

Exploring perceptions of enhancing children's relational well-being in South African school communities

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I dedicate this study especially to my father,

Jacobus Marthinus Abraham Vollgraaff.

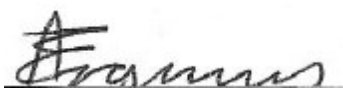
Thank you for your love, passion, guidance and endless support.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this research dissertation, **Exploring perceptions of enhancing children's relational well-being in South African school communities**, is my own effort. I furthermore declare that all the sources used in this report have been referenced and acknowledged.

I also declare that this dissertation was edited and proofread by a qualified language editor as prescribed.

Finally, I declare that this research was submitted to *Turn-it-in* and a satisfactory report was received, indicating that no plagiarism was committed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anke Erasmus', written over a horizontal line.

Anke Erasmus

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Summary

Nationally and internationally there has been increasing emphasis on the enhancement of children's well-being within school environments, including the crucial role that relationships can play in this regard. The focus in South African school communities are also shifting towards relationships as a medium for intervention aimed at well-being enhancement. However, according to subject literature and recent research, a significant lacuna still exists in this regard. This study aims to address the current lacuna, which indicates a lack of research, by contributing to the expanding of the current body of knowledge pertaining to relational well-being in South African school communities. This will be achieved by exploring current perceptions concerning the enhancement of relational well-being, as well as the way in which the understanding of these perceptions might contribute to relational well-being enhancement in South African school communities.

The conceptual framework that informed this study, includes the Community psychology and Positive psychology perspectives, as well as the bioecological systems theory and complexity theory. These perspectives and theories were used as a basis for the understanding of relational well-being enhancement. The promotion of well-being, well-being promotion in school contexts, and well-being promotion in specifically South African schools have been discussed. Moreover, relational well-being as a construct and relational well-being in school communities have also been considered. This has been done from a relational well-being perspective, according to which relationships can be enhanced through an inclusive, holistic, preventative and proactive school community approach. This approach, with an emphasis on relationships as a medium of intervention, is advocated by the mentioned conceptual framework as an alternative to the linear, individualistic and reactive approaches still followed in South African schools. The conceptual framework discussion is elucidated by two graphical representations.

The research problem required that a qualitative research method be used. A qualitative phenomenological research design proved to be a suitable approach to gather the data needed to address the research problem effectively. A non-probability, purposive sampling technique, which included a group of 14 postgraduate students, was followed in order to gain the relevant data to be used with regard to exploring perceptions of enhancing relational well-being. The group seemed suitable for the research goal: they were all part of a larger project on relational well-being, enrolled for a Master's degree in Psychology or Social work or a PhD at the North West University (N=130), involved in South African school communities and attended a colloquium on relational well-being during which a World Café session was held as data gathering method. Additionally, the World Café session was explained by a graphical representation. Audio recordings of the discussions were transcribed verbatim to provide a workable data set to be analysed in terms of the research questions.

The data was analysed according to Clarke and Braun's (2013) six phases. Five themes, which included the participants' perceptions on enhancing relational well-being in South African school communities, were identified as an answer to the first research question, namely how the participants perceive the enhancement of children's relational well-being.

Thematic data analysis revealed that in order to enhance relational well-being, children should be treated with dignity and respect (1). Respect is often shown through non-verbal gestures by showing appreciation and acknowledgement to children and thereby enhancing connectedness. By creating safe spaces by the setting of boundaries (2), a caring, secure environment is established for relationship development. A supportive environment (3), characterised by a web of relationships with the teacher as the leading role player, is essential to the promotion of relational well-being. It also transpired that opportunities for interaction (4) should be purposefully created and facilitated in school communities as relationships primarily grow and develop through reciprocal interaction. Finally, the participants concluded that children learn through observation and argued that teachers, principals, parents and other role players should model positive relationships (5) to children.

During the thematic analysis of the data, it was noted that the participants' language may contain subtle social information about the children with whom they work. This veiled information manifested as concealed "messages" in their spoken language and was of such a nature that the researcher suspected that it might have critical implications for the enhancement of relational well-being – and should therefore be further explored. In order to explore how social information was revealed in language, a different research approach was required. This was necessitated by the fact that social information conveyed in language, manifests on a different level than the literal meaning of words. In order to achieve this, discourse analysis was used. The discourse analysis revealed that the personal dispositions of the participants comprised of two patterns of perceptions, namely a facilitative pattern, which is beneficial for relational well-being enhancement, and a restraining pattern, which might hold impeding implications for relational well-being. The two facilitative perceptions identified and explored include:

- An inclusive school community: it was revealed that intervention should be aimed at the total, holistic, inclusive school community.
- A proactive approach: it was suggested that intervention should entail a proactive, preventative approach. It was agreed upon that relational well-being enhancement be approached proactively by creating opportunities for relationship building.

The implication of the facilitating pattern for relational well-being was critically assessed in terms of the reactive, individualistic perspective, as well as the four holistic, preventative perspectives and theories used as a framework for this study.

Three perceptions were identified that might have a restraining effect on the enhancement of relational well-being: Uncertainty and Ignorance, Competitiveness and Othering:

- Uncertainty and Ignorance: Participants verbally acknowledged their uncertainty and used strategies in their language to try and conceal their uncertainty. Four prominent strategies were identified and discussed.
- Competitiveness: Competitiveness was identified as a result of the linear, individualistic approaches which are still followed in school communities and which focus on personal academic achievement and not on inclusive, holistic relational well-being.
- Othering: Sociolinguistic analysis furthermore identified potential othering perceptions that involve teachers and children. These perceptions were based on some children's "low social class" and other's "culture". Othering in terms of social class involves only the own cultural group, but othering in terms of culture can involve all cultures in South Africa. Therefore, the implications and restraining impact of othering in terms of culture has been explored in more detail.

These restraining perceptions were respectively critically assessed regarding their compromising impact on relational well-being enhancement in current South African school communities.

By the analysis and critical assessment of the facilitative and restraining perceptions and their potential impact on relational well-being enhancement, the second research question, namely how the understanding of these perceptions can contribute to the enhancement of relational well-being, has been addressed.

This study is completed by a conclusive summary, including the answering of the research questions. The advantages of Sociolinguistics as an interdisciplinary approach, as experienced in the research, and the potential contribution of the study to relational well-being enhancement, are also indicated. Furthermore, the surprises and anomalies encountered are discussed and recommendations, ensuing from the findings of the study, are made to the Department of Education, as well as to school management teams and communities. Recommendations for further research are also suggested. Finally, a last, personal word on relational well-being enhancement concludes this study, which can be graphically represented as in Figure 1 below.

Keywords: School community, children, well-being, relational well-being.
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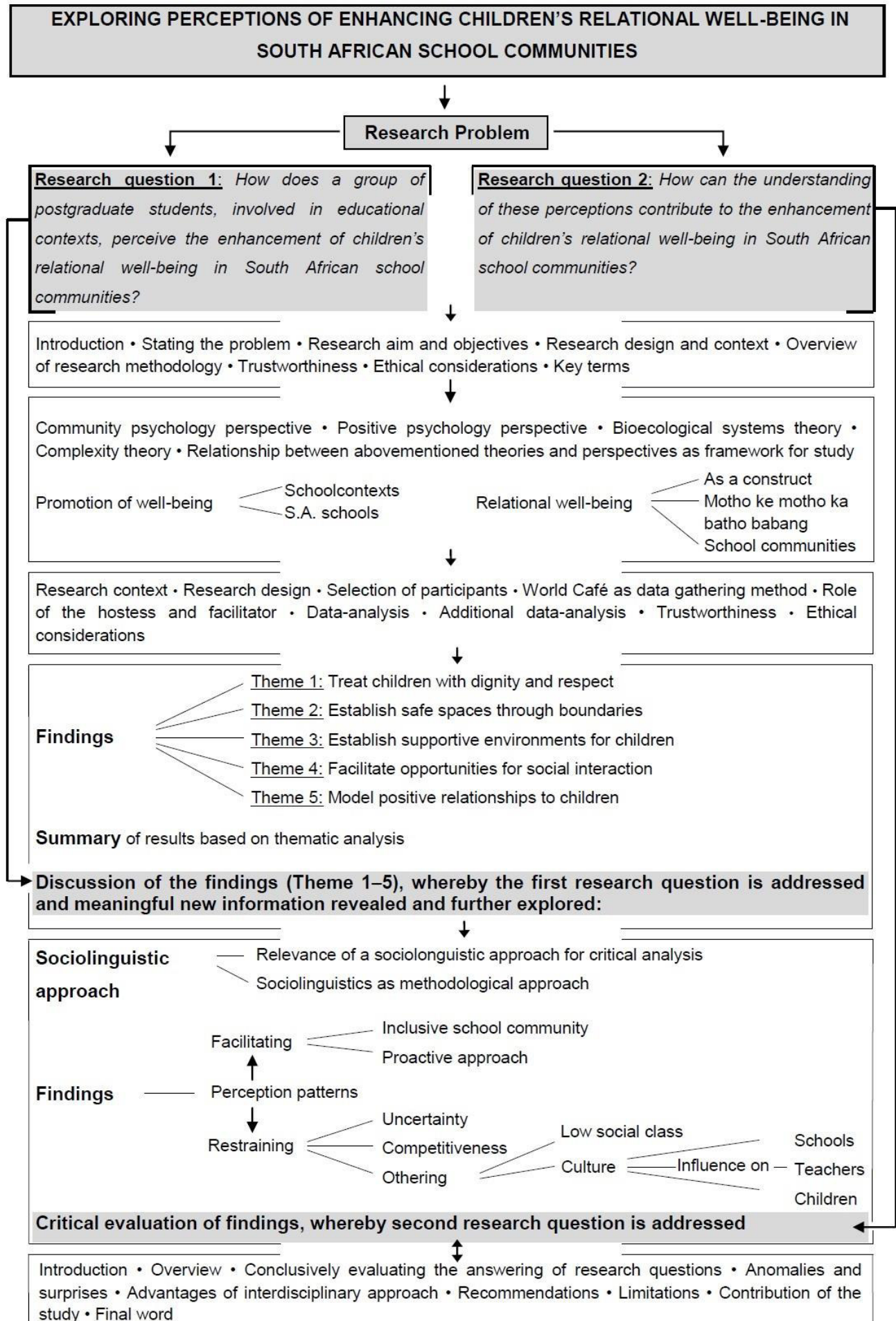


Figure 1: Graphical presentation of summary

Opsomming

Nasionaal en internasionaal is daar toenemende klem op die bevordering van kinders se welstand binne die skoolomgewing en die deurslaggewende rol wat verhoudings in hierdie verband kan speel. Hoewel die fokus in Suid-Afrikaanse skole ook begin skuif na verhoudings as intervensievlak vir welstandsbevordering, is daar in Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe egter tans nog 'n aansienlike leemte in hierdie verband, soos bevestig in vakliteratuur en onlangse navorsing. Hierdie studie beoog om die leemte, wat op 'n navorsingsgebrek dui, aan te spreek deur by te dra tot die verbreding van die bestaande korpus van kennis aangaande verhoudingswelstand in Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe. Dit sal gedoen word deur bestaande persepsies rakende die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand te ondersoek, asook deur te bepaal hoe die interpretasie ("understanding") van hierdie persepsies kan bydra tot die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand in Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe.

Die konseptuele raamwerk in terme waarvan hierdie studie onderneem is, betrek die gemeenskapsielkundeperspektief, die positiewe sielkundeperspektief, die bio-ekologiese sisteemteorie en die kompleksiteitsteorie as basis vir die verstaan van die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand. Verhoudingswelstand as 'n konstruk, die bevordering van algemene welstand, welstand in skoolkontekste, sowel as welstand in spesifiek Suid-Afrikaanse skoolkontekste, is bespreek. Dit is gedoen vanuit die perspektief van verhoudingswelstand wat bevorder kan word deur 'n inklusiewe, holistiese, voorkomende en pro-aktiewe skoolgemeenskapsbenadering. Hierdie benadering, met die klem op verhoudings as intervensievlak, word voorgestaan deur genoemde teoretiese perspektiewe as alternatief vir die liniêre, individualistiese, reaktiewe benadering wat steeds in Suid-Afrikaanse skole gevolg word. Die bespreking van die konseptuele raamwerk is ter verduideliking toegelig deur twee grafiese voorstellings.

Die navorsingsprobleem het aangedui dat 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetode en 'n kwalitatief-fenomenologiese navorsingsontwerp waarskynlik die mees toepaslike sou wees om data te bekom wat die navorsingsdoelwit effektief aanspreek. 'n Nie-waarskynlike, doelgerigte steekproef, wat 'n groep van 14 nagraadse studente betrek het, is gevolglik gebruik om relevante data te bekom wat ondersoek kon word in terme van die persepsies oor die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand. Die groep het geskik geblyk vir die doelwit: almal is deel van 'n groter navorsingsprojek oor verhoudingswelstand, ingeskryf vir 'n Meestersgraad in Sielkunde of Maatskaplike Werk of 'n PhD by die Noordwes-Universiteit (N=130), betrokke in Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe en almal was teenwoordig by 'n colloquium oor verhoudingswelstand, waartydens 'n World Café-sessie gehou is as dataversamelingsmetode, wat aanvullend deur 'n grafiese voorstelling verduidelik word. Die audio-opnames van die besprekings is verbatim getranskribeer om 'n werkbare, toepaslike datakorpus daar te stel wat geanaliseer kon word in terme van die navorsingsvrae.

Die data is geanaliseer volgens Clarke en Braun (2013) se ses fases. Vyf temas, wat die deelnemers se persepsies vir die verbetering van verhoudingswelstand in skole bevat, is geïdentifiseer as antwoord op die eerste navorsingsvraag, naamlik wat die deelnemers se persepsies is aangaande verhoudingswelstandbevordering.

Tematiese data analise het aangedui dat, ten einde verhoudingswelstand te bevorder, kinders met waardigheid en respek behandel moet word (1). Respek word dikwels op nie-verbale maniere weerspieël deur waardering en erkenning aan kinders te toon en daardeur verbintenis te bevorder. Deur die skep van veilige omgewings deur grense te stel (2), word 'n sorgsame, veilige ruimte voorsien waarbinne verhoudings kan ontstaan en verder ontwikkel. 'n Ondersteunende omgewing (3), gekenmerk deur 'n web van verhoudings met die onderwyser as hoofrolspeler, is noodsaaklik vir die verbetering van verhoudingswelstand. Dit het ook geblyk dat geleenthede vir sosiale interaksie doelbewus geskep (4) en gefasiliteer moet word in skoolgemeenskappe, juis omdat verhoudings hoofsaaklik deur wederkerige interaksie groei en ontwikkel. Ten slotte het die deelnemers se gesprekke onthul dat kinders in die eerste plek deur waarneming leer en dat onderwysers, skoolhoofde, ouers en ander rolspelers daarom positiewe verhoudings aan kinders behoort te modelleer (5).

Tydens die tematiese analise van die data, het die navorser opgemerk dat daar in die deelnemers se taalgebruik subtiele sosiale inligting voorkom oor die kinders waarmee hul werk. Hierdie tersluikse inligting, wat soos verskuilde “boodskappe” in gesproke taal gekommunikeer is, was van sodanige aard dat die navorser vermoed het dat dit kritiese implikasies vir die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand kan inhou – en dus ondersoek moet word. Om sosiale inligting in gesproke taal te ondersoek, vereis egter ander ondersoekbenaderings en tegnieke as dié van slegs die letterlike interpretasie van taalgebruik, soos met die tematiese analise in Hoofstuk 4 en soos wat normaalweg in navorsing gebruik word. Om dit te bereik, is daar gebruik gemaak van diskoersanalise. Die diskoersanalise het uitgewys dat die persoonlike ingesteldhede van die deelnemers uit twee patrone van persepsies bestaan: 'n patroon wat fasiliterend is ten opsigte van verhoudingswelstand en 'n patroon wat stremmend kan inwerk op verhoudingswelstand. Twee fasiliterende persepsies is geïdentifiseer en ondersoek:

- 'n Inklusiewe skoolgemeenskap: hier het dit geblyk dat intervensie gemik behoort te wees op die totale, holistiese en inklusiewe skoolgemeenskap.
- 'n Proaktiewe benadering: daar is voorgestel dat intervensie 'n proaktiewe, voorkomende benadering moet behels. Die deelnemers het eenparig saamgestem dat intervensie en verbetering van verhoudings geïmplimiteer moet word vanuit 'n proaktiewe benadering deur effektief geleenthede te skep vir die bou van verhoudings.

Die implikasies van hierdie twee fasiliterende persepsies vir verhoudingswelstand is krities geassesseer in terme van die reaktiewe, individualistiese perspektief, sowel as die vier holistiese, voorkomende en inklusiewe benaderings.

Drie persepsies is geïdentifiseer wat 'n stremmende effek op verhoudingswelstandsbevordering kan hê: Onsekerheid, Kompetisie en Vervreemding (“Othering”):

- Onsekerheid: Die deelnemers het eendersyds hul onsekerheid openlik erken en andersyds strategieë in hul taal gebruik om dit te probeer verdoesel. Vier van die meer prominente strategieë is geïdentifiseer en bespreek.
- Kompetisie: Kompetisie is geïdentifiseer volgens die deelnemers as 'n direkte resultaat van die liniêre, selfgesentreerde model wat steeds in skole gevolg word. Ingevolge daarvan is die klem steeds op individualistiese akademiese prestasie as die hooffokus van onderwys, ten koste van die bevordering en volhouding van verhoudingswelstand.
- Vervreemding: Sosiolinguïstiese analise het voorts potensiële vervreemding tussen die onderwysers en kinders uitgewys. Dit is gebaseer op grond van die onderwysers se persepsies van sommige kinders se “lae sosiale klas” en ander se “andersoortige” kultuur.

Vervreemding op grond van sosiale klas en vervreemding op grond van kultuur is elk afsonderlik bespreek. Terwyl vervreemding op grond van sosiale klas gewoonlik slegs binne die eie kultuur plaasvind, kan vervreemding op grond van kultuur alle kultuurgroepe in Suid-Afrika betrek. Daarom is die stremmende impak van vervreemding op grond van kultuur in meer detail ondersoek.

Hierdie stremmende persepsies is krities bespreek en geassesseer ten opsigte van hul kompromitterende impak op verhoudingswelstandsbevordering in huidige Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe.

Deur die analise en kritiese assessering van hierdie (fasiliterende of stremmende) patrone en hul potensiele impak op verhoudingswelstand, is die tweede navorsingsvraag, naamlik hoe die verstaan (interpretasie) van hierdie persepsies kan bydra tot die verbetering van kinders se verhoudingswelstand in Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe, aangespreek.

Ter afsluiting is 'n opsommende gevolgtrekking gemaak. Die bydrae wat die studie kan lewer tot verhoudingswelstandsbevordering, asook die voordele wat die sosiolinguïstiese benadering vir die studie gehad het, is bespreek, sowel as onreëlmatighede en verrassings wat tydens die studie teëgekom is. In die lig van die bevindinge van die studie is aanbevelings gemaak aan die Onderwysdepartement, skoolbestuurders en -gemeenskappe, asook vir verdere navorsing, gevolg deur 'n persoonlike slotwoord.

Ten einde 'n samevattende oorsig oor die hele navorsingstudie te kry, word 'n grafiese uiteensetting hieronder voorsien.

Sleuteltermes: Skoolgemeenskappe, kinders, welstand, verhoudingswelstand.

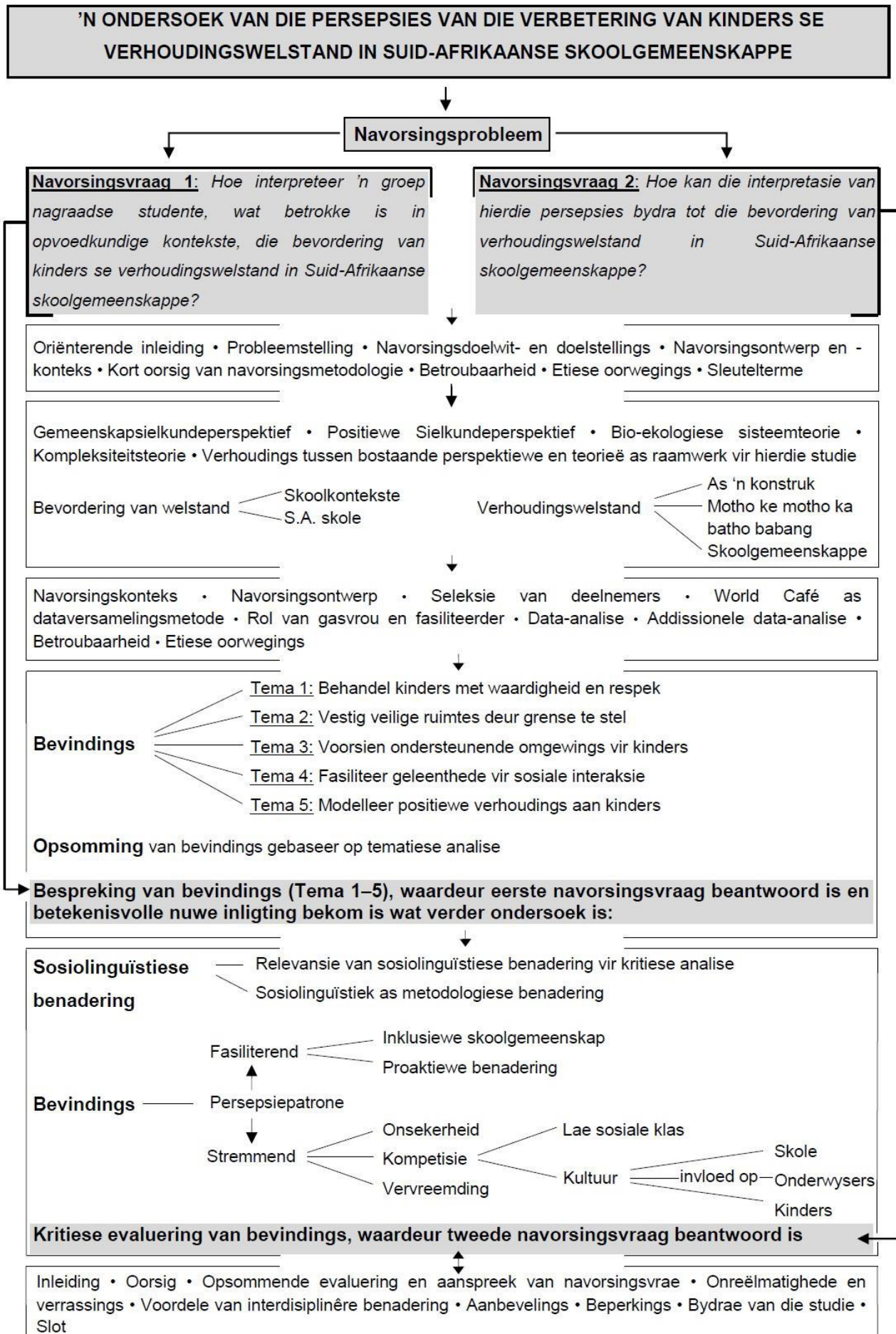


Figure 2: Grafiese uiteensetting van opsomming

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

In 1986, the World Health Organization appealed to schools through the Ottawa Charter to create enabling environments in order to promote all dimensions of health and well-being of young people (Sanchez, Colon & Esparza, 2005; WHO, 1986). In South Africa, the response to this appeal led to the implementation of the Health Promoting Schools initiative according to which schools are considered a key environment for health promotion (Swart & Reddy, 1999). Following the implementation of the Health Promoting framework, various other initiatives were implemented in some South African schools in order to promote health and well-being. This includes the Safe Schools Programme in the Western Cape (Lazarus, Khan & Johnson, 2012) which aims to promote safe school environments, the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP, 2012) which aims to build on and strengthen existing school health services, as well as the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL, 2011) with the goal of improving learning outcomes. Numerous other initiatives including feeding schemes at schools and crime control programmes have also been implemented in South African schools (National School Nutrition Programme, 2009; Lazarus, Khan & Johnson, 2012).

The important contribution of schools as social contexts in the promotion of children's well-being is confirmed by authors who indicate that homes do not necessarily guarantee a safe and positive environment for children and that schools are therefore often the only safe and supportive spaces for children (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Weeks, 2008; Bryant, Shdaimah, Sander & Cornelius 2013). According to McLaughlin and Clarke (2010), children also perceive schools as social institutions that play a role in their well-being and promote positive outcomes for them. Research confirms that educational institutions, like schools, can contribute significantly to the promotion of well-being. (Roffey, 2008; Danielsen, 2010; Schaps, 2009; Atkinson & Hornby, 2002; Farmer & Farmer, 1999; Langhout, 2004; De Jong, 2000). Danielsen (2010) argues that schools constructively contribute to the positive development of children's academic ability and life satisfaction by creating a favourable environment regarding the fulfilment of the three "innate psychological needs", namely relatedness, competence and autonomy in terms of which life satisfaction is accessed.

The important role that relationships play in the promotion of well-being in these contexts is confirmed in the work of Hendry (2009) and McLaughlin and Clarke (2010). Roffey (2011b) also

points out that schools are often the only place where children can develop positive relationships and experience the positive outcomes of such relationships. Relationships, in this instance, refer to relationships across all levels of interrelatedness between teachers, other staff members, learners, parents and community. Healthy and productive relationships, hence the term “relational well-being”, as referred to in this study, are not only conclusive in student and teacher success (Epstein, 2001), but also mediate people’s individual well-being, as well as the well-being of the communities in which they reside (Prilleltensky, 2005). Gergen (2009) argues that the well-being of schools will depend on the extent to which the generative processes of relating between members of school communities are nourished and protected. Research in South African school contexts also confirms that relationships are crucial for academic achievement and the facilitation of enabling learning environments (Kitching, Roos & Ferreira, 2012; Mashau, Steyn, Van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2008; Van der Merwe, 2004; Van Schalkwyk & Wissing, 2010).

The purpose of this study, in view of the important role that schools play in the promotion of relational well-being of children, is to contribute to an understanding of how relational well-being of children can be enhanced in the South African school context. Empirically, the study comprises an exploration of postgraduate students’ perceptions of the promotion of children’s relational well-being, based on their personal experience in school communities.

1.2 Stating the problem

As indicated, relationships, and therefore relational well-being, is an important aspect of schooling. The acknowledgement of the important role that relationships play in school contexts is acknowledged in the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS). In this system, relationships are described as a function that relates to growing, learning, and improving teachers’ teaching practices, as well as prioritising learners’ learning experiences in order to reach positive educational outcomes (IQMS, 2011/12; Report on the IQMS, 2006). Yet, in Reviews of National Policies for Education (OECD, 2008), the focus is mainly on support aimed at individuals. Relationships are barely considered as a critical component of schooling. This might suggest that schools are rather perceived as collections of autonomous, rational individuals, rather than as a matrix of interrelatedness between people that constitute a community, as suggested by Gergen (2009).

However, if the serious challenges associated with relationships in schools are considered, it seems evident that relational well-being should be emphasised. South African schools experience various and multidimensional problems brought along by socio-economic, cultural and political factors, such as unequal levels of training and income, armed conflict, unemployment, the former political system, diverse perceptions, and multicultural contexts. These factors occasioned various

adverse behaviour types and social problems among the youth, e.g. crime, violence, child-headed households, physical abuse, and alcohol and substance abuse (Modisaotsile, 2012; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Botha, 2014; Jansen & Taylor, 2003; Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Pepler & Craig, 2007). Lazarus, Khan and Johnson (2012) confirm that these issues are a serious social concern and reflect in and compromise children's well-being. Furthermore, research done by September and Savahl (2009) and Swart-Kruger and Chawla (2002) concluded that South African children generally perceive themselves as lacking physical, emotional and social well-being. This signifies a need for the improvement of children's health and well-being.

Due to these challenges, partly arising from South Africa's past, it has often been posed that schools need help and support when it comes to well-being, health promotion and effective learning (Mashau, Steyn, van der Walt, & Wolhuter, 2008; Weeks, 2008, Kitching, Roos, & Ferreira, 2012). Strategies to address these challenges, however, still mainly rely on an individualist approach. According to Morrison (2002), the individualistic approach is informed by linear, causal and reductionist perspectives promoted by Western philosophers and educationalists who often consider school communities in terms of machines and engineering (Terjesen, Jacofsky, Froh and DiGuseppe, 2004). The individualistic approach was developed by Western scholars, with the aim to focus on Western societal phenomena. Consequently, the focus of this approach is on typical Western values and perspectives, like personal achievement, self-affirmation and autonomy. Therefore, as explained by McCubbin, McCubbin, Zhang, Kehl & Strom (2013), the individualistic approach is more common in Western societies where people more frequently have a high income, advanced education, rewarding employment and good health, to name but a few. This approach prevailed in the South African context, as indicated.

Conversely, the evidently different circumstances in South African schools suggest that a different scientific approach to the individualistic (Western) one should be applied when researching or intervening these school communities. It further implies that well-being strategies should be appropriately designed in terms of the context and circumstances of the children in order to be effective. When addressing relational problems, Evans, Hanlin and Prilleltensky (2007) suggest a merged approach of the more individual-focussed, reactive individualistic perspective and the complexity approach, which is more proactive and focusses on strengths and empowering. Prilleltensky (2005) argues along the same lines when he also advocates that interventions in schools should be more proactive and preventative.

Recently, more emphasis has been placed on bringing back the *Ubuntu* perspective. According to *Ubuntu*, people exist in relation to others and one's individual humanity can only be expressed through interaction and relationality with fellow human beings (Battle, 1996; Metz & Gaie, 2010; Le Grange, 2012).

In contrast to the individualistic Western approach and in line with *Ubuntu*, the complexity theory focusses on an organic, non-linear and holistic approach where relations and relationships within interconnected networks are the main focus (Morrison, 2006). In terms of the complexity theory, relational well-being is part of a complex and ongoing process that does not merely focus on the individuals in a school community, but also on the relationships between them. Therefore, this perspective advocates that there should be more emphasis on connectedness and positive relationships, as these were found to be conducive to good physical health and relational well-being (Morrison, 2006) (See also Lazarus, Khan & Johnson, 2012).

Accordingly, connectedness to positive role models, like teachers, is encouraged (Lazarus, Khan & Johnson, 2012; Resnick et al., 1997). In line with this approach, the focus in schools is thus not as strong on good academic outcomes as it used to be in the past. Non-cognitive results, like positive relations, connectedness and good physical health get more attention than earlier and are currently being explored and related more effectively in terms of the promotion of physical and relational well-being (Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer & Rosseel, 2007; Lohre, Lydersen & Vatten, 2010; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010).

Concurrently, Clonan Chafouleas, McDougal and Riley-Tillman (2004) also argue that, when aiming at social change, including the enhancement of relational well-being, there should be a shift in focus in school psychology from the more excluding, individualistic perspectives to the more positive, inclusive, strength-based and preventative complexity approach. Recent research therefore often focusses on enhancing relational well-being in school contexts, with the main focus on relationships and their role in enhancing children's relational well-being, while also considering the relevance of contextual factors (Graham, 2011).

Concerning South Africa, this implies that, in respect of the radical sociopolitical changes, initiatives might be necessary to ensure that all role players in relational improvement processes in post-apartheid South Africa are appropriately equipped for their task in a changed context. This includes that they should have the newest knowledge, theoretical approaches and techniques at their disposal. Furthermore, because learning and well-being emerge at the micro-level space of the teacher-child relationship (Roffey, 2008), the teacher's relational perceptions and personal convictions should be examined and assessed to ensure that they are appropriate and relevant to modern social and learning contexts. If not, adverse and harmful perceptions and convictions may reflect in their teaching, with potentially compromising implications for relational well-being. (See Chapter 5) In this regard, Witmer (2005) proposes that deliberate relation-building strategies should be applied by teachers on a daily basis to develop positive relations with the children and hence more successful academic outcomes. Considering the pivotal position of teachers as role models and initiators in educational and relational contexts, relational enhancement seems to be an obvious item

on their list of duties, but is currently lacking. Regarding South African contexts, strategic relational planning, as proposed by Witmer (2005), should include the consideration of teachers' perceptions and personal convictions concerning relationships as a proactive and preventative measure for enhancing relational well-being, as recommended by modern perspectives.

Instead of preventative, proactive approaches that focus on relationships, strengths and the empowerment of children by improving their well-being (Roffey, 2011a; Prilleltensky, 2005). The need for the enhancement of relational well-being in South African school communities is, however, still addressed by individualistic, reactive perspectives.

Kitching (2010) suggests that more research is needed pertaining to relationships in school communities in order to develop the aforementioned proactive and preventative relational strategies. McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) also indicated the lack of research and point out that policymakers are not focussed on this lacuna, which may explain to a degree why relational well-being is still not effectively addressed in South African school contexts. Ungerer (2012), Wagner (2014), Scheppel (2015) and Benade (2013) also confirm the gap in the present information on relational well-being and suggest that further research be done in South African school communities. The current limited information regarding relationships in school communities from a proactive, preventative and holistic approach may seriously compromise the enhancement of relational well-being. Therefore, more research in this regard is necessary, as a better understanding of the enhancement of children's relational well-being requires a sufficient base of relevant information.

Ensuing from the literature reviewed, it transpired that the field of knowledge on relational well-being and its enhancement is indeed limited at present. Information has been found on well-being and relationships, as well as the role that relational matters play in schools. However, perceptions of relational well-being, and especially its configuration and enhancement in South African school contexts, seem incomplete and should still be researched and defined fully.

The rationale of this study is thus to contribute to and address the current gap in literature that, from abovementioned discussions still seem to exist in South African school communities. In order to positively contribute to the enhancement of well-being and more specifically relational well-being, it is necessary that this phenomenon be explored from a more holistic, community and complexity point of view rather than the individualistic approaches which evidently still prevail in the majority of South African schools.

The researcher intends to contribute to the limited knowledge regarding the enhancement of relational well-being in South African school contexts. She aims to achieve this by exploring, from a relational perspective, how a group of postgraduate psychology students, who are involved in various capacities in various school contexts, perceive the enhancement of children's relational well-being in South African school communities, based on their knowledge and experience. This contributes to the significance of this study as the subjects used for data gathering are personally and professionally

involved in school communities in South Africa which propose to bring forth true, authentic, valuable first hand information in this regard. Therefore, the study was guided by the following research questions:

How does a group of postgraduate students, involved in educational contexts, perceive the enhancement of children's relational well-being in South African school communities?

How can the understanding of these perceptions contribute to the enhancement of children's well-being in South African school communities?

1.3 Research aim and objectives

The aim of this study was to obtain knowledge on the enhancement of children's relational well-being in South African school communities as perceived by a group of postgraduate students who are enrolled for master's and PhD studies and work with children in educational contexts as teachers, counsellors or social workers.

The objective of the study was to identify possible ways to enhance children's relational well-being through a thematic analysis of the data collected during a World Café event that took place while a group of postgraduate students attended a research colloquium. Another objective was to critically explore underlying discourses in the data that underpins the participants' convictions and might have an influence on the enhancement of children's relational well-being in South African school communities. This objective emerged in the process of analysis as the researcher and supervisor noted that the participants spoke in a particular way about certain people and contexts.

1.4 Research methodology

In the following section, a brief overview of the research design, research context, participants, and methodology and techniques applied to collect the data needed to answer the research question is presented. The data analysis, trustworthiness and ethical considerations pertaining to this study will also be addressed concisely. All these aspects are discussed comprehensively in Chapter 3 of this study.

1.4.1 Research design

A qualitative-phenomenological research design was applied in this study (Creswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2007). The research design focusses on the meaning and interpretation that people give to a particular phenomenon and therefore provides a more complex description of how people experience a given phenomenon of a situation (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010)

In this study, the researcher examined the participants' perceptions of the enhancing of children's relational well-being in South African school communities, based on their personal experiences in school contexts.

1.4.2 Research context

The research was conducted in an academic setting in which the broader research focus is on children in South African school communities. South African schools are very diverse, pertaining to the demographics of race, culture, and language (Pillay, 2011) and experience an array of social challenges and adverse behaviour that compromise relational well-being across all contexts. These, among others, include socio-economic diversity, unemployment, violence, substance abuse, overcrowded classrooms, bullying behaviour and gansterism. Some of the initiatives aiming at fostering well-being in schools, was briefly discussed in the Introduction and will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. Concerning the socio-economic diversity, the national quintile system was implemented in an attempt to address this issue. According to this system, schools are divided into five categories ranging from "poorest" to "least poor". Quintiles, ranging from no. 1–5, are then allocated to the schools, with Quintile 1 (Q1) being the poorest. On the basis of the allocated quintiles, schools are then subsidised by the government and school fees are determined accordingly (WCED, 2013).

1.4.3 Participants

The population used for this study was a group of postgraduate students, all enrolled for an MA Psychology, MA Social work or a PhD at the North West University (N=130). There were 14 participants in the sample, all working within South African school communities as teachers and registered school counsellors. The participants all adhered to criteria pertaining to this specific study, as mentioned in the problem statement and will be more extensively discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.4.

1.4.4 Data collection

The data analysed to obtain the aim and objectives set for this study was collected during a World Café event held to explore the postgraduate students' perception of relational well-being and ways to enhance relational well-being in schools. This event took place while the participants attended a week-long research on campus. The World Café method was developed by Brown and Isaacs (2005) as a way to conduct research in larger groups in an interactive manner. According to Schieffer, Isaacs and Gyllenpalm (2004), the method creates an opportunity for a large group of

people to think together and discuss a specific subject as a group in a “single, connected conversation”.

The procedure followed during the World Café event entailed that the students were divided into four groups, seated at four separate tables. Each group identified a hostess for their table, who had to remain seated, host the discussion and take notes to keep a proper record. The notes of the hostesses were supported by drawings and illustrations made by their group members. This usage of different recording mediums could ensure a rich and honest representation of the data on the phenomenon studied (Ellingson, 2009) – in this case the perceptions of relational well-being.

Each group had to discuss a specific aspect of the study subject, which was posed as an open-ended question regarding relational well-being in South African schools. After discussing the question for about 20 minutes, the groups had to rotate to a next table with a different hostess and a new question for discussion. After a group finished discussing their aspect of the topic, the hostess had the opportunity to share the previous group’s reflections on the same aspect. The group could then relate their discussion in terms of the previous group’s contribution, thereby furnishing a more finished, crystallised and integrated outcome.

Following the table discussions, everybody gathered again as one large group. The hostesses were afforded the opportunity to report on the four discussions at their tables as a coherent, integrated entity. The large group was then allowed to verify the hostesses’ versions and to add to that where they found it necessary. After the hostesses concluded their representations, the facilitator gave a synopsis of the hostesses’ reports, thereby creating some unification and coherency of the subject discussed. Hereafter, all participants, including lecturers who attended the World Café, were afforded a final opportunity for reflecting on, contributing to or rectifying the information.

The discussions that took place during the World Café event were audio-recorded and all the poster presentations and notes were photographed. The photographs were stored electronically. All the audio-recorded group discussions were transcribed according to Poland’s (2005) recommendations.

1.4.5 Data analysis

The data was coded and thematically analysed according to the six phases suggested by Clarke and Braun (2013). To obtain an understanding of participants’ convictions, a critical comparative analysis was conducted to explore links between participants’ beliefs and the conceptual framework of this study. This analysis was partly done by following a sociolinguistic approach in order to analyse the spoken language from a critical perspective. A detailed discussion of the data analysis is presented in Chapter 3 (Section 3.6 and 3.6.1).

1.4.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290), refers to the means whereby a researcher assures the reader that the outcome and findings of their study are worth paying attention to and taking note of. To enhance trustworthiness of the data in this study, the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1999), were applied.

The principles of crystallisation (Ellingson, 2009) were also applied to enhance trustworthiness of the data. The effect of crystallisation is that a deep, complex and thickly described interpretation of the topic can be brought forth (Richardson, 2000; Nieuwenhuis, 2010; Ellingson, 2009), hence ensuring trustworthiness. Crystallisation techniques used include member checking, proper documentation and reflexive consideration.

1.5 Ethical considerations

In this study, the ethical conduct of the researcher is based on the values stipulated by the Constitution of South Africa (1996), which include human dignity, freedom and equality, as well as the ethical rules and regulations of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA, 1974). In order to ensure that ethical standards were adhered to as indicated in research literature (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), a research proposal was submitted to and permission to conduct this study obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of North-West University. The Ethical Clearance number for the project that includes this study is NWU-00060-12-A1.

The nature of this research suggested that the successful collection of good quality and appropriate data is mainly determined by the attitude of the group. This means that the most imperative priority of the researcher was to conduct research according to ethical guidelines by always putting the participants' well-being above the goals of the study (Strydom, 2011; Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). The following ethical principles (extensively discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.8) were accordingly adhered to: voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, non-maleficence, safekeeping of the data, beneficence, social accountability and responsibility.

1.6 Key terms

➤ School communities

A school community consists of the learners, teachers, head staff and parents. According to Redding (1991, p. 9), when a school functions as a community, the learners,

parents, teachers and staff associate with one another and share common values about education and children. Sergiovanni (1994) states that by referring to schools as communities, a sense of belonging, place and identity is formed. Strike (2000, 2004) argues that schools need to have a sense of community as communities contribute toward a sense of belonging and rootedness.

➤ **Children**

According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South Africa) as well as the Constitution of South Africa (1996), a child is defined as "a person under the age of 18 years". The term "child" may also be defined as "(a) young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014).

➤ **Well-being**

According to Evans and Prilleltensky (2007), well-being entails a state of fulfilment in which personal, relational and collective needs and aspirations are met. The focus lies in the ability to benefit, promote and develop all human aspects, including physical, mental, cognitive, emotional, educational and societal aspects, in order to promote thriving rather than merely existing. The World Health Organization (2005, p. 1) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Furthermore, well-being, according to Nakamura (2000), does not only pertain to physical and mental wellness, but includes interpersonal relationships and the nature thereof.

➤ **Relational Well-being**

According to Cross (1998) and McCubbin (2006), well-being is a relational construct. Personal well-being and collective well-being are also mediated by one's relational well-being, as Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) argue that well-being is highly dependent on the state of one's relationships and the community in which one lives. Relational well-being can therefore be seen as the state of inter- and intrapersonal relationships.

1.7 Summary

In this chapter, the research subject, the research problem, as well as the aim and objectives of the study were presented. An overview of the research design, research context, and the methodology and techniques applied in the data collection process was also provided. The trustworthiness of the study data and the ethical considerations were addressed concisely. Finally, an overview of the key

terms of the study was given. In the next chapter, the conceptual framework for the study is presented.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the conceptual framework for the study is discussed. The conceptual framework includes the perspectives from which the study departs as well as the theories that informed this study and therefore presents a basis for understanding the enhancement of children's relational well-being. An overview of literature on the promotion of well-being, well-being in schools and particularly South African schools is provided. Relational well-being as a construct, our relationality with others as well as relational well-being in school communities are also included.

The theories and perspectives that informed and provided a background for this study will be discussed independently. Firstly, the two perspectives will be deliberated and subsequently the two relevant theories will be comprehensively discussed. Afterwards, a short discussion of the relationship between the perspectives and theories as well as their relevance to the study will be provided. Figure 3 below presents an overview of the conceptual framework:

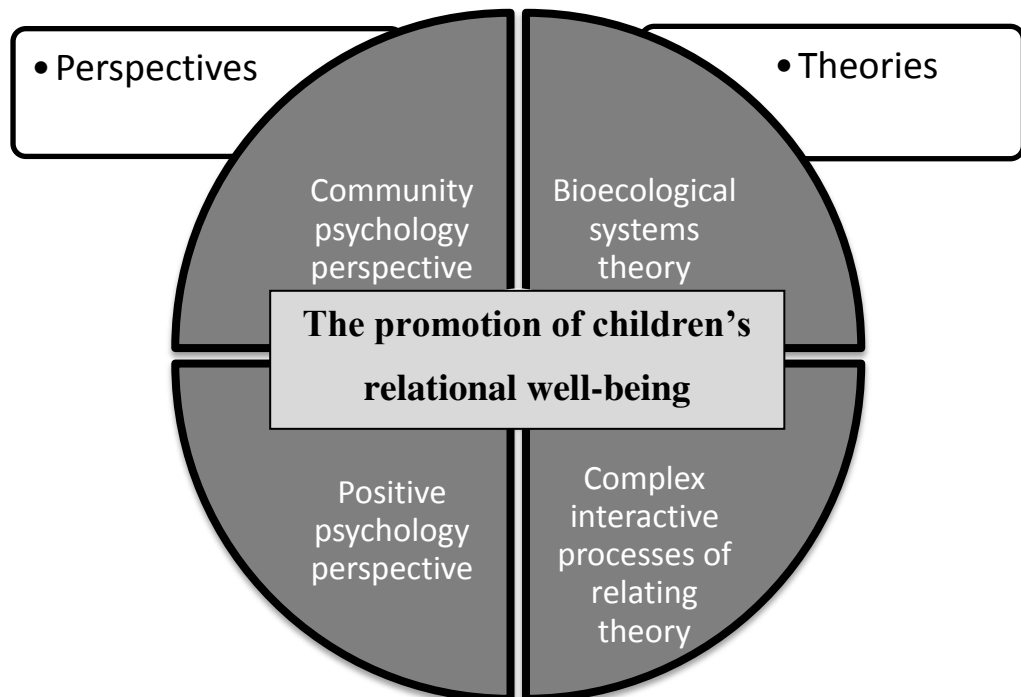


Figure 3: An overview of the conceptual framework that informed this study

2.2 A community psychology perspective

Over the last 15 to 20 years, there has been a movement in psychology towards more positive and strength-based approaches. In recent years, there has been growth within the psychology field towards wellness enhancement, the development of competence and human strengths and growth (Tedeschi & Kilmer, 2005). Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) describe this approach as “a pragmatic reaction against the limitations of a problem-oriented and individual-centred traditional psychology” (p. 123).

The professional practice of psychologists and counsellors working in school communities therefore started shifting away from this child pathology-based orientation that focussed on the deficits in learning, development and well-being. With the rise of Positive psychology and the renaissance of the children’s rights movement, a more strength-based orientation developed, focussing on the well-being and optimisation of development, learning and nurturing of children’s school experience (Jiang, Kosher, Ben-Arieh, Huebner, 2014; Huebner & Gilman, 2003; Jimerson et al., 2004). Seeing that the focus of this study lies in a more positive and constructive approach to relational well-being, a Community psychology approach, focussing on community strengths and well-being, has been identified as the lens through which this study was approached (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

Community psychology was developed due to dissatisfaction with mainstream experimental and Clinical psychology (Aubry, Sylvestre & Ecker, 2010). These disciplines’ application of an individual-centred, medical model according to Adame and Leitner (2008) underemphasise issues such as social conditions, political oppression, family systems, interpersonal relationships, spiritual crises and the trauma of physical and sexual abuse.

According to Levine, Perkins and Perkins (2005), Community psychology is a way of thinking about people’s behaviour and well-being in the context of all the community environments and social systems in which they live their lives. The focus thereof lies specifically in the individual’s relationship, actions, reactions, behaviour and well-being in their immediate environment, community and the context in which he/she functions (Lazarus, 2007; Roos, 2012; Ungerer, 2012). Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) contribute to this view and argue that a person cannot be understood apart from their context. They (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) are of the opinion that a person’s well-being is dependent on his relationships and the community in which he lives. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) further defines Community psychology as “the sub-discipline of psychology that is concerned with understanding people in their communities, the prevention of problems of living, the celebration of human diversity, and the pursuit of social justice through social interaction” (p. 22).

According to Aubrey et al. (2010, p. 89), Community psychology is about understanding the relationships among people, groups, social contexts, communities and social institutions. Rather than focussing on an individual level, the ecological environment is taken into account when approaching alleged disabilities and dysfunctions (Hunt & Crow, 2000; Perkins, 2011; Aubrey et al., 2010). Likewise, Lazarus (2007), De Jong (2000) and Sharrat (1995) agree that the interaction between individuals and their social contexts is central to promoting health and well-being. Kelly (2000) and Prilleltensky and Prilleltensky (2003) also suggest that the best way to promote mental health and well-being is by working with schools as entire communities. (See Section 2.7.1: The promotion of well-being in school contexts.) Therefore, in order to answer the research question, schools should be seen and approached as communities with various interacting agents, namely children, teachers, principals, parents and the wider society.

Levine et al. (2005) strongly support the Community psychology approach when they discuss and emphasise ecological thinking. The focus of the ecological thinking is to contemplate the individual's relationships with others as a community. As well as to see the community as a social group with formal and informal relationships, looking and considering the wider ecological level when it comes to intervention (Mann, 1978; Heller & Monahan, 1977).

According to Meier and Wood (2004), a sense of community can be created in a school through human relationships. McClaughlin and Clarke (2010) are of the opinion that "school connectedness" has a major influence on young people's well-being. School connectedness is facilitated by various activities and experiences, relationships between children, their peers and teachers, learner satisfaction with their experiences, feelings of membership of the learning community and participation and engagement in activity. The above-mentioned "school connectedness" can be seen as a personal, supportive environment, which can be indicative of a strong sense of community.

From a Community psychology perspective, Sarason (1974), Strike (2000, 2004) and Sergiovanni (1994, 1996) also propose that schools should be viewed as communities rather than organisations. Supporting the endeavour that schools should be regarded as communities, Visser (2007a) is of the opinion that support should be provided in the wider context. She (Visser, 2007a) argues that in order to develop and promote a context (community), the whole context (community) should be aimed at promoting change. In other words, the whole community should be involved during intervention and by regarding a whole community as positive contributors to overall well-being, a higher sense of relationality could possibly be reached. Therefore, by regarding the school as a community, the whole school community context can benefit from the intervention, rather than only the individual.

2.3 A Positive psychology perspective

The aim of Positive psychology is to catalyse a change in psychology, moving away from trying to repair and cure the worst things in life in order to build and focus on the better, more positive qualities in life (Seligman, 2005, p. 3; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). The urge is to adopt a more open and appreciative perspective regarding human potential, motive, and capacity and to identify and nurture talent. It can be seen as the study of human strengths and virtues, focussing on the positive attributes and traits in people instead of the negative (Cohen, Pooley, Ferguson & Harms, 2011; Seligman, 2005, Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001; Peterson & Seligman, cited by Quick, 2008). The essence of Positive psychology is that instead of only focussing on the healing of individuals, communities and societies, it calls them forth to thrive (Wagner, 2014).

By using Positive psychology as a background to this study, it ensures that the school community, relationships and well-being will be looked at in a positive light, focussing on “signature strengths” (Quick, 2008) to bring about change. The assumption here is that one’s signature strengths can work as a shield against negative behaviour and the adversity that is part of everyday life. In addition, these strengths can help and support people to achieve new levels of contentment, gratification and meaning. In essence, this is what Positive psychology is all about – helping people to become self-organised, self-directed, recognising their inner strength and capacity, realising the potential in themselves, instilling hope and ultimately thriving.

Schueller (2009) advocates for the integration of Positive psychology and Community psychology for the promotion of wellness. He is of the opinion that the more individual-focussed Positive psychology and the group-focussed Community psychology can contribute together to overall well-being as they share a common goal, namely to “improve human well-being by gaining an understanding of the psychological processes that promote well-being” (p. 933). Carr (2004) also mentions that the focus and central objective of Positive psychology is to understand and facilitate happiness and subjective well-being. Furthermore, Schueller (2009) states that Positive psychology can learn from Community psychology by better understanding structural contextual issues such as human rights and democracy where Community psychology in turn can promote supportive and positive relationships within groups.

As is the case with complexity theory (see Section 2.5 Complexity theory, para. 6), Positive psychology acknowledges that well-being of individuals is fundamentally interwoven with their relationships to others and for that reason also investigates positive relationships (Roffey, 2012b; Carr, 2004). Roffey (2012a) highlights the importance of Positive psychology. Seeing that positive development is at the heart of Positive psychology and schools are considered as positive institutions, composed to foster this positive development (Clonan, et al. 2004; Diener & Diener, 2009), this

approach presents a positive, constructive lens when considering the enhancement of relational well-being in school communities. In the next section, the bioecological systems theory is discussed.

2.4 Bioecological systems theory

In order to understand how a child's development is affected and influenced by their environment, relationships and social contexts, Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1992, 2005) bioecological systems theory was applied. Bronfenbrenner states that everything in a child's surrounding environment has an influence on their development and is based on interdependence between the individual and their environment. The focus therefore lies in the quality and context of the individual's environment (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002, Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

This approach, as is the case with Community and Positive psychology, provides an alternative to the linear, reductionist traditional approaches. The bioecological systems theory, being a multidimensional model of human development, focussing on the influence that the environment can have on relationships and the individual, contributes to the understanding of children's relational well-being in school communities. Swick and Williams (2006) also hold that the bioecological model provides a better understanding of families as well as concepts that are useful in "crafting empowering relations with families" (p. 371).

The bioecological theory was originally formed by a merging of the social ecology and systems theories. The *ecological* theory focusses on the interdependence between an organism and its environment where both the individual and the environment are seen as equally important. According to McLaren and Hawe (2005), the focus lies in multiple dimensions (personal attributes, physical environment), multiple levels (individuals, groups) and the complexity of human situations (snowballing effect of events over time). This process is often described as a web of interconnectedness, drawing on the example of a spider's web. What happens in one corner of the web has implications for the whole web – the so-called "ripple" effect (Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Donald, et al., 2002, p. 45). The *systems* theory refers to different groups in a social context as systems. The functioning of the whole system is dependent on the interaction between all the parts constituting the system. This suggests that a system consists of several smaller interconnected subsystems continuously interacting with each other and thereby creating a whole that is eventually more than the sum of its parts (Donald et al., 2002). This confirms that the two entities need each other in order to survive and function and is in principle at the core of enhancing relational well-being.

In a school community, this would imply that children, being the organisms, together with their families, teachers, peer group, classroom and head staff will constitute subsystems, which are all

part of the more extensive school system, namely the environment. The working and functioning of the school community then depends on all these subsystems interacting with one another. The following serves as an example of a situation that illustrates this reciprocity: When a child has, for instance, an unusual outburst of anger at school, it could most likely have been influenced or contributed to by something that has happened in one of their subsystems (e.g. family). This will then also have an effect on other areas in the school community – the classroom, the teacher and possibly the headmaster when trying to resolve the incident. It therefore confirms that everything is interdependent and what happens in one area of a subsystem will inevitably have an effect on the bigger system as a whole.

The four initial systems of social interaction that Bronfenbrenner identified as important for the understanding of human development are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. Following further research, he added the chronosystem. The chronosystem refers to the timeframe within which the interactions between the four different social systems occur (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). A brief discussion of the five systems in Bronfenbrenner's theory is presented below:

- **Microsystem**

The microsystem is the system within which children are actively and closely involved. They consist of interpersonal relationships and direct interactions on a daily basis (Donald et al., 2002; Berk, 2000). The family, the school and peer group all form part of the microsystem and it is within the microsystem that the key proximal processes occur and contribute to the formation of emotional, cognitive, moral, spiritual and social development (Swart & Pettipher, 2011; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010; Visser, 2007a). According to Jorgensen (2004), the individual (child) also plays an instrumental role in the creation and construction of their own experiences in the microsystem. When considering relational well-being and the enhancement thereof, the microsystem would then be of the utmost value as the relationships occurring within it are developed and evolved on a daily basis. Following the family system and peer group, the school community is considered to be a vital microsystem for the development of children and therefore relationships (Visser, 2007a).

- **Mesosystem**

The mesosystem is the level in which the family, peer group, and school interact with each other and can in effect be described as a system of microsystems (Donald et al., 2002, Swart & Pettipher, 2005, Berk, 2000). Bronfenbrenner (1979) mentions that the mesosystem helps to connect two or more systems within which a child lives. An example hereof would be the interrelatedness between a child's family and the school (Judeel, 2014, Penn, 2005).

Experiences in one microsystem may influence the interactions in other microsystem (Swart & Pettipher, 2011), and hence the reciprocity of relationships and experiences are explained. Swick and Williams (2006) holds that mesosystems are about being in relationship with each other in ever expanding circles.

- Exosystem

According to Paquette & Ryan (2001) the exosystem is a system where the individual (child) does not play a major role in their experiences, but the experiences does have a direct effect on the microsystems within which the child finds him/herself. In other words, the child lives in (experiences) a system psychologically, but not physically (Swick & Williams, 2006). An example hereof would be when a father's work environment changes to such an extent that he needs to travel more. Being away from home causes extra stress, pressure and obligations for the mother and in effect the child's relationship with the mother will change. So the father's workplace (exosystem) has an indirect effect on the mother-child (microsystem) relationship.

- Macrosystem

Social structures, cultural values, beliefs, laws, customs and ideologies all constitute the macrosystem (Donald et al., 2002; Berk, 2000; Harkönen, 2007). According to Harkönen (2007), the macrosystem can be seen as a societal blueprint for a specific culture, subculture or other broader context and what can be referred to as a social system as a whole (Donald et al., 2002). This would then in effect be the society within which the micro-, meso- and exosystems are embedded.

- Chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1989), only at a later stage, added the chronosystem that refers to the dimensions of time as it relates to a child's environment. Sven (2007) mentions that an environment is not static, but rather dynamic. It develops and changes over time. Therefore, every time a person (child) changes and adds to a role, setting or relationships, the entities in the microsystem will also change.

Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994) further extended the theory by adding the Process-Person-Context-Time model (PPCT) (described below). When trying to understand human development better, these four interacting dimensions should be considered (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). The PPCT model consists of the following:

- **Process factors:** Process factors are the regular reciprocal interactions between a person and its environment over the long term – this is referred to as a proximal process.
- **Person factors:** This refers to a person's biological, genetic and personal characteristics that play a role in social interactions. Person factors include physical appearance, gender, experience, skills, emotions, temperament, motivation, and persistence (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).
- **Contexts:** The context refers to the environment of the child, for example the school, family or local community. Involved herein is all four of the original systems: micro-, meso-, exo- and macrosystem.
- **Time:** This refers to the chronosystem, namely the changes that occur in a child and environment over time.

When considering the bioecological systems theory as part of the conceptual framework for this study, it is acknowledged that a child is in a constant relationship with themselves and their direct and indirect environment, thereby recognising that humans are relational and community-bound (environment-bound) and ultimately posing that human development is a complex, interrelated system-bound phenomenon. The bioecological systems theory informed this study by contributing to the understanding of the child within their school community by thoroughly explaining the interrelatedness and reciprocity of relationships and their social systems.

Figure 4 below is a graphical representation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory:

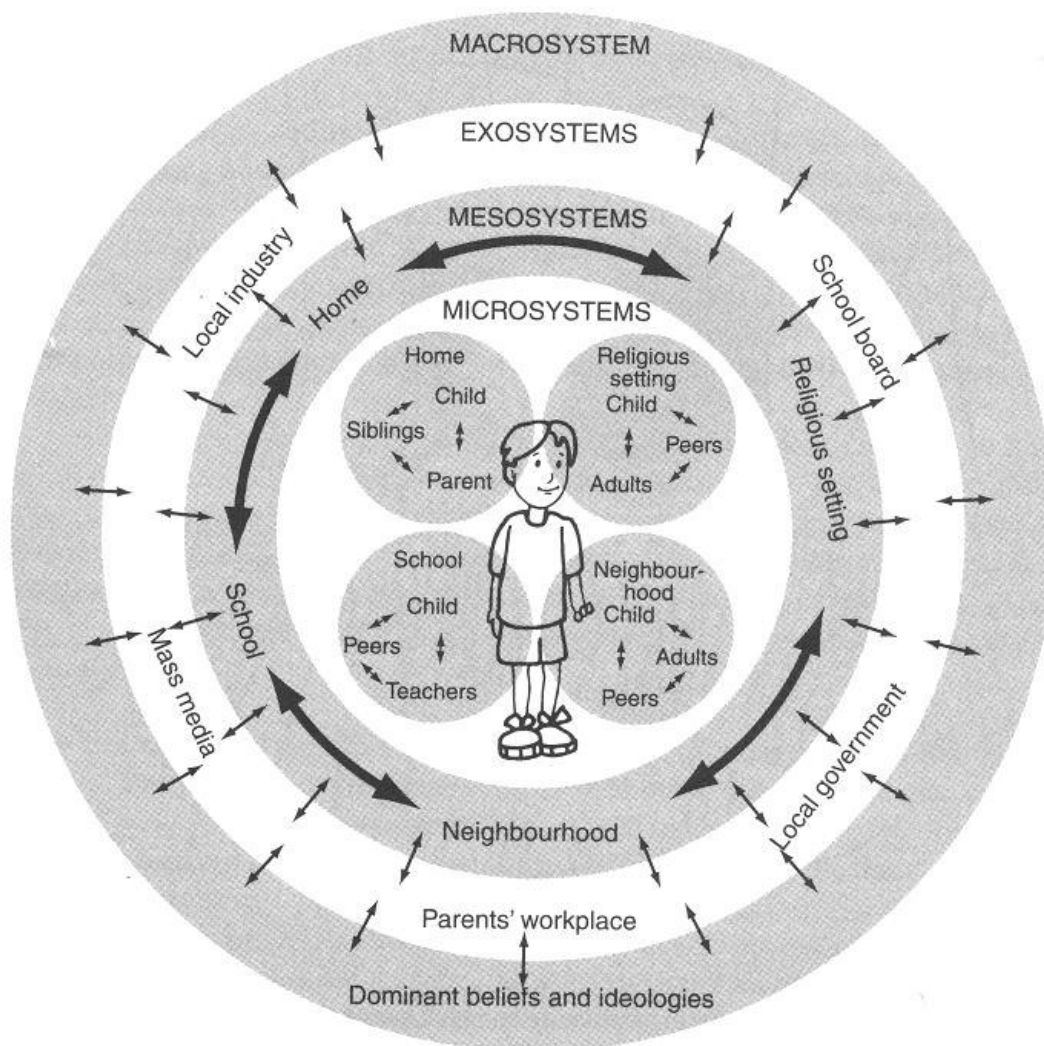


Figure 4: Bioecological systems theory approach: a graphical representation

(Picture scanned from Penn, H. 2005. *Understanding early childhood education: Issues and controversies*. Glasgow: Bell & Bain Ltd.).

2.5 Complexity theory

The complexity theory corroborates the bioecological systems theory in the respect that one cannot look at the organism (the child) without considering and taking into account its environment (Morrison, 2006). Where the bioecological systems theory focusses on the interaction between the individual (child) and the systems (environment) in which they function, complexity theory focusses on the interactive dynamics between the individuals that constitute the system.

Complexity theory, according to Cilliers (1998), breaks away from what is referred to as a “straightforward cause-and-effect models, linear predictability, and reductionist, atomistic, analytically-fragmented approach” to embrace a non-linear, organic and holistic approach to understanding human systems. When an organism (person) senses and responds to its environment, it changes the environment and, in turn, the environment can then change the organism (person). The organism (person) and its environment cannot be considered individually, but are seen as a collective and holistic system of relational behaviour (Waldrop, 1992; Capra, 1996, Parellada cited in Morrison, 2010).

According to Morrison (2002), the complexity theory sees the school as a complex adaptive system. The interaction between the people on different levels (children, teachers, managing staff), contributes to the functioning of the whole system in a non-linear, self-organising way. McQuillan (2008) confirms Morrison’s view by stating that the complexity draws attention to the evolving interrelationships among the system elements. Due to the complexity of relationships in a school community, and the interactive dynamics of this non-linear feedback system, the link between cause and effect is also not easy to determine (Radford, 2008; Morrison, 2002). Being a process theory, complexity theory describes the complex dynamics involved in being together in everyday life (Shaw, 2002).

Seeing that the school community is a complex system, continuously changing and being influenced by the interaction between the people (children, parents, and teachers) in the school, the focus of intervention, according to Davis and Sumara (2001), should rather be on the interactions between individuals and not on the individual behaviour. In this regard, Stacey’s (2003) theory of complex responsive processes, focussing on the interactive nature of relating, is of extreme relevance when it comes to the promotion of relationships.

Stacey (2000; 2003) states that human interaction is a complex dynamic process. He further explains that people influence and are being influenced by each other in their social networks and environments. Complex adaptive systems, embedded in the complexity theory, scan and sense the external environment and make adjustments and developments in order to survive. This process involves self-organisation and autocatalysis where all change and support come from the system itself

(Waldrop, 1992). The process can be explained as follows: People examine and respond to one another's behaviour based on their personal history of social interaction (Stacey, 1996; 2003). Information received from the environment is then reflected on by the individual. Through assimilation the individual chooses and accepts with what they can personally identify and then rejects the information that does not belong to them. Through these continuous complex reciprocal interactions of changing and being changed, a dynamic, self-organising, constantly evolving environment is formed and through this spontaneous process, while trying to make sense of our environment, we reach a higher order and co-evolve together (Radford, 2006; Stacey, 2003; 2000; Shaw, 2002; Badenhorst, 1995).

According to the theory of complex responsive processes, the individual and society (community) are in constant interaction with each other and through these interactions, the "self" and "society" is formed. Stacey (2003, 2007) holds that one's intrinsic conversations are constituted and formed as a result of interaction with the extrinsic environment. He (Stacey, 2003) argues that "the social is in the individual in the form of representations of social relationships and the individual is in the social in the sense of being a part of the social system" (p. 328). Stacey (2003) further states that human beings are primarily social animals. The premise from which he argues is that the human physiology is such that you will not be able to regulate yourself on your own, since the biochemical mechanisms of calming and arousal are linked to the actions of attachment and separation from others. He holds that one's identity is formed and emerges simultaneously in the individual and collective forms through human communicative interaction. Furthermore, Stacey (2003) explains that "the individual is social to the core" and the two (individual and social) are "inextricably linked, one is not possible without the other" (p. 328). In concurrence, Gergen (2009) advocates that human behaviour and its challenges should be regarded in terms of a web of relational interrelatedness.

Kitching (2010), based on complex responsiveness process theory that emphasises the importance of everyday interactions between all those involved in school communities, promotes a relationship-focussed approach to the co-construction of enabling school communities. When attempting to enhance children's relational well-being, it is therefore vital that the complex nature of relationships in the school community should be taken into account. Roos (2012) is of the opinion that the complex interactive dynamics constituting relationships can likely be explained by the complexity theory. Therefore, the complexity theory informed this study and provides an alternative way of understanding the complex, dynamic interactions in relationships and the school community.

2.6 The relationship between the perspectives and theories that informed this study

Visser (2007a) is of the opinion that in order to bring change to a system, support should be given within the whole context and the whole context should be part of the intervention process. In order to adhere to this in terms of the research question, the following perspectives and theories have informed this study: Community psychology perspective, a Positive psychology perspective, the bioecological systems theory and the complexity theory. By using these perspectives and theories as a conceptual framework, the researcher proposes that the enhancement of relational well-being should be approached positively by considering the school community as an interconnected web of relationships, mutually dependent on its different subsystems and consisting of complex, dynamic and interrelated interactions. Furthermore, when there is a focus on strengths as a positive contributor to a community, proactive and preventative intervention mediums are more likely to develop.

It is proposed that by following the conceptual framework discussed above, the interdependent influences of all possible role players in a school community can be considered and taken into account. When this is achieved and the relational well-being of children is adhered to positively, it is proposed that the overall health and well-being of such a school community will eventually influence the whole community in a positive relational manner.

2.7 The promotion of well-being

The term well-being is often used and applied across a broad field of social disciplines. However, it is hardly ever used to imply a fixed definition (Soutter, 2011, Coleman, 2009, Bourke & Geldens, 2007, Pollard & Lee, 2003). According to Mashford-Scott, Church and Tayler (2012), the term “well-being” is abstract, multidimensional, and socially and culturally constructed, resulting in it often being used inconsistently across different fields and contexts. Statham and Chase (2010) state that well-being is generally understood as the quality of people’s lives. Gammage (2004), in turn, suggests that well-being implies a state of feeling valued – socially, emotionally, intellectually and, eventually, economically. Well-being can also be defined as a good or satisfactory condition of existence, where one rises and excels above the everyday problems of society. Included herein would be the ability to integrate physical, mental, cognitive, emotional, societal and educational domains in order to attain optimal development fully (Pollard & Rosenberg, 2003; Thornton, 2001).

The World Health Organization (2005, p. 1) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. This confirms the notion that well-being is more than just the absence of adversity and disease (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) and that the focus of well-being can be strongly related to the theory of Positive psychology,

“not just fixing what is broken, but nurturing what is best” in order for an individual to truly thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 7). Frydenberg, Chan, Care and Freeman (2009) further confirm the shift away from the traditional deficit models when they describe well-being as positive states of being.

Moreover, Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) and Prilleltensky (2005) expand our understanding of well-being as a multilevel phenomenon by defining it as a positive state of affairs in which the personal (individual), relational, and collective needs and aspirations of individuals and communities are fulfilled. This is referred to as holistic well-being and the argument stands that “the well-being of any one person is highly dependent on the well-being of her relationships and on the community in which she resides” (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007, p. 681). Therefore, a short description of the three “sites of well-being” (where well-being occurs), specifically individual, relational and collective well-being, is provided below:

Individual well-being, or rather personal well-being, entails the feelings, cognition and phenomenological experiences of well-being (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007; Prilleltensky, 2005). Included herein are personal control, choice, competence, self-esteem, independence and a positive identity (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Furthermore, Watson (2012) holds that individual well-being can be measured according to three particular domains, namely emotional, psychological and social well-being.

Relational well-being, or relationships, according to Prilleltensky (2005) is where exchanges of material and psychological resources occur. In other words, this can be explained as the place where money and physical help meet with affection and caring. According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010), caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, collaboration, and democratic participation in decision-making processes are all signs of relational well-being. (See also Section 2.8.1 Relational well-being as a construct for an extensive discussion.)

Collective well-being refers to the community’s well-being. According to Prilleltensky (2005), “characteristics such as affordable housing, clean air, accessible transportation, high quality healthcare and education facilities” (p. 54) all constitute the well-being of communities.

Prilleltensky (2005) argues that well-being is an interdependent balancing act between the individual person, his relationships and the community. These three coexist together: “None can neither be subsumed under the others, nor can they exist in isolation” (p. 54) and therefore the enhancement of well-being requires a holistic approach. Relational well-being, however, serves as the mediating factor between individual and collective well-being (Prilleltensky, 2005; Wagner, 2014). It is thus of paramount importance that well-being of relationships should be tended to.

For the purposes of this study, Prilleltensky's (2005) view of holistic well-being has been adopted with a focus on relational well-being.

2.7.1 The role of school communities in the promotion of well-being

The role of schools as social and learning contexts in the promotion of well-being has been researched widely. Gutman and Feinstein (2008) argue that the school environment, as a context of learning, according to various researchers, play an important role in children's social, emotional and behavioural well-being since learning is closely intertwined with well-being. Atkinson and Hornby (2002) concur that educational institutions make a fundamental contribution to the overall well-being of learners (children) and educators (teachers). According to De Jong (2000), education has been emphasised as the primary site for achieving healthy development. Likewise, Konu and Rimpela (2002) perceive schools to be the main setting for health promotion among children and adolescents. Roffey (2012a) also holds that schools can make a very positive difference in children's lives as not all parents manage to tend to the socio-emotional development of their children.

Fraillon (2004) argues that a higher level of learner well-being contributes to better and improved outcomes in all other aspects of schooling. Furthermore, research suggests that when children experience a positive level of well-being (Swartz, De La Rey, Duncan & Townsend, 2008, p. 498–499) and all levels of well-being are addressed, they are

more able to learn and assimilate information in effective ways; more likely to engage in healthy and fulfilling social behaviours; more likely to invest in their own and others' well-being and in the sustainability of the planet, as they take up their social, professional and leadership roles in adulthood (Awartani, Whitman & Gordon, 2008, p. 54).

School communities are seen as positive institutions that can contribute significantly to the promotion of well-being in children's lives. In fact, according to the Children's Act (2004) of the United Kingdom, schools have a duty to promote the welfare of children and promote their educational achievement. Therefore, by focussing on schools as spaces for the enhancement and promotion of child well-being, a bottom-up approach can be followed by influencing the school community first and from there on well-being can possibly circle out to the wider community.

Following the WHO's call for schools to be enabling environments (WHO, 1986), the Global School Health Initiative was established in 1995 with the main goal to mobilise and strengthen health promotion and education activities by increasing Health Promoting Schools (HPS) that constantly strengthen their capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working (WHO, 2016). Another organisation that continuously investigates and promotes the quality of school life in order to achieve

child well-being is the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2009). More recently, in England, the Public Health England (PHE) organisation of the Department of Health set forth the “Promoting children and young people’s emotional health and wellbeing” (2015) document. This document sets forth “key actions that head teachers and principals can take to embed a whole school approach to promoting emotional health and wellbeing” (p. 4). The Universal Education Fund (UEF, 2004) also has the goal of improving children’s health and the quality of education by contributing to the improvement of health in school systems through developing programs and offering support (Lee, Cheng, Fung & St Leger, 2006, p. 530).

Over the years, numerous other global initiatives have come into being with the common goal of enhancing and promoting mental health, well-being and the development of social and emotional aspects in children. Some of these initiatives include the Every Child Matters legislation, Mind Matters and SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning in Schools) (Department of Education and Skills, 2003; Wyn, Cahill, Holdsworth, Rowling & Carson, 2000; Department of Education and Skills, 2005).

By focussing on school communities as a place of well-being promotion, these global initiatives further confirm that schools indeed provide a most suitable environment for the promotion of well-being in children.

2.7.2 The promotion of well-being in South African schools

In South Africa, the movement towards establishing health and well-being in schools include a series of events and initiatives. Initially, the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) initiative, driven and contributed to tremendously by Swart and Reddy (1999), had and still has the goal to improve the health status of children and to improve the development of quality education. Furthermore, the Department of Health brought forth the “National Guidelines for the Development of Health Promoting Schools/sites in South Africa” whereby schools were identified as “sites of well-being” (Department of Education, 2000, 2001; Department of Health, 2008). The focus of these initiatives remains to enhance and promote mental health and well-being of all those involved in schools.

Moreover, some recent initiatives developed by the Department of Basic Education include the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) programme. This programme was adopted from SADC (Southern African Development Community) by Education Ministers in 2008. Its goal is to create an enabling environment to improve learning outcomes by realising the education rights of all children through schools becoming inclusive centres of learning, care and support (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

In 2011, the Department of Health, together with the Department of Basic Education revised the National School Health Policy. From this revision, the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP) was born. The goal of this programme is to contribute to the improvement of the general health of schoolgoing children, the environmental conditions in schools and addressing health barriers to learning (Department of Health, 2012). The Integrated School Health Policy (2012), which guided the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP), holds that the aim of the ISHP is to build on and strengthen existing school health services by providing preventative and promotive services that address the health needs of schoolgoing children by facilitating health services where required, supporting school communities in creating HPS and mobilising resources for the implementation of the school health policy.

On a more academic level, the government launched an education portal in 2005 called Thutong. Thutong, meaning “place of learning”, aims to improve learning through technology by providing an online community where teachers, learners and other educators have the opportunity to “connect and share information and ideas” (Thutong: SA’s education portal, 2012).

However, according to Konu and Rimpela (2002), well-being is mainly seen as separate from the ample goal of schooling and has not yet gained a central role in development programmes. Due to South Africa’s past, also mentioned in the problem statement of this study, school communities struggle with, among others, financial constraints, inadequate training of staff, racially segregated contexts and disproportionate teacher-student ratios (Swart & Reddy, 1999). These aspects all fall within Evan and Prilleltensky’s (2010) “collective wellbeing” and therefore the focus is mainly on improving health-related issues such as healthcare and educational facilities. The focus therefore has mostly been on a physical, communal level.

Other dimensions of well-being, namely relational- and individual well-being, have not been actively promoted and taken into account. Although relational matters such as caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, and collaboration, have been mentioned and highlighted in the Integrated Quality Management System for School-based Educators (Education Labour Relations Council, 2003) few have been activated and implemented. The notion remains that South African schools are currently not providing sustainable supportive environments when it comes to the enhancement of relational well-being (Reviews of National Policies for Education, OECD, 2008; Wagner, 2014).

2.8 Relational well-being

2.8.1 Relational well-being as a construct

Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) state that a person's well-being is highly dependent on their relationships and the community in which they reside. Well-being, according to Cross (1998) and McCubbin (2006), is a relational construct and requires an individual to be embedded in a "network of positive and supporting relationships and participate freely in social, community and political life" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010, p. 30). Fraillon (2004) identified four aspects of positive relationships, namely communicative efficacy, empathy, acceptance and connectedness. These aspects are believed to further lead to interpersonal well-being. There is also substantial evidence that positive relationships, composed of compassion, caring and support, promote well-being and benefit children as well as adults (Berkman, 1995; Cohen, 2004; Ornish, 1997). Furthermore, Diener and Seligman (2004) stated that for well-being to suffice, the quality of a person's relationships is crucial and, in order to sustain well-being, these relationships should be fulfilling and supportive.

According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010), caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, collaboration, and democratic participation in decision-making processes are signs of relational well-being. Additionally, McCubbin et al. (2013) defined six factors of relational well-being: resilience, community involvement, financial stability, cultural practice, family commitment, and healthcare.

As previously mentioned in Section 2.7, paragraph 3, well-being can also be defined as "a positive state of affairs in which the personal, relational, and collective needs and aspirations of individuals and communities are fulfilled" (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007, p. 54). According to Prilleltensky (2005), the relational well-being of an individual mediates the personal and collective well-being. He (Prilleltensky, 2005) thus holds that well-being includes a balance between the person (individual), the relationships (relational) and the community (collective) in which they reside. In addition, McCubbin et al. (2013) argues that well-being is the extent to which the positive effects in a child's life overshadow the negative effects. The authors pointed to the centrality of relational well-being by maintaining that this positive-negative balance pivots on relationships. White (2008) also sees relationships as crucial to the understanding of well-being. She (White, 2008) identified three dimensions of well-being, namely subjective, material and relational well-being, which constantly interact with each other.

These arguments all strongly agree Community psychology and the bioecological systems theory within which this study is grounded. Without the relationship, the person and environment would not be able to interact and influence one another.

According to McCubbin et al. (2013), the community forms a key element of relational well-being and cultivates a sense of place. White (2008, p. 15) is also of the opinion that “the ‘home’ context of well-being is not the individual but the community: well-being happens in relationship”. By being interdependent, as described by the bioecological systems theory, the relationship is seen as fundamental to the well-being of personal and communal well-being. Therefore, when looking at nurturing and enhancing the relationship between the role players in a school community, their well-being might improve and reciprocally circle out to improve the general well-being of the whole community. Thus, it can be argued that in order to enhance relational well-being, a community of individuals is needed and by improving their relationships, the whole community will ultimately benefit.

It is in this regard that the moving away from the more Western culture and traditional approaches that consider the individual as important to approaches that consider the responsibility and success of the whole community as more important than the individual’s well-being (McCubbin et al., 2013; Prilleltensky, 2011). From these perspectives, the relationship between community members should be nurtured in order to achieve collective success and recognition. Included in this approach/construct is the family unit, ancestors, the physical and natural environment, extended family, adopted family, community, society, culture and the world (McCubbin et al., 2013). All these different dimensions of human ecology, as discussed in Bronfenbrenner (1979), are included in and also form a part of relational well-being. Therefore, by focussing on and enhancing relational well-being, which encompasses and includes the individual, family, community and society, (McCubbin et al., 2013) the researcher strives to contribute to the enhancement of children’s holistic well-being.

2.8.2 Motho ke motho ka batho babang

A person is a person because of other people.

The seTswana quote above refers to the inherent meaning of being human. As is the case explained by the complexity theory and theory of complex responsive processes, we exist together, with mutual influence on each other, i.e. each affected and formed via relationships with others.

Strongly agreeing with this and adding to the argument is the African concept of *ubuntu*. According to Battle (1996), this concept generally means that “each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others and, in turn, individuality is truly expressed” (p. 99). Metz and Gaie (2010) argue that, firstly, *ubuntu* portrays and develops humanness by acknowledging that “one

becomes a person solely through other persons” (Le Grange, 2012, p. 331) and the true self cannot be realised through opposition or isolation from other people. Secondly, Metz and Gaie (2010) hold that positive relationships with others are strictly defined in communal terms and they write that “the proper way to relate to others ... is to seek out community or to live in harmony with them” (p. 275).

Current research pertaining to relationships and their importance has further revealed that the same type of principles and train of thought have been applied as that being promoted by *ubuntu* all along. Gergen (2009) argues that humans are primarily relational beings who desire meaningful relationships with others. Hycner (1993) strengthens the argument by stating that relationships are a crucial part of well-being, if not its most significant part. Friedman (cited in Hycner, 1993) also confirms this by stating that this relationship between persons is central, not secondary, to existence.

Pearls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951) mention the following: “The self is not to be thought of as a fixed institution; it exists wherever and whenever there is in fact a boundary interaction” (p. 373) and it is at the contact boundary, where the human body and its environment interact, that the self emerges (Philippon, 2001). Philipson (2001) further explains that the “I” – as a self – exists in relation to others and their environment. It is in this multi-relational existence that the “self” emerges from the relationship between the two. Out of this interaction will flow forth who “I am” – the self identified by being of myself or of being of the other (p. 21, 26).

Josselson (1996) adds and explains that relationships form, and should be interpreted as, arising from the flow of interaction between people. This strengthens the argument that to be oneself or to be considered as having a sense of well-being, one needs to be in relationship with other people. White (2008) is also of the opinion that relationships are not something that an individual has, but rather that people become who and what they are in and through relatedness to others.

Relatedness and individuality are thus not dichotomous, but represent two ends of a continuum and are therefore inevitably intertwined. Together they pose the potential to promote well-being as a whole. It is in this sense that Witmer (2005) remarks that life’s deepest purpose can be found in relationships. The author (Witmer, 2005) is of the opinion that it is our connections with parents, children, spouses, siblings, friends and teachers that provide us with meaning and genuine learning. It has also been found in literature that relationships are of core importance for life satisfaction and that having/finding meaning in life is the top indicator of well-being (Steger, Shin, Fitch-Martin, 2013; Reis & Gable, 2003; Roffey, 2012b). Supporting this endeavour, Oishi, Diener and Lucas (2007) hold that the highest level of happiness is linked to better social relationships (Schueller, 2009; Wissing, 2014). Therefore, by focussing on relationships and relational well-being, the holistic well-being of a school community can ultimately be enhanced.

2.8.3 Relational well-being in school communities

In a school community, relationships matter especially because they can affect school connectedness and therefore academic outcomes (Benade, 2014). Morrison (2002) is of the opinion that school communities should be thought of in terms of processes of people, relations and interactions with each other over time. McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) also emphasise that relationships are vital for “school connectedness”. Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D’Alessandro and Guffrey (2012) and McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) describe school connectedness as the experience of relationships between peers and with teachers, a feeling of membership and being part of the learning community, levels of learner satisfaction, aspects of participation and involvement in decision-making processes. Literature shows that a feeling of belonging or connectedness among school community members can be created through school relationships (Wagner, 2014). Wagner (2014), along with other researchers, is of the opinion that this will contribute to positive holistic outcomes for learners.

According to Epstein (2001), it is clear that student and teacher success is to a large extent determined and influenced by healthy and productive relationships. This can be fostered in a school community through creating a strong school connectedness. An integral part of the educational process, which plays a significant role in student achievement, according to Witmer (2005), is the teacher-student relationship along with teacher-parent and school-home relationships.

When considering relational well-being in school communities, Witmer (2005) explains that teachers, who can connect with learners in their classrooms, are often more engaged with the learning process and can make learning more meaningful for the learners. She also explains that learning only truly takes place when a learner actively engages with the learning experience. This, in turn, happens when a learner sees or experiences an activity as meaningful. Something can be experienced as meaningful when it satisfies or addresses an emotional need. Awartani et al. (2008) also emphasise the effect of relationships in the school community and mention that one of the most important connections is that of students’ feeling of connection to their teachers and overall school community. Students’ learning in such conditions of positive social and emotional environments exhibit fewer risk behaviours and overall more positive well-being and academic performance (Bonny, Britto, Kolstermann, Hornung & Slap, 2000; Nutbeam, Smith, Moore & Bauman, 1993; Havlinova & Scheidrova, 1995; Blum McNeely & Rinehart, 2002; Benade, 2014). In support hereof, Caine and Caine (2004) hold that the brain does not automatically or perceptually separate cognition from emotion. Therefore, one can understand that a positive social and emotional relationship within the school environment can have a positive influence on learner achievement and success.

Moreover, Wang and Eccles (2012) found that engagement in and with school, which is linked to school connectedness, is further improved by supportive relationships between teachers, peers and family. In a study focussing on what it is about relationships that mostly contribute to

meaning in life, researchers found the answer to be a sense of belonging (Lambert, Stillman, Hicks, Kamble, Baumeister & Fincham, 2013). Prilleltensky (2010) also holds that acceptance, participation and a feeling of belonging are crucial when it comes to the sustainability and assurance of relational well-being. Therefore, it seems that connectedness in school communities contribute to the creation of a positive social and emotional environment, which in turn leads to fewer risk behaviours (Benade, 2014; Weeks, 2009; Awartani, 2008).

Morris (cited in Burrows, 2011) states that the main hurdle to well-being in school communities is negative and faulty relationships. Tew (2010, p. 140) also found that when the relational dynamics in a school community are dysfunctional, the “members of the school community use excessive amounts of energy to manage and solve the situation.” The energy available for building positive relationships, teaching and learning is then lost to managing the adverse dynamics.

One of the most important relationships is between the teacher and learner relationship (Roffey, 2012a; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). Others include relationships between peers/friends, staff members, teachers and parents, and the school and the wider community (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010; Roffey, 2012a; Weeks, 2009; Visser, 2007b). Thapa et al. (2012) and McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) found that a positive teacher-student relationship has numerous positive effects such as a decrease in behavioural problems and an increase in self-esteem. There is also an improvement in the grade point average and the learners’ emotional well-being. Learners are also better and more engaged in the classroom activities, which show a better school connectedness. De Klerk-Luttig and Heystek (2007) also found that a poor teacher-learner relationship has a negative influence on learner discipline at school. Therefore, the opposite should also be true, resulting in positive outcomes for learner discipline. Jia, Way, Ling, Yoshikawa, Chen, Hughes, Ke and Lu (2009) furthermore found a positive relation between teacher-peer support and academic achievement. Additionally, there seems to exist a strong body of evidence suggesting and confirming that teacher-student relationships and positive relationships in general are of great importance for positive student outcomes in a school community (Maggu & Kapoor, 2015; Davis, 2006; Diener & Diener, 2009; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt & Oort, 2011; Eloff, Oosthuizen, Wolhuter & Van der Walt, 2013).

Burrows (2011) furthermore explain that a relational approach opens more peaceful, cooperative and spontaneous doors to well-being and suggests that relational well-being in school communities should be placed at the centre of our concern. The author (Burrows, 2011) is of the opinion that developing positive teacher-student relationships is at the heart of learning and well-being. Sherwood (2008) also poses that relationships are the centre of the classroom atmosphere. Thus, when considering the role of relational well-being in school communities, it becomes clear that relationships and positive interactions have a positive influence on learning and student success.

Therefore, it can be proposed that a positive relational environment in schools will indeed enhance holistic well-being within the school community.

2.9 Summary

In this chapter, a theoretical framework for understanding the enhancement of relational well-being in South African school contexts was presented and discussed. The framework incorporates a community and Positive psychology perspective and the bioecological systems theory as well as the complexity theory. Other than the previously followed individualistic approaches, described in Chapter 1 and still followed by South African school communities, these perspectives and theories clearly advocate a more holistic approach when it comes to the enhancement and promotion of well-being. By considering the child within his community and embedded within the complexity of relationships, a more positive and proactive change can be brought forth. Meier and Wood (2004) argue that a community, and in this case a school community, is created through human relationships.

Furthermore, well-being as a construct and the promotion of well-being in school communities has also been discussed. Global initiatives have been launched in an effort to enhance children's health and overall well-being within school communities.

In South Africa, however, despite programmes and various initiatives with the goal of enhancing well-being, the focus still seems to be on a physical level. Although research and policy documents in South Africa acknowledge the importance of relational well-being, it has not reached a central place in school communities. Through the discussion on relational well-being as a construct, it has also been clearly illustrated that positive relationships and relationality has a significant influence on holistic well-being. Therefore, it becomes clear that sustainable and supportive environments, providing and enabling health and well-being on an emotional and relational level has yet to be implemented. This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of relational well-being and how the enhancement and its centrality can further contribute to children's holistic well-being. In the next chapter, the research methodology applied in this study will be discussed thoroughly.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the following sections, the researcher will discuss the methodological and technical components relevant to this research. A general, concise theoretical explanation of the concepts and strategies will be presented, followed by a discussion of the more practical application thereof as informed by the goals and nature of this study.

3.2 Research context

The research context for this study includes both the tertiary education and basic education contexts in South Africa. Postgraduate students shared their knowledge, experience and perceptions of children within the South African school community.

With reference to the tertiary education context, the participants involved in this study were enrolled in an academic setting at the North-West University. They were enrolled for the following degrees: M Psych, M Social Work and PhD in Psychology. The postgraduate students were all involved in a more extensive research project of the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) in Wellington. The students, although working on different topics either in psychology or Social Work, all share a focus on school communities. The students completed their previous studies at various institutions across South Africa.

With reference to the school contexts, all the participants are currently working with children, youth and families in South African school communities on a daily basis. Their involvements encompass teaching, counselling, educational psychology practice, social work, youth development, psychometrics and drama coaching. Being involved with children and school communities, the broader research context providing the background for the study is South African school communities in either urban or rural settings. Social systems, including school communities, are related (See Chapter 2, Section 2.8.3) and the interconnectedness between school systems and other social systems should be acknowledged and appreciated. Therefore, while the focus will primarily be on the school system, references will be made to other systems where applicable – especially to the broader community system.

Due to South Africa's past, a socio-economic diversity exists among the people and, more specifically, in the school communities. The awareness thereof has resulted in various initiatives

across the country which strives to address and overcome this segregation. An example hereof is the National Quintile System (Western Cape Education Department, 2013). According to the NQS, public schools have been categorised into five groups for the purpose of, among others, allocating financial support. These groups range from “poorest” to “least poor”, with quintile one (Q1) being the poorest and quintile five the “least poor”. Only Q4 and Q5 are required to pay school fees. Q1, Q2 and Q3 are free of charge with no school fees required (Grant, 2013). The rankings of schools are determined by the level of poverty and infrastructure around the school. The funding allocated to the different schools would then be used particularly for municipal services, learning support materials, equipment, maintenance and repairs.

However, a multitude of other challenges still exist within school communities. A few examples will suffice: Classrooms in South African schools are often extremely crowded (Modisaotsile, 2012), resulting in a lot of pressure and stress on teachers. Adding to this, Jansen and Taylor (2003) and Modisaotsile (2012) found that poor teacher training, poor learner support, a lack of commitment by teachers and a general insufficiency of educational resources intensify the already overcrowded classroom situation. Moreover, it has been found that children in South African schools are often exposed to difficult home circumstances marked by absent fathers and child-headed households (Holborn & Eddy, 2011; Weeks, 2008). This often results in a lack of positive role models and a deprivation of love and care in many South African homes (Rudolph, Monson, Collet & Sonn, 2008).

Furthermore, violence has been on the rise in schools over the past few years (Botha, 2014; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013; Modisaotsile, 2012). Recent academic research and media reports testify of the severity of the rise in violence in forms of physical and sexual abuse, aggression, alcohol and substance abuse, gang-related activities and various forms of bullying (Wagner, 2014; Van Rooyen, 2014; Ncontsa & Shumba, 2013).

Besides the above-mentioned challenges, South African school populations are typically characterised by diversity regarding demographics of race, culture and language that in turn reflect multiracial, multicultural and multilingual school communities (Pillay, 2011). Due to the dynamics created by this diversity, South African school communities cannot be reduced to a singular, homogeneous context, but are rather a constantly changing environment. As indicated in Chapter 1, this situation poses complex challenges on many levels and policy planners, decision-makers, school administrators and teachers will have to find a middle way to implement an effective, inclusive educational system in order to accommodate everybody.

3.3 Research design

A qualitative phenomenological research design as proposed by Creswell et al. (2007) was applied in this study. A qualitative research approach is aimed at providing a description and an understanding of human behaviour and the meaning that an individual attaches to a phenomenon or experience (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011).

Phenomenology describes the essential meaning of a particular phenomenon as experienced by all participants. Other than the individual focus of the qualitative approach, the focus in a phenomenological study falls on collective meaning, i.e. the essential, universal meaning that is generally shared by participants. The purpose of a qualitative phenomenological study is thus to explore and understand the universal core of people's perceptions, perspectives and understanding of phenomena or situations in which they are involved (Creswell et al., 2007; De Vos et al., 2011). Moreover, ensuing phenomenological descriptions consequently usually result in describing what all participants have in common, attempting to explore the generality and its essence (Van Manen, 1990).

The nature and goals of the present study can therefore be addressed by the principles and philosophy of the qualitative research approach as qualitative research typically studies people or social systems by interacting with and observing participants in their natural environment and focussing on the (phenomenological) meaning and interpretation that they (the participants) attach to the experienced situation/phenomenon (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

A qualitative research design allows for a more complex description of how people experience a given phenomenon, in this case the promotion of children's relational well-being as perceived by postgraduate students involved in school communities. In this research, the application of the qualitative approach suggests that relational well-being, as experienced and conceptualised by the participants, will be explored. By working in a qualitative manner, the aim of this study, namely to describe and understand the phenomenon of relational well-being and its enhancement in school contexts, could be achieved. This was possible because the qualitative perspective allowed the researcher the opportunity to gather rich, in-depth and subjective data from the individual participants on the basis of their everyday experience in school contexts. Because the qualitative research design is flexible (De Vos et al., 2011), it also allowed an additional sociolinguistic analysis (see Section 3.6.1 Additional Analysis, as well as Chapter 5, Section 5.2) of the same set of data which could serve as a comparative, interdisciplinary cross-checking measure, resulting in a more nuanced and complete picture and understanding of the research question.

The researcher could therefore draw on the individual participants' lived experiences, opinions, beliefs, convictions, behaviours and relationships in order to develop a deeper and more nuanced insight into their perceptions of enhancing of children's relational well-being (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2009; Henning, 2004; Mack, et al., 2005). The subsequent description of

the exploration of the participants' perceptions regarding the enhancement of relational well-being could be done in depth and related in terms of a more faceted, varied qualitative research design.

In terms of the phenomenological design, the researcher proposes to explore and understand how postgraduate students, who are employed in the formal school system, perceive the enhancement of children's relational well-being in South African school communities, in the various settings in which they work. Willig (2008) states that from a phenomenological perspective different people can and do perceive and experience the same context in different ways. Peoples' perceptions are therefore always constitutive of their experiences. In this study, the different perceptions of postgraduate students on the enhancement of children's relational well-being are therefore considered as constitutive of their experiences in the South African school community context.

These perceptions will be translated into a meaningful synthesis on which basis recommendations can be made for the enhancing of children's relational well-being in school contexts (Chapter 4). A more critical perspective of the perceptions will also be presented by exploring the relevance of the participants' theoretical frame of reference as well as their personal convictions by assessing it from a sociolinguistic angle (Chapter 5). In this way, through the exploration and identification of the essence of the perceptions on enhancing children's relational well-being in terms of the qualitative phenomenological research design, the researcher intends to make a meaningful contribution to the body of existing knowledge on relational well-being enhancement.

3.4 Selection of participants

Sampling was done by using a non-probability, purposive sampling technique (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, De Vos et al., 2011). The group selected as participants for obtaining data for the purposes of the current study consisted of 14 postgraduate students enrolled for a Master's in Psychology, a Master's in Social work and PhD's in Psychology at the NWU (N= 130). The participants, who attended a colloquium on relational well-being in South African schools, are all currently involved in school communities across South Africa. They have diverse, but related professional backgrounds and are all involved in educational occupations like registered councillors, teachers, social workers, counsellors, educational psychologists, youth developers, psychometrists and drama coaches. The participants adhered to the following selection (sampling) criteria as determined by the objectives of this study:

- The focus of their postgraduate research is on relationships and relational well-being in South African school communities.
- They work in South African school communities either as teachers, counsellors, social workers or other educational occupations.

The assumption, on which their selection was based, is that postgraduate students might be well-equipped by their academic knowledge and schooling, as well as by their various professional experiences in different school contexts to reflect more effectively on their perceptions and understanding of relational well-being within the context of real school environments. Their contributions were considered as being substantial and adequate to generate practical, diverse, multidimensional and multivocal baseline information and insights.

De Vos et al. (2011) warn that, concerning purposive sampling, the individual judgement of the researcher could be risky. Ellingson (2009) also recommends that positivist claims in this regard should rather be avoided. The researcher duly considered these alerts when assessing the possibility of bias and rationalising the objectives of the study and the appropriateness of the sample group. Her conclusion, however, remains that, regarding the present research, the sample group has not been selected only for convenience' sake, but that the set goals of the research indeed meaningfully align with the nature and purpose of the sample group without manipulation or rationalisation from the researcher.

3.5 Data gathering

The data for this research was collected while the postgraduate students attended a research presented by a senior researcher from the School of Psycho-social Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences at the North-West University in April 2013. The aim of the research was to prepare the students for their research projects. A World Café event was organised while the students were on campus and students involved in research on relationships and relational well-being were invited to attend the World Café event.

The philosophy behind the World Café can be summarised as follows: Each person interprets the world in their own way. By sharing one's viewpoint, one's personal understanding of different alternatives is expanded. The World Café thus provides the opportunity for changing the status quo in relevant areas, because it allows the opportunity for shifting collective thinking. Participants in the Word Café can experience their collective capability and activate and mobilise their collective wisdom. It provides a space and opportunity where participants, through their focussed attention, shared learning and appreciation for everyone's contribution, can develop a strong commitment to common aspirations. The key purpose of the World Café is accordingly to conduce new visions and possible solutions by thinking together and innovate collaboratively (Schieffer et al., 2004).

This method makes it possible for a group of people, like the participants in this research, to participate, discuss and analyse a specific phenomenon, in this case the enhancing of children's relational well-being, in creative and inquisitive ways as part of a "single, connected conversation" (Schieffer et al., 2004, p.2). The opportunity is consequently created for all participants to share their

personal perceptions, ideas and experiences about relational well-being in schools and henceforth create a meaningful, diverse and coherent dialogue on relevant issues of enhancing relational well-being in South African school communities (Schieffer et al., 2004)

At this specific World Café, the value of gaining a better understanding and a broader perspective by sharing one's view, was clearly demonstrated when the participants compared several relational well-being difficulties in various schools. The researcher observed that, in the end, they did not only have a better understanding of the challenges in their schools by listening to the contributions of the others, but they could also relate these challenges to different contexts. By allowing the participants, as a group of qualified, informed and experienced professional people to share and discuss their individual ideas on the issue of relational well-being within the context of a World Café, produced some rich, in-depth and informed data.

The World Café event was organised and co-ordinated by three students enrolled for their Master's degrees in research psychology under the supervision of the research professor in their division. In order to meet the requirements set by the goals of the project, of which this study was a part, the collection of data had to cover the topic in general and, at the same time, had to be more specific in certain respects considered central to the wider topic. Therefore, the discussion of the topic was deliberately structured in order to produce the desired outcome. This was done by applying the World Café method as follows:

1. At the commencement of the event, the participants were divided randomly into four smaller groups, which resulted in a twofold advantage. Firstly, it afforded each participant sufficient time and opportunity to actively participate and share her views on each one of the questions. Secondly, the researcher, in her role as hostess (see 3.5.1 Role of the hostess), noticed that, in a smaller group, there may be more tacit pressure on members to be involved in discussions, simply due to the fact that it might be noticed by the other participants if she does not participate in the discussion. In a bigger group, and also keeping the time frame in mind, somebody's non-participation may go largely unnoticed by the other participants. Some people might be prone to feel overwhelmed, shy or intimidated in bigger groups, while having more self-confidence in a more personal, smaller group. It may thus be that participation in the discussions was subtly encouraged by the psychosocial dynamics within the small groups. Therefore, through a smaller group discussion, provision was made for possibly shy or introverted participants to also share their views.
2. The groups gathered at four different tables and each group nominated a hostess for their table. The hostesses were to remain seated at the table while the other members of the different groups rotated between tables.
3. A specific aspect of relational well-being in school contexts was discussed at each table. The questions were aimed at exploring the participants' perceptions of relational well-being and

how they perceive its enhancement in school contexts, with specific reference to the experiences of adults and children. The possible limiting effect that questions could have had on the participants' contributions was countered by posing open-ended questions in broad outline. They were merely intended as stimuli and guidelines for a spontaneous, open and multidimensional discussion in a natural situation (De Vos et al., 2011, p. 331). The hostess could participate freely in the discussions, but also had to take notes, summarise and record the group discussion. (See also 3.5.1 Role of hostess, para. 4.) At the end of the discussion, the hostess informed the participants about the previous group's discussion, allowing them the opportunity to relate, assess and incorporate their contribution with the previous one, ultimately resulting in a more integrated and finished end product (See also 3.7.2 Crystallisation, para. 3).

4. After discussing a question for about 20 minutes, the groups rotated to the next table. This afforded each participant the opportunity to discuss a different question with a different hostess.
5. After all four groups had the opportunity to discuss the four core questions, everybody gathered again as one big group for a feedback session. The hostesses from each table were given the opportunity to explain and discuss their summaries of what have been said at their specific table. The discussions were supported by the notes and visual drawings and sketches made by the participants while the table discussions took place. This procedure resulted in a coherent summary by the hostesses of each of the four identified aspects of relational well-being. The participants were then given the opportunity to comment on, add and rectify what was said by the hostesses.
6. During the feedback session, the facilitator took notes of the presentations by the hostesses and the responses to these presentations and then presented a synopsis of all the discussions. The group was then offered a final opportunity to reflect on what has been conveyed by all the participants, the hostesses, the lecturers and the facilitator.
7. After the detailed and extensive discussions and feedback session, a coherent and comprehensive final impression on the issue of relational well-being was presented by a facilitator giving a summary to clarify and unite the discussed perceptions. Re-reflection was thus secured by allowing another opportunity for it after the facilitator's summary.

To prevent exhaustion and avoid possible boredom during the data collection process, specific strategies were applied during the process: time restriction, spatial relocation and new elements. The discussions were restricted to 20 minutes per question. Each time a group proceeded to the next table, they were met by a different hostess and a different question to answer. This restricted time frame, frequent change of spatial orientation and being met by a different hostess with a different question,

induced an atmosphere in which the participants could remain alert and engaged – which were conducive to lively, meaningful discussion.

3.5.1 The role of the hostess and the facilitator in the data gathering process

According to Schieffer et al. (2004, p. 4), the role of a hostess in a World Café event is to remain in a specific place in order to welcome a new group of participants and to host the conversation that evolves at her table.

The positioning of the hostesses in the structuring of the data collection process was strategically pivotal and had direct implications regarding the quality and trustworthiness of the data obtained, as well as the analytical and interpretative processes. The role and function of the hostesses and the above-mentioned implications for, especially, coding and explication, necessitates some further elucidation.

At first sight, it may appear that, because the hostesses had to remain seated, they might have missed out on the opportunity to participate in the discussions of the other three aspects of relational well-being not hosted at their tables. The researcher, who was also a hostess, experienced that, although she was in principle allowed as a hostess to participate freely in the discussions at her table, it was not practically possible, because of her duties. This seeming deficiency was, however, intercepted by the opportunity later to listen to and (having the opportunity to) participate in the discussions following the feedback of the other hostesses, as well as the facilitator's synopsis after the conclusion of the World Café event. The hostesses thus ultimately had equal opportunities for discussing and contributing to the other three questions and did not experience any injustice or were not wronged by their role as hostesses in any respect.

Each hostess hosted the discussion of only one question, namely one aspect of the concept of relational well-being considered as significant to the subject. As previously mentioned, her duties included the taking of notes of the discussion for purposes of feedback to the group later on. Although the hostess was an equal member of the conversation (Schieffer et al., 2004, p. 4), her position as hostess gave her some prominence in the context of the World Café situation. The greater responsibilities and expectations, plus her not wanting to disappoint, could have alerted her to listen carefully, take notes meticulously and confirm that she understood correctly. Any mishandling from her side would have been noticed by the group and would thus have exposed her to possible embarrassment and criticism. This pressure to sustain her good standing could have encouraged her to work meticulously, thus handling the data in a sound and reliable way.

As a hostess, she had the opportunity to experience and participate in the discussion of the same question by four different groups, which afforded her the chance to gain a more detailed and

comprehensive insight in the aspect discussed at her table, which could have been even further encouraged by her having to take notes and giving feedback at the end. Her role as hostess thus assured that she was not only intensively and attentively involved in the discussion of a specific, confined aspect of relational well-being, but that she was in a position that equipped her to, in conclusion, give a rich, rigorous, comprehensive, well-considered and nuanced contribution, thus enhancing the quality of the data.

The facilitator's synopsis was a coherent and entire summary of the feedback session of the four hostesses. Although complex and multidimensional, the synopsis suggested that there are tenets, characteristics and repetitions that could point to generalities, patterns, themes and structural elements present (notable) in current relational well-being issues in South African schools. There were also singular, unique remarks that could be worthy of further investigation in attempting to improve relational well-being in schools. The participants were then allowed the opportunity to respond on the facilitator's synopsis.

It can be concluded that the role of the hostesses was to co-ordinate and summarise a varied and in-depth discussion of one of the four identified aspects by four small groups of professionals. Thereafter, the facilitator brought together the four summaries into the concise format of a synopsis, thereby reconfirming the coherency and main features of relational well-being as perceived by this group of postgraduates as a construct, as well as the realisation thereof in South African school contexts with special reference to the role of adults, children and school communities.

3.5.2 Recording, documenting and transcription

Visual representations (Appendix B) were made by the hostesses, participants and facilitator to support the participants' discussions. Audio recordings of the original conversations (Greeff, 2011) were made at each table, by the facilitators, in order to keep proper record of the event. The recordings were obtained from the facilitators after the completion of the World café and transcribed verbatim by the researcher (Appendix C) at a later stage to be used as a data set. Some sections had to be revisited and relistened to for the critical perspective and sociolinguistic analysis (See Section 3.6.1 Additional analysis, as well as Chapter 5, Section 5.2), which was done after the initial analysis. The recommendations suggested by Poland (2005) were applied to ensure that the transcriptions were done correctly.

Figure 5 on the next page supplies a detailed graphical representation of the data collection process at the World Café event:

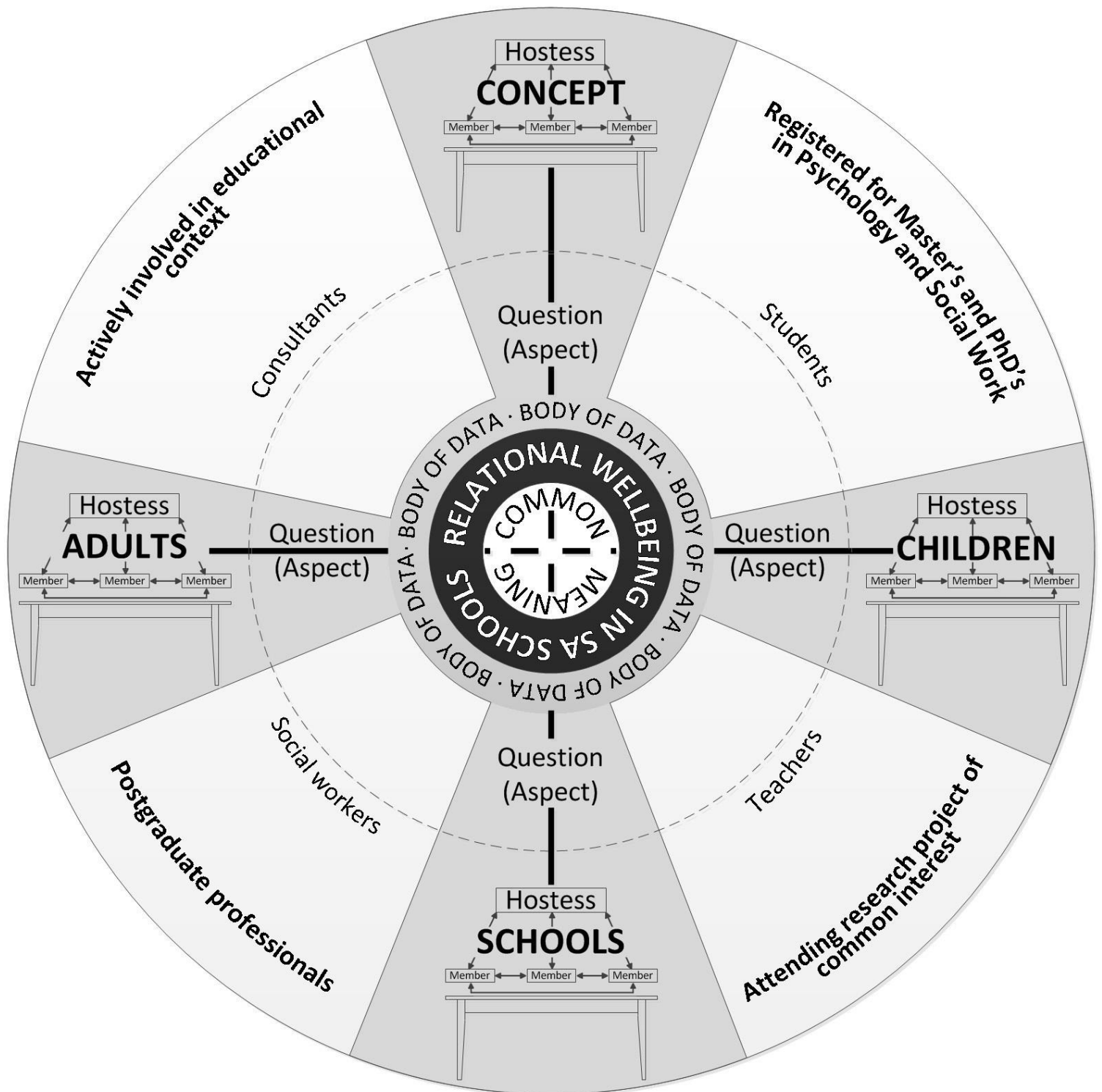


Figure 5: Detailed graphic representation of the data gathering process

3.6 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves the process of recording and meaningfully transforming and interpreting the raw data collected (Gibbs, 2007, p. 1). Data analysis implies a kind of metamorphosis or transformation, as a large, often unclear, seemingly senseless amount of data is processed through analytical procedures into an understandable, clear and meaningful set of data (Schurink, et al., 2011, p. 397; Gibbs, 2007, p. 1). In this study, thematic data analysis was done by using the six phases of data analysis, as proposed by Clarke and Braun (2013):

1. Familiarising oneself with the data: During this phase, the data was transcribed verbatim, read and re-read to start forming an initial idea of what the data entails. All the data was transcribed, but only the data relevant to this study was used. Transcriptions were also translated where necessary and double-checked by the supervisor to ensure accuracy.
2. Generating initial codes: During this phase, the outstanding features of the data was coded and marked across the whole data set. This procedure could be employed in identifying themes later on. An example of the initial data codes can be seen in Appendix D.
3. Searching for themes: During this phase, possible themes were identified by grouping the relevant coded data together. Visual representations were revisited and used in order to sort through the data set and search and identify a comprehensive set of possible themes.
4. Reviewing themes: During this phase, the identified themes were reviewed in order to eliminate, break down and create sub-themes from all the possible themes identified in step 3. This was done in order to narrow down initial codes to candidate themes and to ensure that the chosen themes “accurately reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91).
5. Defining and naming the themes: During this phase, the themes were defined and the core of each theme determined. From this, appropriate names were allocated to the themes to give the reader an immediate idea of what the theme brings about. With assistance from the research supervisor, the themes were revised and refined to the most evident main themes.
6. Producing the report: During this phase, once all the themes were identified, the write-up and final analysis were done.

3.6.1 Additional data analysis

After the data analysis was completed, an additional sociolinguistic analysis was conducted. This analysis was not initially planned as part of the study, but emerged inductively during the coding, identifying and analysing of the main themes. The researcher discovered that certain aspects in the participants’ spoken language seemed to conceal some relevant information pertaining to relational

well-being. To further explore these observations, the researcher, in consultation with the supervisor, embarked on a discourse analysis embedded in Sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relation between language and society (Nordquist, 2015; Hudson, 1996). Coulmas (2013) furthermore describes it as the study of choice, as we choose what we say, and holds that the principal task of Sociolinguistics is to “uncover, describe and interpret the socially motivated” (p. 11) choices that an individual makes.

In order to further uncover, describe and interpret the participants’ disposition regarding relational well-being, discourse analysis was applied. This research technique involves the analysis of language “beyond the sentence” (Tannen, n.d.). This indicates that, through discourse analysis, one can discover what the speaker is not consciously aware of or is not verbally proclaiming. This allows the researcher to understand and describe exactly what the speaker is not explaining, i.e. the unspoken word.

The discourse analysis entailed more or less the same data analysis procedure as described in Section 3.6 Data analysis above, only with the focus on more minute and tacit linguistic variables that need a specialised technique like discourse analysis to reveal and interpret the social information. This second analysis required some relistening to and re-reading sections of the data at a later stage, which resulted in the researcher becoming very acquainted with the data (See next Section 3.7 Trustworthiness, para. 2: Credibility; 3.7.2 Crystallisation, para. 1).

In order to avoid confusion of the two analyses, a further, more detailed description of the additional analysis is provided in Chapter 5.

3.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290), refers to the means whereby a researcher assures the reader that the outcome and findings of the study is worth paying attention to and taking note of. In order to raise the trustworthiness, reliability and validity of a study, there are a number of measures that should be considered, for example the four constructs proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1999) for improving trustworthiness in research. The following is an integrated description of how these constructs were adhered to in this specific study:

Credibility – Credibility could be established by the researcher being in a prolonged and intensive engagement with the data pertaining to the research process. By the time the research was finished, the data was studied and actively engaged with for a period of at least two years. The researcher had ample time to think about and rethink the data, the methodology, the processing, and, in various instances, reprocessing, as well as the interpretation of the outcomes. During the sociolinguistic exploration of the data, which was done at a later stage, it was necessary to relisten, even several times, to some of the audio recordings to ensure that the transcriptions are linguistically

100% correct. By relistening to and reprocessing the data from a different, interdisciplinary sociolinguistic perspective, the researcher eventually got to know the data set better than before. Consequently, correcting of some of the earlier findings could be done, while relistening to the audio-taped records and revisiting the transcriptions for the purposes of the critical perspective and sociolinguistic analysis. This included the detection, interpretation and verification of the more difficult determinable linguistic aspects like emotion, tone of voice, pitch, mode and pausing. These sensitive, and more tacit aspects of spoken language, necessitated some cautious and time-consuming relistening and re-interpretation. The advantage is, however, that it could ultimately result in a more accurate, faceted and complete description of the match between the research topic and the participants' views thereof, consequently contributing to the enhancing of trustworthiness of the research (De Vos, 2011).

Transferability – According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 316), transferability provides a data base from which others can make a transferability judgement. Transferability, or generalisability, as called by De Vos (2011), indicates that the findings of a study can be transferred from a specific situation to another. To enhance the transferability of this study, proper documentation of the research process was kept along with a rich description of the methodology, research context and theoretical parameters. By using different sources of data, methods and theories, the transferability of this study could also be enhanced, as confirmed by De Vos (2011).

Dependability – Shenton (2004, p. 73) states that dependability refers to the detailed description of the methods that were used during the research in order to ensure that someone else can repeat the study (See 3.4 Research Methodology). For a study to be dependable, it should have a similar outcome when repeated in the same context. To ensure the dependability of the present study, the research process, including the methodology, is comprehensively and explicitly documented in a standardised, logical manner and audited by the supervisor.

Confirmability – In order for a study to be reliable, it is proposed by Lincoln and Guba (cited by Schurink et al., 2011, p. 421) that it should be possible for the findings of the study to be confirmed by someone that is not directly involved in the study in order to test the objectivity thereof. This can be done by leaving a paper trail by which an external person can trace the course and development of the study and test the conclusions' validity by comparing the findings and interpretations thereof with the original data – “A more compelling demonstration can hardly be imagined” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 313). In this study, confirmability was adhered to by leaving a clear audit trail including raw data, such as process notes, recordings of the group discussions, transcriptions of the data, a detailed description of the research methodologies and techniques applied, themes identified during the coding process, and the results of the study.

3.7.1 Crystallisation

The researcher also applied crystallisation to enhance trustworthiness further. Crystallisation is a technique aiming to move beyond the “rigid and fixed two-dimensional object” of triangulation towards the idea of a crystal, where a variety of shapes, colours, multidimensionalities and angles constitute the whole. By crystallisation, a deep, complex and thickly described interpretation of the topic is brought forth by including a combination of various forms of analysis and representations of the data (Richardson, 2000; Nieuwenhuis, 2010; Ellingson, 2009; Geertz, 1973). In this study, crystallisation was achieved by, among others, approaching the research problem from two different points of view: the five main themes as well as the critical analysis of the participants’ perceptions. This way, the research question was addressed by different perspectives, theories and methodologies, resulting in a more faceted, complete and closer-to-the-truth version of reality. By using crystallisation to ensure trustworthiness, a comprehensive and more nuanced description of the researched phenomenon could be brought forth in order to get a clearer and more reliable picture of the participants’ lived experience (Tracy, 2010; Ellingson, 2009).

In order to obtain further crystallisation, the researcher used the crystallisation techniques of member checking, proper documentation of the research process and reflexive consideration in order to enhance trustworthiness of the data.

During the member-checking process, data have been tested by repeating back to the participants’ what they originally discussed and making sure that the researcher has recorded and understood exactly what the participants brought forth in the data collection phase (Lincoln & Guba, 2009). This was done during the World Café sessions. It was also supported by the participants’ visual representations and drawings made during the discussions. (See Section 3.5.2 Recording, documenting and transcription.) The hostesses’ presentation of their summaries of the questions discussed at their table was an opportunity to “play back” the information provided by the participants to the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). They were then given the opportunity to react to it. They could assess whether it was adequate representations of their contributions, correct errors and wrong interpretations and give additional information. The research data was thus reflected and re-reflected upon by the participants, added, completed and rectified. Comments could also be made on other groups’ contributions and insights could be tested with another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data was also summarised by the hostesses and re-summarised by the facilitator, i.e. “the first step along the way of data analysis” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314), bringing along a tentative, but significant indication of coding and themes that were later confirmed by more detailed analysis.

Proper documentation of the research process and procedures was kept along with a rich description of the research context, methodology and theoretical parameters. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), these records provide information on which other researchers can make judgements

regarding the transferability from a specific situation to another. The auditing trail in this study is intended to be transparent to the extent that it not only informs the reader on *what* was discovered, but also *how* it was discovered. This can enable the reader to reach a more informed conclusion on the transferability of the study, by better understanding and validating the researcher's interpretations, the position she adopted regarding the study and her critical questioning of her role in the research process (De Vos, 2011). The latter is referred to as *reflexive consideration*.

Reflexive consideration pertains to the researcher's critical questioning of her role in the research process (Creswell, 2009), including critically considering her own perspectives, interpretations, personal subjectivity, bias, preferences and her authority as interpreter and author (De Vos, 2011).

The researcher was easily convinced to adhere to reflexive self-discipline, because she became aware of the serious danger surrounding this issue. On the one hand, being familiar with some sociolinguistic strategies, the researcher is aware of how easy it can be to manipulate language, inferences, conclusions and interpretations in reporting in order to suit desired outcomes. On the other hand, she experienced that the more she became engaged and especially when she thought about her own role in the project, she realised that any irresponsible, unaccountable, unethical or subjective act on her side might have a double negative outcome: people might have been treated unfairly and might have been offended, and the entire study might be compromised and rejected. The implications, as perceived by the researcher, are overwhelming and the researcher indeed experienced a shift in her approach when realising the loaded implications of her own role. Consequently, it was reassuring to have a strategy of being continuously self-reflexive in order to minimise possible adversity coming from the researcher. Therefore, the researcher aimed to act on all levels as soundly as possible when dealing with all research aspects. This was done by frequently reflecting on and bracketing her personal thoughts, opinions, feelings, convictions, and sociocultural, political and religious views, as well as norms and values during the research process in order to prevent personal bias within the findings of the study (Ellingson, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2009). By realising the implications of her own limitations and prejudice, she did her utmost to continuously handle the project with scientific and ethical integrity in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Trustworthiness was also enhanced by managing the research properly. Credibility, confirmability, transferability and dependability were further supported by having an experienced research supervisor to mentor the process. She constantly guided the research, advised on all aspects and phases in order to ensure that procedures were correctly applied, verified transcriptions for accuracy, assisted with the themes, ensured that reflexive consideration was done to guard against possible subjectivity by the researcher, and audited the documentation.

De Vos (2011) points out, due to criticism against the four strategies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (cited in De Vos et al., 2011), that the strategies of managing the research process, transparency (auditing trail) and reflexivity have recently become more important in ensuring quality research than the four strategies proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

In terms of quality, quantity and trustworthiness of the data, it can be concluded that the data, by following scientifically recommended collection procedures and submitting it to various recommended strategies for trustworthiness, reliability and high quality, may contribute to qualify the data for substantiating the findings and conclusions of the present study.

3.8 Ethical considerations

In this study, the ethical conduct of the researcher is based on the values stipulated by the Constitution of South Africa (1996), which include human dignity, freedom and equality, as well as the ethical rules and regulations of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA, 1974). In order to ensure that ethical standards were adhered to as indicated in the literature (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Strydom, 2011; Graziano & Raulin, 2007), a research proposal was submitted to an ethical review committee of the North-West University. This study has been approved and has the following ethics number: NWU-00060-12-A1. The title of this study is “Exploring perceptions of enhancing children’s relational well-being in South African school communities”.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.7, the ethical standards adhered to and their specific applicability to this study will be discussed in this chapter in more detail. The nature of a social research project like this one and the strategy for data collection suggested that the successful collection of good quality, substantial and appropriate data is to a considerable degree determined by the attitude of the participants. This means that the relationship between the researcher and the participants was of paramount importance and had to be, on all levels, beyond reproach in order to be conducive to the obtaining of the best possible quality data adequate to substantiate the findings of the research. Consequently, the most imperative priority of the researcher in this regard was to conduct research, particularly collecting data, according to strict ethical guidelines. This principle was adhered to in terms of the methodology of data collection by primarily putting the participants’ well-being above the goals of the study. This meant that the participants’ direct needs and concerns were always attended to, prior to focussing on the data collection process (Strydom, 2011; Mack et al., 2005).

To establish and maintain a positive and co-operative relationship with the other participants, posed no particular challenge to the researcher. This may be ascribed to the congruence of the purpose of the colloquium attended and the goals of the present study, as well as to some of the attributes of the participants. All participants, including the researcher, studied in the same social

discipline, were all on a postgraduate academic level, well versed, familiar with the accepted conventions (Strydom, 2011) of the research procedures and had a common and real interest in the project. These aspects contributed to a warm and spontaneous group atmosphere charged with excitement, mutual acceptance, trust and interest. However, in this favourable situation, the researcher was attentive, in this warm and spontaneous atmosphere that prevailed, to the fact that it could have been very easy to overstep boundaries which could have compromised her good relationship with the group or the group's respect for her. Therefore, she minded her own, personal behaviour and constantly – and at the very least – treated the participants with the utmost respect. Accordingly, the following ethical principles were adhered to in order to enhance the ethical standard of the study:

Informed consent and voluntary participation: On their arrival on the Potchefstroom campus, before the research colloquium commenced, a briefing was held by the research interns to inform the participants of the World Café event. They were also informed of the nature of the research, their questions were discussed and it was clearly stated that their participation in the project was voluntary (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006; Strydom, 2011). They were assured that their position as students will not be compromised in any way and that they could refrain from taking part in or withdraw from the project at any stage without consequences in terms of their studies. Upon arrival at the research colloquium, following the proper dissemination of information, and the goal and purpose of the study, participants were handed an informed consent form (Appendix A). The informed consent signified that all participants were thoroughly informed about the goal and purpose of the study (Henning, 2004; Graziano & Raulin, 2007) and that all possible risks and benefits were clearly stated (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008). The participants were then allowed time to consider participation and the participants who agreed to attend and participate, signed and returned the forms before the World Café event commenced (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; Creswell, 2012; Tracy, 2010).

Confidentiality and anonymity refer to the public non-disclosure of somebody's personal information. The participants' anonymity could not be guaranteed in this study, as it was a research group project and the researcher and participants knew each other and were therefore able to recognise each other afterwards (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Strydom, 2011). Specific codes were therefore allocated to the participants' names in order to ensure partial anonymity. When anonymity cannot be guaranteed, it is the researcher's responsibility to at least keep the participant's information confidential. Personal details and biographical information were subsequently not included in the research report and transcriptions. Written and signed consent forms and the participants' audio-recorded contributions were also handled in a strictly confidential manner (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Bless et al., 2006; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; Strydom, 2011; Henning, 2004). Moreover,

participants were requested not to reveal who participated in the World Café event or discuss the contributions of the participants outside of the World Café event. The sociolinguistic analysis, which was done later than the initial analysis, posed no threat to confidentiality, because the same researcher and the same data set remained involved. The data was handled with the same confidentiality than that applied to the initial analysis.

Non-maleficence: The researcher was attentive that non-maleficence was attended to during the research process. This includes that no physical, emotional or psychological harm should be done to any participant in any respect (Bless et al., 2006, Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; Strydom, 2011). This was partly achieved by the group sharing their perceptions and practical experience of relational well-being, rather than personal incidents that could have caused unease when exposing them. The researcher ensured that if a participant felt exposed or compromised due to the nature of the conversations, she could have been referred for counselling to an independent professional on campus. However, owing to the nature of this study and the intention to contribute positively to knowledge creation, no harm to participants was foreseen.

Safekeeping of the data: During the research process, the data, audio recordings, transcriptions and all confidential information were kept in a safe at the researcher's house. Electronic information was also safeguarded and secured by using computer passwords. After completion of this study, the data will be kept safely at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies in Wellington for a period of 5 years.

Beneficence, social accountability and responsibility: The sole intention of this research process was to contribute to the enhancement of relational well-being in schools, thereby gaining a deeper understanding thereof in South African school communities (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; De Angelis, 2011). Thus, to ensure that the participants and the contexts in which they work benefit from this study, the findings will be disseminated to the participants and the Department of Basic Education upon completion of the study.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, the research contexts, design and methodology, data gathering and techniques applied in this study were extensively discussed. The trustworthiness of the data and ethical issues pertaining to this research were also addressed. In addition, the analysis of the data was obtained.

The discussion of the data collection process is supported by and explained in terms of a graphic overview. In the next chapter, the research results ensuing from the analysis of the data will be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

I knew that schools could make a difference, could transform the lives of children, could overcome the deficiencies of the home and the dysfunctions of the family...

(Barr, 1996, p. 382)

The enhancement of relationships within school communities can make a positive contribution to a child's life. Witmer (2005, p. 224) emphasises that together with reading, writing and arithmetic, *relationships* also need to be considered part of the foundations of effective education. Relationships here refer to the matrix of interrelatedness that include the teacher-parent, teacher-learner, learner-learner and parent-learner relationships, which all play a significant role and are an integral part of student success in the educational process.

As already indicated in Chapter 3, four questions were posed during the World Café event, which means that the researcher had four data sets to work with during the analysis. Although only one of the questions specifically focussed on the relational well-being of the children in schools, the researcher also explored the other data sets as it was evident that these data sets also revealed information relevant to the research question that guided this study.

In the discussion of the themes identified, the four data sets were coded as follows:

- rwa – relational well-being adults;
- rwc – relational well-being children;
- rws – relational well-being schools; and
- rw – relational well-being.

Each group in a set has been numbered from 1–4. Participants are indicated with a “P”, followed by their number, namely 1–10. A host was indicated with an “H”. A typical reference in text will then for example be:

- *The child, staff and parents. This is what a school consists of...* (P7) (rws, g3, p21).

This refers to Participant 7, relational well-being in schools, group 3, page 21. Dialogue was also transcribed without altering participants' words and use of language in order to ensure reliability.

The obtained data set was analysed thematically. Five themes which indicated how participants perceive the enhancement of relational well-being should take place were identified. In the final instance, a critical perspective (Chapter 5) was applied with the goal of revealing some of the participants' dispositions and personal convictions regarding the enhancement of relational well-being.

4.2 Presentation of results based on thematic analysis

In this section, the five themes identified based on the analysis of the four data sets will be discussed with reference to the empirical data and relevant literature. Figure 6 below gives a visual overview of the themes perceived to contribute to the enhancement of relational well-being.

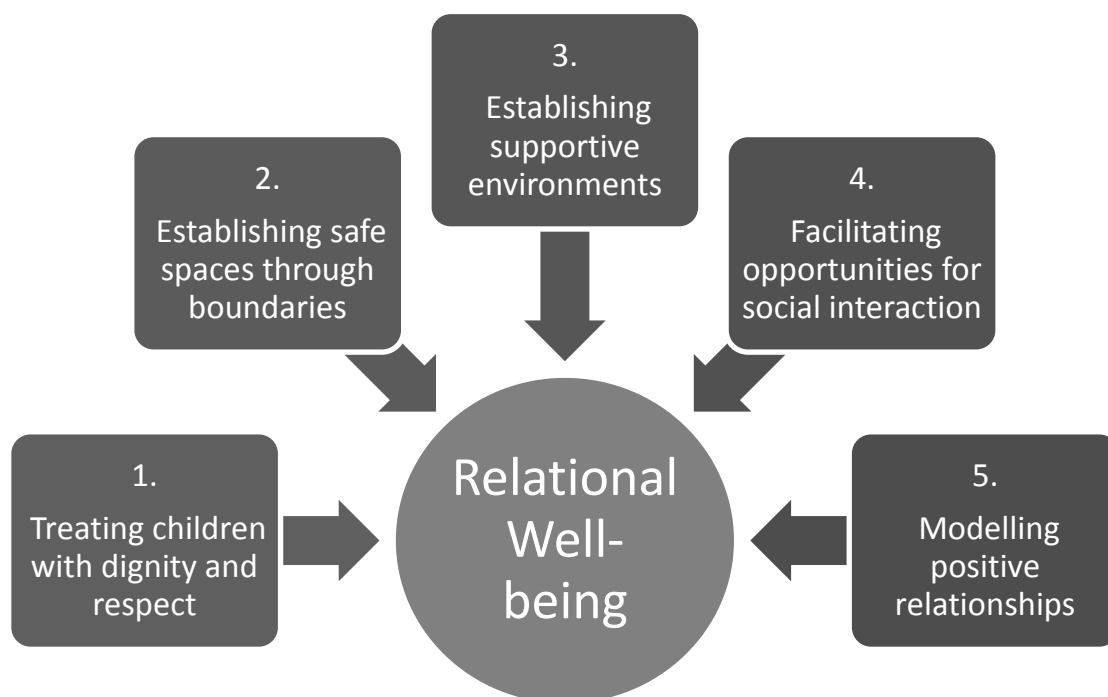


Figure 6: A Graphical representation of the five main themes perceived to enhance relational well-being

4.2.1 Theme 1: Treating children with dignity and respect

The ultimate end of all revolutionary social change is to establish the sanctity of human life, the dignity of man, the right of every human being to liberty and well-being.

(Emma Goldman, 1924)

It is the participants' view that if we intend to enhance children's relational well-being, they should be treated with dignity and respect by those who are close to them and deal with them on a day-to-day basis, whether at home or at school.

Dillon (2007) describes respect as the deference people show to one another. This refers to the regard and admiration one has for another human being without sacrificing one's individual worth. Gillespie (1997) described respect with reference to the feeling of being valued and accepted as an individual. Kitching (2010) identified respect as an important facet of interrelatedness in an enabling school community. Furthermore, Middleton (2004) holds that respect always occurs in the context of social interaction. Meyer (2009) states that dignity, according to the Royal College of Nursing (RCN, 2008, p. 8), is concerned with

...how people feel, think and behave in relation to the worth or value of themselves and others. To treat someone with dignity is to treat them as being of worth, in a way that is respectful of them as valued individuals.

The RCN believes that people feel in control, valued, confident, comfortable and able to make decisions for themselves when they are treated with dignity, but when dignity is absent in people's lives, they feel devalued, experience a lack control and are generally uncomfortable. They are unable to make decisions for themselves and feel insecure when there is a lack of respect in their lives.

White (1991) identified three forms of respect, namely achieved respect, status respect and unconditional respect. *Achieved respect* is gained and acknowledged by admiration from others due to significant achievements. When someone is respected due to their specific status, it is referred to as *status respect*, for example where someone is respected because of their advanced age or being a leader or the queen. *Unconditional respect*, however, awards respect to everyone without exclusion. According to Lalljee, Tam, Hewstone, Leham and Lee (2009) as well as White (1991), unconditional respect indicates distinct acknowledgement of people that involves behaviour which does not include manipulation or humiliation towards other people.

Likewise, the participants advocated for *unconditional* respect when they argued that treating children with dignity and respect implies that they should be acknowledged as human beings who have autonomy and agency. This means that they should be allowed to express their own opinions even if it is different from those of the adults. This is illustrated in the following excerpts from the discussion:

- *And you do that when you see his humanness... They must be given enough time to share their ideas and their ideas should not be disregarded, their opinions must matter* (H) (rwc, g1, p5)
- *...Or if you say something and they can contribute their ideas and opinions, and it's different from yours and they are allowed to differ from you...* (H) (rwc, g1, p5)

According to Giesinger (2012), educational respect implies that children should be treated “in a way that enables them to see themselves as persons endowed with dignity; that is, as having the equal standing to make claims on others ” (p. 100). Fattore, Mason and Watson (2007), in an Australian study on children’s perspectives on well-being, found that children experience well-being when they are enjoying autonomy and agency and are able to act freely and exert their choices and influence within strong social relations. By allowing a child to freely participate, share and be themselves, they can experience what it means to be respected.

The participants also emphasised the importance of understanding that children experience respect through the actions and activities in which they are involved. It is through activities that they feel valued and appreciated, as is evident from a statement by a participant:

I don't think children have the terms to explain, they don't talk about feeling appreciated... I once asked my class what do they see as a healthy relationship...and they couldn't describe it like, 'I feel appreciated' or such, they described it totally in their own language, but it came down to it that it was fun to be with you or when you enjoy being with someone... (P5) (rwc, g3, p16)

*...And when you **listen to me** and look at me...I think that relationships are based on this...the small things, when you **look at** me when we speak, do you respect what I am saying, or do you disregard it. I think that is the way children see healthy relationships.* (P5) (rwc, g3, p16)
(researcher's emphasis)

Other participants confirmed:

I think relational well-being can be seen more in a non-verbal way... (P3) (rwa, g1, p2)

*That's a very good one. **Non-verbal** experience rather than verbal. The meaning lies in the non-verbal...* (H) (rwa, g1, p2) (researcher's emphasis)

More than it is a verbal thing, because it's not words that's being said, it's an experience. Yes, you feel it and it's a process that is fluid and differs from day to day. (H) (rwa, g3, p21)

Significant meaning is attached to non-verbal gestures of respect as children experience respect through the way in which an adult treats them. Respect, as understood within the context of relational well-being, can therefore be described as an experience and not merely a descriptive value added to a list of values that should be adhered to. This might also apply to the way in which children will experience acceptance, appreciation and self-worth.

Being treated with dignity and respect, according to the participants, furthermore involved that children should not only be acknowledged as human beings but that their contribution should also be appreciated and valued. As mentioned earlier, such appreciation can be shown by allowing all the children an opportunity to participate in the classroom and other activities. Although the participants admitted that this might not be easy to achieve in practice, one of the teachers gave an example of how she addresses the challenge to ensure that each child in her class gets a chance to participate. The approach may work well especially in the South African school contexts, because the high number of children in each class makes it very difficult for the teacher to pay attention and show respect to each child individually:

In my class, because there are so many children, I put up a new number every day. I numbered the children from 1–40. So, every day when we change the date, I put up a new number and then that specific child can start with everything we have to do that day. I start everything with that child, reading, when I ask questions, I ask him first...and so, eventually I get through to all the children. (P2) (rwc, g1, p5)

So everyone gets a turn... (Host) (rwc, g1, p5)

I listen to about 20–25 children. So they definitely get more than one turn, but when I start everything with that child today, eventually everyone gets a chance to be first. (P2) (rwc, g1, p5)

And they know it, so they know that if they maybe don't get a chance today, they know that they will probably get a chance tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. They can pack away first, and that child's group can go first...it works really well. And eventually everyone will get a turn. (P2) (rwc, g1, p5)

The participants also pointed out that in order to acknowledge children as individuals, it is important to take into consideration their unique needs for acknowledgement. All children are different and should therefore be treated differently when it comes to personal and relational issues such as acknowledgement and appreciation:

...every child has a different language... for example to one child I can say, "Oh, I am so proud of you," and he is completely taken...and to another one I must give a hug and he is happy and for another one I must do something with him/her, literally with them...and this is how you sometimes can...be completely unaware, you are not aware that what you just did has such an influence on the child, especially when he/she has a low self-esteem...that everything is my fault. For example, when I scold someone in a class, say children are making a noise and I call the guilty ones out by name. Then there is other children that will take the blame unto themselves. So the self-esteem thing you can really see in a class situation which children takes the blame unto them. (P6) (rwc, g3, p19)

I described that as uniqueness, some wants physical touch with a hug, for others words are enough, others want attention. So I think a child experiences relationships according to their personal preference (P5) (rwc, g3, p19).

Children are developing beings. Schaffer and Kipp (2013) refer to the plasticity of human life as the capacity to change and develop due to positive and negative life experiences. The implication is that they can still learn new things and that the right input can make a tremendous difference in schools. According to Stojanov (2009), the aim of educational respect is to respect the child's individuality in the present and also their future concerns. Stojanov is of the opinion that when a child's individuality is respected, it works as a "tool for the fostering of human development" (ibid., p. 167). Thus, when children are respected, taken seriously and treated as individuals, it will inevitably contribute to their relational well-being and overall development.

Apart from children having different personalities that require different ways of showing respect, the situation according to the participants is complicated by the cultural differences between children, as one participant described:

I think races and different culture groups are very different about (relationships) (P6) (rwc, g3, p20).

The way in which respect is understood is therefore complicated by the fact that schools are multicultural environments, as different cultures conceptualise respect differently:

...the culture has a big influence...The two (cultures) meet and there is conflict, because there is completely different upbringing. (H) (rw, g4, p25)

According to the Children's Charter of South Africa (1992), children are entitled to basic human rights and ought to be treated with respect and dignity. However, the delegates of this charter recognised that this has not always been the case in South Africa and children have been subjected to violence, discrimination and racism which is contrary to the ideal mentioned above. In this regard, participants confirmed that children are not always treated with respect and dignity.

The participants furthermore referred to the disrespectful ways in which some parents treat their children:

(They)... are very scared of their parents...they punish them corporally/severely...at home they are literally used as slaves. They must do everything, they must clean the house, they must wash the dishes, and they must make the food... (P5) (rwc, g3, p20)

Apart from possible disrespectful treatment at home by their own parents, it has also been found in literature that even though corporal punishment has been banned by the South African Schools Act in 1996, it still persists in the majority of schools (Khanyile, 2014; De Wet, 2007). Morrell (2001) also confirms this in his study and mentions that corporal punishment is still used in schools as a strategy to discipline learners. So does numerous other research studies. Corporal punishment, defined by the UN Committee on the rights of the child as including “hitting or slapping a child with the hand or an implement (e.g. belts, canes etc.), kicking, shaking, or throwing a child, pinching or pulling their hair; forcing a child to stay in an uncomfortable or undignified position, or to take excessive physical exercise; burning or scarring a child (and the threat of any of these actions) as a form of discipline”, does not adhere, in any way, to the basic right of being treated with dignity and respect. In 2012, the General Household Survey concluded that 2.2 million South African children have been experiencing corporal punishment in schools (SAHRC, 2014). A study done by Morrell in 2001 also gives explanations as to why corporal punishment is still being used in schools, making it clear that it is not something of the past. In May 2014, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) convened a national conference titled, “Ending Corporal Punishment in Schools”. It has also been found that reciprocal disrespect is shown between students and teachers and that teachers often try to control the children’s behaviour by exerting power over them or threatening them with suspension (Van Rooyen, 2015, p. 76).

However, despite the still existing disrespectful treatment of children, the results of this study concur with recent studies which showed that when children are indeed treated with dignity and respect, it can have a positive effect on their development, school performance, general co-operation and relational well-being (Giesinger, 2012; Roffey, 2008; Kitching et al., 2012, Roffey, 2008). Ungerer (2012) who conducted research in four schools of skills in South Africa, emphasised that mutual respect between teachers and learners play a significant role in the promotion of positive relationships, despite the often challenging circumstances that prevail in these schools. Teachers in particular indicated, as is the case in this study, that mutual respect was enhanced when a positive and healthy classroom atmosphere was created in which children sensed that they were valued despite their challenges.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Establishing safe spaces through boundaries

Children's security does not merely lie in the boundaries being set for them, but in the adults' ability to maintain them.

(Anne Cawood, 2015)

The participants indicated that a school should be a safe space for children to experience relational well-being in the school context. They agreed that the provision of a safe space is essential for the enhancement of relational well-being although only brief statements were made, such as “Yes, for sure, safe... they feel safe” (P1) and “a child feels safe when he has a safe environment” (P2) (rwc, g1, p3).

The same participant emphasised that establishing boundaries and creating a safe place for children is easier in the foundation phase than in the intermediate and senior phases of school. She based her argument on her perception that the young children “are more dependent on the teacher, as the one who mentor them, one that you can put your trust in” (P2) (rwc, g1, p3).

According to Witmer (2005), students need to feel physically and emotionally safe in their learning environment. Fattore et al. (2007) further support the safety and security of a child in order to experience well-being by emphasising secure and stable relationships with adults. In this study, the provision of safe spaces was specifically linked to the setting of boundaries for children indicated as “safety within boundaries” (H) (rwc, g1, p7). Fox (n.d.) is of the opinion that the primary purpose of boundaries is to provide safety and protection. The participants also agreed that “Unconditional love” (P2) (rwc, g1, p7) is a basic condition when setting boundaries. Concurrently, they pointed out that it is normal, even necessary for children to test their boundaries, because they are actually only searching and confirming their safe zone, their place where the world is safe and predictable. The participants agreed that boundaries are continuously being tested and established by children, as stated in the following:

But they test it! (P1) The child...he can push the boundaries in a sense...do you understand? (because) He has a safe environment (P2) (rwc, g1, p7).

The participants also emphasised that, if children are pushing their boundaries, it must not be considered as naughtiness or challenging behaviour. One teacher indicated that she challenges parents at parent meetings to understand that “it's not a bad thing if children test their boundaries” (P1) (rwc, g1, p7).

In this regard, Fox (n.d.) argues that children test the boundaries because they are there and that there is safety in “pushing against a wall that doesn’t give”. She is of the opinion that if there is nothing to test or rebel against, it can cause children to feel unsafe (Fox, n.d., p. 3).

The participants’ view, on the important role that boundaries play in the provision of safe spaces, concurs with the Minton’s (2008) work. Minton (2008) considers the setting of boundaries and limits for a child, as an act of nurturing and love. By setting limits and boundaries for a child, you give him a clear message that you care about him and want him to be safe and to feel secure. According to Fox (n.d.), boundaries do not need to be harsh or hurtful, but they must be firm enough to provide safety and security (par. 3). The applicability of boundaries and limits should depend on the child’s age and developmental stage. In this regard, Minton (2008) states that boundaries for young children usually involve safety, while boundaries for older children should for instance involve decision-making techniques.

Children will, however, challenge the boundaries. This, according to Minton (2008), is part of what could be expected from children as it is their “job to test those boundaries to make sure they are solid, sturdy and will hold up under pressure” (p. How to set and enforce limits for your child, para. 6). Without continuously testing and establishing their boundaries, children will not be able to distinguish between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. It makes it easier for them to form a perception of what is expected from them and to know what the rules and guidelines are. At the same time, it provides a solid and secure base from which they can stretch from (Fox n.d., p. 5), explore the world and experiment to their heart’s desire, realising that they have a safe and secure environment to do so. Children therefore ensure their own safety by testing their boundaries.

The literature (Fox, n.d; Minton, 2008) emphasises that the roles of adults and children should be specific and clearly distinguished and explained when it comes to children’s establishing and testing of boundaries. Adults should not be hesitant or unsure about their own role when creating boundaries and limits for children. In this regard, adults must be adults: clearly distinguishable authority figures who nurture, guide and protect children by creating safe spaces for them through setting boundaries and limits clearly and unambiguously so that children “*realise what the boundaries are*” (P1) (rwc, gl, p7).

The adult must be the authority figure (Minton, 2008). They must be in charge, set out boundaries and limitations, and tell the child what is expected, what is acceptable and right and how to act. The child does not know how to “do life”. They expect from adults to teach them and to show them, to model to them, how it is done. (See Theme 5: Modelling positive relationships.) If a child does something wrong, the adult also needs to enforce the right behaviour. The adult’s behaviour must continuously prove to the child they are “rock-solid about what affects [the child’s] well-being” (Minton, 2008, How to set and enforce limits for your child, para. 6). If a child is uncertain about

your conduct, he will act out, which is actually him crying out to you for securing his world. However, some schools seem to be very unconcerned in this regard and do not live up to expectations. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.3.2 Othering based on culture, Subsection Restraining cultural behaviour: Of the schools.)

Participants furthermore concluded that, in their schools, there is more harmony and support between the teachers of the foundation phase than between those of the senior phases and that the reason might be found in the statements from the World Café conversations considered in the following paragraphs:

When the child grows older, *“they are more dependent on ... their friends ... so that changes their relationships ... (with their teachers) (P3) (rwc, g2, p10). And when they’re teenagers, they’re not worried about their teachers or their parents, it’s just what their friends say and that’s (when) peer pressure comes into it (P3) (rwc, g2, p10). Obviously a new set of boundaries and limits will be needed to comply with the requirements and needs of this new phase.*

The educational environment also changes for the children. They do not have one teacher any more. They now have several teachers, several subjects and a lot more academic and sport pressure, as well as much more competition to deal with. The result is that *“there is not a common purpose with the child any more, it’s not one teacher only anymore, there is not really security in your teacher any more, one whom you can trust ... (H) (rws, g1, p7). Another participant also pointed out a very important aspect: “There is not much time ... it’s academics, (when you’re finished) go out (P3) (rws, g1, p7) ... Yes, do your work, do your homework...” (H) (rws, g1, p7). Therefore, boundaries should be reviewed and adjusted regularly and new ones should be set in order to keep up with the changing needs and circumstances of the developing child. (See Theme 4: Opportunities for social interaction.)*

4.2.3 Theme 3: Establish supportive environments for children

“All young people... deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to achieve their full potential.”

(Harvey Milk, 1977)

Harvey Milk, an American politician in the 1960–70’s, was not only an activist, fighting for the rights of gay people, but was an advocate, instilling hope, for all people, regardless of age, colour

and handicap, to reach their full potential. When a person has a safe and supportive space in which he can develop and explore, he is bound to reach his potential.

With regard to creating supportive spaces as a way to enhance relational well-being, participants emphasised the role of the school while concurrently indicating their perceptions of the role that the home environment should play in creating a supportive environment.

A safe and nurturing environment contributes to acceptance, support and a positive self-image where educational risks can be taken. When you are in relationships with other people, support is created. When someone experiences that they have the support of other people, they are also more likely to engage in activity and form new relationships. The reciprocity of human relationships and support thus also clearly comes to the fore. In this regard, Resnick, Bearman, Blum and Bauman (1997) and Roeser, Eccles and Samerhoff (2000) argue that support enables adolescents to feel safe and to feel that they belong. This view is confirmed by Fattore et al.'s (2007) research in which children themselves pointed out that the security provided by strong relationships gave them confidence to act more independently, while feeling insecure and experiencing that fear affected their well-being.

Participants noted that when a child's *"relationships are experienced as positive, he will be more supportive of his friends"* (P8) (rwc, g4, p25). Adding to this train of thought other participants contributed the following: *"Supportive, see, if you are supportive and you also receive support, then you can offer support to others"* (P8) (rwc, g4, p27) ... *"So then it will be a satisfactory relationship"* (P10) (rwc, g4, p27). The idea carried forward by the participants is that when you have support and can offer support to others, your relational well-being will be positive.

McLaughlin and Clarke (2010, p. 92) argue that "schools should be involved in developing emotional well-being". This involves the "intentional, deliberative process of providing support, relationships, experiences and opportunities that promote positive outcomes for young people". In order for the child to experience the school environment as safe and supportive, the qualities contributing to constructing a caring and supportive environment can be considered. What does a supportive and caring school environment with healthy relations do for a child? The nature of a positive school environment generally provides a most crucial inclusive, interrelated web in which relationships are signified by safety, respect and support. However, the participants' perception seems to be that some schools, particularly those in townships, do not use opportunities to establish a supportive and caring environment. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.3.2 Othering based on culture, Subsection Restraining cultural behaviour: Of the schools.)

In concurrence with the above-mentioned argument, Schaps (2009, p. 8) advocates for creating “caring school communities” of which the influence will be much more positive and extensive than in traditional school environments. The participants’ perceptions are in agreement with the literature regarding which factors constitute a supportive and caring school environment:

Positive (P3), healthy relationships marked by reciprocity (P3) motivation (P1) where you can express emotions (H)... mutually support each other (H) promoting guts (P3).

The dynamic nature of relationships is also confirmed:

It is a process...not (a) static process...it is fluid (P3) and also there is a balance (P2 and H) You feel cared for, you feel respected (H)... that is a requirement (P2)... that your needs are met (P3) (rwa, g1, p1,2,3) a feeling of belonging (P4) love (P5) Acceptance, you are accepted for who you are (P4) appreciated (H) trusted (5) (rwa, g2,p9) satisfied and happy (P1) (rwc, g1, p1) compassion (H) (rwc, g1, p2).

Supportive school communities also provide positive academic and social learning experiences and outcomes for children:

The school is the place where social skills can be learnt and where relationships are built (P8). The school should also be the place where children learn life skills...if it is a healthy, safe environment for children, then it is going to be easier (for children) to have a relationship with your teacher. (P7) It is like you say, children can also sense, if you and your neighbor do not get along well, they sense it. So they (the neighbors) do not respect each other, so why do we need to respect each other? (P8) (P7 & P8) (rws, g3, p23, 24) (researcher’s emphasis).

Needless to say, in these school environments, relationships between the children, educators, parents, peers and friends should be, ideally speaking, beyond reproach and meet the six requirements of relationship-driven teaching as proposed by Rogers and Renard (1999, p. 36), namely that it should be safe, valuable, successful, involving, caring and enabling. Furthermore, with regard to safe and caring environments, Schaps (2009, p. 9) suggests that a “cross-age buddy program” could be implemented at schools: “Buddy programs build caring cross-age relationships and create a supportive schoolwide climate.”

Danielsen (2010, p. 37) points out that “teachers may provide the basis for a supportive climate for the class.” She (Danielsen, 2010) also reveals that in the situation of being close to students and pedagogical caring, the school process operates on an individual level. The participants are convinced that it also has a big influence or impact on whatever happens in the school environment: “*I think that would be the most important one, the relationship, especially the young*”

(P10) (rws, g4, p29) and “*Yes/Ja, obviously like this social part is important, because you need to feel acceptance, accepted in the school, in the class, with your age group.*” (P9) (rws, g4, p29). Another participant added that “*when it is a healthy and safe environment for children, then it will be easier to have a relationship with your teacher.*” (P7) (rws, g3, p24) and “*I think the important relationship in a school is definitely the teacher-child relationship*” (P10) (rws, g4, p29).

Witmer (2005) suggests that teachers should create conditions for students to feel safe not only by removing physical threats, but also by getting rid of all sarcasm and criticisms in a classroom, thus creating emotional safety. Kitching (2010) also found that support from teachers was experienced as comforting for learners and it made them “*feel safe*” (p41). The participants of the study also confirmed this when they said that:

You (with reference to the child) need to feel the teacher is protecting you, otherwise you'll start acting out at some point. You need to be accepted socially, in the community, you know, making sure that you feel wanted in that school. (P10) (rws, g4, p29).

Research conducted by McLaughlin and Clarke (2010, p. 94) confirms that “attachment to adults who care is at the center of engagement with school and through school with society”. Their research indicates that attachment to teachers considerably reduced criminal behaviour among youths in Edinburgh. This finding is supported by Wentzel (1998) who found that social support “is a key variable for all pupils”. The influence of teachers is thus very powerful, as it impacts on academic as well as social aspects for learners as “they learn about themselves and relationships through relating to teachers and this perceived support is related to self-esteem and depressive feelings”. Judeel (2013) in a study with South African adolescents also found that the adolescent-teacher relationship facilitates academic achievement and can play a preventative role in the lives of adolescents. A good teacher-learner relationship thus contains the power to enhance overall well-being.

Rogers and Renard (1999, p. 37) propose that caring is one of the fundamental qualities of a healthy teacher-child relationship. Caring ideally starts with the predisposition of teachers. A teacher with a spontaneous, innate caring nature will, with very little extra effort, convey a caring approach in their teaching. Teaching does not come naturally to everyone and some teachers may need some training and support in order to become more sensitive to the issue of social, relation-based education. Teachers and other educators who really care, who are deeply and personally involved and committed to the education of a child, have a complete different impact on a child's life than those who are more detached or apathetic. A caring teacher can provide a caring classroom climate that provides a safe and supportive space in which children can feel more nurtured and thus be more courageous to participate in the teaching process and even to take educational risks (Witmer, 2005, p. 225).

It should be noted that the caring and support given to the child are valued as “perceived” support and caring. As Reddy, Rhodes and Mulhall (2003, p. 122) point out: “It is not the support experiences themselves, but the cognitive representations of the providers as available and supportive that influence outcomes”. (See also Witmer, 2005; Resnick et al., 1997.) In other words, when a child perceives a teacher as supportive and caring about them, it is not the physical support or caring they receive that they experience, but rather the emotional feeling of being cared for. This implies that, once a healthy, supportive relationship is established between child and teacher, it should take, in the researcher’s view, very little extra effort from the teacher to maintain this relationship. Furthermore, this means that it is worthwhile to make the effort initially to invest in establishing a good relationship with a child and creating a safe, supportive environment.

In Fattore et al.’s research (2007, p. 21), the children themselves confirmed that supportive adults are very important for “helping them to learn new things” and “develop”. According to Strimaitiene and Kvieskaite (2009), “The family is the first social institution of the child’s socialisation, i.e. education, growing members of the society” (p. 115). The family is perceived as the first community for the child and therefore a vital environment for education and socialisation. The participants also agreed that, as a child’s primary social context, providing support “*is the responsibility of the home*” (H) (rw, g2, p13).

Children’s well-being is crucially influenced by a sense of having a home. Having (or perceived as having) physical sheltering and emotional sheltering (support) are stable reference points (“constants”) that contribute to children’s well-being (Fattore et al., 2007). The findings of Danielsen, Samdal, Hetland and Wold (2009) confirm those of Fattore by stating that there is a definite relation between parental support and young people’s perceived well-being.

Fattore, Mason and Watson (2009) furthermore state that parents are the people responsible for keeping children safe. In this regard, there are two aspects involved. The first concerns physical safe-keeping, the practical aspect thereof and the child’s trust that his parents will provide protection. The participants agree with this view and point out that a child with physical needs would obviously “*struggle with well-being ... physical needs like does the child have food, does the child have shelter* (P3) (rwc, g2 p13) ... *when talked about Maslow’s ...* (P4) (rwc, g2, p13) ... *it’s important.*” The participants, however, found that many children are not being taken care of properly at home in the physical sense:

... because how many people don’t have shelter, water ... shoes, clean socks ... we talk about poverty ... Now education ... every child has the right to education ... you know some kids are struggling to get to school ... so are they getting the education that they think that they have ... ? They have feeding schemes, so the school has to feed them ... they say they don’t eat when they get home ... they have a cup of tea and then they go to sleep ... (P3) (rwc, g2, p13).

They also highlighted the influence of physical neglect on the school and social environment:

I mean you can't concentrate ... (if your basic needs are not met) (P3)...you can't do what you need to do if you're not eating enough and drinking enough (P3) (rwc, g2, p14) ... there's not gonna be a place to have a relationship ... you're gonna first see to basic needs and then you will be able to have a relationship... then you will be able to go up in that sort of interaction. (H) (rwc, g2, p14) ... So in school you need to look at their social, you need to look at their physical needs as well. I feel like all these things are very related ... (P10) (rws, g4, p29)

In the life of a child, the importance of having a home cannot be overestimated. It does not only provide physical safety, as children's primary social context, a home and family also shape their behaviour (Resnick et al., 1997). Therefore, the second aspect of having a home is the sense of being cared for. This is emotional security referring to a relationship that is "warm, satisfying and trusting... Children expect that home should be a place where personal threats do not exist and emotional and physical security is promoted." They experience a "feeling of 'togetherness'" (Fattore et al., 2009, p. 66). Therefore, when children are afraid of their parents, in other words don't have a good relationship with them, then their well-being will be affected by the fear and insecurity provided by the home environment not being a "supportive space".

Most participants came to the conclusion that currently, in South African school communities, emotional support and care from the parents are unsatisfactory and a difficult issue to address, because of variant factors involved:

... they live in a township and I can only do therapy up to a point – if I have to (consult) a psychiatrist or occupational therapist, I cannot fix it, I cannot. (P3) (rws, g1, p6) And the support system does not exist, so even if you get the child into therapy, but the support system also does not exist at home, it is going to be of such a nature that you cannot help them ... (P2) (rws, g1, p6)

The participants felt that, for some children, the school indeed provides a relatively safe space – emotionally, as well as physically:

I think races and different culture groups are very different about (relationships) (P6). They are very scared of their parents...they punish them corporally severely and the children would rather like to come to school than staying at home, because at home they are literally used as slaves. They must do everything, they must clean the house, they must wash the dishes, and they must make the food. That is how it is in their culture, so I think how they have relationships with their parents is very different from how these children experience

relationships with their parents. (P5) Definitely. (Facilitator). I am in a township (school). It's completely different (P5) (rwc, g3, p20) (researcher's emphasis)

Those participants involved in more privileged schools are dealing with another kind of emotional negligence:

They (the parents) teach the children basic life skills (P3)...but not emotional skills (P3)... But at home it is...ok...you are my angel, you can do absolutely nothing wrong...so the child gets this idea, my environment must adapt to me... (P3) (rws, g2, p10)

Furthermore, ego problems are the order of the day:

The parents are on your back, anything that you do, anything that you say to the child, any possibility...then it is (like) "so you say my child needs help??" ...so you have to ease the parents in...so at the end the child does not get therapy, because the parents do not allow it, because they do not want to admit it (the need for therapy) (P1 & P3) (rws, g1, p6)

Participants also acknowledge the reciprocity of supportive relationships as indicated by the bioecological systems theory (Chapter 2, Section 2.4). It must therefore be pointed out that positive school-related experiences do not only affect a child's school experience, but may also have an effect in "other life domains than schools" (Danielsen, 2010, p. 36). "Multiple life domains may be involved in regard to school-related social support" as supplied by parents and classmates – the two groups of support providers who interact with children in the home environment and leisure time activities (see Theme 4). Participants acknowledge the view that individuals and their environments are interrelated, interconnected and inextricably interwoven. They agree with this principle and stressed the importance thereof continuously:

When you said about the ripple effect, everyone's interrelated regarding with what is going on at home, will affect the school, teachers, friends. (Host) (rws, g4, p30).

And also:

It could be that the child has a bad relationship with the teacher that is going to affect the... maybe the home life, the relationship with friends, their relationship with their parents... (P10) (rws, g4, p29)

Therefore, the interrelatedness and mutual effect that support in the "home" and support at "school" can have on each other should be taken into account when establishing a supportive environment for a child.

The effects of a positive, supporting school environment with healthy relationships on a child are numerous and far reaching. McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) also established that a child's connectedness to a school is a key protective factor. It lowers the likelihood of risky behaviour regarding health, as well as other kinds of adverse behaviour.

In conclusion, supportive spaces and relationships enable children to fully engage in school activities and to persevere. They encourage and strengthen positive outcomes for the child, for instance academic motivation. If children experience positive relationships, they will like to excel at school and other areas of their lives. They are also taught desirable social skills and competence, trust and respect for teachers, unselfish tendencies, and appropriate conduct in the school and social environment.

This theme clearly confirms that people, including children, are happiest and live to their optimum if they feel that there is somebody behind them that will support them if difficulties arise. This support gives them more self-confidence and courage. Therefore, by having a safe and supportive environment, created by the school, teachers and parents at home, it can contribute to the enhancement of children's relational well-being.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Facilitate opportunities for social interaction in and across all levels of interrelatedness

Human beings are social creatures. We are social not just in the trivial sense that we like company, and not just in the obvious sense that we each depend on others. We are social in a more elemental way: simply to exist as a normal human being requires interaction with other people.

(Atul Gawande, n.d.)

The participants suggested that when children have the opportunity for interaction with other people, they feel loved, accepted, that they belong and supported, thus relationally well.

Schaps (2009) states that children can learn the skills necessary for relating to others and develop wider networks for positive relationships when they have frequent opportunities to interact. Opportunity, time and space for social interaction for children should therefore be allowed in order to enhance their relational well-being. Baumeister and Leary (1995) are of the opinion that social interaction, relationships and support are crucial to human life, in order to nurture a global need to belong and to provide situational or task-specific support. This view is supported by Roffey's view

that “[p]ositive emotions build on social capital” (2007). Roffey (2007) confirms that positive feelings of being valued, being cared for, being respected, being included, having fun, belonging and feeling good enhance co-operation, understanding and compassion, respect, commitment and motivation, resilience and problem-solving abilities. Roffey (2007) found that these relational qualities contribute to the generating of social capital. Social capital can be considered as the shared values, purpose and commitment that are contributed to the well-being of the community over and above personal interests (Roffey, 2008, 2012b).

It might be possible that allowing opportunities to children for social interaction is even more important than for adults, because children still need to develop social interaction and relational skills. Therefore, opportunities for social interaction are imperative, as they contribute to the development and enhancement of children’s relationships and relational well-being.

Relationships can only be developed when opportunities are available to develop them. While discussing what relational well-being and relationship entail, the participants agreed that the “*relational comes into place with social (interaction)*” and “*it’s in the interaction, the give and take*” (P2) (rw, g1, p2) that relationships are brought forth. One participant stated that “*this whole thing is in the interactions...the in-between*” (people) (P2) (rw, g1, p2). This strongly confirms Josselson’s (1996) statement that relationships are created from the flow of interaction. When you are in a relationship and interact with other people, support is also created. (See Theme 3, para. 4.) This leads to strengthened connectedness and mutually supportive relationships and ultimately the improvement of relational well-being.

Meaningful relationships are thus created when children have the opportunity for social interaction. The participants confirmed the literature that states that interaction affords one the opportunity to experience relationships, acceptance, belonging and support. Social interaction in this regard does not necessarily imply spoken words or discussions among one another. Interaction is often found in the “being together”, spending time together and experiencing life together in a non-verbal manner. One of the hosts described this as follows:

...emotional well-being is positive, it means growth, satisfaction, that you get feedback from your relationships and that there is a balance between your different relationships and how you feel when you experience well-being. That you are heard, and you can be honest about your emotions, that you don’t feel rejected, but rather supported where you are and then it is this non-verbal experience that you have, it’s not necessarily words and things people say to you. It is the feeling you get when you are with people and the way they react. (H) (rwa, g2, p12).

It is thus clear that opportunities for social interaction should be allowed for the creation and enhancement of children's relational development and well-being. The interaction, however, does not necessarily need to be verbal (See Theme 1, para. 10). The kind of interaction (e.g. verbal/non-verbal) will be determined by the child's age and the context, as discussed later in this section.

The participants identified several environments where opportunities for social interaction for children can be created. They indicated that the home, the school and, especially, the teacher are some of the most important sources for creating opportunities for interaction.

Thomas (2009) explains that a nurturing family background plays an important role in young children's well-being – especially regarding relationships, as pointed out by the participants: *If he is well-educated at home, he will have a stable relationship* (P9) (rwc, g4, p26) ... *everything starts at home* (P9) (rwc, g4, p26). But older children, such as adolescents are more influenced by their peers and friends. Friends are regarded as a comfort and place where problems and feelings can be expressed. When children learn and understand through social interaction, relationships and the emotional needs of others, they are able to form better and more intimate relationships (Larson, 2002; Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990; Dunn & Cutting, 1999; Dunn, 2004).

Booth-LaForce, Rubin, Rose-Karsnor and Burgess (2005) suggest that the lack of family support or inadequate family support can be replaced by friendships. Early adolescents are also more likely to spend time with each other, talk to each other and turn to one another for support than to adults. In the Good Childhood Inquiry (cited by McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010), when children were asked about the “the ingredients of a good life”, they valued time with friends highly and reported that they derived intimacy, support and pleasure from these friendships. In this regard, the participants contributed the following:

It's the social, because for them it is really important to feel part of a group. Social support, social acceptance, everything is about support and acceptance... For them everything is about their friends (P1)

and

if you look at the time they spend together, then everything is done together. If you look at teenagers, they don't necessarily play together, but they sit together. (H) They spend more time together. (P1) And social skills, because they learn social skills in these relationships. (P2) (rwc, g1, p7)

Another participant added:

So that belonging ... to play together ... it's respect. (P3) (rwc, g2, p13)

With reference to age and context-related interaction mentioned earlier, Fattore et al. (2008) point out that the relational context plays a crucial role for activities to lead to a sense of well-being. The participants explained the age-relatedness of interaction as follows: *The child's relationships are based on the development phase (they are in) (P3) (rwa, g1, p4)*. Childhood friendships are, for instance, all about playing. Buhrmester (1990) mentions that a child's playing include sharing, co-operation and communication. He is of the opinion that if these skills are not developed in middle childhood, the transition to adolescence can be difficult resulting in young adolescents feeling isolated when they require intimacy, support and understanding from peer relationships.

As above-mentioned research suggests, children tend to find comfort in each other. Fattore et al. (2009) mention that friends can understand where the child is "coming from" and can empathise with each other. It has also been found that the ability to form friends appears to have a direct influence on how children cope with crisis situations (Dunn, 2004; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010).

However, the participants indicated that although the home and the school are very important in creating opportunities for interaction, it does not happen effectively. The reasons they gave are that creating opportunities for social interaction and developing relations and relational well-being are not priorities at home or at school:

... school would be very important ... it's a very constant influence if you think of their well-being. (P3) (rwc, g2, p9) ... in a school context, relationships are the least ... (P3) (rws, g1, p8) ... this child ... is not taught about relationships in school ... also not in the classroom, because the teacher does not have time, (researcher's emphasis) and at home it is this busy life (of) taking on as much as you can. (P1) (rws, g1, p9)

They (the parents) don't worry ... they don't even open the child's bookcase ... they don't even fetch the reports ... they just don't have any interest (P5) (rws, g2, p14) (researcher's emphasis).

The general conclusion the participants came to is that "*he is (nowhere) being taught about relationships* ... (P1) (rws, g1, p9) (researcher's emphasis). It can therefore be concluded that, according to the participants, opportunities for social interaction and relational development do not exist – not at home and also not at school. They furthermore identified several barriers limiting or preventing these opportunities for interaction in the South African school community. Four of the most prominent challenges are:

No time allowed: *"There is no time to build relationships...you just do what you have to, to carry the curriculum over to the child and then move on ... (P3) (rws, g1, p4). If there is time, I can sit down with a child and ask them what is going on at home ..."* (H) (rws, g4, p32).

Not a priority: Not officially and also not personally. Despite time for interaction being a need, it does not seem to be a priority in the school system. The participants explained as follows:

...the other important thing is that relationships are last in line, completely at the back. (H) (rws, g4, p32) ... your relationships and emotional well-being is not a priority in the school, it's the academics. (H) (rws, g4, p32) ... they put relationships and the emotional completely at the end. (P3) (rws, g1, p4) ... they are so focussed on other things in schools that emotional well-being is at the end of the line. (P5) (rw, g2, p13)

The focus in this study is on the relational well-being of children and factors influencing their well-being. As the teachers can play a major role in children's well-being, it is necessary to also consider their situation in this context, because what affects teachers, can also affect the children's well-being. It has therefore been identified that teachers themselves are also in need of support and social interaction in order to be able to provide and facilitate these opportunities to children. In this regard, the participants identified two major challenges that affect them (teachers) that can have a significant impact on their relationships with the children:

Over worked and overwhelmed: Schaps (2009) confirms that teachers are often over worked and flooded with a "never-ending stream of demands". The participants, some of them being teachers themselves, confirmed that they often don't get time to relax and recharge. One participant stated that *it is so difficult to build relationships, like you said, the time...* (P3) (rws, g1, p6) Schaps further explained that teachers have a lot of responsibilities and must tend to children's academic, social and relational development and help them become skilful, principled, civic minded and caring adults. He explains that teachers are so stretched by what they need to do and accomplish that by even suggesting a little something extra might cause a mini melt-down by teachers, exclaiming: "You've got to be kidding!" (2009, p. 8). They are mostly overworked, tired and emotionally drained and this often forms a negative cycle where relationships are continuously neglected. When discussing this phenomenon they confirmed it and came to the conclusion that teachers are overwhelmed by the amount of work and activities they need to adhere to and that they need opportunities to interact and vent to each other:

Yes, and then they tell you, "no, we are sending you on a course to learn to treat children better and then ... let's put something more on you as teacher." (H) (researcher's emphasis)

Teachers are half overwhelmed, they are so overloaded with stuff that they don't have time to also attend to the child's emotional well-being. (P10) (rwa, g4, p27)

No therapy: Opportunities and systems for teachers to debrief or get therapy, does not exist. *But then if you say that you need help ... let them give you an opportunity to talk and it doesn't have to be to a counsellor.*

There is (the) police people and therapists that they see in their stressful situations, there is in every single occupation that is important, these (kind of) (H) (rwa, g4, p28) ... debriefing get at the well-being of the teacher (the system) should help us by giving that well-being (H) (rwa, g4, p28) (and you) cannot contribute to the children's well-being (P8) (rwa, g4, p.28)

... there is a need there, because what I mean is that quite often a teacher experiences emotional stuff herself and this is transferred to the children ... (P10) (rwa, g4, p29)

... teachers crack, cut them off emotionally ... (H) (rwa, g4, p31)

These challenges point out that opportunity for social interaction and support for teachers are also needed in order to empower teachers to attend to and enhance their relationships with the children. It is imperative to address these problems: “... you can't (promote) well-being without experiencing well-being in yourself” (H) (rwa, g3, p23) and “... we feel that sometimes teachers should go for therapy ... (H) (rwa, g3, p27). If the teachers are not well, they cannot support and enhance well-being in children. It is thus necessary, in order to allow them to effectively attend to children's well-being, to attend to their own well-being also as a preventative measure in ensuring the children's well-being.

Time and space for teachers to interact, vent and unwind should therefore be on the agenda in order to keep their sanity intact and support them as educators. However, as this study focusses on enhancing relational well-being in children, it was recommended that:

More time is spent on relationship building and to put time aside to help children (P3) (rws, g1, p7).

Therefore, as suggested by the participants in this study, along with several confirmations from literature, it becomes clear that when opportunities are allowed for children to interact and by creating the opportunity for mutual support and acceptance to be formed, relationships can be influenced and enhanced positively.

4.2.5 Theme 5: Model positive relationships to children

“You can’t do a fine thing without having seen fine examples.”

(William Morris Hunt, n.d.)

Children tend to learn through examples and what is modeled to them by the adults present in their lives. “Modelling (sic) describes how human behaviour is learned through observation and vicarious reinforcement...” (Dickens & Ogden, 2014). This depiction therefore implies the presence of an example or a model. Children need role models in order to have a frame of reference when it comes to creating, understanding and nurturing positive relationships. The participants in this study agreed with the views quoted above, namely that children should definitely have role models. In other words, they should see examples set by teachers, parents and other adults of how they should relate to and interact with other people in positive and nurturing ways. A participant explained the advantage when a role model can demonstrate appropriate behaviour to children as follows:

If they can see it (the correct behaviour) and if they have it (understand it), what does it mean to a child? They must have a picture thereof, and the picture is from that which he/she sees. (P1) (rwc, g1, p3)

It is widely accepted that children learn much faster and more effectively by observing examples than by mere instruction. Not only do children learn by examples, they also experience the need for examples. As was found by Weeks (2009), both teachers and learners expressed the desire that “Teachers should serve as worthwhile role models for learners” and that “Learners and teachers should be positive ” (p. 10).

When children see and experience positive relationships around them, it is easier for them to understand and apply the values associated with relational well-being, namely caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, collaboration, and democratic participation in the decision-making processes (Prilleltensky, 2005). One of the participants confirmed the conveyance of positive behaviour and the characteristics of relational well-being by modelling it to children: “You don’t say that to a child, you show it (researcher’s emphasis) (H) (rwc, g2, p12)

The directive and strong influence of role models on children’s behaviour can even be seen in people’s diet patterns and eating habits. Dickens and Ogden (2014) found in their study about the relationship between a child’s diet pattern and their parent’s control and modelling in this regard, that children not only imitate their parents’ eating behaviour and patterns, but also their attitudes towards

food and body image. This is evident even years after the child left home. They concluded that behaviour, rather than control, is a stronger determinant of future patterns and that, as explained earlier by one of the participants, it is what parents do, rather than what they say, that has the more lasting impact upon children in future.

Relationships are part of everyday life. Everywhere one goes; there is some form of relationship involved. These everyday examples of relationships, becomes a guideline for children while they are learning how to function and behave in a social environments. Seeing that children are relational, practical beings, it is more effective for them to mimic a good relational example than to create relationships without a proper model. Children will therefore mimic all examples modelled to them – irrespective of whether these examples bear a positive or negative outcome for their social life or education. One participant stated:

He sees a relationship between his mother and father, it can either be good or it can be bad...he sees relationships... (P6) (rwc, g3, p17) and he will mimic these relationships (researchers' addition).

Another thing to keep in mind is the examples children see at home and in other places that are not necessarily verbal (See Theme 1, para. 8, 9, 10) or of positive relationships. Somewhere in the various examples children see in everyday life, they will form their own idea of relationships and how to act in social environments. However, some schools, by not using opportunities like the handling of teenage pregnancies to demonstrate a positive, proactive example to children, are missing out in this regard. (See Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.3.2 Othering based on culture, Subsection Restraining cultural behaviour: Of the schools.) As a result, a negative example is set to children. It is thus necessary to keep in mind that whether the relationship modelled is positive or negative, it will have an impact on the child's relational well-being, because the child will simply mimic what he sees.

The following aspect discussed by participants demonstrates that children will learn through relationships and social interactions by experiencing and merely witnessing others in interaction:

Yes, what they see and what they hear between family members. Oftentimes, with family and children, one talks about a family member you don't particularly like and the children hears this...how does this small things influence their perception of relationships, because Sunday afternoon we all had a lovely time together and laughed together and had conversations and so forth and then Sunday evening we have to listen to this (bad) thing and this (bad) auntie...understand...that type of thing...I think, I always say that children really are the most intelligent beings on earth, without a degree. They are sharp. You can't lie to them, they can see right through the image we as adults work so hard on, they see right through it. For me, there is a lot of fake relationships, so how does that influence children's perception of relationships? And I think a lot of times that is why children don't want to give their all in a

relationship and is open in a relationship to allow that kind of interaction. They see all these crooked images of relationships and interaction and I often think that it must have an influence on how they feel. (P6) (rwc, g3, p17)

This scenario demonstrates the discrepancy between what was conveyed by the parents on two different occasions. The impact according to the participants will be that the children's understanding of relationships becomes muddled, because what was said or done is being contradicted by what is said and done later on. Children are new members of society, developing social beings without any prior knowledge or experience of social conduct. They do not have the social knowledge, skills and experience to distinguish between good and bad examples. Therefore, they simply follow what is being revealed to them by other members of society (role models).

A study done by Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers and Robinson (2007) speculates that children imitate and learn emotional regulation through imitating the way in which their parents cope and handle emotional situations. By observing emotional, verbal and behavioural responses from their parents, children will model these behaviours when confronted with their own personal emotional situations. Therefore, the same is suggested when it comes to learning and experiencing relationships. If children see their parents in a relationship with others, chances are that they too will mimic the behaviour involved in their parents' relationships.

Children tend to copy what they see. Whatever a child sees in a role model, they will make an effort to do and act in the same way. Participants confirmed that children will act out what they see in society in their relationships. They will *"model it to your relationships...parents model in their relationships"* (H) (rwc, g1,p7) *"and it comes from a variety of places, how they learn...and through what people tell them, but more from what you model to them"* (H) (rwc, g3, p17). Therefore, the notion tends to be that they will compare themselves and their relationships to the parents (or role models) and act in the same way.

Pringle (in Weeks, 2009, p. 5) argues that if certain important emotional needs of learners are not met within their relationships with significant role players, their self-image will be scarred and they will seek fulfillment of their needs in ways that may not be acceptable or successful. They might engage in challenging behaviour and their full potential is not realised: "Challenging behavior and underachievement are, in effect, cries for help." Here, the support of a role model is crucial. In the Every Child Matters document, set forth by the Department for Education and Skill in 2003 in order to reform and improve children's care, positive role models are set forth as a protective factor that can help children to overcome disadvantage. This implies that the right (positive) behaviour needs to be demonstrated to the child, thereby sending a message to them that they (the role model) see a self (in the child) that is better than the present act. In this regard, Li, Chan, Mak and Lam (2013, p. 6) found in her study on the enhancement of parent-child relationships by parental training in order to support

children in their transition to primary school, that parents can ease the process for children remarkably by promoting effective coping in their children “via coaching (listening to children’s voices and providing feedback) and modelling (setting examples of coping and behaviour). These strategies can enable children to consider every possible solution to deal with stressful situations and can lessen the effect of such situations on children’s psychological health. Noddings (1992, p. 25) argues along the same lines and adds that “confirmation” in their relationships enables the child and the role model to have a vision of “a better self”.

Several studies confirm that the family is perceived to be the primary community, the institution for the development of the child’s physical and relational well-being and positive socialisation ensuring the formation of a matured personality. The participants agreed with this view and confirmed that physical, as well as “*emotional well-being is the responsibility of the home*” (H) (rw, g2, p13). They intensely discussed the relationship between the home environment and relationships and came to the conclusion that “*everything starts at home...if he is well-educated (at home), he will have stable relationship(s)*” (P9) (rwc, g4, p26). The participants further indicated that it is very important to consider the effect of the child’s home environment and relationships and how they can influence their other relationships at school, with friends and the wider community. One participant added the following in this regard:

You see, the relational mechanism a child has at home will to a big extent, influence how he relates outside of his home. (P3) (rwc, g4, p22)

And also:

... the home life is important, because it will have an influence on the relationships at school ...whatever is going on (at home) will affect their school environment. (P2, g4, rws, p29)

Negative or bad relationships between parents and children at home will undeniably reflect adversely in relationships at school: “*If there is a bad relationship between the parents and the child, then the relationship between the teacher and the child is also bad, because it (the child’s relationship with the parents) leads to bad behaviour. So if they are not disciplined at home, they think they can do just what they want at school*” (P5) (rws, g2, p14). This fact is also confirmed by the study done by Wagner (2014). Aggression, alcohol and drug addiction, antagonistic adult behaviour and involvement in deviant groups are examples of conduct mentioned by Strimaitiné and Kvieskaité (2009) that impact negatively on the child’s relations and behaviour.

The participants confirmed in this regard that, if a child is correctly educated at home, they will have more stable relationships. They explained:

You see it in your parents, how they live (P3) Which is kind of the learnt part (Host) Like for example...from a very young age, I think, a two-year-old's processing of alcohol abuse: action – reaction (P3) ...It is directly linked, you can see this child is linked (P3) ...Definitely (P5) (P3 & P5) (rw, g2, p12)

Turnbullet and Turnbullet (2001) mention that parents are one of the most fundamental agents of social stabilisation in the lives of children. They are of the opinion that as role models, social educators, counsellors, and caregivers, parents have a more primary obligation to provide for their children's spiritual, intellectual, psychosocial and material needs. The Department of Education and Skills (2003) also mentions that the bond between children and their parents has the most critical influence on their (the children's) life. During socialisation, including the family, the school and the broader community role players should also model to the child not only how to grow into a mature adult, but also how to deal with and manage sociocultural challenges and relationships in order to equip them with the necessary skills, ensuring positive relational well-being and self-actualisation. (Strimaitinė & Kvieskaitė, 2009).

The school is perceived to be the secondary community for the child “where s/he gains knowledge of behavior and communication skills” (Kvieskienė & Indrasienė, 2008 in Strimaitienė & Kvieskaitė, 2009). It thus stands to reason that, in order to create a positive, healthy relational bearing in a child, an example of these relations should be modelled to them by role models in school contexts – as confirmed by the present study and several others. In a study by Roffey (2008), it was pointed out that if teachers and principals expect children to treat them with respect, they (as educators) had to model the according behaviour to them (the children). Also found in her study was that relational expectations for students were demonstrated by the way teachers and staff interacted with each other. The participants emphasised in this regard that it is very important that relationships between teachers should be healthy in order to model healthy relationships to the children: *“If there are not relationships between teachers (you experience) suspicion...slyness...no co-operation...everything is going to be negative...negative influence on the school...negative influence on the child...it is going to have that ripple effect again on all other relationships (P5, P6) (rws, g2, p16)*. Therefore, it is important that, in order to be able to model positive and caring relationships to children, the relationships between teachers should also be well, otherwise it can also have a ripple effect (see also Theme 4). Weeks (2009, p. 4) found in her study of caring schools that, “If a person has not been cared for, he or she will not be able to care for others. Learners must therefore be cared for by their teachers first before they will be able to care for themselves and others”.

If strong connectedness can be created between children and the school, it would be an ideal opportunity for teachers to create healthy relationships with children and foster them in various respects. Ryan and Deci (2000) explain that people readily perform even less popular activities

because such activities are stimulated, modelled or valued by significant role players like teachers “to whom they feel (or want to feel) attached or related” (Danielsen 2010, p. 37). Wagner’s study (2014, p. 84) confirms that, although relational well-being is an inclusive process involving various role models, “teachers and school management teams should initiate the process and lead by example” (researcher’s emphasis). In her research on the developing of positive relationships with learners and parents, Witmer (2005 in Wagner, 2014) argues along the same lines and also emphasises the crucial role of educators in the modelling to and establishing of positive relations for children, while Roffey (2012a) points out that, in order to be incorporated and become embedded in a school’s established culture, it is imperative that adults engaged in school contexts, should set an example concerning positive relationships. Noddings (2010) agrees with this view and points out that regarding care, congruous caring relationships should be modelled by teachers to children in a school community. The participants confirmed this view and pointed out that “*if teachers have good relationships (amongst them), for sure they are going to be happier and they can do their work with the children better...and they are going to have a... positive influence on the whole school*” (P7, P8) (rws, g3, p22).

As the participants in this study indicated, it is imperative that children have role models and examples when it comes to relational well-being. The literature explored, confirms their findings in this regard and strengthens the argument that in order to enhance relational well-being in school communities, a positive model thereof needs to be present.

In the data collected, five main themes were identified according to which the participants perceive that relational well-being in children can be enhanced. These themes include that children should be treated with dignity and respect, that boundaries should be set for children in order to provide a safe space for them and that their environment should be supportive. Furthermore, the participants feel that frequent opportunities for social interaction and the modelling of positive relationships can contribute to the enhancement and promotion of relational well-being in children in South African school communities.

4.3 Discussion of the findings

In order to enhance relational well-being in children, the participants are of the opinion that dignity and respect (Theme1) are crucial. Respect, however, is often a non-verbal experience and conveyed through positive gestures and treatment. By treating someone with respect, appreciation and acknowledgement are shown. Participants felt that when a child experiences respect and dignity, they are more open to share of themselves and build better relationships as they feel worthy and that they matter. Kitching, Roos and Ferreira (2012) identified mutual respect as a nurturing aspect of relationships. Respect and respectful engagements also enhance positive social connection (relational well-being) and are seen as crucial to relational well-being (Benade, 2013; Wagner, 2014; Ungerer,

2012). Despite the participants' agreement that mutual respect can enhance relational well-being, they also acknowledged that showing respect and being treated with dignity are not necessarily the reality in South African school communities. Children are often mistreated and receive corporal punishment from teachers as well as parents.

Having a safe space (Theme 2) within which children can interact is seen as crucial to the enhancement of relational well-being. Participants seemed to agree that children feel protected and safe when they have a safe environment providing a comfortable network of interactions. According to Wagner (2014), a safe space constitutes a caring and supportive environment which is crucial to the enhancement of relational well-being. It was suggested that by having boundaries, children feel protected and secure. Boundaries provide them with a guideline within which they can explore and develop their relationships. Setting boundaries for a child is seen as an "act of love", providing safety, security, rules and guidelines to follow. Regarding safe spaces in schools, Ungerer (2012) also found that a safe space contributes to a relaxed, safe and secure feeling within a child and that having boundaries contributes to this as children know what is expected from them. Likewise, Roffey (2012b) perceives a safe learning environment as contributing to well-being. However, Botha (2014) found that in South African contexts, schools are no longer deemed a safe space due to bullying behaviour and increased violence.

Schools should also be supportive environments (Theme 3). Participants are of the opinion that along with the home environment, the school plays an important role when it comes to support in a child's life. By experiencing that they are supported, a feeling of safety and belonging is instilled in a child and according to the participants, this contributes to relational well-being. In confirmation hereof, Evans and Prilleltensky (2007) are also of the opinion that supportive and positive relationships contribute to overall well-being. Likewise, Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010, p. 30) state that being nested in "a network of positive and supporting relationships" is a prerequisite for relational well-being. Support is created through being in relationships with others. Care and support are also seen as one of the five key elements of interrelatedness that Wagner (2014) identified for the promotion of relational well-being in school communities. The participants agreed that teachers play an important role in creating supportive environments and that this can be achieved by the promotion of caring school communities. Teacher support not only keeps children interested in academics and increases life satisfaction, it also promotes mental wellness (Suldo & Schaffer, 2008). According to Schaps (2009), caring school communities have a more extensive positive influence. It has also been found that a caring (supportive) school environment has numerous positive effects when it comes to relational well-being in children (Roffey, 2012a; Weeks, 2009; Noddings, 1995, 2003, 2005; Schaps, 2009).

According to the participants, the necessary skills for relating to other people are learnt through interaction with others. Therefore, when children are afforded the opportunity to frequently interact with each other on a social level (Theme 4), it will contribute to the development and enhancement of relational well-being. They also argued that the relational is brought forth by the flow of interaction. Here, again, the reciprocity of the influence as in the bioecological systems theory, described in Chapter 2, was acknowledged and emphasised by the participants. Visser (2007a) as well as Levine and Perkins (1997) support this through their observation that human behaviour is influenced by the interpersonal interactions together with the physical and social environment.

The home-family and school-teacher relationships were considered crucial sources for creating opportunities for interaction. Friendships contribute to these relationships by providing intimacy, support and pleasure. According to Gouws (2000) the developmental task of socialising involves the development of friendships, engaging in intimate relationships and appropriate interaction with authority figures such as parents and teachers. Ngai, Cheung, To, Liu and Song (2013) found that supportive, prosocial, high-quality friendships enhance a sense of worth and social connectedness in children and help them to cope with demands set by the school environment. Despite these benefits brought about by social interaction, the participants came to the conclusion that there is a lack of time and effort when it comes to opportunities for social interaction within the school community. Instead, four barriers to limiting opportunities for social interaction were identified.

With regard to the school as system, the first barrier is that no time is allowed/allocated for social interaction. Emphasis is placed on the academics and the curriculum which should be completed in a certain amount of time. This result is confirmed by various other South African studies which also found that a lack of time exists when it comes to social interaction and relational aspects in school communities (Benade, 2013; Wagner, 2014; Kitching, 2010). A second barrier perceived by the participants was that relationships do not seem to be a priority in schools. The idea was carried over that they (relationships) were always last in line and that only after academics, sport and several other activities have been attended to, relationships could receive some attention. Wagner (2014) and Smyth (2006) also confirm this when they report that schools mainly focus on academic achievement, naturally resulting in relationships to fall to the background.

Concerning teachers' role in opportunities for social interaction, the fact that teachers are overwhelmed and overworked creates a third barrier when it comes to socialisation and relationship-building opportunities. Participants reported that teachers are under a tremendous workload which often results in pressure and limited time for anything other than the academic and sport obligations. Roffey (2012a) and Weeks (2009) also confirm that teachers have a large workload and daily

demands which often results in burnout and withdrawal from relational aspects. In addition hereto, participants identified the fourth barrier as a lack of therapy or opportunity for debriefing when it is needed. Participants felt that in other occupations, debriefing and counselling are often provided to employees as a means of support, but in the school community this seems to be lacking. Without teachers being well, they would inevitably struggle to support and enhance the relational well-being of children. Participants strongly felt that these barriers should be addressed in order to better provide opportunities for social interaction and, in turn, enhance relational well-being.

It is widely accepted that children learn best through following examples. In this study, it was also confirmed by participants that role models and examples provide a frame of reference to a child. Participants are of the opinion that when a positive relationship is modelled (Theme 5) to a child, they are prone to understand, follow and thus behave accordingly and strive for better relational well-being. The Department for Education and Skill (2003) states that role models are a protective factor when it comes to overcoming disadvantage. Moody, Childs and Sepples (2003, p. 264) contribute hereto and remark that a positive relationship with an adult role model is one of many additional factors that can contribute to resilience in children. In this regard, participants indicated that the family and home environment plays a most crucial role. In support hereof, the most fundamental agents of social stabilisation have been found to be the parents (Turnbullet & Turnbullet, 2001).

In the school context, the principal, teachers and other staff should set an example of positive relationships to children. Participants felt that teachers should lead by example and model a positive classroom and school environment by focussing on having positive relationships with other staff members. In her study about the role of social support in academic achievement, Judeel (2013) found that care and support from teachers contribute to adolescents' ability to deal with their problems – they also indicated that they want teachers to “show them the way” (p. 72). Noddings (1992) also reports that a teacher is both a carer and a role model and the person who models behaviour to learners (children). As an essential characteristic of caring schools, Weeks (2009, p. 10) found that teachers should serve as worthwhile role models for children.

Figure 7 below demonstrates the way participants perceive the enhancement of children's relational well-being in South African school communities. The five main themes that transpired from the data seem to make a positive contribution to the enhancement of relationships between the child, school community and wider community. Other relational influences (positive and negative), which might have an impact on children, as discussed throughout this study, are also included.

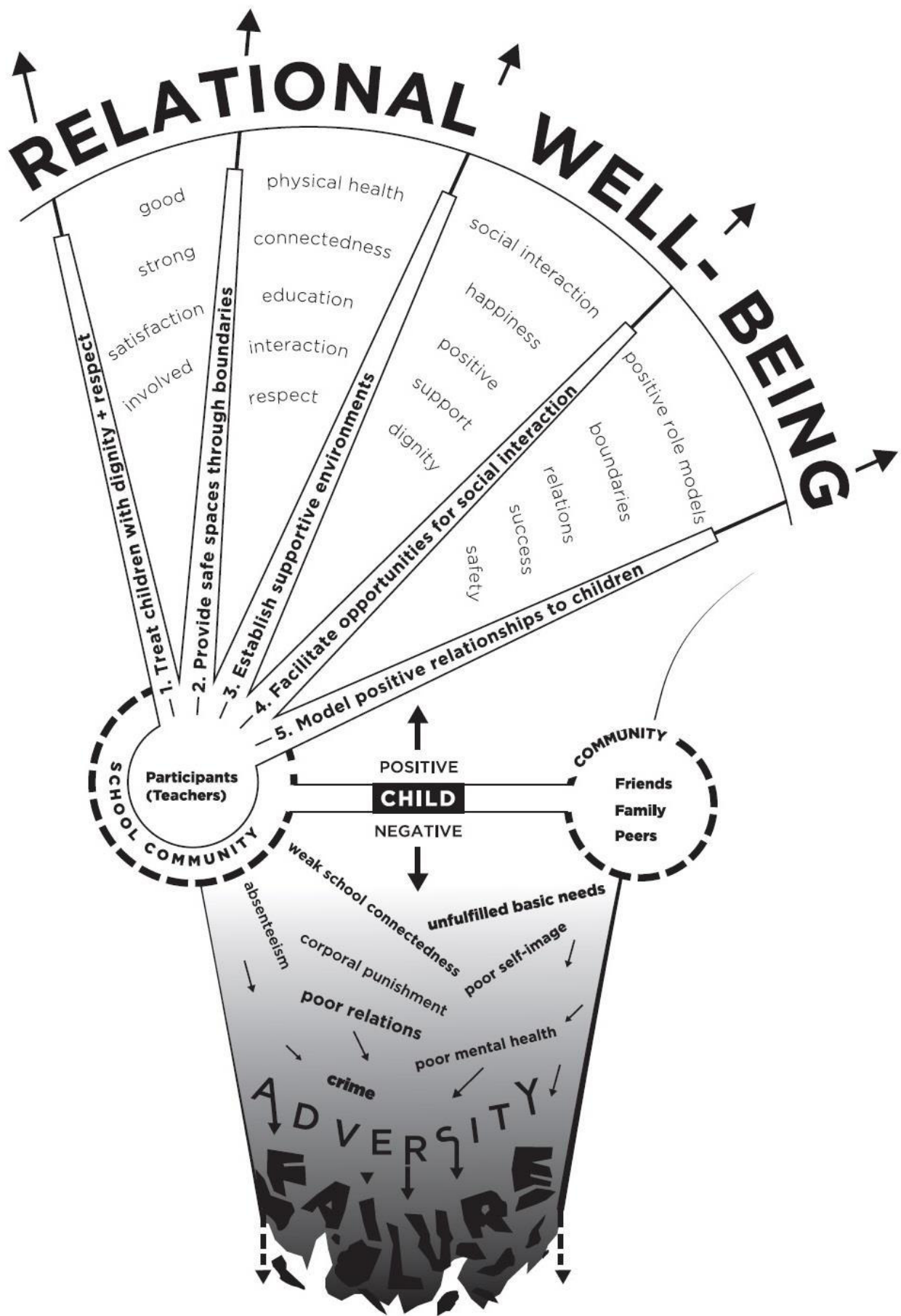


Figure 7: Enhancing relational well-being: Participants' perceptions

4.4 Summary of results based on thematic analysis

In this chapter, the content of the data has been comprehensively discussed. Five main themes have been identified by the participants and are concurrently confirmed throughout the literature. It can therefore be argued that, according to the participants, showing dignity and respect, providing safe spaces through boundaries, offering support, providing opportunities for social interaction and modelling positive relationships to children can contribute significantly to the enhancement of relational well-being in school communities.

CHAPTER 5

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS

“Deep inside you is a personal guidebook that influences almost everything you do.”

Graham Lawton (2015)

5.1 Introduction

While conducting the thematic analysis, the researcher noted that the way in which the participants spoke about the children and the socio-economic contexts in which these children grow up and receive their education, might have an influence on the enhancement of relational well-being in school communities. To further explore these observations, the researcher, in consultation with the supervisor, embarked on a sociolinguistic approach in order to explore the observations by doing a discourse analysis of the data. Discourse analysis refers to a sociolinguistic research technique in which written texts of conversations (called “discourses” in linguistics) can be analysed, taking into account both linguistic and social aspects that are reflected in the conversation (Taylor, 2013).

It is important to take into account that this chapter is an additional add – on to the research study as the researcher noted some concerning aspects in the participants’ language use. Due to the limited scope of a Masters thesis, discourse analysis was only used selectively and as a critical lens through which the linguistic observations could be further explored. Therefore, the researcher admits that the results brought forth through this additional critical analysis might lack some rigour and quality when it comes to following discourse analysis as a proper research method.

In this chapter, the researcher will first explain what a sociolinguistic approach encompasses, followed by an indication of how the sociolinguistic methodology was applied to identify perceptual elements in the conversation (that ultimately constituted perceptions) that are perceptually meaningful regarding relational well-being. The nature of these elements will then be explored in terms of relational well-being enhancement in South African school contexts. Finally, the discussion of each perception will be concluded by a critical assessment, indicating the perception’s implication for relational well-being.

5.2 A sociolinguistic approach

“Language is not a neutral instrument. It is a thousand ways biased.”

Dwight Bolinger (1987, p. 68)

Sociolinguistics is the linguistic discipline that explores the latent power of language in use by focussing on social information encompassed in the language (Van Herk, 2012; Wardhaugh, 2006; Hudson, 1996). The discipline originally developed from the co-operation between linguistics and sociology. With the theoretical shift in conceptions of what constitutes a person, social psychologists also increasingly realised that Sociolinguistics, because of its interdisciplinary nature, could contribute to psychological research by offering a widening range of cross-disciplinary methods of data collection, processing and interpretation (Gumperz, 2014; Robinson, 1988).

Language is of a social nature, as it is not directed to the self, but to others. As such, a language, being a form of social interaction, is an integrated part of a society and its culture. Consequently, there is a clear relationship between language and social factors, implying that Sociolinguistics studies language use within the context of its community, culture and within a specific situation. Therefore, the way in which and the functions for which the language is used (discussed later) reveal certain social qualities of the speaker, which can be meaningful to psychological explanation, including relational well-being.

Coulmas (2013), Ebbles (2005), Hudson (1996) and Du Plessis, (1987) explain that, as the social environment of a speaker is reflected in their use of language, some significant social information about the speaker can be detected by exploring the spoken language from a sociolinguistic perspective. The information can be considered as social messages about the speaker and can, for instance, reveal the speaker's personal conviction about what they are saying. Apart from conviction, the application of sociolinguistic techniques can reveal various other social aspects about the speaker, such as their intentions, attitudes, socio-economic status and regional provenance (dialects), as well as their historical, cultural and ethnic background.

5.2.1 Relevance of a sociolinguistic approach for the critical analysis

Gumperz (2014) confirms that exploring spoken language from a sociolinguistic perspective can have significant advantages for social research in several disciplines. With reference to psychological research, it is important to be aware that considerable measures of social information are being signalled when language is used. Accordingly, the participants' spoken language (the transcribed data) can, as indicated above, convey evidence of their personal disposition, perceptions and practical approach to relational well-being that might have critical consequences for relational well-being. In post-apartheid and multicultural South African contexts, where various and complex

perceptions prevail, it is imperative to analyse these complexities. The way they manifest in language, signal social and perceptual differentiation regarding perceptions, attitudes, and personal convictions which, through sociolinguistic analysis, may yield significant outcomes for the enhancement of relational well-being.

The nature of social perceptions, for instance social distancing, bias, superiority and inferiority, and the implications of these perceptions in social contexts, especially educational contexts, should be explored. Educators and educational planners should disclose this information and deal with these differentiations critically, because such differentiations affect the sustaining of social interaction by the individual (like teachers) and can have profound implications in an educational context. Exploring language from a sociolinguistic angle may not only yield new outcomes, but can also verify existing conclusions and new insights into the workings and implications of social processes, which occurred in this study, as will be indicated later.

As the participants are also directly involved in school contexts in post-apartheid South Africa, it is imperative that their personal convictions should be explored in the best interest of teaching and relational well-being. As already indicated, there were radical societal changes in South Africa on various levels, including politics, economy and education. Lawton (2015), however, confirms that, despite social changes, people's fundamental set of beliefs, including beliefs about other people, are, contrary to the kind of changes mentioned above, "highly resistant to change... (and) stay with us for the rest of our lives" (Forget the facts: para. 1). Lawton(2015) further explains that beliefs are mainly shaped by psychological, biological and cultural factors, which means that the beliefs of educators who grew up in the sociopolitical context of former apartheid South Africa, and whose beliefs were founded in that era, may at present still be the same, or similar. Lawton (2015) states in this regard: "More often than not... we simply cling to our beliefs" (p. 33). This implies that there might still prevail some personal convictions and attitudes from the apartheid era in today's post-apartheid context, which might be detrimental for relational well-being enhancement. If negative stereotypes circulate among people in everyday conversation and language, containing ideological perceptions, it "may work to promote the reproduction and circulation of stereotypes". Racist discourse, for instance, thus contributes to racism, as it reproduces and perpetuates negative stereotypes through talking, keeping ideological and discriminatory perceptions alive "to justify the subordination and oppression of people of color" (Hill, 2008, p. 31). Therefore, when evidence of social othering was detected in the language of the participants, the researcher thought that racism might be a possible cause of this othering. To determine the validity of this assumption, the othering perceptions of the participants were concurrently explored in terms of the theoretical framework of the three groups of topics that are usually discussed in racist discourse, as explained by Van Dijk (2011):

1. Topics that imply or focus on negative stereotypes of the Other, creating differences, and thus othering, between the “Others” and “Us”. “We” are typically positively portrayed and “They” negatively, resulting in polarisation between an in-group and an out-group.
2. Topics that portray the “Other’s” behaviour as deviant from ours.
3. Topics that present “Them” and “Their” behaviour as a threat to “Us” and our norms.

After completing the discourse analysis of the participants’ personal convictions, the outcomes were evaluated in terms of the above theoretical framework of racism to establish if the participants’ othering inclinations were based on race. It was, however, found that, although the participants’ othering perceptions theoretically aligned with the characteristics of racism as stated by Van Dijk (2011) and confirmed by Hill (2008), no evidence of racism was found in the data. The participants were, in fact, extremely cautious regarding any racial aspect, as will be discussed later. The othering that was detected was, contrary to the researcher’s earlier suspicion, not based on race, but on social class and culture. These aspects will later be addressed in more detail.

5.2.2 Sociolinguistics as a methodological approach

The application of a sociolinguistic methodology implies that social messages in the spoken language of the participants are detected by discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a relatively new cross-disciplinary field of analysis, involving both social and linguistic aspects in analysing language to detect social information that can be meaningful in terms of relational well-being enhancement (Tannen, n.d., Taylor, 2013).

A discourse analysis includes that one should firstly look for discourse markers in a conversation, or discourse, as it is called by linguists. A discourse marker suggests that there is a certain point of reference or prototype in terms of which it is “marked” or “unmarked”. An example would be the word “short” which implies that the prototype of length is relevant (Coulmas, 2013). People perceive the prototype as a paradigmatic measure and consider utterances (e.g. a word, phrase, interjection, sound or hiatus) that conform to it as “unmarked”, and utterances that deviate from the prototype as “marked”. A discourse marker is thus a “marked” utterance, as it apprehends extra meaning that is not found at unmarked utterances: it encompasses social information about the speaker, given to it by the specific situation in which it is used. It is thus “marked” by the specific situation. As such, it is thus not neutral, natural, “expected” or “unmarked” (Bussmann, 1996), but has an extra dimension, as it conveys social (non-linguistic) information about the speaker in a specific situation. The social information allocated to it by the situation in which it is used, implies that an utterance (e.g. a specific word) can indicate a specific meaning in one situation and a completely different meaning in another situation. To qualify as a marked utterance, implies that

“extra” meaning, social information about the speaker, is added to the utterance by the context of the situation in which it is used. All discourse markers are thus contained in utterances, but all utterances are not discourse markers. Furthermore, discourse markers can be positive or negative, depending on how it is informed by the situation in which it is used. It can also be of a linguistic or non-linguistic nature, such as a sound or a silence in a sentence. Social information about the speaker can thus be encompassed in non-linguistic utterances and not necessarily in “ordinary” language. Therefore, analysing utterances in language with discourse analysis to detect social information about the speaker, both linguistic and non-linguistic discourse markers will be explored.

As discourse markers also manifest in non-linguistic utterances, discourse analysis may reveal social information about the speaker that the speaker might not have intended to be revealed. The speaker may not even have been aware that he is revealing this information in his language (Coulmas, 2005, p. 90). This is where the true gain of discourse analysis for this study is evident: social information about the participants’ perceptions (e.g. bias, rejection and preferences) that is latent or “hidden” in their language can be obtained by discourse analysis. This information, while still being encompassed in the “raw” language, may seem somewhat vague or elusive to the unacquainted, because the participants use strategies in trying to hide certain information about themselves. The strategies are, however, coded in utterances, which can be identified by discourse markers and analysed by discourse analysis in order to detect the very information that the participants are trying to hide when speaking. The disclosed and analysed information about the participants’ perceptions will be related to relational well-being enhancement in South African school contexts and the value thereof assessed in terms of it. On a technical note, the reader should take cognisance that, regarding terms, the researcher will not try to be “politically correct”, but will use the terms as used by the participants. This will hopefully contribute to coherency and the avoidance of confusion. For orientation towards this section, a typical case of discourse analysis will be explained below:

An example of a discourse marker is found in an utterance like “*uhm*” in the following: “*It was something about relationships ... uhm ... what is a healthy relationship, something like that...* (P1, G2, C, p16). The utterance “*uhm*” reveals some non-linguistic, social information about the speaker. When considered in the context of the discourse situation and the meaning of some other words in the same sentence, the utterance “*uhm*” conveys that the speaker is evidently hesitant of what she wants to say, that she is uncertain. This uncertainty is confirmed twice by the speaker herself: earlier in the sentence by “*something*” and later in the sentence by “*something like that*”. Both of these indirect and vague utterances confirm that the utterance “*uhm*” points to uncertainty.

Exposing uncertainty, like in the example, is, however, just one of various functions that discourse markers may have. The function relevant to this research is that discourse markers can indicate the personal disposition, the underlying conviction and attitude that the speaker may have

about the subject or phenomenon that they are talking about. Quite often, the information detected about the speaker's attitude through discourse analysis can be used to verify if what they say, either honestly reflects their personal disposition, or if there are discrepancies pointing to not being "honest".

It should be clarified that most social contexts differ from each other in the sense that situations in which conversations take place are seldom the same. Each one's sociolinguistic presentation and interpretation will thus differ accordingly, because the context of the situation determines the interpretation and meaning. In this regard, Locke (2004, p. 59) confirms that the context is not a given, but something that is constructed by the writer. When analysing discourses, the writer has a role of responsibly "revealing" the participants in a specific situation in a certain way to the reader. Therefore, it is not possible in all cases to refer to relevant literature to support the specific sociolinguistic conclusions, because they are always context-related, as already indicated. Angermuller (2014) advises that in this instance, the researcher should "(s)can the social context..." (p. 179) as revealed by the text in order to find cues (e.g. age and gender groups, topics, generations and power relationships) that reveal information about the nature of the context of the situation: "The text then offers the reader the interpretative instruction" (Angermuller 2014, p. 179). It should also be pointed out that marked utterances often encompass a combination of varied social information, resulting in some utterances being repeatedly quoted to illustrate different social aspects. Many aspects are also closely related and/or overlap, resulting in discussions in which a degree of seeming similarity may be noted.

The researcher's intention with the critical discourse analysis is not to provide a complete analysis of the transcribed texts. It is merely to explore, from a sociolinguistic perspective, the participants' perceptions, including their attitudes, considerations and personal dispositions regarding the children and their contexts. The information about the participants' perceptions was retrieved mainly from their language use by doing a discourse analysis of the marked utterances in the transcribed texts of the participants' conversations. The information was analysed to determine if it encompasses information about the participants' perceptions that may have critical implications for the enhancement of relational well-being.

5.3 Perceptual patterns

While analysing the transcribed data, two distinctive types of perceptual patterns, that will subsequently be discussed, became evident in the participants' talking on relational well-being: one that is of a facilitating nature and one that is restraining in terms of relational well-being enhancement. In conclusion of each discussion of the perceptions constituting a pattern, a critical assessment, indicating the perception's facilitative or restraining implications for the enhancement of relational

well-being, will be presented. The table below provides a framework for the patterns revealed by applying a critical perspective:

Table 1: Facilitative and restraining patterns revealed through critical analysis

5.3.1 Facilitative patterns	5.3.1.1 An inclusive school community	
	5.3.1.2 A proactive approach	
5.3.2 Restraining patterns	5.3.2.1 Uncertainty and ignorance	
	5.3.2.2 Competitiveness	
	5.3.2.3 Othering	5.3.2.3.1 Othering based on social class
		5.3.2.3.2 Othering based on culture

5.3.1 Facilitative perceptual patterns

Two prominent facilitative perceptual patterns were identified in the participants' discussions. These include the recognition of interconnectedness between the members of the school community and advocacy for a proactive, preventative approach to relational well-being.

5.3.1.1 Recognition of interconnectedness between all members of the school community

The participants repeatedly emphasised the interconnectedness between children and their environments and referred to it in terms of a ripple effect. Therefore, the enhancement of relational well-being should involve the school community as an interconnected, integrated whole in line with modern perspectives, for instance as suggested by the complexity theory. The participants illustrated a clear understanding that particular situations might have an effect (ripple effect) that extends to their relationships in other contexts:

... it has a ripple effect on all your relationships... (H) (rwa, g3, p23)

...it is going to have that ripple effect again on all other relationships” (P6) (rws, g2, p16)
(See Chapter 4, Theme 3, p. 78, para. 4)

And:

... no co-operation (between teachers) has a negative effect on the child...if the colleagues are not okay, it extends to everything” (H) (rws, g3, p25) (researcher’s emphasis).

When you said about the ripple effect, everyone’s interrelated regarding with what is going on at home, will affect the school, teachers, friends (H) (rws, g4, p30).

And also:

It could be that the child has a bad relationship with the teacher that is going to effect the...maybe the home life, the relationship with friends, their relationship with their parents...(P10) (rws, g4, p29)

... many times a teacher himself is going through emotional stuff and then it is transferred to the children ... my daughter ... comes home (from school) and she says she doesn’t know what is going on with this teacher, but she is so upset about everything and she saw she was in tears in the end and stuff like that and the children notice it (P10) (rwa, g4, p29).

The term “ripple effect” indicates the mutual influence that all the various systems, as described by the bioecological systems theory, have on one another. It therefore implies that relationships will be influenced by what happens in the environment, thereby acknowledging that all aspects of an environment are interconnected (Donald et al., 2002). It includes that one’s social, emotional, physical and relational environment is influenced by all the systems with which you are in contact (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1992, 2005).

Roffey (2011, p. 197) also confirms the nature of the ripple effect by pointing out that human behaviour is rarely affected in a straight, cause-and-effect line as is suggested in the reactive Medical model. As is the case with the bioecological systems theory, and the participants’ experience, Roffey (2011) states that behaviour is continually affected by interactive, circular and accumulative factors. In this regard, it seems that the participants know and understand that the environment and surroundings have an influence on the child. However, in some instances they still described events in the Medical model terms of cause and effect. (This will be discussed in more detail under “Restraining patterns”.)

According to the data, participants are of the opinion that a child’s family, peers, school and teachers have the greatest influence on their (the child’s) relationships, which is in congruence with

the principles of the microsystem described by Bronfenbrenner. As confirmed by the literature, it is also here that the key proximal processes occur (Swart & Petipher, 2011; Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010, p. 40; Visser, 2007a, p. 106) and therefore constitutes the ideal environment for building positive relationships that can influence overall well-being. This is where schools can play a pivotal determining role in creating and enhancing well-being.

The participants emphasised that, because of the interconnected and mutual nature of relationships, the enhancement of relational well-being has to encompass a holistic approach and that everyone should be involved as “*everybody affects everybody else*” (P9) (rws, g4, p28). School communities supply an ideal opportunity in this regard.

The participants further agreed that enhancing relational well-being should not focus on the individual child, as in Medical model terms. It rather necessitates a comprehensive, inclusive process where the wider relational networks and school community are involved as advocated by more recent theories, such as the Community psychology and complexity theory: “*It’s a whole perspective...it goes...from pupils to teachers, to the department head, to the headmaster...to those in charge of the schools, the school boards, the parents, then you go to the community...it includes everything...relational well-being is about all of these...because everybody affects everybody else.*” (P9) (rws, g4, p28)

Also in this regard, the participants strongly felt that one cannot take a child out of the class for therapy, as is currently done, because the other children, as well as the teacher, cannot continue with class work – or, if they do, the child getting therapy, will lose out. This way of giving therapy is also contrary to modern perspectives, as it indicates a reactive, individualist perspective where the child is isolated and may be labelled and thus marginalised. Therefore, counsellors should consult with the teachers regarding children getting therapy, and “*their (the teachers’) perceptions must change*” (P8) (rwa, g4, p29) regarding the process of therapy. The teacher, as well as the rest of the class must be involved in therapy: “*It must be a team thing*” (P1) (rwa, g4 p29–30). The implications of involving the whole, interconnected school community in relational well-being will be discussed critically at the end of the following discussion of a proactive approach.

5.3.1.2 Advocating for a proactive approach

The participants agreed that, to enhance relational well-being, a proactive, preventative approach is necessary. It has also been found in the literature that a more proactive, preventative approach to intervention is favourable to a reactive approach (Wagner, 2014; Prilleltensky, 2005). This is, however, currently lacking and limited in school contexts, as confirmed by Kitching (2010). The participants also confirmed this lack, based on their own experience: “*There is nothing there in*

the school that...that senses it (problems) in advance...and there is also not something that act proactively, there are not...groups being formed and that teach children about relationships” (P1, P3, H) (rws, g1, p8).

The participants also indicated that a general mistake that teachers make regarding relational well-being is that, because children have families and homes, “*we accept that relationships are already there*” (P1) (rws, g1, p8). This is true, as we are relational beings. However, the crucial role that relationships play in everyday life is not necessarily realised at home and, as confirmed by all participants, also not at school. This indicates that there is an urgent need for creating awareness about the role that relationships and relational well-being play. (See also Theme 4.) This situation creates some serious concern, as neither the school, nor the home environment is aware of and proactively building, allowing opportunities thereto and advocating healthy and positive relationships.

This pattern of relational well-being as a proactive process, resonates with the Positive psychology perspective. It is also in this sense that the Positive psychology, focussing on strengths and the opportunity to thrive, can be of value. By approaching relational well-being in schools from a Positive psychology perspective, it can be ensured that relationships are proactively built and nurtured in a school community as an inclusive environment. However, the only current initiative in schools that might border on an opportunity, or effort to be proactive, seems to be the Life Skills period where children can be taught about relationships. But it does not effectively realise, because “*It (Life Skills) becomes a subject ... it becomes an isolated (autonomous subject), ... it’s your subject, write it and get over it. The other teachers don’t know about, they don’t know the information and to the contrary, they discriminate against the subject (P3) (rws, g1, p8) ... because they think you are playing!” (H) (rws, g1, p8).*

It seems that the foundation phase currently offers a more positive environment for proactively enhancing relational well-being than the senior phase. Participants seem to agree that the relationships and well-being between teachers, and children and teacher are far better in the foundation phase than in any other phase, because the teachers ... *have a common purpose ... to get everybody (the children) on a specific level (in order) to move on ... to the same purpose... they move forward together... Consequently they (the teachers) ...supported each other... They have a better relationship in the foundation phase (H) (rws, g4, p31), because they have a safety net type of relationship (P1) (rws, g1, p2).* These factors result in a better relationship between teachers and teachers and children in the foundation phase: ... *the junior personnel and children have a much stronger bond or they support each other much better than in the senior phase (P3) (rws, g1 p2).* This may be because there are not individual interests yet, only common ones. The focus is thus on the children as a group, and not on the individual children. No individual achievement is expected from them yet, like in the senior phase, so there is no pressure or competition on the children or teachers

causing friction and dividing behaviour. However, despite this seemingly more favourable environment for relational well-being, children are also only taught, as in the senior phase, ... *life skills ... but not emotional skills* (P1 and P3) (rws, g1, p8).

5.3.1.3. Discussion of facilitative patterns

The participants consider interconnectedness across all levels a very ... *important aspect of well-being in schools* (Host, G4, A, p30), thereby illustrating a Community psychology way of thinking as described in Chapter 2. This concurrently implies that their convictions may create conditions conducive to accommodate an inclusive, interrelated holistic school community approach to relational well-being. They acknowledged that this approach, involving the whole school community and all role players, could contribute more effectively to the enhancement of relational well-being. In this regard, Sergiovanni (1996) also advocates for schools to rather be perceived as communities, involving all interconnected systems and relationships.

Congruently with the favourable environment that may be created by the participants' Community psychology way of thinking, their proactive, preventative thinking in terms of the Positive psychology, may further contribute to establish an appropriate climate for enhancing relational well-being. The creation of an appropriate relational enhancement framework in terms of modern holistic and inclusive approaches, and contextually relevant for South African environments, can benefit from this situation. The facilitative patterns reflect thinking that is not only in line with modern theoretical perspectives, but also practically informed by the reality of modern South African school contexts. The perceptual environment thus provides a favourable starting point for initiatives where teachers can be further informed and trained to be more effectively equipped for sustaining and enhancing relational well-being. However, as indicated earlier, all participants confirmed that relationships and relational well-being are not priorities in their schools at all: There is no time and no opportunity for relationships. Accordingly, the general attitude, as determined by the complex and demanding reality of the present situation, seems to be that: "... *just do what you have to, do the curriculum with the child and move on* (P3) (rws, g1, p6). The participants realise and repeatedly confirmed that relationships in school contexts remain in abeyance and that they feel frustrated and disempowered by the compromised current situation. Therefore, they all support a more proactive, preventative and holistic, inclusive community-based approach in enhancing relational well-being.

5.3.2 Restraining perceptual patterns

Three prominent patterns identified in the participants' language that may have a restraining impact on relational well-being were identified, namely uncertainty/ignorance about the construct, competitiveness and the othering of some people.

5.3.2.1 Uncertainty and ignorance

When exploring the participants' contributions from a sociolinguistic perspective, it transpired that they are in fact uncertain about the meaning of the construct "relational well-being", as well as ways to actually enhance children's relational well-being in their schools. The participants seemingly have a sense that being together in a school context is complex, yet they still seem to be confused about how they should interpret relationships in terms of the complexity in order to enhance relational well-being.

There are several instances where the participants openly admitted their ignorance and uncertainty about relational well-being: "*I don't know. We get confused.*" (P8) (rw, g3, p15) and "*Their teacher is like most important ... I don't know ... like their social well-being, their physical well-being, their emotional well-being, also like that, I don't know, would we, well I suppose ... like school would be very important ... You know, they are happy if they got a good well-being, but it's never to use a lot of, I don't know, you could also use all those negatives to be super, abuse and all those kinds of things and their well-being would be not so good*" (P3) (rwc, g2, p9).

Apart from openly admitting their uncertainty, the discourse analysis yielded various discourse markers confirming that the participants actually also use strategies in their language to conceal their uncertainty and ignorance. The strategies that they applied to hide their uncertainty are taking different positions (or dispositions) regarding the topic. The following four frequently used discourse markers (figuring in language as marked utterances) indicate their uncertainty and concurrent strategic positioning to hide the uncertainty: "*I think ...*"; "*Do you think ... ?*"; "*We should kind of ...*" and "*Just mention it*".

<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Discourse marker/Utterance</u>	<u>Positioning</u>
Strategy 1:	<i>I think ...</i>	reflects: "I only give my opinion"
Strategy 2:	<i>Do you think ...?</i>	reflects: "Ask somebody else's opinion"
Strategy 3:	<i>We should kind of ...</i>	reflects: "Remain vague and indefinite"
Strategy 4:	<i>Just mention it ...</i>	reflects: "Rather evade the discussion"

The above strategic linguistic manoeuvres were revealed by discourse analysis. By hiding their uncertainty, the speakers' image was protected. Although the utterances also convey politeness and are generally used in everyday conversations, their conspicuously high frequency of use in the conversations of the participants identify them as discourse markers pointing to a considerable measure of uncertainty. All of these discourse markers, as in the participants' language use, suggest

indirectness and are often characterised by an accompanying degree of vagueness. The (intended) vagueness further clouds and veils the uncertainty, confirming that the participants modulate their speech when trying to conceal it (Coulmas, 2013). The strategies of concealing uncertainty, as reflected in the participants' language use, will subsequently be discussed.

“I think”“This is only my opinion”

When the participants talked about the subject in the first person, they frequently used the discourse marker “*I think*”. This indicates some cautioning from the speaker regarding what and how she is talking about the subject. This cautioning strategy, continuously used, makes it clear that “what I am saying now, is only what I personally think”. The implication of this is that “what I am saying, are only *my* thoughts and may factually, or in other respects, not be correct and you, the listener, may differ from me”. This indicates that the speaker is aware that she is not talking about facts, as is confirmed by Mooney and Evans (2015), pointing out that expressions like “That’s just my opinion!” and the related “I think”, “It feels to me” and “I am wondering” are not based on facts (p. 60–62). As such, these utterances may convey uncertainty. In his diagrammatic presentation of the functions of language, Robinson (1988) points to another dimension communicated by the above-mentioned utterances, namely that it is a way of asking the listeners if the “(c)orrect diagnosis (was) made or impression conveyed?” (p. 116), confirming that these utterances indeed indicate uncertainty as can be seen in the following:

I think they are very attached to these relational well-being ... This is what I think (P4) (rwc, g2, p9). I think your previous relationships determine that. (P4) (rwa, g2, p10). I don’t think you’re gonna know what’s going on ... (P6) (rwa, g3, p21) ... I think cognitive goes with relational ’cause it’s subjective ... (P2) (rw, g1, p6).

The following quote illustrates how cautiously the participants can veil their uncertainty: “A child with physical needs would obviously ... I think would struggle with well-being” (P3) (rwc, g2, p13). The word obviously suggests a conversation where there would be a general consensus that the phenomenon discussed is indeed considered as obvious. The pause after using the word obviously, however, indicates that the speaker was alerted after using the word, as if she was reconsidering if, what she was saying, was *in fact* obvious. The fact that she paused and then retrieved from the more general “obvious” to the more personal and “safer” “*I think*” indicates that she reconsidered the validity of her statement and realised that she might be wrong about the “obvious”. She then decided to play it safe by going back to “*I think*”, the situation of “this is only *my* thoughts and they may be wrong”. By using this strategy, she was trying to save herself some possible embarrassment in case she was wrong (Coulmas, 2005).

The speaker in the following instance safeguarded herself even better against potential judgement than the previous speaker. To avoid judgement (and losing face value), she moves away from the level of logic (thoughts – “*I think*”), where she can be liable to judgement, to the level of emotions (feelings), which are extremely subjective and cannot logically be judged in terms of “right” and “wrong”: “*Community and, it feels to me, if all those things are healthy, you are going to have a healthy relational well-being*” (P1) (rw, g4, p22). This strategy of extreme cautioning implicates that uncertainty is being concealed.

Following the strategy of using “*I think*” to conceal uncertainty, the participants also used another strategy by appealing to the other participants for their opinion. Instead of stating “*I think*”, they now ask:

Do you think ... ?.....Ask somebody else’s opinion

Asking for confirmation or negation of your own view, is to tacitly admit that you are uncertain. So, to save your image, now you do not *say* it, i.e. anything about the facts, you rather *ask* somebody else about it, which means that you did not say anything on which you can be judged: you simply asked a question to somebody else, hoping that they will answer the question instead of you answering and “making a fool of yourself”. It is a strategy to protect your ego by deflecting your uncertainties in the form of questions to somebody else, thus taking the pressure off yourself:

*The other thing I can think of is the subjective ... Do you think it is subjective? It is, isn’t it? How is it experienced? It must be subjective? (P4) (rwc, g2, p11) ... say for instance some of his needs are met at home and some not, isn’t he going to look for that in other areas? (P8) (rwc, g4, p24). *I think cognitive goes with relational ‘cause it’s subjective ... Also the way you think and ... Don’t you think cognitive goes on its own though? ... The belief and how you think, do you think cognitive is about beliefs?* (P1, H, P2) (rw, g1, p6–7).*

The participants’ conversations are generally characterised by these types of questions, i.e. asking somebody’s opinion. The kind of specific, directed questions asking the opinion of the listener, indicates that the speaker is not necessarily looking for new information, because the question is linked to a specific topic. It is actually asking for a reflection on what he thinks in an effort to make sure that he is right. Robinson (1988, p. 116) also confirms that “What do you think?” is an effort to reach a satisfactory ending to what the speaker is saying by involving a second person in the conversation. The disposition conveyed is: “I am not sure of what I am saying, therefore I deflect the conclusion/outcome to you by asking your opinion. Does your opinion confirm mine or not?”

The way the participants ask questions to the others ensures that they keep the conversation on the level of thoughts and opinions. They do not move to the level of “hard knowledge” (facts)

where something is either “right” or “wrong”. They keep it open and in suspense, merely throwing “thoughts” back and forth, not going for the core of the issue, because they might miss it and be embarrassed. By keeping the conversation on the same level, the speaker protects herself, as well as the others, from being exposed (and judged).

Another example of illustrating the subtle concealment of uncertainty is: “*And I am wondering – with children, if the relational well-being is also involved in their development, ’cause that’s part of their friendships, some extra that we, one way or the other*” (P4) (rwc, g2, p10). By using “*I am wondering*”, the speaker also tries to hide her insecurity about what she is saying. This time, however, she does not even “*think*” and she also does not directly ask the listeners’ opinion by “*Do you think ... ?*” she takes it to a next level of uncertainty (and vagueness) by not “*thinking*”, but seemingly *wondering* by herself. The fact that she, however, expressed her “wondering” in the presence of others, indicates that she is not actually “wondering” by herself. Her intention is that her “wondering” should “wander off” to the others who can hear her. She is in fact using a subtle strategy, posing a tacit question in a very underplayed and subtle way to the other participants about what she is not sure of herself. At the same time, she suggests some curiosity and indefiniteness, an element of “wonder”, to cloud and veil her uncertainty even more. Her seemingly uncommitting “wondering” expects an answer from the other participants. “*I am wondering*” has the same function as “*Do you think ... ?*”, but it is a more subdued incitement of the other participants to (hopefully) supply the conclusion that the speaker does not have. By concealing her uncertainty by very subtly deflecting the issue to the others, the speaker protects her face value, saving her possible embarrassment.

We should kind of Remain vague

Another strategy that the participants used in order to hide their insecurity is to not address the issue that they are talking about directly and intensively, but to rather relate it to examples of similar concepts: “*It’s more like it’s subjective, the way I think it’s subjective*” (P1, H, P2) (rw, g1, p6–7). “*Like*” points to something else than what is being discussed, i.e. something similar. This suggests that it is not this directly relevant issue that is being discussed intensively now. The comparison with a similar, but different issue, confirms that the participants do not have the knowledge to discuss this thing and therefore, as indicated by the use of “*like*”, they deflect to another object with similar qualities, thereby distracting the attention from their ignorance about the real issue. The use of “*more*” further clouds the issue, contributing to the indefiniteness and vagueness. We cannot be pinpointed and held accountable for what we are saying, thus reducing the risk of possible embarrassment (Coulmas, 2005; Gauker, 2003). The same argument applies to the use of “*sort of*” in the next example:

So you have to interpret it like that and do not attract it towards you ... Sort of that interaction again (P5) (rwc, g3, p20) ... Don't you think cognitive goes on its own though? ... It's a big part of a person, it's more like an individual thing ... It's more like it's subjective, the way I think it's subjective ... (P1, H, P2) (rw, g1, p6–7) ... Maybe we should put something personal, cognitive... (P1, H, P2) (rw, g1, p6–7)... And I am wondering, with children if the relational well-being is also involved in their development, cause that's part of their friendships, some extra that we, one way or the other (P4) (rwc, g2, p10) ... I think it's part of their development, ja. The relationship plays, I think, a big role in their development ... it's part of bonding and so on ... (P4) (rwc, g2, p10) ... it follows that self-image thing of me as individual ... (P6) (rwc, g3, p18) ... Psychological is like the feelings (P3) (rwc, g2, p13) ... So self-esteem is probably determined by the parents, as well as the teachers ... to honour feelings ... determines it (H) (rwc, g2, p10).

This strategy of course allows for a lot of vagueness and loose ends, but this is exactly what the speaker wants. She knows that she, by concealing her uncertainty by being general, indefinite and indirect, she keeps the conversation vague and does not say anything substantial. Concurrently, she cannot be pinpointed and judged on anything factually that she said. Instead, she hides her uncertainty by deflecting and relating the issue to something else. The other participants, having the same problem of uncertainty, use the same strategy, resulting in their conversations also being characterised by generalities and examples of specific similar occurrences in real life, resulting in indefiniteness that confirms uncertainty.

Just mention it Rather evade discussion

Another strategy that the participants used to conceal their uncertainty was to evade issues that they were unsure of or that could create conflict in the group, as is clearly illustrated in the following quotes (– in order to read more fluently and illustrate the line of argumentation more clearly, the speakers will be indicated at the end of the quotes only):

But relational well-being is about relationships, period, finish ... But relational well-being is something else ... ? Define them separately ... Didn't you just say relational well-being is something else? ... Define them separately and bring them together ... Well-being reflects onto your physical and mental well-being ... does it make sense? ... (Silence) ... We can just discuss that one (physical needs) and then the relational ... It must come together somewhere ... Okay, relational is interpersonal relationships ... Interpersonal and interactions ... Oh goodness, we get confused, hey ... ? So do you think relational is physical as well then? Maybe you should just mention it and it does have ... (an influence) (P8, P7, P6, H) (rw, g3, p14–15) and (H) (rwc, g2, p15).

The above discourse starts with two opposing views of the topic of whether physical well-being is part of relational well-being. This immediately presents a situation for potential conflict in the group. The participants now have to deal with two issues: the discussion of the topic itself, about which their knowledge is insufficient, but which can also not be avoided without them losing face, because the topic has been opened up already. At the same time, they have to try to avoid friction, caused by the opposing views, within the group.

When the group became aware of the two conflicting views, one of the participants suggested to *(d)efine them separately*. Hereby, the potential escalation of conflict is (at least provisionally) avoided. By not discussing and evaluating any one of the views immediately, but to separate them instead, the status of both views remains the same: undiscussed and thus unjudged. By separating them, the views are also not in conflict anymore and the group cohesion is retained. Both participants who put forward their views should be pleased, because “nobody is wrong” (yet).

The acceptance by all participants of this strategy of preventing a conflicting discussion by evasion may point not only to the prevention of group conflict, but also to their lack of knowledge about the topic. Instead of discussing both views in depth, they rather steered clear of the issue by separating it.

“*Didn’t you just say relational well-being is something else?*” is an effort to prod the discussion towards a conclusion, but it is done in a very subtle way by putting it as a question to the person who spoke earlier. The purpose of the question is not to obtain new information, because the question is only a repetition of what the person said earlier. As such, it is meant as a polite (and conflict-avoiding) reminder of and a request that the person should elaborate immediately (“*just*”) on their statement. By using the question technique, the speaker makes a contribution to the discussion by trying to incite a previous speaker to explain her view, thereby trying to move the conversation forward. The speaker herself, however, stays out of the arena of conversation, where she could be subjected to criticism and lose face. She thus spurs on the discussion without actually participating in the discussion. This way of putting questions instead of effectively participating in the discussion also has the advantage that it prevents conflict, because she did not say anything substantial. Thus, nobody is antagonised and the group cohesion is still intact.

By repeating “*(d)efine them separately*”, the speaker reinforces her earlier suggestion. This may point to her being determined to prevent conflict, but is also a tacit admission that they did not make any progress in the meantime that could make her change her mind. Then, as an attempt to accommodate both views (and thus still prevent conflict), she suggests “*and bring them together*”, as if trying to marry the two opposing views. This “solution” indicates that the participants realise that there is a point of connection between physical well-being and relational well-being, but it seems that nobody knows the exact nature of the connection. Therefore, they accept, by their silence, the

accommodation of both views, as they seemingly do not have the knowledge to clarify and conclude the issue. They rather steer clear of making a final choice between the two by hedging arguments that necessitate conclusions, thereby underlining their ignorance of this topic.

“*Well-being reflects onto your physical and mental well-being*” is another effort to get closer to a conclusion, but then the speaker weakens her statement, and confirms her uncertainty, by following it up with a question: “*Does it make sense?*” (Robinson, 1988). The silence that follows her question is very meaningful in sociolinguistic terms, because silences, also being utterances, are “loaded” with social meaning. Discourse analysis, as indicated earlier, thus includes both “what they say and leave unsaid” (Thiesmeyer, 2003, p. 1). In the context of this situation, the silence evidently points to the fact that nobody had something to say, confirming their ignorance.

The same suggestion as earlier is then offered as a solution for the dead end that the discussion reached: “*We can just discuss that one (physical needs) and then the relational*”. This sentence indicates that they are now, in terms of a conclusion, back where they were at the beginning. It also includes that the participants should avoid digging deeper for the “truth” (coming to a conclusion) and thereby ending up in a situation where their ignorance might be exposed (again!) or cause a confrontational situation. Therefore, the suggestion is to not go deeper, but stay on the “surface” by limiting (“*just*”) their contribution to a “discussion”. Firm and final conclusions are thus out of the question, instead the participants keep them open, in flux and in suspension on the surface and safe in order to hide their lack of knowledge and to prevent conflict. However, they realise that still “*It must come together somewhere*”, with “*somewhere*” confirming uncertainty and indefiniteness. The silence and the “*Okay*” indicate that the state of affairs was considered again (in silence) and that it was accepted tacitly by the speaker and also, by saying nothing to the contrary, by the other participants that they were not able to reach a conclusion because of their ignorance. The two participants who speak next, also try to move the conversation, but do not take it any further in terms of a conclusion, as they only echoed what was discussed already, thereby confirming their ignorance. The utterance “*Oh goodness*” conveys the speaker’s unease and feeling of powerlessness, because she is aware of their inability to conclude the issue, because of their lack of knowledge. The utterance “*we get confused*” is a euphemism used to prevent her from admitting their ignorance. Then, at last, another participant touches the core of the matter, but once again in the form of a question: “*So do you think relational is physical as well then?*” The next speaker, also being in the dark, does not answer the question directly. Instead, she rather uses an evasion strategy again by suggesting that “*Maybe (uncertainty) you should just mention it and it does have ... (an influence)*”. She also keeps the onus on the previous speaker by saying “*Maybe you should ...*”. Herewith the participants moved even further away from the issue than they did with the suggestion to “*just discuss*” the matter: now they are not going to “*just discuss*” it anymore, but “*just mention*” it and indicate that it does have an influence. They thus avoid exploring the exact nature of the relationship

between physical and relational well-being, because of their lack of knowledge. In the end, they just give a vague, unsubstantiated reference to relational and physical well-being.

The evasion strategy is clearly characterised by questions, asking for opinions, “*Oh goodness*” and silence. When this strategy of evasion is considered in relation to the other strategies of “just giving your opinion”, asking other’s opinion and being indefinite, it confirms considerable uncertainty.

Figure 5 below demonstrates the way in which the participants discussed and argued about relational well-being and its dynamic nature. It seems as if they merely argued around the concept, not knowing exactly what it entails and how to access the larger body of knowledge regarding relational well-being:

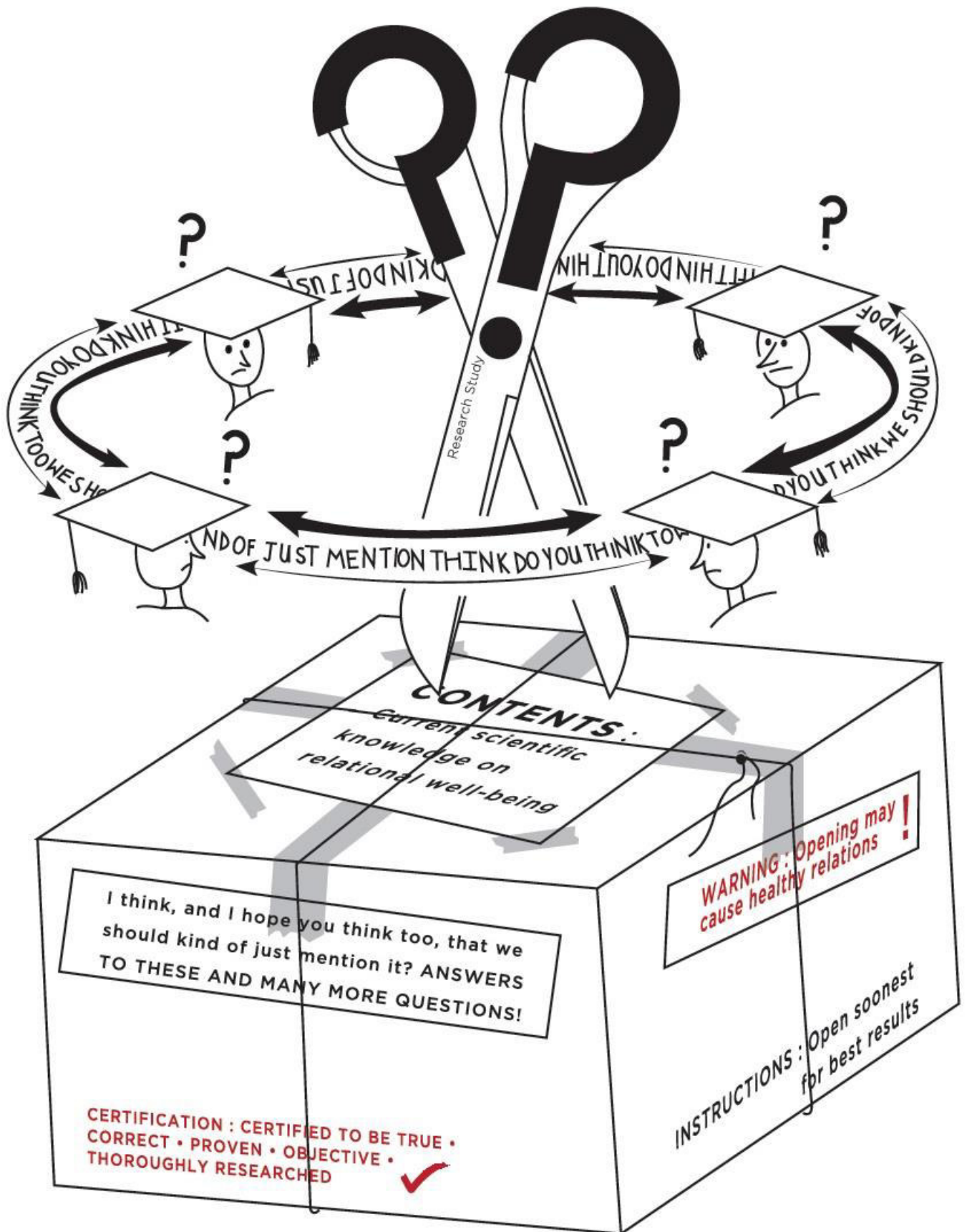


Figure 8: Uncertainty and ignorance towards the concept of relational well-being

5.3.2.1.1 Discussion: Uncertainty and ignorance

Although the participants do have some knowledge about relational well-being and acknowledge the importance of it in a school context, as well as the complexity of relationships, it transpired that they are still uncertain about their knowledge about relationships and also how to interpret their uncertainty. On the one hand, they admit their uncertainty outright, but on the other hand, various strategies in their spoken language confirm that they are also actually trying to hide it. These strategies, signalled in their language by marked utterances (discourse markers), in fact reveal the uncertainty when subjected to discourse analysis. Four of the more prominent strategies have been identified and discussed from a sociolinguistic angle:

<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Discourse marker/Utterance</u>	<u>Positioning</u>
<u>Strategy 1:</u>	“This is only my opinion”	: <i>I think; I’m wondering; It feels to me</i>
<u>Strategy 2:</u>	“Ask somebody else’s opinion”	: <i>Do you think; Isn’t it; Don’t you think</i>
<u>Strategy 3:</u>	“Remain vague and indefinite”	: <i>It is (more) like; kind of; One way or the other</i>
<u>Strategy 4:</u>	“Rather evade the discussion”	: <i>We can just discuss that one; Maybe we should just mention it</i>

When the influence of this uncertainty on relational well-being is assessed, it should be mentioned that if qualified and experienced educators are not certain about the theoretical knowledge on relational well-being and how to apply it in school contexts, there is reason for concern. The implication for relational well-being is that the participants do not possess a sound basis of knowledge on which its enhancement can be founded and executed. The lack of knowledge consequently results in the participants being uncertain of how to operate effectively in this regard and realise relational well-being enhancement practically in schools. This clearly indicates that inquiry, as well as training, is required.

In this regard, Coulmas (2013) explains that the issue of concealing uncertainty during conversations cohere with the desire to be accepted and appreciated. In every social discourse situation, e.g. during the participants’ discussion, each person or speaker has a “social persona”, “face” value or “image” that he wants to maintain. Consequently, when speaking in the first person, like the participants did, the speaker would protect their “face” by not committing any face-threatening acts, e.g. revealing ignorance or uncertainty that could change their “face” into a negative. Therefore, when the participants speak in the first person about a subject of common knowledge and common interest (relational well-being), the speaker exposes her knowledge and perception of the subject. The other participants might discover if the speaker is, for instance, not talking the truth.

They, also having a good grounding in the same subject, are thus in a position to judge the speaker's knowledge and, if negatively judged, the speaker loses face. Accordingly, if the speaker is not completely sure about the facts, they may feel anxious and vulnerable, because they are risking their image by "sticking out their neck". Accordingly, to protect their face value, they use strategies when talking to protect their face value. The participants therefore continuously emphasised the strategic position that they took, namely that they, for instance, only give their own opinions about the phenomenon of relational well-being. As indicated earlier, they avoid talking about the facts, which they should be familiar with. They seem to steer away from sharing "hard" knowledge and discussing the real issues. They rather safely keep discussions superficial by being indefinite, sharing opinions, thoughts and examples and then vaguely relate it to similar phenomena. This way they avoid damaging their image (Coulmas, 2005). What is meaningful for relational well-being is that, by using these strategies, a lack of knowledge is tacitly admitted, which should be addressed critically.

5.3.2.2 Competitiveness

Competitiveness, as indicated in the Proactive approach (Section 5.3.1.2), is another pattern indicated by the participants that may have a restrictive impact on relational well-being. Competitiveness seems to be a result of the emphasis on academic achievement as the main focus of schooling. This pattern, although not necessarily supported by all the participants, was clearly evident in the data. In their discussion of the situation in the senior phase of schooling (Grade 10–12), competitiveness is indicated as a major contributor to friction among the members of the school community.

Participants seem to agree that the relationships and well-being between teachers and between children and teachers are far better in the foundation phase than in any other phase, because the teachers *"... have a common purpose ... to get everybody (the children) on a specific level (in order) to move on ... to the same purpose ... they move forward together ..."*. Consequently, they (the teachers) *"... supported each other ... They have a better relationship in the foundation phase"* (H) (rws, g4, p31), because *"they have a safety net type of relationship"* (P1) (rws, g1, p2), which results in a better relationship between teachers and teachers and teachers and children in the foundation phase: *"... the junior personnel and children have a much stronger bond or they support each other much better than in the senior phase"* (P3) (rws, g1, p2). This could be because there are not yet individual interests like in the senior phase, but only common ones. The focus is thus coherently on the children as a group and not on them as autonomous individuals.

In contrast to the foundation phase, the relational situation in the senior phase is, according to all participants, characterised by *"... a lot of friction ... there is a lot of friction between teachers (and) teachers and children"* (P3) (rws, g1 p2). The participants also explained the implications as follows: *... if there are not (good) relations between the teachers, (it leads to) ... suspicion* (P6) (rws, g2, p16)

... secrecy (P4) (rws, g2, p16) ... no co-operation (P5) (rws, g2, p16) ... they get competitive – the teachers (H) (rws, g2, p19) – are my books marked. That is what it is about (H) (rws, g2, p19). The relationship the teachers have with each other ... they are aggressive” (P10) (rws, g4, p30). And also: *It is not about how is the child in your class today ... it is ... how is your file ... o goodness, is my stuff marked, is my register marked, is everything in blocks and lines, is my file labelled, it's the paper work. That's what it's about”* (H) (rws, g3, p26).

The participants also pointed out that the competitiveness results in the senior phase teachers becoming self-centred in their work and that relational well-being is not enhanced or sustained. Numerous administrative duties shift the focus away from well-being: “*It is not about how well the children in my class are, it is (about) how does my file look, are my marks ready, are my books marked. That is what it is about*” (H) (rws, g2, p19). It is evident that the focus of the teacher is on themselves, their administrative performance, as well as the results of their teaching, which is evaluated only in terms of academic and administrative outcomes: “... *they (the teachers) are looking for results ... it is kind of a competition ... it is fire on fire* (P3) (rws, g1, p3). *They don't worry about the whole (sic) child being able ... they just worry about the little bit (their subject)*” (H) (rws, g4, p31).

The participants indicated the strong focus on achievement as the cause of the competitiveness: “... *if you compete to get your marks in (on time) and you must have the right (pass) marks and you must get the evaluation and whatnot ... and you are being judged on those marks on how well you teach the child ... I think it also has a big influence(!)*” (H) (rwa, g2, p14). It is clear that success is only defined in terms of academic achievement and that relational well-being plays no role.

Concurring with this teaching pattern is that, also concerning the children, the focus is very much on the individual child: *So I think a child experiences a relationship as a result of his personal preference ...* (P5) (rwc, g3, p19). They focus a lot on individual relationships ... *so I think, for many of them, it is about that, the individual child. How is that child's processing, how does that child experience ...* (P6) (rwc, g3, p21). *And each one has his own process and how he works* (P5) (rwc, g3, p21). *They all react differently ...*” (P6) (rwc, g3, p21).

The participants indicated that a possible reason for the above competitive situation of and individual achievement at the expense of relational well-being, is, apart from the biological development of the children and their natural increasing competitiveness, that the teachers do not ensue the same common purpose any more. Contrary to the foundation phase, different teachers are now teaching different subjects and the best possible performance by the children in their subject is now the teachers' purpose: “*So you stress only about your subject and in my subject all children must pass and you teach mathematics, (so) in your subject they must pass and you teach Afrikaans and*

your children must pass well. So there is not that general purpose of the children must be on this level to move forward” (H) (rws, g2, p19), like in the foundation phase.

5.3.2.2.1 Discussion: Competitiveness

A very clear indication of the divergent outcomes of the reactive individualist approach and the more relationship-focussed, proactive approach was evident in the participants’ perceptions on relational well-being in the foundation phase and the senior phase.

The individual achievement-focussed situation, seemingly more evident in the senior phase, might lead to a competitive, dividing, and opposing situation which might undermine relational well-being between the teachers and also between the children and teachers. The teachers’ self-centred disposition will also be reflected in their teaching and conveyed to the children, thus confirming and strengthening the excluding individualist approach instead of the inclusive, relation-centred, proactive approach. This state of affairs creates concern, as relational well-being is not promoted at all due to the extensive emphasis on individual performance at the expense of relationships, which are further compromised by some teachers calling children negative names, like “... *you’re stupid, why did you do this, or you’re silly...*” (P1) (rw, g1, p5). This name-calling may label, marginalise and exclude them, just like the perceptions about social class and culture.

It is thus clear that, in contradiction to what has been said in Chapter 1, regarding the complexity theory whereby the focus in schools should not be so strong on good academic outcomes, the focus is indeed still very strong on personal achievement by the teacher, as well as the children, and that relational well-being accordingly does not get proper attention. Therefore, a strong reactive, individualist approach, fuelled by competitiveness, still persists in school communities and evidently acts as a restraining pattern when attempting to enhance children’s relational well-being.

5.3.2.3 Othering:

Except for uncertainty and competitiveness, othering was also identified as a personal conviction, an inclination that may compromise relational well-being. Othering is specifically manifested in perceptions about social class and culture, which the participants consider as restraining for relational well-being.

Participants differentiate and “other” between children’s social class, which includes residential area, language, education and socio-economic circumstances and children’s culture, which includes values, norms and shared patterns of behaviour. Both these “othering” perceptual patterns will be comprehensively discussed.

5.3.2.3.1 Othering based on social class

Social class can be described as a sociological construct that can be applied to stratify society. Different scales and factors, like occupation, income, residential area, education, church membership, lifestyle and race can be used by investigators as criteria to assign people to different social classes. “Classing” people this way also results in them being assigned to categories to which they might not have assigned themselves (Wardhaugh, 1986, p. 141).

The concept of social class, including “lower” social class, is salient everywhere and is commonly used by all members of society. Different social classes can display, amongst others, different characteristics, such as linguistic behaviours that are characteristic and indicative of a specific social class. Coulmas (2005) confirms that there is, for instance, correlation between dialects and social stratification. Somebody’s linguistic choices can be clear indicators of their (perceived) social class or group: their use of language can identify them as “upper class”, “middle class”, “lower class”, “working class”. Their spoken language not only indexes their social class, but also a set of accompanying characteristics, such as clothes, accessories, hair style and behaviour, that are associated with that specific class (Mooney & Evans, 2015). In this study, discourse analysis revealed that the way in which the participants talked about the parents of some of the children that they teach, that they consider these parents as part of a “low social class”. They evidently base their perception of low social class on behaviour, language and residential area, as will transpire in the following discussions.

The residential area and socio-economic circumstances thus confirm to the participants that the inhabitants are indeed of low social class. It is probably not the physical area itself that is looked down upon, but the socio-economic circumstances associated with the area.

It is important to note that, like in the instance of othering based on culture, (to be discussed), the negative stereotypes associated with class are ascribed not to an individual only, but to everybody belonging to the “low social class” (Van Dijk, 2011). These characteristics cause, according to the participants’ perceptions, dysfunctional relationships. It is important to note that they other people based on their perceptions only, irrespective of these perspectives being founded, being mere generalisations or being exaggerations. It was confirmed that the participants have a notion of being superior to and have dysfunctional relationships with the “low social classes” because of the following negative characteristics that the participants ascribe to them:

Lacking interest: They show very little or no interest in the school and their children due to their circumstances: “*They just have ... no interest ... bad circumstances ... so the parents have no (interest)*” (P5) (rws, g3, p22).

Careless and uninvolved: It seems that the parents of well-resourced, as well as under-resourced schools, are poorly involved with their children and schools and are careless, although in different respects. In well-resourced schools, the participants stated, for example: “*I get many children at school in therapy who says my mom listens, but she does not put off the TV ... then you should know how he is longing for his mom listening to him*” (P5) (rwc, G2, p14). “*I am at a very rich school, like I said, most moms do not work, but I think, although it may look (as if) these moms are so involved ... I don't think so*” (P6) (rwc, g3, p16). “*... but now that child participates in gymnastics and art and rugby and netball and, do you understand? And now you hear: ‘Oh, we are so busy, we don't have time to do it...’*” (P1) (rws, g1, p9). “*So (it is) from both sides: this child in this school is not taught about relationships in school, at home it is now this busy life ... also not in the class, because the teacher does not have time, so nowhere is he taught about relationships ...*” (P1) (rws, g1, p9).

The quotes illustrate that the participants blame the parents for the fact that children get little to no undivided attention, therefore there is no guidance regarding relationships: “*... if it (relationships) was a sport, hey, then the children would have done emotionally very well*” (P3) (rws, g1, p9). Children have too many activities and relationships are not a priority: “*... children do not always have the coping skills to handle it (relationships)*” because they were “*never taught skills to build a successful relationship*” (P5) (rwc, g2, p18). Parents are often oversensitive and deny a child's problems, because their egos are threatened by their children experiencing problems. All of this results in no proper relationship building with their children. The children thus do not know how to build relationships, there is no time and opportunity scheduled for relationship building, children do not get therapy when needed and relationships with teachers are hindered by oversensitive parents.

It seems that in well-resourced schools, the parents, although the mother often does not work, do not have time to engage in proper relationships with their children or to guide their children in building meaningful relationships: “*... I think in the bigger picture there does not exist direct guidance regarding relationships*” (P6) (rwc, g2, p19). The parents are also putting a lot of pressure on the children to perform and their egos may compromise the children's relational well-being.

Concerning under-resourced schools, the “low social class” parents “*... don't care*” (P5) (rws, g2, p14): “*... the parents do not want to be involved with the school, 90% of the time ... they don't worry, the child must go to school (but) further on they don't even open the child's bookcase ... they don't even fetch the reports. They just have ... no interest ... bad circumstances ... I mean some of the white people live in locations. So are the circumstances, so the parents have no (interest)*” (P5) (rws, g3, p22).

Audacious: Considering the little or lack of involvement and interest of the parents in under-resourced schools, the participants also experience some actions from the parents as unjustified and audacious: “*... but they report you to the principal ... !*” (P6) (rws, g2, p14). Parents have no or

dysfunctional relationships with the teachers, which clearly confirms the lack of relationships and communication: “... *between the teacher and the community there is no relationship*” (P5) (rws, g2, p14).

Insurgent: “... *there is, for example, rebellion against the school*” (P6) (rws, g2, p14). Poor communication, a lack of relationships and incomplete knowledge and information may be conducive to insurgence.

False accusations: The participants feel that they are sometimes unreasonably and wrongly accused by the parents, who are inclined to part with their children: “*The parents would for example come to the school and say it is your fault that this-this-this-this ...*” (P5) (rws, g2, p13) while “... *many of these things really didn’t happen ... it is never the child’s fault*” (P5) (rws, g2, p13).

Bad language: And also: “*What sometimes impede these relationships (between parents and teachers) is (that) the parents think the teacher is talking bullshit (die onderwyser praat stront) ... Most of the times ... most of the times* (P8 & H) (rws, g3, p22)”.

This verbatim reflection of the “low class’s” language indicates strong othering: “One of the most obvious ways that ... othering ... discourse manifests is in pejorative words about the other” (Mooney & Evans, 2015, p. 135). Allan and BurrIDGE (2006, p. 78) also confirm that “cursing intensifies emotional expressions that inoffensive words cannot achieve”.

It is clear that, in poor schools, the parents are blamed for not being involved with the child and the school, for being audacious and for being impudent when it comes to relationship building. This results in a poor relationship with the child and school and hinders relationships with the teacher which does not contribute to enhancing relational well-being.

The perceived characteristics mentioned above confirm the lack of/dysfunctional relationships between the parents and teachers. It also points to the resulting distancing, othering and superior inclination towards the “low social class”. This notion of superiority, which is reflected in their language, was detected by applying sociolinguistic principles, which indicated their choice of strong words, insults, sarcasm and the use of pejorative words which are linguistic means of expressing their personal convictions towards the low social class. In order to acquire a better understanding of how these aspects were manifested in language use, the reader is referred to Addendum A.

Discussion: Othering based on social class

“*Very often, the ‘hidden’ ideologies we find in talk about social groups reveals the negative attitude held about them ... social class creates a hierarchy that marginalises and ‘others’ groups that are positioned lower in the hierarchy*” (Mooney & Evans, 2015, p. 180).

The impact of social “classing” on relational well-being is that these perceptions of social classes can create a social hierarchy that may be conducive to a chain of judging, distancing, othering, offensiveness, stigmatisation, marginalisation and exclusion. Being assigned to a social category like “low social class” may have limiting or restraining effects on the individual in an educational context, as they are not considered as a unique individual with talents and potential any more, like advocated by the Positive psychology and Community psychology. The individual is not one of “Us” anymore, who are positively portrayed, but one of “Them” (Van Dijk, 2011). In addition, the individual is now merely a specimen of “his class” and, by implication, in possession of all the negative stereotypes in terms of which his class is considered.

The way in which the participants perceive the low social class is that they are not eligible for good relations, because of their behaviour, which is determined by their circumstances. In terms of the participants’ perception, the low social class’s adverse behaviour tends to exclude them from relational well-being. So, assigning a child to a “low social class” is to assign him to a category that is mainly excluded from relational well-being enhancement, thereby doing them a social injustice in terms of the Community psychology perspective. The above preconceptions about social class, which are contrary to the dynamic nature of relationships as proposed by the complexity theory and Positive psychology, might jeopardise the ideal of building healthy relations in school contexts. These perceptions of the participants still suggest typical thinking in terms of the reactive perspective: individual-centred, exclusive, determinist (cause-and-effect), competitive and achievement-driven. The implications of this approach are opposed to the inclusive, preventative, multifarious, interconnected, community-centred relational perspective that is considered today as the obvious way for enhancing relational well-being in South African schools.

Apart from categorically being mainly excluded from relational well-being enhancement by being assigned to the “low social class”, the personal effect that this exclusion may have on a child, can be comprehensive. Research proved that considerations about one’s group can be directly related to identity formation, mental and physical health and life chances (Pager & Quillian, 2005). (See also Section on Culture.) It may thus have a severe restraining effect on the individual, as Mooney and Evans (2015) confirm: “The significance of social class in this respect is often overlooked ...” (p. 180). Assigning people to different social classes is thus a social as well as personal injustice and contrary to the principles pursued by the Conceptual framework of this study. What is significant to note about othering based on social class is that the term refers to a group within the participants’ own culture. This may further confirm that the participants’ othering is indeed not based on race, but on unacceptable behaviour. Unlike othering based on social class, othering based on culture concerns all people within the wider multicultural South African community. The restraining impact thereof thus seems to have more extensive consequences. Consequently, the potential restraining impact of othering in terms of culture will be explored in more detail than that of othering based on social class.

5.3.2.3.2 Othering based on culture

Culture is perceived as the learnt and shared patterns of behaviour of a community of interacting people. It includes the interpretation, use and perception of artefacts, tools, values, norms, symbols, interpretations, perspectives, behaviour and interactions that identify them as a culture group and, at the same time, distinguish them from other culture groups. The understanding and meaning of the above-mentioned aspects are usually the same, or similar, for all members belonging to a specific culture (Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition & Banks & McGee-Banks, 1989). Culture is perpetuated by models, such as parents, shaping the perceptions, actions and behaviour of their children. Consequently, people, including the participants, estimate other people's culture, in this instance the township culture, by assessing the members' actions and behaviour. It is further important to note that, like with othering based on social class, the perceptions about other cultures (irrespective of whether it is "true" or not) include that what is perceived about one person is believed to be applicable about all persons sharing that culture, because, by sharing the same culture, they are considered to be "all the same" (Van Dijk, 2011).

Perceptions and contemplations about other cultures and racial groups, whether positive or negative, is a universal phenomenon. The participants, all belonging to the white racial group and sharing in the white culture, also have perceptions about other cultures. They perceive township culture as a very important factor when considering the enhancement of township children's relational well-being. They further consider the influence of the culture as tenacious and that the culture that is acquired at home is perpetuated in the outside world: "*Ja, culture is a very important ... (influence)* (P1) (rw, g1, p5) ... *the culture has a big influence* (H) (rw, g4, p25) ... *the relationship mechanism that a child has at home, determines to a large extent how he relates outside the house* (P10) (rwc, g4, p22)". In this regard, Alexander (2003) confirms the participants' perception that culture, including social representations thereof and mental models, "possesses a relative autonomy in shaping actions" (p. 12). Accordingly, actions and behaviour of the people living in townships are thus interpreted by the participants as being part of, and reflecting, their culture.

Further perceptions that the participants hold about the township culture, and which are particularly significant for this study, include that the township culture is not only very different, but also deviant from their own. The deviance is of such a nature that it may even extend to friction and conflict between different culture groups: "*I think, no I think races and different culture groups are very different about, about ... (relational well-being)* (P6) (rwc, g3, p20) (*T*)*here is conflict, because there is completely different upbringing* (H) (rw, g4, p25)".

As indicated earlier, there is a clear relationship between a language and social factors, and that language reflects social factors in tacit ways. Accordingly, the perception of township culture as

being different and deviant is illustrated in several ways by various characteristics in the participants' spoken language, as discussed in the following section.

Language reflecting othering based on culture:

Political overcorrectness: With reference to South Africa's earlier history of racial segregation and the later sociopolitical changes, it seems to be a typical current post-apartheid language strategy to express racial differences in a more politically correct way than before. This suggests more respect towards people of other cultures and races (Hill, 2008). Teaching in multicultural schools, this widely used strategy is also evident in the participants' language. It seems, however, that they are so sensitive about the racial/racism issue that they are politically "overcorrect": the participants avoid referring to people in terms of colour or race. Although they used the word "races", it seems that they consider it politically too "loaded" in the post-apartheid context to use words like "black" and "brown". (They did, however, refer to "white", which indicates their own group and thus makes it less risky.) Instead, they replace these references by other, more veiled references, like "culture" and "township". This strategy is analogous to what Wodak (2014, p. 403) calls a "floating discourse", which is a discourse of exclusion that has become de-referentialised, i.e. removed from any direct relation with a specific constructed racial subject, e.g. "blacks". In a racist context, it can be called "racism without races" in which racist/anti-Semitic/xenophobic attitudes are combined with specific negative stereotypes. Apart from these avoiding of direct racial/colour references, the strategies of circumscribing and the use of euphemisms to remain politically correct were also detected by discourse analysis.

In the discussions, the participants used various euphemisms to refer to politically sensitive situations. They also avoid referring to schools in terms of race or colour, but in terms of finances. They, for instance, continuously talked about "rich" schools and the opposite of "rich" schools – which they did not call "poor" schools, but "township" schools. Although they associate townships and township schools with poverty, they never literally and directly referred to township schools or people as being "poor". Instead, they rather circumscribed what they wanted to say along the lines of the following: "(T)he parents literally do not have money, they don't ... they live in a township ... (P3) (rws, g1, p6). *Many people don't have shelter, water ... you know, like new shoes, clean socks ... you know what I mean, like when we talk about poverty* (P3) (rwc, g2, p13)".

The choice of "rich" and "township" to denote everyday binary opposites is unusual and therefore a clear discourse marker that indicates political sensitivity in a post-apartheid South African context. The participants, who are all white, evidently did not want to offend people of other races and cultures by straightforwardly calling them "poor" and thus use the euphemism "township" instead of "poor" (Locke, 2004; Macaulay, 2005). Their circumscribing was quite often vague, implying that the listener had to "read between the lines" and make his own conclusions. This is a very typical

strategy of evasion in the participants' language in order to prevent losing face value by being considered racist or insensitive.

The language techniques of avoidance, circumscription and euphemism are generally used in the conversations of the participants in an effort to be politically correct and to prevent the revelation of their attitudes. However, the latter is very sensitively concealed, it still suggest othering and superiority, which were detected by discourse analysis. The benefit of discourse analysis in this regard is that it in fact identifies and analyses the very linguistic efforts that is made to conceal social information. The speaker in the following discussion is, for example, politically very careful. She initially does her best to be objective, but as she proceeds, various utterances "give her away" by revealing her othering from the township culture. The strategies of avoidance, circumscription and euphemism that she uses to conceal her personal disposition are the very strategies that actually reveal her personal disposition when subjected to discourse analysis:

If I am looking, we are double medium, so there is an English side too. See, if I am looking, uhm ... the children, it is not the same, they ... it's going to sound like that ... it's like, the Afrikaans children are more like that attachment to mamma ... where the English children ... to me, it's more like an autonomous independence. (P6) (rwc, g3, p20)

The phrase "*If I am looking*" is the speaker's opening effort to be objective, which is fortified by the repetition of "*if I am looking*". It indicates her determination to be most cautious and determined to remain objective, not revealing any form of prejudice, such as racism. She also tries to ensure that the listener is there, with her, in the moment and involved in the situation by using the words "*See*" and "*looking*". She actually politely asks the listener to use their own senses to look at the matter with her, to be on her side. Doing it this way confirms her determination to be completely objective: she wants to ensure that the listener clearly and correctly understands what she says, so that there cannot be any question that she is not offending any of the (social/racial or school) groups of children.

By using the word "*see*", she also ensures that what she says is safe. There is not much to argue about what one *sees*, because *see* is more objective than *know* for example. To *know* something implies knowledge and interpretation – and with interpretation comes, among others, subjectivity and bias, which can make the use of *know* more disputable than the use of *see*. She is thus extremely cautiously doing a political egg dance to not be blamed for bias/prejudice/racism. This indicates that she is intensely aware of the sensitive political/racial situation, as well as her personal disposition. Therefore, to protect herself, she uses linguistic techniques to conceal her personal disposition, indicating fear that her personal convictions may result in her being considered as biased/prejudiced/racist.

The utterance “*uhm*” and the pause thereafter suggest that the speaker is still very careful and rethinking what she is saying. She then, after the pause, does not proceed with what she wanted to say. She stops herself and does not “risk” exposing herself to potential criticism by making a statement about the situation, as a statement may reflect bias and judgement. Therefore, she returns to what she momentarily considered as neutral ground: *the children*. This is, however, not safe ground at all. Although the children are at the centre of the issue, they are also her learners. Emotions and loyalty are involved: being children, they are vulnerable and may be hurt directly by what she wants to say. Therefore, she immediately retreats from the children to the (emotionally) safer and impersonal “*it*”: the situation. Now, being back in the safer situation, she says more straightforwardly than before what she wants to say. She, however, still protects the children by not talking about them, but about the (impersonal) situation: “*it is not the same*”. What she actually wanted to say is, “*The children are different*”, but, most likely out of fear of risking political incorrectness or offending the children, she uses euphemisms (“*not the same*” instead of “*different*”) and steers clear of saying promptly what she wants to say. She then refers to the children again (“*they*”), but then, although still tacitly, admits her fear: “*it’s going to sound like ...*” She still does not say *how* it is going to sound. She does not want to say it in words, i.e. the fact that she is afraid that, if she says something along the line of children belonging to different races and cultures have different mentalities and ways of acting, she might be accused of prejudice/racism. Therefore, she generally also keeps it vague by using utterances such as “*it’s like*”, “*to me*”, “*it’s more like, I think ...*”. (See earlier discussion 5.3.2.1 Uncertainty and Ignorance.)

Spending more time: The transcribed data revealed that the participants spent a greater amount of time on talking about township children, their circumstances and culture than, for instance, talking about white children and their “class”. The characteristics of township people and their culture that they discussed (see Addendum B) were of a negative and deviant nature when compared to their own, thus being in line with the principles of Van Dijk’s (2011) racist discourse theory. The implications of more time spent on the discussion of a specific group of people will later be discussed in the assessment of cultural othering.

Siding with own culture: Lawton (2015) states that people have a natural tendency to believe that their own group is superior to others. Accordingly, the participants seem to consider their own culture as the norm in terms of which they evaluate the township culture as being different and deviant. They consider it as “belonging to others” and clearly distance themselves from it, which implies that it should be rejected. Accordingly, various discourse markers indicating the othering, were detected in their language, as illustrated in the next example:

The speaker, discussing children and their contexts, mentioned some positive characteristics about Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking children. Thereafter, she stopped speaking, which

suggests that she is extremely cautious and would rather keep quiet about what she perceives as a serious problem: the culture of the township people. She had to be *asked* before she eventually reflected on the township children. She then named some adverse phenomena in their culture and eventually concludes that “... *that is how it is in their culture ... so I think how they have relationships with their parents is very different from how these children experience relationships with their parents*” (P5) (rwc, g3, p20). This disclosure is veiled, so that the listener/reader has to “read between the lines” for the real meaning, which includes that the township children have their own culture that is *very different* from hers, that she distances herself from it and that she sides with her own.

Other discourse markers that indicate distance (and othering) between the speaker and the township culture are “*these*” and “*they (their)*”. The use of “*these*” and “*they*” not only confirms the difference in and perceived distance between cultures, but also confirms that the speaker uses the Afrikaans and English culture as a norm whereby the culture of township children is being assessed. Accordingly, the own culture of the participants (Afrikaans and English) is being positively “own-ed” and the township culture being negatively “other-ed”. The speaker identifies herself more closely with the Afrikaans/English culture than with that of the township. This implies a polarised positioning of “Us” versus “Them” (Van Dijk, 2011), which is contrary to the tenets of the Community psychology and relational well-being enhancement.

Differential reference to and consideration of children: Although the participants were politically very cautious and never referred to children in terms of race or colour, there is still an element of differentiation (implying probable judgement or bias) in the different ways that they refer to children of different culture groups. Some children are referred to by their language, i.e. *Afrikaans* children and *English* children, and others by their location, i.e. *township* children.

The above perception, including distinction, othering and superiority, is strengthened by the way in which children of different cultures, are considered by the participants: they continually refer to the own culture’s children (Afrikaans and English) positively and township children negatively (Addendum B). It should be noted that it is not the township children that are considered negatively, as well as their parents and their culture (although “they are all the same”!):

They are very scared of their parents ... they (the parents) punish them corporally severely ... at home they are literally used as slaves ... that is how it is in their culture ... so I think how they have relationships with their parents is very different from how these children experience relationships with their parents (P5) (rwc, g3, p20).

The element of othering and cultural superiority is revealed in the above quote. By using the term “*literally*” (discourse marker), the speaker’s language indicated that she was upset and averted by some (perceived) cultural practices (e.g. corporal punishment and slavery). After mentioning some

of these practices, she referred back to them by confirming that *“that is how it is in their culture”*. *“That”* indicates distancing, which is confirmed by her describing the culture in more detail earlier, having to mention aversive manifestations of the culture one by one as a strategy to convince the listeners of the culture’s perceived deviancy. The utterance *“that is how it is in their culture”* evokes the opposite: *this is how it is in my culture*. It concurrently suggests strong difference, othering and an element of disbelief, even threat. It is as if the speaker has to confirm to herself a second time how things are. These aspects are, according to her, the direct cause of why township children’s relationships with their parents are *“very different”* from Afrikaans and English children’s relationships with their parents.

Same action, different verbs: Othering is further clearly illustrated by the participants using different verbs to describe teaching in different contexts: “rich schools” versus “township schools”: *“She teaches at a private school and I am in a township ... It’s completely different ...”* (P5) (rwc, g3, p20).

“It’s completely different” could also have referred to the different personal dispositions and attitudes that the participants held regarding teaching in a rich school versus teaching in a township school. The personal dispositions and attitudes of the participants about teaching in these schools, can be determined by exploring the role of the discourse marker *“I am”*. By using the auxiliary verb *“am”* on the same continuum as *“She teaches”* defines *“I am”* as a discourse marker indicating that the person teaching at the (rich) private school has a specific, defined occupation. The speaker, however, who has the same occupation, but teaching at a township school, does not refer to her job as teaching, but that she *“is”*. *“[I]s”*, in this sense, does, however, not refer to her occupation, but to a location or condition, implying that she perceives teaching in a township as not having much purpose: she does not really *teach* there, she *“is”* merely there. She does not perceive teaching in a township as having a proper, esteemed occupation, but as bordering on the unstructured and indistinct. It is as if she is restrained, nearly paralysed in her occupation by the culture (and poverty) of the township, making her feel powerless, restricted and limited, not being able to achieve much – also not in terms of relational well-being enhancement: *“So the thing is ... we are standing powerless (sic)”* (P1) (rws, g1, p5).

Another example is: *“she is at a private school and I am sitting in a township”* (P3) (rws, g1, p6). Once again, both verbs (*“is”* and *“am (sitting)”*) refer to the same action, but *“is”* is neutral (unmarked) in this instance, while *“am sitting”* is marked and reveals that the township teacher is powerless, as if being in, or “sitting in” a situation that limits her, where she cannot achieve much.

This choice of different verbs to describe the same action (teaching) clearly reflects that the speaker perceives teaching as having lower and higher status, depending on where you teach. Teaching in a township school, and by implication, also the children’s culture(s) is inferior to teaching

at a private school: “... *it’s completely different ...*” (P5) (rwc, g3, p20). It implies differential, and thus dividing, fragmentary thinking in terms of the reactive perspective.

Restraining cultural behaviour:

The participants hold the perception that the township culture has a restraining impact on relational well-being because of the following deviant behaviour of the parents, the school and the children.

Of the parents:

The participants agree that, as indicated earlier, parents are models, shaping the actions and behaviour of their children, while also having to protect them, take care of them and meet their needs. The participants are, however, not convinced that the township parents act responsibly and accountably regarding providing in their children’s needs. The several instances of the parents’ neglect in this regard may have informed the participants’ perceptions of the township culture as being deviant.

The participants are blaming the parents for not adequately supplying in their children’s physical needs. If one’s basic needs are not met, relationship building is impossible: “... *they (the children) say they don’t eat when they get home. They have a cup of tea and then they go to sleep ...*” (P3), “... *you can’t concentrate if you (don’t eat) ... you can’t do what you need to do if you are not eating enough or drinking enough*” (P3) (rwc, g2, p14), “... *there’s not gonna be a place to have a relationship*” (H) (rwc, g2, p14), and “... *a child with physical needs would obviously ... struggle with well-being*” (P3) (rwc, g2, p13). There are also numerous logistical needs that are not met by the parents: “*You need money (for) transport to take you to that school ... there is still logistical problems how to get their school uniforms also*” (H) (rwc, g2, p14) and “... *how many people don’t have shelter, water... new shoes, clean socks ... you know what I mean, like when we talk about poverty ... some kids are struggling to get to school*” (P3) (rwc, g2, p13)

The researcher initially accepted that the township parents cannot supply in their children’s physical and basic needs because of mere poverty. However, discourse analysis suggests that the participants ascribe this failure to their culture. The context of the situation in which the discussion took place indicated that the neglect was not discussed in relation to poverty, but in the context of corporal punishment and abuse, indicating that they perceive all of these as cultural practices, a “way of life”, rather than a result of sheer poverty. One of the participants’ remarks that “... *the school has to feed them*” (P3) (rwc, g2, p14) supports this conclusion by suggesting that the school does not have a choice (“*has to*”), like the parents seem to have. The researcher listened to the audio recordings

again for verification of the matter and can confirm that the tone of voice was indeed not sympathetic, but rather of a blaming nature, strengthening the notion that the neglect is considered as a cultural matter. The value of the sociolinguistic approach as alternative method of research proved to be successful in this instance, as it clarified uncertainty of what otherwise might have remained a misconception.

According to the participants, the parents also do not provide a sufficient support system for their children at home, resulting in seriously compromising the already little and inadequate relational help at school “... *and the support system also doesn't exist*” (P2) (rws, g1, p6), “... *even if you get the child in therapy* (in spite of logistical problems) *and even if you do therapy with the child, but the support system also does not exist at home, it is going to be of such a nature that you cannot help them*” (P2) (rws, g1, p6). It seems that the township children do not only experience poverty and a lack of support from their parents, but that the parents' behaviour toward the children is rather exploitative, abusive and bordering on violence, as the parents “... *punish them severely corporally*” (“*slaai hulle uitmekaar uit*”) (P5) (rwc, g3, p20) and “... *they are literally used as slaves*” (P5) (rwc, g3, p20). Further, the parents “*(a)buse ... also physical(ly) abuse, emotional(ly) abuse. Many families, parents, emotionally abuse children*” (P1) (rw, g1, p5). These occurrences may have informed the participants' perception of the township culture as being deviant, as the speaker concluded with: “*that is how it is in their culture ...*” (P5) (rwc, g3, p20). The quote also reflects on the social aspect of the township culture, including the nature of relationships between the parents and their children: “... *so I think how they have relationships with their parents is very different from how these children experience relationships with their parents*” (P5) (rwc, g3, p20). This implies that the participants' perception of township culture is that it is not only different, deviant and threatening, but that there is also an implicit, long-term challenge of a different nature that may also have compromising implications for relational well-being: As indicated earlier, culture, having a nearly monopolist influence on the individual's and institutional behaviour, is perpetuated. Accordingly, the “different and deviant” culture will remain, posing a situation where the current problems, caused by the township culture (according to the participants), will continue to exist. The question is whether the countering thereof by modern approaches in terms of, for example, Positive psychology and Community psychology will be effective and strong enough to effect a permanent change.

Of the children:

In the discourse analysis, it transpired that the participants do not consider the children's behaviour as having a major impact on relational well-being. They rather consider the township children as victims of their culture and displayed a sympathetic and concerned attitude towards them. Concurrently, blaming and othering seem to be not as strong regarding children as regarding the

parents and the culture. There are, however, incidents where the participants were highly upset and disgusted by the behaviour of the children, as in: “... *now the child had a flippen child outside just when the bell rang she got labour pains there outside, then the ambulance came and whatnot ... Then the baby came three months early ...*” (P8) (rw, g3, p19,20).

To the speaker, it is most alarming that a learner, who is still a child herself, had a child at school. The repetition of “*the child*” who had “*a child*”, plus the accompanying expletive “*flippen*” convey, simultaneously with shock and dismay, the speaker’s moral conviction and judgement. It is, according to the speaker’s set of moral values, not acceptable that “*a child*” has “*a child*”. To her further consternation, it happened “*outside ... there outside ... just when the bell rang*”. It is clearly a culture shock to her (and aversive and threatening to her norms and values) that somebody can have a baby outside of a building, publicly, between other children at the end of a break.

In this regard, Van Leeuwen (2008) explains that in some professions, such as teaching, the teachers assign normatively and authoritatively certain functions and meanings to certain spaces and the arrangement of these spaces. Certain actions are accordingly linked to certain spaces and spatial elements, e.g. furniture that stresses the functionality of the space, as well as the hierarchy involved, e.g. the teacher’s table in front of the children’s desks in a classroom. There is also an element of moral concepts and thus judgement involved, as in the above quote (“*the child had a flippen child*”) in the functionality and hierarchy relevant to the spaces. Some spaces, for instance gardens and gymnasiums, are perceived to be “healthy”, while art studios are “creative” and classrooms “educational”. (This notion strongly concurs with the “safe and secure learning environment” suggested by the participants, as discussed in Theme 2, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2.)

Assigning certain functions to certain spaces which are arranged and equipped in certain ways, indicate a purpose and a form of social control, involving authority and hierarchies. For the teacher who communicated the episode, all of these perceptions were violated when the girl had a baby at school:

- On a moral level: Children should not have babies. They should also not lie about it: The sarcasm in “*Then the baby came three months early*” indicates the speaker’s judgement (disapproval) of the new mother’s efforts to hide the pregnancy and her lie about the due date. According to the participants, hiding a pregnancy and lying about a pregnancy are, however, customary in township schools: “*Yes, they are pushing it, hey? Some of them are showing (‘Party van hulle magies staan so’)*” (P8) (rw, g3, p19) and “*Cause very often they hide it, hey?*” (H) (rw, g3, p20).
- On institutional (purpose) level: School girls should study, not have babies – especially not at school.

- Space: the playground, “*there outside*”, is reserved for relaxation and socialisation, not for labouring.
- Time: When the bell rang, it indicated the end of the break and the start of a new period. Instead of stopping all other activities immediately, the girl started a new activity by going into labour.
- Hierarchy and control: The girl did something most ineligible without prior permission from the relevant authorities or even informing them. This points to the girl’s behaviour as uncontrolled and opposing to the hierarchy of rules and regulations.

Hence, according to the participants’ perception, the girl ticked all the wrong boxes by having a baby unannounced. It was the wrong thing to do, the wrong way to do it, the wrong place to do it and the wrong time to do it. Furthermore, it was disruptive of all control and procedure.

Although there is a measure of sympathy, “*Shame*” (P6) (rw, g3, p20), there are several markers that indicate othering from the situation: “*Really?*” (H) (rw, g3, p19), “*That’s scary ...*” (P7) (rw, g3, p19), and “*... Aaah, oh my word!*” (P6) (rw, g3, p20) that reflects the participants’, unbelief, shock and rejection. Confirming this conviction, is the utterance “*then the ambulance came and whatnot ...*”, as it reflects othering. After the initial shock, and the (negative) evaluation of the implications of what happened, the speaker lost interest. She does not want to be involved any more and withdraws from the situation.

Of the school:

It was mentioned earlier that the power of culture has a “relative autonomy”, a determining influence, on both individual and institutional behaviour. This includes that schools are also shaped by a community’s culture and that blaming culture is to also blame schools, and vice versa. Township schools are directly blamed for several problems and neglects, including children having babies (also at school), as well as for the way the schools handle these incidents. It appears that the schools readily accept the situation of teenage pregnancy by not actively discouraging it: “*Now did they know that she is pregnant, or ... ?*” (H) (rw, g3, p20) “*Yes.*” (P8) (rw, g3, p20). “*We have six children who are pregnant ... Yes, they get maternity leave, you have to send all their stuff, yes ... some of them are pushing it so much to remain in school, we have now implemented a kind of a semi-policy ...*” (P8) (rw, g3, p19, 20).

It transpires that it is the participants’ perception that, by not constructively addressing this obvious challenge, and by knowingly and wilfully allowing the pregnant girls to remain in school, the schools condone the situation: Pregnant girls are even accommodated by intern arrangements and “policies”. The participants’ perception seems to be that a school, as an educational institution, should educate and build young people to be full and equal members of society by, a. o. the setting

and enforcing of clear boundaries, as discussed in Theme 2 (Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2). This is done by formal academic, as well as social education, which is conveyed, a.o. by examples and role models. The school, supposed to be a role model par excellence, plays a critical role by the example it sets in a.o. handling academic and social matters. However, the participants are convinced that the school's example in handling situations like this conveys too much acceptance, and therefore condoning, of the situation. It does not convey the message that school children having babies is not acceptable. Therefore, the school's example is not considered appropriate. This could have been an ideal opportunity for the school to be an example (See Theme 5, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.5) by showing positive, proactive and constructive involvement. In this regard, the complexity theory advocates that, like the organism and its environment can mutually change each other, the school, as part of the child's collective, holistic environment, can contribute to change the child's behaviour positively (Waldorp, 1992; Capra, 1996; Parellada cited in Morrison, 2010). As a result, a supportive environment can be created, as suggested in Theme 3, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3, instead of being unconcerned. Like racist talk can create and perpetuate racism, inappropriate toleration, a relaxed attitude and lack of constructive and appropriate action may create and perpetuate an institutional culture where school children having babies (even at school) is generally accepted, acceptable and, eventually, even normal.

This perception of the situation most probably plays a pivotal role in shaping the participants' convictions of township (including school) culture as being deviant, resulting in their strong othering in this regard: "*Jis, these schools are now starting to encourage it, hey, they even get maternity leave nowadays ...*" (P8) (rw, g3 p19–20). The speaker, using sarcasm ("*encourage, maternity leave, hey*") to convey her dismay and, later on, even anger ("*the child had a flippen child ...*" (P8) (rw, g3 p19–20) about a situation that, in her view, is highly unprecedented in a school context, but about which the school seems to be not too concerned.

Other significant markers indicate not only the speaker's othering and rejection of this behaviour, but also her perception that this problem does not occur in any school, but specifically in township schools: "*(T)hese schools ...*", instead of "*the schools*". They are thus being singled out, considered as an exception, implying that something is happening at them that does not happen at the others, i.e. something unusual, something out of the ordinary and/or something deviant. "*Starting*" indicates that what is happening now is also something new, while "*nowadays*" reinforces it by indicating that it was not like this before. Both these markers confirm the speaker's disapproval and othering from what is happening *now* at *some* schools, suggesting that she favours other schools and earlier situations.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the school, Department of Basic Education and school boards are blamed for a lack of time, opportunities and constructive policy (Theme 4, Chapter 4,

Section 4.2.4) to build positive relationships in school communities: *“This child in this school is not taught about relationships in school, ... also not in the class, because the teacher does not have time, so nowhere is he taught about relationships ...”* (P1) (rws, g1, p9). *“It is usually the relationship that is being missed, I think, because the school does not involve the parents enough ...”* (P5) (rws, g2, p14) *“... the parents are part of the community ... And that (involving parents) is usually, some schools have a problem with that”* (P5) (rws, g2, p11).

Furthermore, they are also blamed for not properly implementing policies, resulting in no formal support regarding relational well-being in schools: *“It is the department ... they draw up these protocols and policies ... but it is not practically implemented ... it is not”* (P3) (rws, g1, p5). The Department is also accused of not having contextual insight: *“... each school should have its own policy”* (H) (rws, g2, p18), *“... each school exists in its own context”* (P4) (rws, g2, p18) *“... but ... You (the Department) do not have the bigger picture ...”* (P5) (rws, g2, p18). These various factors result in poor relationships between all the role players in the school community, with the children being done the greatest injustice in the end.

Impact of restraining cultural behaviour:

In this section, a conclusive summary is presented of the participants’ perceptions about what the relationally straining impact of the “deviant” culture is on schools, the teachers and the children.

On schools:

The school has to take over the responsibility of supplying in the child’s physical and basic needs, because of the parents neglect in this regard. The school does not have a choice in this matter, like the parents seemingly have: it *“has”* to feed them, because *“... a child with physical needs would obviously ... struggle with well-being”* (P3) (rwc, g2, p13). The children also *“... don’t have pens ... they don’t have (books)”* (P3) (rwc, g2, p13), so the schools also have to supply this, implicating more financial, administrative and logistical challenges on schools and teachers, resulting in even less time for relationships.

On teachers:

Teachers in township schools experience the impact of the indicated cultural problems and neglects, as extremely challenging: *“... they live in a township and I can only do counselling up to a point if I have to see (engage) a psychiatrist or have to see (engage) an occupational therapist, I cannot fix it, I cannot. And the support system also doesn’t exist ... you cannot help them ... because their culture is not like that”* (P2 and P3) (rws, g1, p6). This results in poor and often impossible relationships between children, teachers and parents. The parents furthermore contribute to the problems by not being involved with the school community and by sometimes being arrogant towards

teachers. These complicated and dysfunctional relationships may result in little or poor opportunities for enhancing children's relational well-being.

On children:

The township culture's influence on relational well-being is perceived by the participants as restraining the children in the following ways:

The children from townships experience various and serious problems that have a negative impact on the relational well-being aspect. The parents are poor and do not supply adequately in their children's physical needs, as well as other logistic needs. They also do not furnish an effective support system at home and they act exploitatively and even violently towards their children. They also have no or dysfunctional relationships with the school and are sometimes arrogant towards the teachers.

The participants indicated that these factors, which they consider as cultural, have a seriously restraining effect on the children's academic education, as well as the enhancement of their relational well-being in schools. It results in a compromised situation that makes it nearly impossible for enhancing relational well-being, with the children being on the losing side. One participant put it as follows: "... *are they getting the education that they think that they have ... ?*" (P3) (rws, g2, p13).

Apart from these restraining factors, the participants also indicated an aspect that may complicate relational well-being even on longer term for children in township schools: "*I think how they have relationships with their parents is very different from how these children experience relationships with their parents*" (P5) (rwc, g3, p20). This indicates that the social system (including relationships), that is encompassed in the culture, and through which culture is perpetuated, *is very different*, even deviant and threatening when compared to the participants' own, Western social system. The township children are, however, part of the township culture that has informed, and still is informing, their perceptions. This being the case, school children from townships are confronted with two diverse cultural sets of beliefs, norms and values: that of their own culture plus that of the Western world, as manifested in school contexts. This puts the children in a very difficult position on several levels, including relational well-being. Although the influence of some of their cultural manifestations are experienced by the participants as adverse to relational well-being, the township children are in effect seriously in need of healthy and positive relationships that can contribute to a supportive environment for their dealings with all the diverse challenges. Therefore, comprehensive, inclusive and context-relevant research is of paramount importance in order to contribute to a welcoming, accommodating relational environment, supporting all children to reach their full potential.

Discussion: Othering based on culture

Although the othering patterns detected by discourse analysis in the participants' language reflect the same theoretical characteristics as othering based on race, as explained by Van Dijk (2011), their othering inclinations are based on culture. The township culture is undeniably perceived as being different and deviant from the participants' own culture. Perceptions of the township culture as threatening, especially regarding the participants' norms and values, were also detected. The characteristics detected in the language by discourse analysis indicate strong cultural othering.

The participants' language reflects some polarisation: Township people are described in terms of negative stereotypes, while Afrikaans and English children, belonging to the speaker's own culture, are considered positively. This indicates an opposing situation of "us" versus "them", a positively owned in-group which is contrasted with the negatively other-ed out-group. Theoretically, this pattern of othering is in accordance with the overall strategy of racism. Although not based on race, the participants' othering inclinations implicate that they might be holding some distinctive and dividing negative convictions about people from "other cultures". As also indicated in "Siding with own culture", there is clearly reason for concern, as the participants' perceptions do not indicate total objectivity towards the children. This could have profound negative implications for relational well-being enhancement.

The perception that the township culture is different and deviant from theirs, transpires in various instances in their language. As described in "Differential reference to children" and "Same action, different verbs", Afrikaans children are typically described in terms of being "[a]ttached to their mothers", following and having, respectively, "rules and manners" and "always participat[ing]", while English children are described as "[i]ndependent". The descriptions indicate discipline, family values, involvement/competitiveness and sustainability. Township children are, however, described in terms of aversive conditions that indicate a degree of deviancy: "afraid of parents, starving, sexually active early" and subject to "extreme corporal punishment" and "literally (being) used as slaves" and "does not want to participate". In contrast to the positive description of Afrikaans and English children, the latter description of township children depicts them as victims of deviant conditions and practices. It should be noted that the children themselves are not blamed in these respects, but their culture is clearly considered in terms that suggest strong othering because of oddness and deviance. Relationships between parents and children are also considered as "different", which implies that the present relational well-being enhancement models cannot be applied and that a different relational enhancing initiative is necessary for township schools.

The negative factors discussed are seemingly experienced by the participants not only as deviant, but even as threatening, as is evident in the following utterances: "Aaah, oh my word!" (P6) (rw, g3, p20), "Really?" (H) (rw, g3, p19) and "That's scary ..." (P7) (rw, g3, p19). Apart from other

discourse markers that indicate othering and deviance, as discussed, it was especially the tone of voice, assessed when relistening to the audio recordings, that clearly conveyed disbelief, shock, disgust and maybe even fear when talking about some of these incidents. (See Addendum C on disgust.) The Other's behaviour is portrayed as deviant and thus a threat to the participants and their norms and rules. Only tacit utterances (in the context of corporal punishment and slavery) were found that directly state that the participants consider the Other as a physical threat. To the participants, it seems to be rather a matter that the other's culture (or class) is threatening their norms and values. The shock and dismay conveyed in the tone of voice in several instances when talking about some incidents reveal disapproval, distancing, and rejection, e.g. "*punish them corporally severely (slaai hulle uitmekaar ...)*" (P5) (rwc, g3, p20), and from there it is only a short step to violence. This further indicates one of the advantages of interdisciplinary sociolinguistic methods, namely to determine finer nuances, e.g. tone of voice, that can contribute to making meaning clear.

Furthermore, the participants spent considerably more time and effort describing township children and matters related to them than they spent on other children. In this regard, recent research found that when people do not accept something, when there is disbelief, longer and more resilient brain activities are produced in the deliberation and decision-making areas of the brain, as if it takes some extra effort for the brain to reach a conclusion (Lawton, 2015). This may not only clarify why the participants spent more time talking about township children, but possibly also confirm their othering disposition.

Most of the negative behaviour by township people and problems regarding their children were indiscriminately and without much hesitance ascribed to "their culture": "*This is how it is in their culture*" (P5) (rwc, g3, p20). No finer distinction within the concept of culture was made, for instance social class (stratification) or circumstances, as in the case of Afrikaans and English people. Diversity is ignored by using the term culture. This may indicate either that the participant is not familiar with the finer stratification of the other culture or that she intentionally allows distance between herself and the deviant culture by not getting too involved.

Considering all people to be the same, concurs with the inclination of ascribing all problems to a specific culture. The participants' consideration and use of the term culture is that they perceive and use it as an all-inclusive, undifferentiating and thus unifying umbrella term, implying that township people are considered as a homogeneous group that does not display variation and individuality. Van Dijk (2011) confirms that this view "usually ... implies that They are all the same (and We are all individually different)" (p. 201). By ascribing behaviour within this group to culture only, it is most likely a simplistic, non-nuanced view that does not reflect reality. The differential reference to children may also suggest some distinction and othering: Township children are being bunched together under the collective name of "township children", indicating a communal

identification, not allowing acknowledgement of diversity by more specific, individual references. Considering everybody as the same denies personal competencies, talents and potential, which is not in line with the tenets that signature strengths can work as a shield against negative behaviour and adversity, as proposed by the Positive psychology. By considering people as “all being the same” also boils down to them being marginalised and eventually being excluded.

Concerning views regarding other cultures and social groups, Mooney and Evans (2015) state that the moment when a group is singled out in conversation, e.g. when the participants talked about “township” or “culture” as entities that are separate from their own, boundaries are drawn and people are allocated to membership to random (unfair, maybe non-applicable) categories. If educators differentiate between children on the basis of culture, it can have, like in the case of social class, decidedly limiting, practically complicating and even an excluding impact in terms of relational well-being enhancement. In this regard, the researcher agrees with Van Dijk (2011) that cultural differentiation, othering and discourse “is a form of discriminatory social practice” (p. 200). Like Van Dijk(2011), Wodak (2014, p. 402) also explains that racism, racialisation and other forms of “othering” (including cultural) and discrimination are concepts and practices of exclusion.

“Us” and “them” are the foundation of othering perceptions. It is about the exclusion of many, and the inclusion of some (Wodak, 2014, p. 403). This polarisation is significant in terms of relational well-being: It manifests the underlying ideological attitudes of the speaker as phrased in their discourse and which will reflect in teaching situations, bringing about notions of segregation, differentiation, and exclusion. This is not only contradicting modern theories, but is also not in line with the government’s relational enhancement philosophies in terms of post-apartheid South African reconciliation. These notions cannot be allowed in the current South African contexts. As the situation seems to be in present South African school contexts, it is already a far cry from Gergen’s (2009) matrix of “preventative, holistic and inclusive web of interrelatedness”. It is also in stark contrast with the inclusive, interrelated, social networks and celebration of cultural diversity, as advocated by the Community psychology. It also opposes tenets of the Positive psychology that focus on instilling hope and thriving by stressing positive qualities like signature strengths, talents and potential as a shield against negative behaviour and adversity.

Culture-based othering at school level thus suggests that children are done a social and personal injustice by (at least perceptually) excluding them from a resource like relational well-being, which may have a severe restraining effect on relationships and further development.

Conclusively, it can be stated that notions of othering are definitely evident in the perceptual framework of the participants and that they can have a potentially compromising impact on relational well-being. Holding concepts of othering can, in practice, result in dividing and rejecting attitudes and inclinations. In school contexts, it can contribute to instigate and perpetuate perceptions of

superiority and inferiority, approval and disapproval, acceptance and rejection, and inclusion and exclusion. As such, these perceptions, having subversive relational implications, should be addressed appropriately in the best interest of relational well-being enhancement.

5.4 Summary

In this chapter, a critical analysis of the participants' perceptions of relational well-being was presented, including their personal dispositions and attitudes, as reflected in their spoken language. The latter was explored from a sociolinguistic angle. After a concise description of the term Sociolinguistics, the relevance of a sociolinguistic perspective to the research problem was discussed, as well as the methodological approach and practical procedure of discourse analysis.

Two distinctive types of discourse patterns were subsequently identified in the spoken language of the participants: a facilitating pattern and a restraining pattern. The facilitating pattern included that relational well-being should be enhanced by involving the school community as an inclusive, holistic entirety and that a proactive, preventative approach to relational well-being is required. The restraining pattern included the following aspects that may have a compromising effect on relational well-being enhancement: uncertainty and ignorance, competitiveness and othering based on social class, and culture. These factors were critically discussed and concluded by assessing them in terms of their (compromising or facilitative) impact on relational well-being enhancement in current South African school communities

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a concluding summary to this study will be provided. A brief overview of the research topic and problem statement will be supplied. Afterwards, the answering of the research questions will be evaluated. Furthermore, anomalies and surprises that emerged during the study will be discussed along with some of the advantages of using an interdisciplinary approach. Recommendations ensuing from the research will be made on practical as well as academic level. Finally, a short discussion of the limitations and contribution of this study be provided.

6.2 Overview of the research topic and problem statement

Concurring with the global focus on enhancing well-being in school communities and the existing lacuna in this regard in South African schools, this study, as part of a wider research project, was conducted to address the local deficiency of knowledge regarding relational well-being. The intention was to make a contribution by addressing the research problem through exploring existing perceptions of enhancing relational well-being in South African school communities and further to determine how the understanding of these perceptions could contribute to enhance relational well-being.

This study was conducted from a relational well-being perspective and informed by the Community psychology perspective, the Positive psychology perspective, the bioecological systems theory and the complexity theory which were used, in combination, as a theoretical framework. Relational well-being as a construct, the enhancement of general well-being, and well-being in schools, specifically in South African schools, were discussed. Considering these theories and perspectives, the focus was on relational well-being as a proactive, preventative, holistic and inclusive approach as an alternative to the individualistic, excluding, deterministic, achievement-driven, and reactive, linear, traditional approaches, which still seem to be followed in South African school contexts.

A qualitative-phenomenological research design was applied. The data collection included a World Café event in which fourteen postgraduate students were involved. After the collection of the

data took place, thematic analysis was conducted to reveal the five main themes of the study. Through further exploration and discourse analysis, an additional critical perspective emerged from the data set.

6.3 Conclusively evaluating the answers of the research questions

The analysis of the data revealed five themes encompassing the participants' perceptions of enhancing relational well-being, thereby addressing the first research question: *How does a group of postgraduate students, involved in educational contexts, perceive the enhancement of children's relational well-being in South African school communities?* Despite several challenges still existing in South African school communities, the following themes were identified as the participants' perceptions of what might contribute to the enhancement of children's relational well-being:

1. Children need to be treated with dignity and respect on a daily basis.
2. A safe and secure learning environment should be provided by the setting of boundaries.
3. Establish a definite supportive environment by providing a system of loving and caring family members, teachers and friendships.
4. Deliberate time and space needs to be identified and allocated for social interaction.
5. As children primarily learn through observation, it is of the utmost importance that positive relationships be modelled and demonstrated to them on a daily basis.

During the above thematic analysis, it transpired that the participants' perceptions of relational well-being enhancement, as encompassed in the five themes, are founded in modern theories and perspectives, e.g. the bioecological perspective, while also reflecting constructive, context-based thinking. Their perceptions are further confirmed by existing literature, as well as recent research on relational well-being in South African schools. It transpired that the participants' perceptions regarding relational well-being include facilitating aspects (as will be discussed later) in terms of modern, proactive and preventative thinking in terms of currently endorsed perspectives.

However, in spite of their positive disposition, insight in and notions based on modern approaches regarding relational well-being, thinking in terms of the individualist model is still evident. Their theoretical knowledge and understanding of relational well-being seems to be of limited and obsolete nature in some respects, as their discussions still, at times, reflect a medical ideology: Arguments were often based on a deterministic, linear, traditional model.

During the thematic analysis, social information was identified in the data with potentially conclusive implications for relational well-being. The disclosure and analysis of the information, seemingly significant in post-apartheid and multicultural South African contexts, indicated the

involvement of a sociolinguistic perspective, which relevance was consequently explained in terms of the research problem.

Concurrently, a critical discourse analysis was applied to the most significant information in order to determine *how the understanding thereof can contribute to enhance children's relational well-being* (Research question 2). The analysis revealed a pattern of perceptions that could facilitate relational well-being, as well as a pattern that could restrain relational well-being. Both patterns proved to have pivotal implications for relational well-being. The facilitating pattern included two perceptions which may have the following facilitating impact:

1. Relational enhancement should be aimed at the entire school community network, including all role players involved in the child's life, in order to yield greater effectiveness. The participants' discussion reflected a relational well-being enhancement approach that suggests that they are informed by modern perspectives, theories and models. This transpires from them using the following concepts and frameworks for explaining their perceptions: totality and holism (Community psychology), complexity, interconnectedness and environments (complexity theory), ripple effect (bioecological systems theory) and direct references to Bronfenbrenner's model concerning the environment.
2. Relational improvement should involve a proactive, preventative approach. They agreed unanimously that it should be facilitated by actually creating opportunities for proactively building and nurturing relationships in a school community as an inclusive environment. By focussing on strengths and the opportunity to thrive, they involved a Positive psychology perspective.

The implications of the two facilitating perceptions for relational well-being were critically assessed and it transpired that their perceptions have fostering implications for relational well-being. The creation of an appropriate relational enhancement framework in terms of modern holistic and proactive approaches, which is contextually relevant to South African school communities, can benefit from this situation. The facilitating patterns reflect perceptions that suggest a facilitating climate for enhancing relational well-being, as they are not only in line with perspectives and theories that are currently advocated, but also practically informed by the reality of present South African school contexts.

The restraining pattern included three perceptions:

1. Uncertainty: Apart from openly acknowledging their uncertainty, the participants also tried to conceal it by using strategies in their language. Four language strategies were analysed through discourse analysis and discussed: "*I think ...*", "*Do you think ...*", "*Maybe we should ...*" and

“Just mention it...” The restrictive impact that uncertainty, even when disguised in language, may have on relational well-being was explained.

2. Competition: Especially in the senior phase, competition is considered to be a direct result of the linear, individualist and self-centred model, with the focus on personal accomplishment, which is still followed in schools at the expense of relational well-being enhancement. This illustrates that the participants acknowledge the inappropriateness of the “illness ideology” for national school contexts.
3. Othering: Based on the teachers’ perceptions, othering, as encompassed in various negative stereotyping characteristics of some children’s “low social class” and “deviant” culture, was identified as potentially restraining for relationships. The implications thereof for relational well-being, being a chain process that starts with polarisation and ends with exclusion, were discussed.

The three perceptions, restraining to relational well-being, were each critically assessed and their potential compromising impact on relational well-being explained in terms of a chain process between “us” and “them”, involving differentiation, polarisation, distancing, othering, marginalisation, rejection and ultimately exclusion.

Teachers and the school community are part of the child’s process factors (“proximal processes” in Bronfenbrenner and Ceci’s, 1994, 2004 terms). In the regular, long-term mutual interaction between the child and their teacher, there are ample time and opportunity for teachers’ perceptions, either facilitating or restraining, to impact conclusively on the child’s well-being. Consequently, in conclusion of each discussion of the respective facilitating and restraining patterns, a critical evaluation was presented. By explaining the potential impact of each facilitating or restraining perception on children’s relational well-being enhancement, the second research question was addressed: *How can the understanding of these perceptions contribute to the enhancement of children’s relational well-being in South African school communities?*

Conclusively, the findings indicated that the participants’ perceptions of enhancing children’s relational well-being, including the understanding thereof, may have facilitating as well as restraining implications. It should, however, be noted that the restraining factors disclosed in this study may have a decisive impact on relational well-being in terms of marginalisation, and even exclusion, in educational contexts. It is therefore of critical importance that they be addressed in the best interest of children’s relational well-being. Consequently, some recommendations are made in this regard to the Department of Basic Education, school management and communities as well as for further research. (See Section 6.6 Recommendations.)

6.4 Anomalies and surprises

The researcher found it peculiar that, given South Africa's racial diversity, history and the persistency of perceptions, no racism was detected in the participants' language. The atmosphere during the World Café conversations was relaxed enough to conduce very informal discussions, but not even the participants' excitement at times provoked "a slip of a racist tongue". As concluded in Chapter 5, their othering was based on social class and culture. The question is whether this indicates political (over)correctness on the part of the participants or whether it indicates that people's "racism" is not based on the other's race, but on the other's culture. If the latter is true, it implies that the term *racism*, which has primarily a genetic meaning is generally used inappropriately and should be replaced with a term like *culturism*.

While working on the section of cultural othering, the researcher was intrigued to find that there is considerably more data on township schools and township people than on non-township schools and people. It was only much later that Lawton's (2015) article was found, confirming that people indeed spend more time on talking about things that they do not accept. This was an illuminating first-hand experience that, what first seemed to be an exception, was indeed an actual confirmation of the (othering) perception being explored.

6.5 Advantages of an interdisciplinary approach

Conventional exploring of research problems usually comprises analysis merely based on the literal interpretation of data, as in Chapter 4. Answering the second research question from a sociolinguistic angle, and interdisciplinary approach, is an attempt to address the research problem also on an alternative and deeper level of analysis. The sociolinguistic approach, as applied in Chapter 5, yielded several advantages in this regard. No new data collection was necessary, as the existing data set was compatible with the sociolinguistic theory and methodology. Ethical dilemmas, validity and reliability were also minimised, as they were already addressed during the first process and required no further effort.

The already existing results of Chapter 4 could be verified through the discourse analysis – which was only employed halfway through the study. By reanalysing the data from a sociolinguistic angle, the researcher became very familiar with the data set and could identify errors in the original analysis, thus improving the trustworthiness thereof. One such misapprehension that indicated the researcher's prejudice occurred when she accepted that the othering detected in the participants' spoken language may be of a racist nature. However, discourse analysis proved that it was based on perceptions of social class and culture. This cross-checking eventually led to the offering of more reliable results, which is an advantage to the study.

The sociolinguistic approach may be of special significance for researching sensitive issues in diverse South African contexts. Sociolinguistic methodology includes techniques for opening up concealed, latent information in discourse that may include sensitive, subjective and personal information. Therefore, information on the participants' personal convictions about relational aspects could be obtained in this study, without directly asking for it, because it was encompassed in the existing data already. This way, the participants were not "alerted", thus giving uncensored, honest information and thereby enhancing reliability.

New aspects could be detected and analysed. Factors, such as the participants' personal dispositions, believed to be mostly overlooked, could be identified and opened up by discourse analysis. The analysis revealed their perceptions as having substantial facilitating, as well as restraining implications for relational well-being. This disclosure, as encompassed in the two facilitating and three restraining perceptions (Chapter 5), would not have been possible without applying discourse analysis. The interdisciplinary approach thus resulted in more comprehensive and complete knowledge and a more faceted understanding of the research answer (De Vos, 2010).

As sociolinguistic methodology comprises techniques appropriate to analyse seemingly minute social information, e.g. tone of voice, volume and speed of talking, information of a delicate nature can be detected and analysed. This information, being of a subjective, personal and concealed nature, is not always accessible without specialised techniques, e.g. discourse analysis. This implies that their social significance, which proved to be irrefutable in this study, could have been missed without an interdisciplinary focus.

The sociolinguistic approach led to a new perspective of the existing investigation. By analysing elements that are usually not analysed (or even noticed) in normal analysis, minute utterances comprising conclusive social information on relational well-being could be analysed and interpreted. Therefore, a deeper, more nuanced interpretation of participants' perceptions and convictions contributed to a more complete and multidimensional understanding of the research problem, thus bringing the research closer to the core of the research answer.

6.6 Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, recommendations are made to the Department of Basic Education, school management and school communities. Recommendations for future research are also provided.

6.6.1 Recommendations to the Department of Basic Education

With regard to the enhancement of relational well-being in South African school communities, it is recommended that the Department of Basic Education consider the implementation of specific strategies to facilitate relational well-being in South African schools. Such strategies may include:

- A focus on the enhancement of relational skills at an early age when learners access school.
- If the uncertainty among the participants is considered, it also seems imperative that teachers are equipped with proper knowledge and intense training regarding the value of relationships and relational well-being and strategies to enhance this in their classrooms.
- Training pertaining to teachers' personal convictions on cultures and social groups is also required as it transpired that this might have an influence on the quality of education children receive.
- Furthermore, a structured support system including therapy, counselling and emotional support to teachers is recommended in order for them to unwind and reboot. The goal of such a system would be to better support teachers in order for them to fully focus on teaching and learning.
- Awareness about relational well-being should also be instilled in school communities. This can be achieved through workshop training with the whole school community.
- In order to achieve and optimally promote relational well-being throughout multicultural school communities in South Africa, it is recommended that an interdisciplinary team of people are appointed as managers and co-ordinators of relational well-being development. This team could include educational psychologists and school counsellors equipped with an adequate base of knowledge and training regarding psycho-educational interventions, as well as social anthropologists, who are not only trained in various cultures, but also in the norms and values regulating cultures, cultural interaction and governing behaviour, including socialisation and educational development.

6.6.2 Recommendations to the school management and communities

Recommendations for the school management teams, teachers, parents and home environment and children are suggested as follows:

Management:

- School management should have at their disposal sufficient information about the recent, modern perspectives, as well as a proper understanding thereof. Furthermore, school governing bodies should ensure that this modern type of proactive, preventative thinking and way of approaching challenges is implemented at schools as they are appointed to promote the interests of the school and strive for the positive development of the school.
- It is also advised that school management supply, promote and implement a supportive network to teachers and educators in the school community. This will help to ensure healthy, motivated and positive attitudes and relationships between teachers and in effect flow through to classrooms and children.
- It is recommended that relational well-being in schools be promoted as a team effort that requires constant collaboration and responsibility between the role players.
- As positive relationships are modelled through important role players, it is suggested that the headmaster and school management team create a deliberate effort to build positive relationships with their teachers and other staff members.

Teachers:

- Teachers should be up to date with the modern proactive approach and a structural programme for the implementation thereof within different schools should ideally be proposed and actively implemented in order to create unity when it comes to intervention.
- Teachers should receive training to manage their personal matters, trauma, convictions, opinions and emotions in their classrooms. This should be done in order to prevent these aspects from negatively impacting and influencing the educational situation and being transferred to other staff, children and parents.
- From a complexity theory perspective, it is advised that an awareness of the potential negative effect that teachers' personal convictions could have on relationships be created and enlightened with more current social, economical and political situations in South Africa.

Parents/Home environment:

- Better and more constructive relationships and interaction between the home and school environment are advised. These could be achieved by organising fun days, camps, movie nights and other collaborative efforts between the school, teachers, home, parents and children.

- Schools should offer parents training in raising holistically healthy children and to see school and education in the context of collaborative relationships with others.

Children:

- Children should be deliberately taught about relational well-being and relationships, including the advantages of relationships and how to build and enhance relations with others.
- It is furthermore recommended that children be taught, trained and informed about multicultural and multi-social diversity, how it operates in general life and that it should be appreciated, respected and celebrated.

6.6.3 Recommendations for further research

- Further research is recommended with regard to the understanding of relational well-being as a phenomenon within the South African education context.
- The phenomenon of othering and the influence of culture and social class in education should be further explored, especially in the multicultural and diverse South African society.
- The potential restraining influence of cultural and social aspects on education should be further explored.
- Research studies involving more heterogeneous and culturally diverse population samples could significantly contribute to the better understanding of relational well-being of children in South African school communities.
- Research including children's opinions and perspectives on the relational well-being construct could also improve and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding thereof.
- It is also advised that research be done regarding a workable support system for educators. Their immediate crucial needs and general support requirements should be explored and consequently an operational strategy should be developed.

6.7 Limitations

This study was thoroughly executed by deriving first-hand knowledge and data about relational well-being from a group of postgraduate students with an academic background and are currently involved in school communities. The non-probability and purposive sampling technique was used with the intention of accurately determining and achieving the research aim of the study. However, the sample size and homogenous group of participants can be seen as limitations to the

study, as they were not accurately representative of all of the school communities across South Africa. Participants were predominantly from the North Western province, which means that the results were obtained from one province only. A more comprehensive and accurate description and understanding of relational well-being could have been achieved by including more participants from other provinces across South Africa.

In addition, participants were mainly from a Western culture, which is not representative of the multicultural diversity constituting South Africa. For a more diversified and relevant South African perspective, participants from each culture group in South Africa would have provided a better representation regarding the enhancement of children's relational well-being in South African school communities. On a practical level, the researcher found that being appointed as a hostess has its drawbacks, e.g. technical and organisational arrangements can prevent participant observation during discussions.

Another aspect that may be seen as a limiting factor in this study was that no children were involved during this research. Children form the majority of a school community and are the main role players in schools. The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of Children (1989) found that when children are of concern, their views should be taken into account and their best interest should be of paramount consideration. By not including children in this research and not considering their opinions on the research topic, the understanding of enhancing relational well-being remains partial.

6.8 Contribution of the study

This study may contribute to relational well-being enhancement in South African school communities in the followings ways:

The existing corpus of knowledge on relational well-being is confirmed, and its significance thus effectively strengthened, by the findings of this study, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The facilitative pattern may contribute to relational well-being enhancement by suggesting a perceptual platform that is favourable and contextually relevant for creating proactive, preventative intervention initiatives, as currently advocated.

By identifying, analysing and explaining the implications of the restraining pattern, a deliberate effort could now be made in order to address these compromising perceptions in the best interest of relational well-being. This study, by focussing on the personal dispositions of teachers as an aspect that may encompass critical impact on relational well-being, may contribute to a stronger awareness in this regard. This seems yet to be effectively addressed in South African school communities.

Furthermore, this study may serve as an illustration of the value of involving an alternative, interdisciplinary approach in research. It may indicate how veiled social information of a more personal, implicit nature, that could be ignored in normal research on a literal level, was revealed, analysed and, the critical implications thereof for relational well-being, explained. It can thus offer a new, alternative explanation by discourse analysis, arriving at a more founded, nuanced understanding, which may have brought the researcher closer to the heart of the research answer.

6.9 Final word

A final word on relationships will immediately be contradicted by its dynamic, developing and changing nature.

Therefore, the researcher does not have a final word, only final hope: That this study, at this point in time, may contribute to enhance relationships as crucial connections in the holistic cycle of growth and development of the children in all schools of South Africa.

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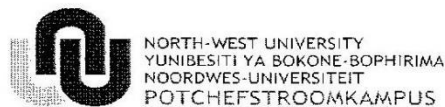
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Appendix A: Informed Consent



Faculty of Health Sciences

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23 April 2013

Beste Deelnemer

INGELIGTE TOESTEMMING – Persepsies van verhoudingswelstand in 'n opvoedkundige konteks

U word hiermee versoek om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingsprojek wat poog om persepsies van volwassenes oor verhoudingswelstand in 'n opvoedkundige konteks te ondersoek. Deelnemers sal versoek word om deel te vorm van 'n interaktiewe gesprek waar elkeen die geleentheid sal kry om hul standpunt te bespreek in 'n groep.

Deelnemers sal ongeveer 3 ure by die navorsing betrokke wees en daar word nie enige voorsienbare risiko's verwag nie. Indien deelnemers ontlonting benodig na afloop van die navorsingsprojek, is sielkundiges beskikbaar vir die doel. Etiese goedkeuring is verkry vir die navorsingsprojek wat geloods word deur AUTHER (African Unit for Transdisciplinary Health Research) van die Noordwes-Universiteit se Potchefstroom kampus. U word versoek om uself te vergewis van die onderstaande inhoud voordat u die vorm onderteken.

In die ondertekening hiervan verklaar ek dat:

Ek ingelig is dat die navorsing ten doel staan om verhoudingswelstand in 'n opvoedkundige konteks te ondersoek. My deelname sal behels dat deel te vorm van 'n interaktiewe gesprek waar elkeen die geleentheid sal kry om hul standpunt te bespreek in 'n groep.

Ek verstaan dat daar geen voorsienbare risiko's of ongemaklikhede is wanneer ek instem om deel te neem aan die studie nie. Ek verstaan dat die resultate van die studie gepubliseer mag word, maar dat my naam of enige identifiserende besonderhede nie geopenbaar sal word nie. Die Noordwes-Universiteit sal konfidensialiteit handhaaf van alle rekords, materiaal en opnames.

Ek is daarvan ingelig dat ek nie vergoed sal word vir my deelname nie. Ek is ingelig dat enige vrae wat ek aangaande die navorsing of my deelname voor of na toestemming mag hê, beantwoord sal word deur die navorsers van hierdie studie. Ek verstaan dat ek my toestemming kan terugtrek en dat ek my deelname ter enige tyd kan beëindig, sonder enige boete of verlies van voordeel aan myself. In die ondertekening van hierdie toestemmingsvorm, laat vaar ek enige wettige eise, regte en regsstellings.

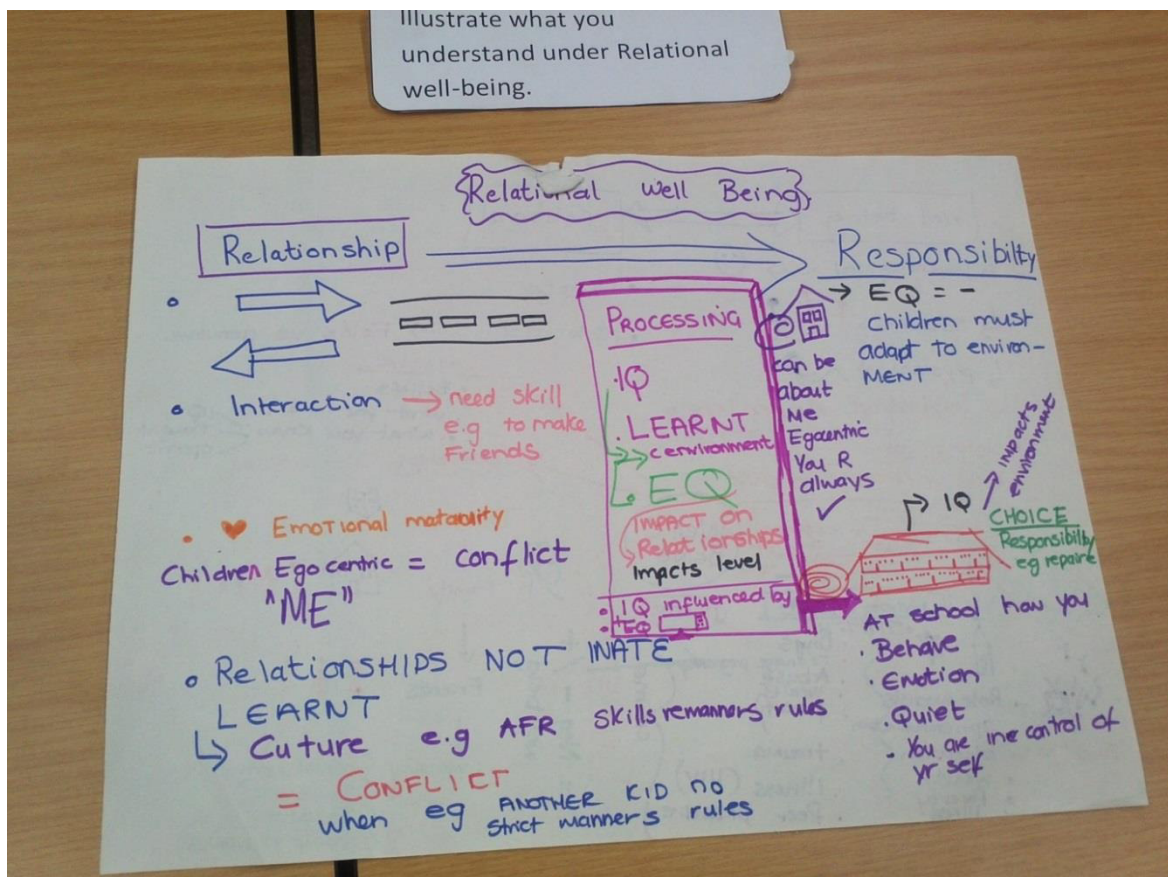
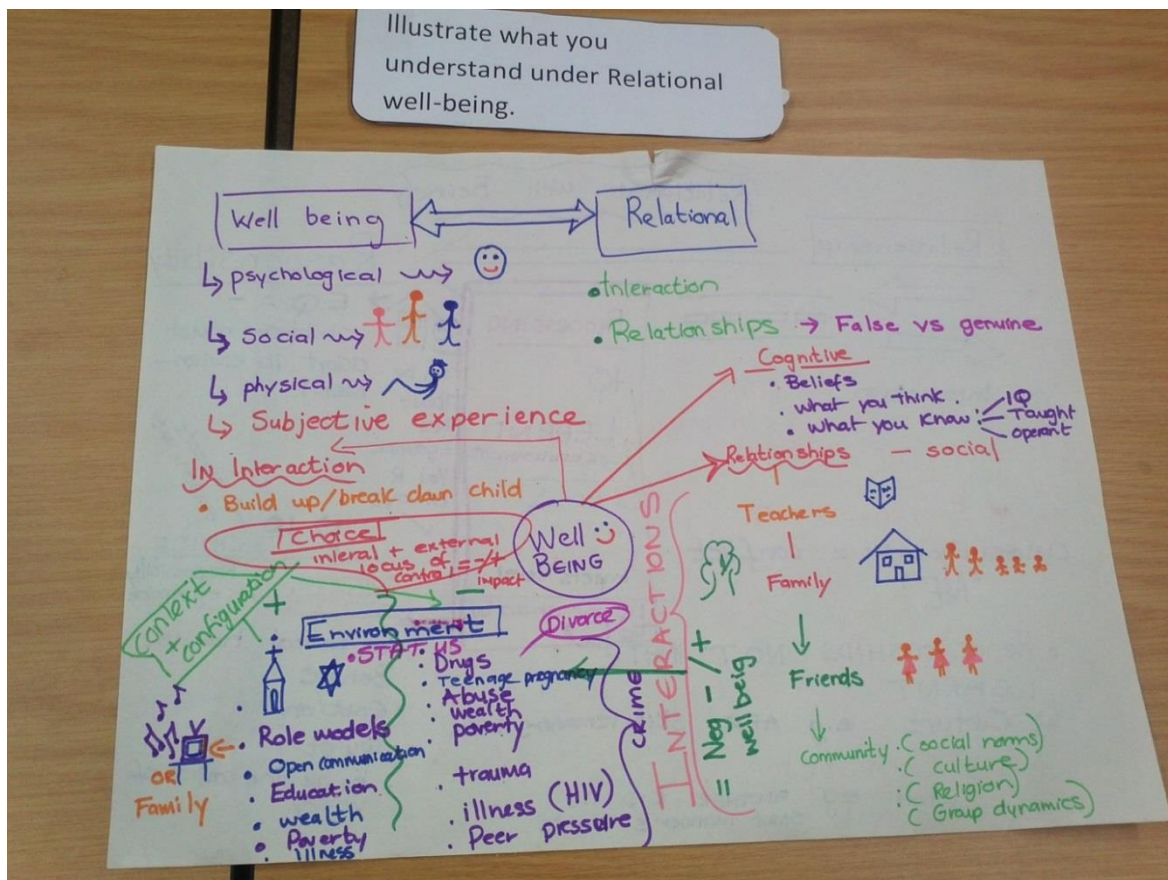
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. van der Merwe', written over a horizontal line.

Handtekening van deelnemer

A handwritten date '22/04/2013' in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Datum

Appendix B: Visual representations of participants' discussions



Appendix C: Example of verbatim transcription

Relational Well-being: Children, Group 3

Host: Daar is julle vraag. Illustrate how relational well-being is experienced by children. Ok, so ons gaan eers bietjie praat ...

WC Aanbieder:

Dames, dieselfde nou weer, eers bietjie gesels, dan kyk wat die ander groepe gesê het. Weer so 20 minute. Ok, sharp ... ok.

Host: Ok, uhm ...

P1: Ek dink glad nie kinders het daai terme, hulle kan glad nie praat van ek word waardeer ... ek weet nie of jy kan onthou nie, ek het een keer in ons klas vir kinders gevra van ... o, toe neem ek hulle op ... uhm ... dit was iets oor verhoudings ... uhm ... wat is 'n gesonde verhouding, so iets ... en hulle konnie sê ek word waardeer of so nie, hulle sê dit heel in hulle eie taal, maar dit het daarop neergekom, dis lekker om by jou te wees ... uhm, ek wens ek het dit nou hier gehad.

P2: Ja, dit was oulik hoe hulle sin daarvan maak ...

P1: En jy luister na my en jy kyk vir my ... en ek dink dis 'n basis van 'n verhouding, daai klein goedjies van ek kyk vir jou as ek met jou praat ... uhm ... respekteer ek dit wat jy sê of kraak ek dit af ... Ek dink op 'n manier dis wat kinders as 'n gesonde verhouding sien ...

Host: Dis hoe hulle dit ervaar.

P2: Ja, ek dink dit is vir seker iets van daai teenwoordigheid van die ander persoon. Daai totale betrokkenheid van ek luister nou vir jou, ek speel saam met jou, ek, uhm ...

P1: Kontakmaking ... ek is daar ...

P2: Ja, dis nou ek en jy of ek en ons, dis van ...

Host: Onverdeelde aandag basies ...

P1: Ja, ek kry baie kinders by die skool in terapie wat sê my ma luister, een het nou die dag vir my gesê, maar sy sit nie die TV af nie.

Host: Dis soos hulle self voel ...

P1: Ja, en toe dink ek 'n kind hou van TV, maar jy moet weet – as hy wil hê die TV moet afgesit word, dan moet jy weet hoe smag hy eintlik daarna dat sy na hom moet luister.

Host: Ja ... mmm ... onverdeelde aandag.

P2: Ek dink ook, ek en sy is by 2 verskillende kontekste van skole, maar selfs by, ek is by 'n baie welgestelde skool, soos ek sê die meeste mammas werk nie, maar ek dink alhoewel dit dalk kan lyk, jis, hierdie ma is so betrokke by die kind se aktiwiteite en sy's altyd by die skool, sy kom haal hom die heeltid en, en, en ... lyk dit half, verstaan asof daai teenwoordigheid daar is, maar ek dink, ook maar nie.

Appendix D: Examples of initial data coding

Host: Dan om hierdie wellbeing in 'n relationship te hê moet jy voel dat jy gehoor word en jou eerlike emosies kan uitdruk en dat daar nie verwerping is nie, maar ook dat jy ondersteun word deur die mense wat om jou is in watookal jy doen en aanpak. Al stem hulle nie altyd saam nie, maar dat hulle jou ondersteun in wat jy doen. Hierdie is 'n experience wat op 'n nie-verbale vlak gevoel word eerder as wat dit verbaal gesê word in woorde. Maar ek dink ons het 'n goeie ding hierso. En dan die proses en dis fluid, dit kan party dae op wees en party dae af gaan en als. Dis nie net, dis daai storie van met jou hartklop. As jou hartklop net so hard klop is die mense in verhoudinge of plante dood. Solank daar net bietjie op en afte is, dit klink soos my huis. Ons soek 'n bietjie daar moet 'n bietjie beweging wees en alles.

Groep 2:

P1: Nee, dis reg. Die eerste ding wat by my opkom is 'n gevoel van belonging.
Host: Belonging.
P1: Dis 'n gevoel van jy hoort êrens en jy beteken iets êrens.

Comment [A1]: feedback van ander in relationships

Comment [A2]: non-verbal

Comment [A3]: fluid proses

Comment [A4]: belonging, aanvaarding

Host: Ek wil nou net gou-gou vra hierso by die hoort iewers, hoe weet jy, jy hoort iewers, wat gee jou daai gevoel van belonging.

P2: Liefde
P1: Aanvaarding, jy word aanvaar vir wie jy is en jy voel ...
Host: ...voel veroordeel...
P1: Ja, en jy voel asof mense tyd saam met jou wil spandeer.
Host: Uhm, dink julle daar is 'n waarde aspek daaraan? Van hulle voel gewaardeerd, appreciated.
P1: En jy voel, belangrik en asof jy iets beteken. Dis seker maar dieselfde...
P2: Ja...
Host: Beteken iets vir iemand spesifiek of vir die samelewing in die algemeen?
P1: Nee, vir iemand spesifiek of vir die groep.

Comment [A5]: how do you feel you belong somewhere..

Comment [A6]: appreciated

P1: Ja...dis as jy saam met hulle die reëls maak van die klas en sulke goeters...
Ek het in my klas, omdat daar so baie van hulle is, sit ek elke dag 'n nuwe nommertjie op die...hulle is almal genommer van 1 tot 40. Elke dag as ons die datum verander dan sit ek die volgende nommertjie op en dan met daai kind begin ek daai dag alles...so ek begin by hom lees, as ek vra vrae, dan vra ek hom eerste...so kom ek deur almal op 'n stadium...

Host: So elkeen kry 'n beurt...
P2: Maar nie noodwendig nie, want onthou noe, as ek lees doen, doen, luister ek na 20 of 25 van hulle. So hulle kry meer as een beurt, maar as ek met daai kind vandag begin, eventually kry hulle almal 'n beurt.
Host: Ja, dis baie oulik
P2: En hulle weet dit, so hulle weet as hulle nie vandag 'n beurt gekry het nie, weet hulle, hulle gaan tien teen een môre of die dag daarna 'n beurt kry. Hulle mag eerste oppak, en hulle mag eerste, in die groepie wat daai kind is...dit werk baie goed.

Comment [N7]: Recognition as part of dignity and respect / Make plans to give all children recognition

P1: Dis oulik...
P2: En selfs as ek soos, uhm, vir hulle blou kolletjies gee vir positiewe gedrag of whatever...dan gaan ek ook in daai volgorde...

P1: Jy werk met hulle emosies, jy...
P2: En dat almal kry 'n beurt eventually. Jy gaan miskien nie vandag jou beurt kry nie, maar môre gaan jy.
Host: Daar is nie 'n voortrekkery hie...

P2: Ja, regverdigheid.

P1: Jy sien hulle emosionele needs.
P2: En dis vir hulle ok, want hulle voel nie elke dag hulle word nie raakgesien nie, hulle word dalk nie vandag raakgesien nie, maar hulle weet, môre gaan ek gesien word.

Comment [N8]: Steer away from favouring

P1: Sê mens dat jy hulle emosies in ag neem, soos hulle emotional needs

Host: Miskien acknowledge emotions, of...
P2: Mmm...as ek eers begin het kan ek nie ophou nie...
P1: Sê iets van emosies
P2: Iets van emosies, emosies word in ag geneem

Comment [N9]: Theme 1

P4 That's like how relationships connect with siblings, not in fact favoritism if you have the second or the third one...the age gap between children or the...all that plays a role...

P3 Ja, I just want to see if they said anything else that goes with age, so we don't repeat...

P4 It's more of a, this is more of a bigger picture...

Host: Maybe you can write down your psychological social and physical wellbeing...

P4 Ok, we've got a lot of that here...

P3 Cause here a child needs to feel accepted...you know...

P4 Wat julle daars o het...

Host: Make an asterix...different colours...

P3 So that you can see... psychological... social will be with all two and with the peers... *belonging*

P4 Just make yellow stars there...

P3 So that belonging...speel lekker saam...it's respect...so this will all be the social side, okay...then we talked about psychological is like the feelings... the child wants to... *participate*

Host: Feel safe, want's to feel happy (participate)... *self belief*

P4 Self belief...

P3 All those kinds of things would be their social needs...

P4 Here as well, is the child shy, nervous...attention seeking...what is it about...struggling psychologically, what is happening at home, what is happening in schools...

Host: Their situations...Physical?

P3 Physical would be like... a child with physical needs would obviously...I think would struggle with wellbeing... you know, be more difficult, relationships will be more... (can't hear) and the teachers would be more involved you know, like a child that is disabled or...you know what I mean, physical needs like that I would think...

Host: What of the part where you show your love and not just say your love...

P3 Physical needs like, does the child have food, does the child have shelter, you know what I mean, are their needs being given to them?

P4 Physical could be like, when talked about Maslow's...uhm...

P3 Ja, but it's important, because how many people don't have shelter, water...you know like new shoes, clean socks...you know what I mean, like when we talk about poverty. So are their physical needs being. Now education like...uhm...every child has the right to education...they can go to school, you know some kids are struggling to get to school...so are they getting the education that they think that they have...

Uncertain about what T.W. includes. Physical?

Verbal in multi-cultural + SA situations. Growth!

facit blaming

Ja, if you're not in that area, you need money to transport to take you to that school, so there's a lot of...it's open and it's for everyone, there is still logistical problems how to get their school uniforms also.

Ja, and they don't have pens...they don't have...the good thing about schools is they... (can't hear) and they have feeding schemes, so the school has to feed them. So it's just about food, if you ask them and speak to them, they say they don't eat when they get home. They have a cup of tea and then go to sleep, they don't eat like lunch or their, their dinner...you know. So are their physical needs met, because I mean you can't concentrate if you...

P4 It's Relational wellbeing...

P3 Ja, but then, it's still more about wellbeing...you can't do what you need to do if you're not eating enough or drinking enough...

Host: You're not because your relationship...there's not gonna be a place to have a relationship...

P3 Ja, I get that...

Host: You're gonna first see to basic needs and then you will be able to go up into that sort of interaction...

P3 So here can I just put like poverty, basic needs. I think that other one about physical is also like the child's disability, financially the strain on the parents...

P4 Ag I...ja

P3 The child might feel like it's their fault

P4 There's a little girl in my daughters class, she's got a hearing problem. So in all the classes she has to sit in front. How does that affect the child in terms of relationships with friends, and her self esteem...I think that would be more in terms of relational wellbeing.

P3 I think I am focused a bit more on the wellbeing, but eventually you can see how it influences the relationships.

P4 I am just on relational wellbeing now...

P3 So what do you want me to add here...

P4 No, no, so I think we should just assume that they are fed...

Host: You just don't put your line in there...you assume... *basic needs*

P4 The basic needs are met...

P3 That's part of your wellbeing...your emotional, your social, then you've got your like...

P4 Ja, but you must assume that the physical needs, that the basic needs are met on all levels...

P3 That's a bad function...

line space

T1+T3

Neg

Rich vs poor

13

14

Addendum A: Language reflecting othering based on social class

Othering based on social class, as detected by discourse analysis, is expressed through language in various ways, such as:

Word choice: The use of strong words communicates the speakers' attitude towards "low class" in no uncertain way: "... It's a dysfunctional relationship" (P4, G2, S, p14) "... yes, it's terrible" (P6, G2, S, p14).

Insult: Insult can create, as well as confirm othering: "*low social class*" and "*I mean some of the white people live in locations*" (P5) (rws, g2, p14). Allan and Burrridge (2006, p. 79) explain that insults are "normally intended to wound the addressee or bring a third party into disrepute, or both". Insults are usually based on the victim's perceived inferiority regarding a range of aspects, including socio-economic status, residential area, cultural and ideological considerations and social ineptitude. Insults do not only involve the target, but also his family, friends and acquaintances, as "... they are all the same".

Sarcasm: "*There is never a relationship here*" (P5) (rws, g2, p13) "*But there is! It's-the-principle-and-the-principle ...!*" (P6) (rws, g2, p13). Like with insult, sarcasm is also intended to show disapproval of a third party's behaviour, while also convey a sense of anger.

Pejorative words: One of the participants once used a pejorative word when discussing the behaviour of the "low social class": "*What sometimes impede these relationships (between parents and teachers) is (that) the parents think the teacher is talking bullshit ...?! (die onderwyser praat stront)*" (P8) (rws, g3, p22). Pejorative words (expletives, dirty words and swearing) like "shit" are strong discourse markers that can convey strong emotions like anger, distance and disapproval. Mooney and Evans (2015) confirm that the use of pejorative words to refer to others, indicates the clear manifestation of othering.

It is not only the pejorative word that indicates othering, but also the switching of style. Regarding language styles, Joos (as cited in Allan & Burrridge, 2006, p. 75) distinguishes between the following levels on the continuum with two extreme opposites:

Intimate – Casual – Consultative – Formal – Frozen.

Intimate and intimate-casual styles are also called "colloquial" styles and are (very) relaxed and informal. These are the levels where pejorative words, like "shit", are characteristic. The remaining styles are increasingly formal styles and with increasing formality, the lesser the chances become to find pejorative words (Joos, cited in Allan & Burrridge, 2006, p. 75).

According to the researcher's judgement, the participants' general style of communication could be considered consultative, maybe sometimes casual-consultative. Pejorative words were used only on two occasions in the participants' conversations and did not generally characterise their language. When pejorative words are used in a style that is not typified by these words, the use of these words becomes discourse markers. This indicates a switch of style from standard conversation style to a lower register. It indicates that there were "unusual" circumstances that "necessitated" the switch. The question is: What necessitated the use of "shit" in this instance? It can be explained as follows:

The speaker generally conducted a casual/consultative style that was typical of the discussions until that stage. By using the dirty word, however, she switched from the casual/consultative style to an intimate style. The latter is the style where pejorative words like "shit" would be at home. When considering this utterance in the context of the situation, as well as in the linguistic context in which it appeared for the first time, it is clear that the speaker wanted to convey a strong (emotional) social message to her listeners. This message is evidently that she wanted to persuade them about what she was talking: that the class of the people she was talking about was indeed lower. Therefore, she reflected on their language by gibing at it: she puts herself for a single moment in the lower class's shoes and "demonstrated" to the listeners the language used by the lower class. The implication is that they, the listeners, by having an example of the "low class's" language, can then judge for themselves what the level of the people's class is. It is the speaker's strategy to convince the listeners that her judgement of them being low class is correct. It is a stronger way of asking, "What do you think?" It developed to the level of "Now you can see for yourself". She went some length to establish that she is right. By putting in the effort to act it out, she demonstrated that she is serious about it. This implies that her perception about it is fixed, i.e. she is convinced.

It is important to note that "attitudes toward a group's language reflect attitudes toward a group" (Mooney & Evans, 2015, p. 180). Expressing a negative attitude towards the language that the low class use, like this speaker did, is thus the same as expressing negative attitudes toward their low social class, including all people of that "class".

Mooney and Evans (2015) further explain that social class is only one category in terms of which attitudes can linguistically be expressed in order to label them as a social identity. Other variables include age, gender and ethnicity. It almost seems that it is acceptable to criticise a group's language when a group cannot be criticised in any other way. The speaker might, for instance, have been aware that calling people, for example, "white trash" is pejorative, but to label their language is more acceptable. This kind of language shifting, the "talking down" to a lower class, as was done by the speaker, is a universal phenomenon and is called linguistic "accommodation" (Mooney & Evans, 2015). It implies that other people's language is accommodated, even if just for a few seconds, to

reach a specific purpose of the speaker. In this instance, as explained earlier, the speaker's purpose may have been to convince the listeners about her conviction that they are dealing with "low class". Mooney and Evans (2015) relate that George Osborne, a UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, used the same linguistic technique of "adopting" the lower class warehouse workers' language in Kent in an effort to reduce the perceived distance between himself and his audience. The participant who provided our example used the same technique as Osborne, but had the opposite intention with it, namely to increase the distance. This proves how versatile language is and how important the context of the situation is in which the utterance is made.

Allan and Burridge (2006) point out that status plays a role in swearing and that "(s)wearing at someone of lower status is possible without loss of status ..." (p. 77-78). This statement confirms the sociolinguistic findings that the participants indeed consider the "other" as having low status compared to theirs. Furthermore, "(c)ursing intensifies emotional expressions in a manner that inoffensive words cannot achieve" (Allan & Burridge, 2006, p. 78). Andersson and Trudgill (1990, p. 53) also confirm that swearing involves something that has a stigma in a culture, that it should not be interpreted literally and that it can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes, which confirms that the participants are indeed patently othering the "other".

Addendum B

This table serves to demonstrate the way in which the participants differentiate between children of different “cultures” and how *othering* was revealed by considering their discourse. Township children are mainly portrayed in negative terms and Afrikaans and English children positively. It can be graphically presented as follows:

Children	Associated characteristics	Total number of characteristics	Positive/Negative
Afrikaans	Attached to mothers Rules and manners Always participate	3	Positive Positive Positive
English	Independent	1	Positive
Township	Afraid of parents Unfulfilled physical needs Early sexually active Extreme corporal punishment Child labour Unwilling to participate Physical abuse	7	Negative Negative Negative Negative Negative Negative Negative

Addendum C

Lawton (2015: The feeling of rightness, para. 11) says the following about disgust:

“... disgust tends to make people of all political persuasions more averse to morally suspect behaviour, though the response is stronger in conservatives ... Conservatives often feel strong revulsion at these violations of the status quo and so judge them to be morally unacceptable. Liberals are less easily disgusted and less likely to judge them so harshly.”