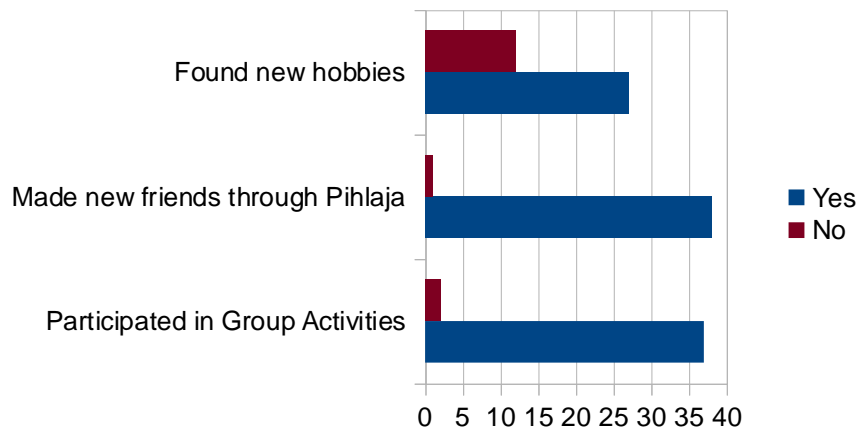
The chart above measures several social factors for the clients at Pihlaja. It looks at their participation levels and what they have gained from those groups and from the centre in general. Group participation was very high. The groups that were available were 'Tea and Sympathy'; a social group with a focus on conversation and crafts and 'Let's Read Together' which is a Finnish language building group where Finnish volunteers come and read with the immigrant women clients. In addition, there were also different group lectures and other learning opportunities. 59% of the WRCP clients participated in all of these activities, while 36% participated in at least one of these, or in an alternative group activity, such as 'girls' club' or then a cultural group.

It can also be seen through the chart that many clients made new friends or found new hobbies through Pihlaja and the activities offered by them. This can lead to stronger social networks, which support the client and their integration process. (Valtonen 2008)

The proceeding chart indicates how confident the ladies at Pihlaja felt to be in the groups and to participate actively. It also measures whether they felt a sense of belonging in the groups. The majority of women in the centre did feel like a part of the group, but two clients stated that they only sometimes felt like a part of the group. One of them sited childish behaviour on the part of others as the reason why it was not always nice. However, she seemed to be referring more to the internship responsibilities than the group activities. Several of the ladies remarked that they did not feel confident to express their opinions at the centre, one because of the language barrier and another because she was concerned that others would dislike her or be angry.

FIGURE 11: CONFIDENCE AND BELONGING
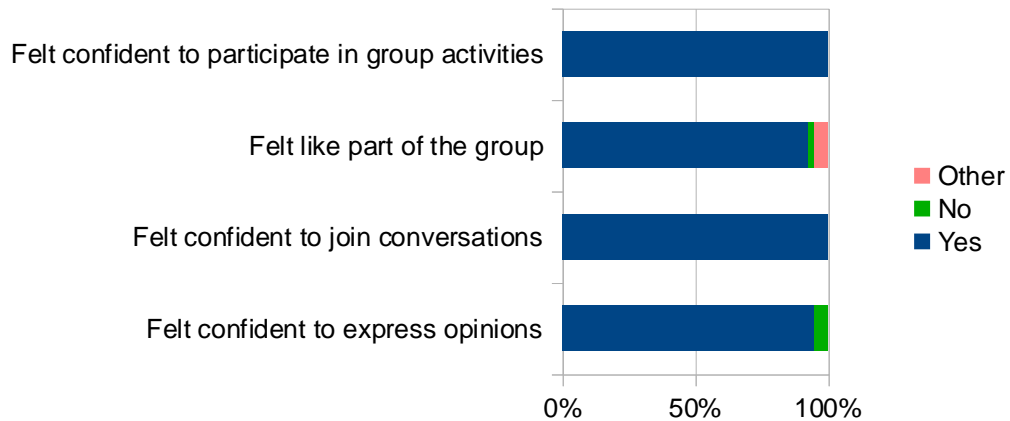
5.3 Continuation Path Correlation

As one of the determining factors for effectiveness, we looked at the relationship between the amount of time spent at the WRCP and whether or not the clients gained a continuation path. A continuation path is defined as a training place, internship, education path or employment in some form. To find the correlation between these two factors we used the cross-tabulation method. This will determine how effective Pihlaja is, by demonstrating how quickly the clients found a continuation path through the centre. For this cross-tabulation we used both sets of data provided by the centre (data set one: 67clients: 2009-2011 and data set two: 39clients: March-August 2012), which gave us a total of 106 clients.

TABLE 4: CROSS-TABULATION CONTINUATION PATH/TIME AT PIHLAJA

		Getting a continuation path			
		Yes	No	Unknown	Row Totals
Amount of months as a Pihlaja Client.	0-3mo	24	8	7	39
	3,5-6mo	32	6	17	55
	6,5-9mo	6	4	0	10
	9,5-12mo	1	0	0	1
	12+ mo	0	1	0	1
	Column Totals	63	19	24	106
	Column Percent	59.43%	17.92%	22.64%	100.00%

The categories that they have been divided into are either yes: they did get a continuation path, no: they did not find a continuation path and are unemployed, or unknown: meaning that data section was left blank, or that they had applied somewhere and the outcomes were yet unknown when the data was collected. Eleven of the clients with unknown continuation paths had put in applications to schools or work places. However, they had not yet received any responses at the time the data was collected. In addition to this, three of the women that were considered as not having a continuation path were listed as: Pregnant, Stay-at-home parent and on Maternity leave. The chart shows that the majority of clients received a continuation path within the first six months of being in Pihlaja. Only a small minority did not get a continuation path. Of those that did not find a path, seven were still current clients at the centre and were continuing their search for a path.

6. Trustworthiness and Ethics

Trustworthiness makes up an essential part of any research project. In quantitative research, it involves examining issues of validity and reliability within the data. Reliability and validity refer to how relevant the data and results are, how dependable the sources are and whether the study is reproducible using the same study design. (Bryman 2008) This section also addresses ethical issues with in our research, such as confidentiality and data security.

6.1 Trustworthiness

Validity and Reliability of the data are the building blocks of trustworthiness in quantitative research. Validity has three different aspects: Validity of measurement, Validity of explanation and External validity. (Jupp 2006)

Validity of measurement seeks to determine whether the data gathered and analyzed actually answers the research question in accordance with the theoretical background. (Jupp 2006) This can be seen in the thesis as the data does provide an answer to the question. All of the variables evaluated, particularly in the client perspectives section, were carefully chosen to answer the well-being support and effectiveness aspects of our research question. Our variables deal with well-being issues such as confidence and self-esteem, knowledge and skill development and effectiveness. The effectiveness is visible through the cross-tabulation of continuation path and lengths of client-hood. The variables also related to empowerment. This is evident in client views being heard and through the self-evaluations of the clients.

Validity of explanation or Internal validity, deals with the accuracy of the information produced, and whether it is correct within the context of the study. (Jupp 2006) With the data we had access to we felt that we provided a full and accurate picture of the Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja and its clients. We also felt that our data was correct, although, the second data set did prove to be challenging to work with. In looking at the second data set there was room left for interpretation. In some cases the questions on the questionnaire were poorly formed, or used complicated language. We felt this could skew the client responses, considering that many of them had limited Finnish skills. Also the questionnaire was not administered in a consistent manner with some being conducted as interviews, and in other cases an unofficial translator was used. There were gaps in some of the data sections. When we came across any kind of information gaps or unclear areas, we discussed the issue and came to a mutual decision on how to deal with it. For example, often on the second data set, in regards to the continuation path, the client was listed as having applied somewhere, without any results being listed. We discussed whether applying to places counted as a continuation path, and we came to the conclusion that it should be categorized into the unknown section. When formulating the categories for well-being evaluation, we chose the questions most relevant to the study, and also those with the fewest gaps in information or confusing language. This was to get the most accurate and reliable results.

Another aspect that may have influenced the validity of the second data set is the fact that it was administered to clients in different phases of their time at Pihlaja. Some were still current service-users, while others were former clients. We felt the information would have been more accurate if the feedback forms had been given at the end of the client time in Pihlaja, to give an overall evaluation of what the clients had learned, and how they felt they had developed. The whole questionnaire was not used for this thesis; we only used the variables that would best answer our research question.

External Validity or Validity of Generalization is the measure of how the data and conclusions can be applied to other groups of similar background or in similar settings. (Jupp 2006) In this case it would measure whether our conclusions can be applied to other immigrant women groups, or to other women's resource centres. This thesis was a case study directed specifically towards the Vantaa Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja. As such it is not possible to compare the experiences and data of the clients to that of the whole population of immigrant women in Vantaa. Furthermore, the conclusions cannot be generalized to include all women's resource centres or immigrant services. In spite of this, the research can be applied throughout Pihlaja itself. Their methods and working models that are determined to be effective in well-being support could be applied in other organizations. Also, the client perspective data samples could be loosely applied to the overall client-base of Pihlaja, to be used in development of services. The demographic scales that will be referred to in more

detail in the reliability section show that the 39 respondents of data set two could be considered representative of the total 106 respondents that we had data for. This lends to the reliability of the data.

Reliability is the measure of how dependable the data is and how accurate the conclusions are. It deals with whether the study is reproducible with the same results, and also where and how the information was gathered. It is also related to how well sample groups from the data are representative of the whole.

The data was not gathered by us personally; instead it was a combination of two separate sets of data provided for us by the centre. This information is available to other researchers that would like to reproduce this study or test their own hypotheses. We described our methodology thoroughly and it is clearly seen what variables we chose to focus on in the data presentation section of this thesis. Receiving the data from the centre could be construed as a bias. However, the information was gathered and verified by independent sources and we are not the first researchers to use the data in a study. Since there were two separate sets of data (and for parts of the thesis we combined the two sets for example the client profile), it was necessary, particularly when we were examining client perspectives to find out whether the 39 clients represented in the second set of data were representative of all 106 respondents.

The following four graphs show a visual representation of the relationship between the 106 clients that are represented in both sets of data and the 39 clients from the 2012 data set that are being used to show the client perspectives of the centre. The purpose of these graphs is to determine if those 39 clients are representative of the entire client base. If the charts show a similar relation between the two groupings it can be determined that the 39 clients are representative of the 106 and as such it increases the reliability of the data relating to the client perspectives. It also allows us to determine the effectiveness of the centre with more accuracy.

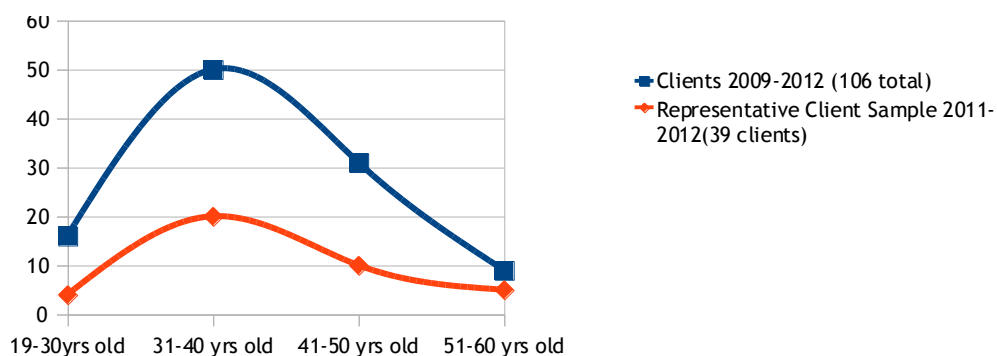FIGURE 12: AGE RELIABILITY GRAPH
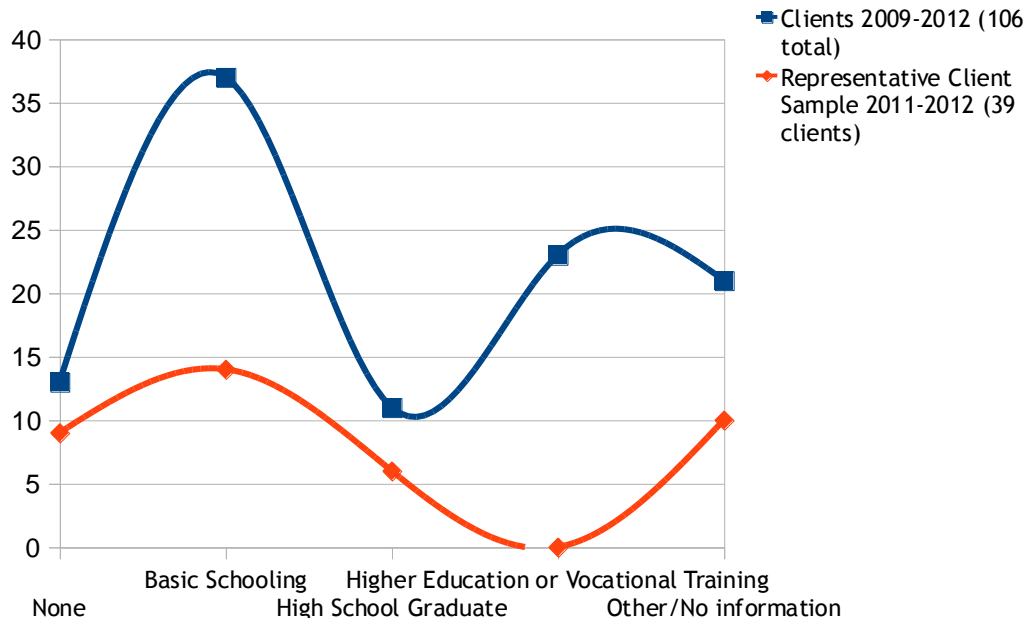
FIGURE 13: EDUCATION LEVEL RELIABILITY GRAPH

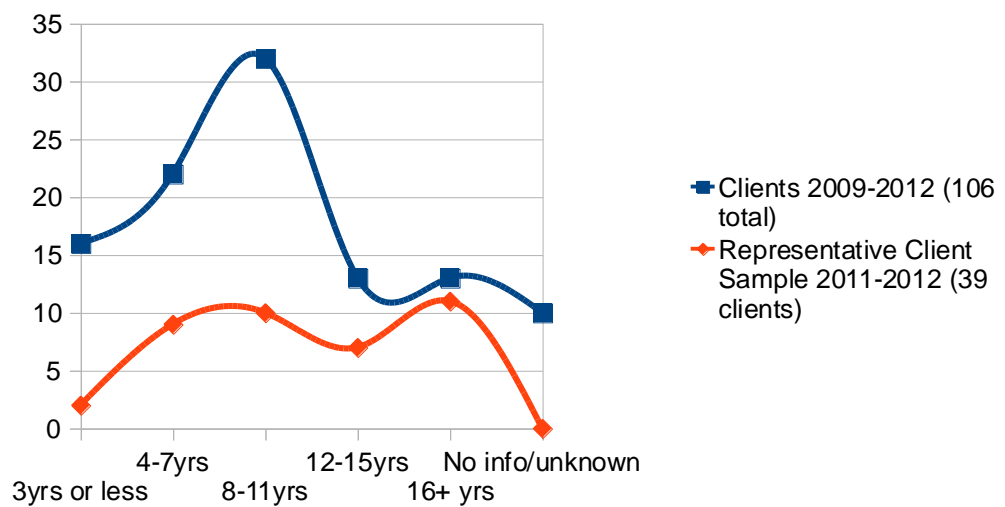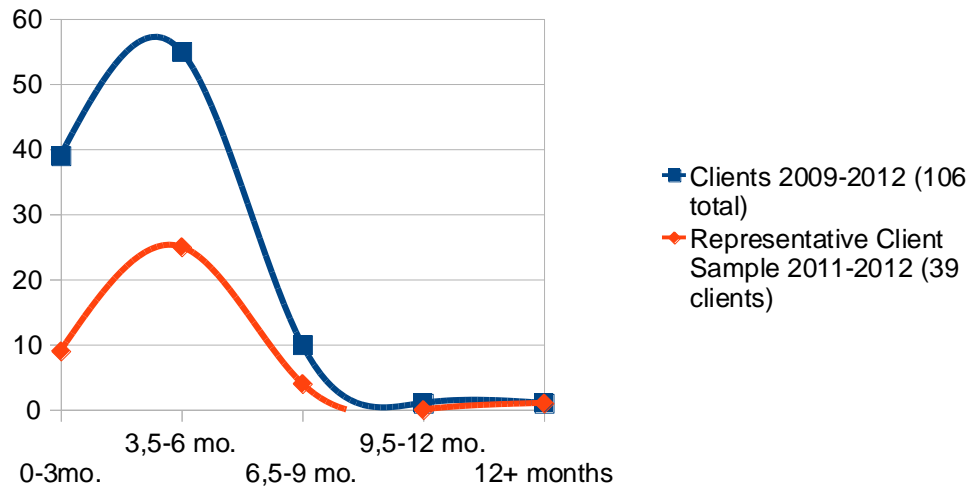FIGURE 14: LENGTH OF RESIDENCY IN FINLAND

FIGURE 15: LENGTH OF CLIENT-HOOD IN PIHLAJA

As can be seen in all of these graphs the data sets are fairly similar and there are not major discrepancies between the two lines. There are some differences and the exact ratios were not met between the two sets. For example, it can be seen that the percentage of clients with Basic Schooling among the 106 clients was higher than that of the sample group. The largest discrepancies can be seen with the education levels and the length of time the clients have lived in Finland. That said, all four graphs do seem to follow a similar curve with both sets of data, and the ages and amount of time spent in Pihlaja are very closely related. We can determine from these graphs that the client sample being used for determining client perspectives is representative of the overall group. Therefore it is reliable when being applied to the group.

6.2 Ethics

"Conducting evaluations of programs also requires that social workers comply with ethical standards required by all researchers (Reamer, 1998). Issues of importance when either in-house staff performs an evaluation or an outside consultant conducts an assessment include confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent….In addition, the security of data, ensuring that case records and other information about respondents are not accessible to anyone other than the researcher or authorized staff members, is a concern." (Hardina, Middleton, Montana & Simpson 2007, 339)

This quote points to the need for ethical considerations in social research. In this project the main ethical issues dealt with were: security of data, confidentiality and anonymity. Informed consent did not figure into the research because the data we had was gathered by other parties, and because we did not have direct contact with the clients. The data was kept with

the researchers and not distributed to any sources outside the centre. In addition to this, none of the data sets contained names of the clients or other identifying information. Any confidential material given to us for the purpose of the thesis will be returned to the centre, and any confidential information has not been disclosed. The centre was very good about keeping client confidentiality and anonymity, by removing all identifying indicators from the data before giving it to us. Anything that did have names was kept at the centre and we were able to use it there if needed, although it was not necessary in this case.

We also dealt with the ethical issue of transparency in our thesis, in our workings with Pihlaja. We tried to keep an open line of communication, keeping them informed of where we were at with the thesis and what ideas we had as to where it was going. The communication could have been clearer, but it was open and quite understandable overall. An issue that we did come up against, particularly when analyzing the data was when we did not quite understand something, and needed clarification. For example, clients who had their continuation paths listed as 'applied somewhere and awaiting answer', we were unsure of how to categorize that. We asked the centre, and although they could have given us answers as to whether the application responses were positive, we felt that it would be changing the data too much and that adding another data set would over-complicate the results of the thesis. Instead we decided to categorize those clients under the unknown continuation path.

Recognizing ethical issues is an important aspect of any research project. (Bryman 2008) In this case we upheld the main principles of ethics, and did not compromise the data to get at more desirable outcome for our research question. Confidentiality and data security was maintained throughout the process and transparency with the working life partner was also present. Due to a lack of client contact, these were the main issues relating to our thesis.

7. Discussion

The purpose of this case study was to determine the effectiveness of well-being support at The Vantaa Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja. The data we used to answer the question was the client perspectives on what they've gained from the centre. Of equal importance, we looked at whether clients found a continuation path and how this correlated to the length of time spent as a client of Pihlaja.

7.1 Discussion of Findings and Study

The intention of this thesis was to provide an objective overview for the development of services at Pihlaja and also to make recommendations as to how the centre could be more effective in promoting well-being support for their clients. As mentioned previously, this study will be used in a number of different ways. It will be used for funding applications, in the year-end report and for developmental purposes. It is our hope that this study will also produce useful information for future studies related to immigrant women in Finland, for the development of integration policy and immigrant services. We feel the study is also important because immigrant women, as a research topic in Finland are worth exploring in more depth. With the increase in number of immigrants coming to Finland every year thus far, this issue will undoubtedly demand the attention of social researchers as well as social service providers in the future.

The study design used for the thesis needed to be built on a theoretical basis in order to make sure that the research question was answered in the most accurate way possible. The study design was first and foremost based on empowering principles. It was client-centered and the clients' perspectives and perceptions of the centre took precedence. (Gutierrez et al. 1995) It was important that the study design was not purely "results-based" referring to gaining a continuation path. While the continuation path was an important aspect of the study, that alone could not determine effectiveness of the centre in well-being support. For this reason, we are also looking at factors related to well-being. The second set of data contained many different variables but we felt that not all of them were relevant to the study. Keeping in mind the different components used to measure well-being, we carefully chose variables that would provide the most pertinent information. For example, one of the questions asked on the feedback form was "have you gained friends through Pihlaja?"(Oletko saanut uusia ystäviä Pihlajan kautta?) We felt this was highly relevant to the topic of well-being. On the other hand, another question was "has your family's appreciation of you grown?" (Onko perheesi arvostus sinua kohtaan kasvanut?) We felt this was not relevant to our study and it was a rather odd question. There were quite a few categories and questions which we were able to combine, while other questions were repetitive so we left them out of the study. The data variables we selected based on the six measurements of well-being were skills and knowledge, economic and health factors, as well as group participation and self-esteem.

We faced some challenges throughout this thesis process. Firstly, it was a challenge not to be involved in the centre firsthand, through observing the clients or getting the opportunity to talk with them directly. We feel this interaction would have helped our understanding of the centre and its workings and eased our writing process. Secondly, using data planned and collected by other researchers was difficult. Had we the opportunity, we would have done

many things differently including using clearer language in the questionnaire and having employed a more consistent administration method. Despite these challenges, we felt we were able to provide a well-argued account of the centre's effectiveness in supporting their client's well-being.

An additional limitation we faced while looking at well-being in this context was that we did not have information as to how outside factors affected the clients' outcomes or responses. For example, in skill and knowledge development, several clients felt they had not developed. This could be tied in with the centre, but it could also be affected by the fact that most clients have resided in Finland for a long time, and already have acquired these skills. It should however be noted, that the questionnaire did specifically refer to what the clients gained from Pihlaja or with Pihlaja's assistance.

Through our analysis of the data, we discovered many interesting features. There were also some areas for development that needed to be addressed. As mentioned earlier, to measure well-being, we looked for evidence of self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, personal growth and also environmental mastery. (Ryff & Singer, 1996)

We started by looking at skill and knowledge development at the centre which tied into several of the qualifiers of well-being. Skill and knowledge development encompassed several areas of well-being including personal growth and environmental mastery. Personal growth can be clearly seen in the feedback of from the clients. Nearly all of them reported at least some development of language skills. When it came to evaluating their own knowledge and skill development, 34 out of the 39 clients reported having some development. More than half of those 34 felt they had a rather large improvement. For this thesis, we equated environmental mastery with integration and developing tools to aid in that integration. This is evident in the data through the types of knowledge and skills that the clients felt they learned. Over half the clients in the sample from data set two reported learning civics skills and knowledge, computer skills, and gaining an understanding of Finnish working culture. In addition to this, 46% felt that they had gained working life skills or knowledge. We can also tie into this the economic and health factors discussed in the data presentation, since economic and health factors play a significant role in competently managing one's surroundings. While less of the clients needed guidance in economic factors such as using internet banking or applying for support, the assistance was available to them and was used by nearly a third of the clients. The majority of clients did not need assistance in health matters. Of those that did need guidance, only one felt they did not receive guidance when needed. While we felt this should be mentioned, we also felt that it did not detract from the overall positive display of well-being support.

The second variable evaluated for the thesis was group participation and self-esteem. These are evaluated using the well-being indicators of self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relationships with others and environmental mastery. Self-acceptance, we felt was characterized by how the clients felt within a group. According to the data gathered, the majority of clients felt confident to join the group activities, conversations and to express their opinions. This suggests a safe and welcoming environment which encourages the clients to be at ease, confident and expressive. Autonomy ties in here mainly because the clients could choose what they wished to participate in, if anything. In that sense, they took responsibility for their own learning and development. We defined positive relationships with others as social interaction and social networking skills of the client. With 95% of the clients participating in the group activities and 97% reporting that they built new friendships at Pihlaja, it is safe to say that this particular component of well-being is well supported by the data. The social interaction aspect is also supported by the previously mentioned confidence and communication. This social interaction and networking contribute to environmental mastery in that building networks increases the amount of resources an individual has in their support system. As a result, this may lead to different opportunities and increase emotional well-being. (Valtonen 2008)

Economic and health factors were also looked at, but we felt they tied in with knowledge and skills when evaluating them for well-being. There was not much data regarding these. However, what data we had was fairly neutral in regards to client support in the centre. This is because many of them felt they did not require any assistance in these areas. This could be due to the fact that many of them have been in Finland for more than four years and have possibly gained knowledge through firsthand experience in dealing with these issues. It is useful to note that over half of the women felt some form of improvement in their health since becoming a client of the centre. This relates to well-being on a concrete level if we look at well-being as something beneficial to an individual.

Finding a continuation path was the final element of well-being and ties into purpose in life and environmental mastery. We will also be discussing the continuation path and its relationship to client-hood at the centre, further on. Of the 106 clients that we had data on, 63 gained a continuation path, while an additional 11 were in the process of applying to various institutions in search of their continuation path. Only 18% of the clients were confirmed as not having a continuation path. In regards to purpose in life, gaining a continuation path can be seen as taking a step towards achieving personal goals. In addition to this, by following the path, the clients become more integrated by adapting and participating more actively in their host environment. Employment and training programs are often seen as the predominant measure of integration, at least in accordance with Finnish

integration policy. (Heikkilä & Peltonen 2002) With nearly 60% of the centre's clients gaining a continuation path, this can be qualified as advocating well-being.

Using the well-being indicators discussed above to determine whether the centre supports well-being, we were able to show a clear relationship between the qualifiers and the data. From this we can determine that, according to client perspectives, well-being is supported at Pihlaja. However, the well-being qualifiers are not enough to determine whether the centre effectively supports its clients. The continuation path is also a factor, particularly in conjunction with the length of client-hood. Only when well-being and a continuation path have been achieved, can we say that the centre is effective.

In comparing the relationship of time spent in Pihlaja and acquiring a continuation path, it is very noticeable that the majority of conclusive outcomes for the clients occur within six months of client-hood. Only 12 clients were at the centre for more than six months. Of the 94 clients that were at Pihlaja between 0-6 months, 71% either had a continuation path or were in the process of getting one, meaning that they were waiting for decisions on their applications. The fact that so many of the clients firstly, got a continuation path and secondly, got it so quickly, indicates that the centre is proficient in its client support particularly related to finding a continuation path. Even of the 12 clients that were at the centre for more than six months, the majority also gained a continuation path.

7.2 Conclusions

To draw a conclusion for our research question, we have determined that our hypothesis was correct and the Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja does in fact, effectively support the well-being of its clients. This is backed by the overwhelmingly positive numbers in relation to continuation path, and additionally by the high percentages of clients which gained skills and knowledge from the centre. Likewise, it is supported by the indication of confidence of the clients and social factors found in the data. The data aligns with the six principles that we used to define and measure well-being. This conclusively means that the centre is effective in their well-being support of their clientele.

The fact that the Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja is able to effectively support the well-being of clients from such diverse backgrounds is indicative of their cultural competence. This is visible in their culturally and gender sensitive working model and their efforts to develop their working methods to better serve their clients. Pihlaja uses many of the multicultural social work values in their work with their clients. Part of this is demonstrated in that they expressly asked us to review the effectiveness of their services in fostering the well-being of

their clients. The centre aspires to develop the quality of their service provision in order to be more effective in helping their clients to move forward in a positive direction. By using outside sources to evaluate them and being open to recommendations and constructive criticism, they're exhibiting an active desire to increase their self-awareness, knowledge and skills. As mentioned previously, these are all components of multicultural social work. (Sue 2006)

The use of multicultural social work and empowerment theories provided a context with which we could more effectively conduct our research. While learning more about the centre and its practices, we saw how multicultural social work and cultural competence are woven into their working models and methods. We were not seeking to test the theories of multicultural social work and empowerment, but rather use them to notice features of effective social work. The effective social work practice that we recognized from the working methods of the centre supported empowerment theory. It is present in their client-centered approach to working. This is evident in how they value client feedback and how they involve the clients in the operations of the centre. It is also visible in how the clients have the power to determine and influence their own life paths while the workers assist and facilitate the process. (Payne 2005)

7.3 Recommendations and Future Use

In this thesis, we have stated that it is our hope that this research will further develop the centre's operations. Furthermore, we hope it will encourage further research into the centre and on the subject of immigrant women in Finland. We would recommend that future feedback forms are given to clients who are at the same stage of client-hood rather than including current and past clients together. This would help to clarify results. We feel it would be beneficial to the centre to research the client's development from the beginning of their client-hood to the end. It would also be interesting if the centre evaluated its previous clients and their satisfaction with Pihlaja, to see how their lives have changed since their time at the centre and if they were satisfied with their continuation path.

Throughout our research process, we realized that there was a lot of information available about the centre on the website. However, it was not necessarily written in a way that makes it easily understandable. It would be nice to have some information about the centre in basic Finnish on the webpage, as well as making the information in English more available. We feel this would make the centre more accessible for potential clients.

By proving the centre's effectiveness in supporting the well-being of their clients, it is our hope that in the future, similar organizations will take notice of these positive practices and develop their working models correspondingly. With the continuing growth of the immigrant population in Finland, nearly half of which are women (Statistics Finland 2011), there is clearly a need for the services offered by the Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja. This also creates a need to cultivate more diverse, culturally and gender sensitive integration policy.

In conclusion, our research question was answered successfully with the confirmation that the Women's Resource Centre Pihlaja supports their client's well-being with a very high level of effectiveness when viewed from a client-centered perspective. The theory used to guide our research strengthened our study and broadened our professional horizons. We feel this thesis has helped us in our professional growth by introducing us to an unfamiliar field of study. In our process, we stepped out of our academic comfort zone by using a research method that was intimidating to us. However, in doing so we gained a lot of new knowledge and a better understanding of both the social work field and academic research fields.

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Appendix 1

Client Questionnaire Questions from Pihlaja
39 questionnaires gathered between March-August 2012
Esitiedot

Ikä *

○ 20-30

○ 31-40

○ 41-50

○ 51-60

○ Muu: [   ]

Siviilisääty *

○ Naimaton

○ Avoliitossa

○ Avioliitossa

○ Eronnut

○ Leski

○ Muu: [   ]

Lasten lukumäärä * [   ]

Koulutus *Valitse korkein koulutustaso

○ Ei koulutusta

○ Peruskoulu

○ Ylioppilas

○ Opisto

○ Muu: [   ]

Käynyt suomenkielenkurssin *

○ Kyllä

○ Ei

Työ *

☐ Työ kotimaassa

☐ Työ Suomessa

☐ Työharjoittelu

☐ Ei ole tehnyt työtä

Asumisvuodet Suomessa *

○ 0-3 vuotta

○ 4-7 vuotta

○ 8-11 vuotta

○ 12-15 vuotta

○ yli 15 vuotta

Mitä kautta Pihlajan asiakkaaksi *

○ Kaverin kautta

○ Te-toimiston kautta

○ Muu: [   ]

Asiakkuus *

○ Nykyinen asiakas

○ Entinen asiakas

Kuinka kauan olet ollut/ olit Pihlajan asiakkaana? * [   ]

Kielitaito

Oletko saanut Pihlajassa opetusta suomenkielen.. *Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto, voit valita useamman.

☐ Puhumisessa

☐ Lukemisessa

☐ Kirjoittamisessa

☐ Kaikissa edellä mainituissa

☐ En ole saanut tarvitsemaani opetusta

☐ En ole tarvinnut opetusta

Miten suomenkielen taitosi on kehittynyt Pihlajassa? *1= Ei ollenkaan 2=jonkin verran 3= kehittynyt hyvin 4= kehittynyt paljon 5=Kehittynyt erittäin paljon

	1	2	3	4	5	
Ei ollenkaan	○	○	○	○	○	Erittäin paljon

Tiedot ja taidot

Oletko saanut Pihlajassa ohjausta.. *Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto, voit valita useamman.

☐ Tietotekniikassa

☐ Suomalaisessa työkulttuurissa

☐ Kansalaistaidoissa

☐ Työn tekemisen taidoissa

☐ Kaikissa edellä mainituissa

☐ En ole saanut tarvitsemaani opetusta

☐ En ole tarvinnut opetusta

☐ Muu: _____

Miten ohjaus on vaikuttanut tietoihisi ja taitoihisi *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Ei mitenkään	○	○	○	○	○	Tiedot ja taidot ovat kehittyneet erittäin paljon

Mitä olet oppinut? Asiakkaan oma kertomus oppimistaan asioista:

Taloudellinen tilanne

Oletko saanut ohjausta *Valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot, voit valita useamman

☐ Verkkopankin käytössä

☐ Tukien hakemisessa (toimeentulotuki, asumistuki, lapsilisä, lesken eläke, yksinhuoltajan tuki ym.)

☐ Asunnon hankkimisessa

☐ Kaikissa edellämainituissa

☐ En ole saanut tarvitsemaani ohjausta

☐ En ole tarvinnut ohjausta

☐ Muu: [_____]

Oletko saanut Pihlajan avulla.. *Valitse yksi

○ Opiskelupaikan

○ Työpaikan

○ Työharjoittelupaikan

○ En ole saanut mitään edellämainituista

○ Muu: [_____]

Onko taloudellinen tilanteesi Pihlajan asiakkaana olessasi *Valitse yksi

○ Parantunut

○ Pysynyt samana

○ Huonontunut

Osallisuus

Oletko osallistunut ryhmätoimintaan? *Valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot, voit valita useamman

☐ Teetä ja sympatiaa tiistaisin

☐ Luetaan yhdessä keskiviikkoisin

☐ Yhteiset luennot

☐ Yhteiset oppimishetket

☐ Olen osallistunut kaikkiin edellämainittuihin

☐ En ole osallistunut

☐ Muu: [_____]

Oletko saanut uusia ystäviä Pihlajan kautta? *

○ Kyllä, useita

○ Kyllä, yhden

○ Ei

Tunnetko olevasi osa ryhmää? *

○ Kyllä

○ Ei

○ Muu: [   ]

Oletko löytänyt uuden harrastuksen *

○ Kyllä, useita

○ Kyllä, yhden

○ En ole

Vaikutusmahdollisuudet

Oletko saanut Pihlajassa tietoa *Valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot, voit valita useamman

☐ Äänioikeudesta ja äänestämisestä

☐ Tasa-arvosta

☐ Sanan vapaudesta

☐ Olen sasnut ohjausta kaikissa edellä mainituissa

☐ En ole saanut tarvitsemaani ohjausta

☐ En ole tarvinnut ohjausta

☐ Muu: [   ]

Oletko saanut Pihlajasta tietoa oikeuksista ja velvollisuuksusta *Valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot, voit valita useamman

☐ Suomen kansalaisena

☐ Työntekijänä

☐ Vanhempana

☐ Puolisona

☐ Kaikista edellä mainituista

☐ En mistään edellä mainituista vaikka olisin tarvinnut

☐ En ole tarvinnut ohjausta

☐ Muu: [   ]

Osallistutko johonkin toimintaan *Esimerkiksi järjestö, puolue, harrastus..

○ Kyllä

○ Ei

Jos vastasit kyllä, niin mihin toimintaan osallistut? [   ]

Terveystieto

Oletko saanut Pihlajassa ohjausta *Valitse sopivat vaihtoehdot, voit valita useamman

☐ Terveyspalveluiden käytössä

☐ Oman terveyden huollossa

☐ Sairauden hoidossa

☐ Kaikissa edellä mainituissa

☐ En missään edellä mainituista vaikka olisin sitä tarvinnut

☐ En ole tarvinnut ohjausta

☐ Muu: [   ]

Koetko saamasi ohjauksen vaikuttaneen omaan terveyteesi? *1=Terveyteni on huonontunut 2=Terveyteni on pysynyt samana 3= Terveyteni on hieman parantunut 4=Terveyteni on parantunut huomattavasti

	1	2	3	4	
Terveyteni on huonontunut	○	○	○	○	Terveyteni on parantunut huomattavasti

Osaatko käyttää terveyspalveluja? *Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto, voit valita useamman.

☐ Tiedän mistä tarvittaessa saa apua

☐ Osaan hakea tietoa terveyteen/sairauteen liittyen

☐ Pystyn asioimaan itsenäisesti terveyspalveluissa

☐ Tarvitsen edelleen paljon apua terveypalveluiden käytössa

☐ Muu: [   ]

Arjen hallinta

Oletko saanut ohjausta arjen asioissa? *Valitse sopiva vaihtoehto, voit valita useamman.

☐ Ajankäytön suunnittelu

☐ Asioiden hoitaminen

☐ Kodinhoito (siivoaminen, pyykinpesu, kaupassa käynti, lastenhoito, ruoanlaitto ym.)

☐ Kaikissa edellämainituissa

☐ En missää edellämainituissa

☐ En ole tarvinnut ohjausta

☐ Muu: [_____]

Onko saamasi ohjaus aikuttanut arkipäivän asioihisi?

Itsetunto

Uskallatko osallistua ryhmän toimintaan *

○ Kyllä

○ En

Jos vastasit En, kerro miksi? [_____]

Uskallatko osallistua keskusteluun? *

○ Kyllä

○ En

Jos vastasit En, kerro miksi? [_____]

Uskallatko sanoa oman mielipiteesi *

○ Kyllä

○ En

Jos vastasit En, kerro miksi? [_____]

Onko perheesi arvostus sinua kohtaan kasvanut? *

○ Kyllä

○ Ei

Oletko huomannut itsessäsi muutosta ollessasi Pihlajan asiakkaana?

Muuta lisättävää

Haluatko kertoa vielä jotain kokemuksistasi Pihlajassa?