

# Post-graduate students' reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities

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Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree *Magister Artium* in Psychology at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University

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## DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

I, Valda Benade, hereby declare that “Post-graduate students’ reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities” is my own work and that all the references that were used or quoted were indicated and recognised.

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## DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

Hereby I declare that I have language edited and proof read the thesis *Post-graduate students' reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities* by Valda Benade for the degree MPsych.

I am a freelance language practitioner after a career as editor-in-chief at a leading publishing house.

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## **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe post-graduate students' reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities. The research formed part of a broader research project, entitled "Relational well-being in school communities". The researcher applied the Gestalt paradigm and the theories of existential dialogue and the field theory to this study. A qualitative, interpretive, descriptive design was followed. Non-probability purposive sampling was used whereby 14 participants were purposively selected based on their involvement in a cohort workshop organised by the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) in Wellington in the Western Cape. Data was collected through a World Café session with the post-graduate students. Thematic data analysis was used to identify themes among the data. The findings indicated a distinction between relational qualities embedded in the self, relational qualities that are essential for social connection and relational qualities that are critical in leadership. The findings suggest that the presence of relational qualities in individuals, the school community as a social context and the leadership in the school can contribute to relational well-being in school communities.

### **KEY CONCEPTS**

Gestalt paradigm

Existential dialogue

Gestalt field theory

Well-being

School well-being

Relational qualities

Relational well-being

School communities

## **OPSOMMING**

Die doel van hierdie studie was daarop gerig om nagraadse studente se refleksies oor verhoudingskwaliteite, wat moontlik verhoudingswelstand in die Suid-Afrikaanse skoolgemeenskappe mag bevorder, te ondersoek en te beskryf. Die studie het deel gevorm van 'n groter navorsingsprojek, naamlik “Verhoudingswelstand in skoolgemeenskappe”. Die navorser het vanuit 'n Gestaltparadigma gewerk en eksistensiële dialoog en die veldteorie as teoretiese vertrekpunte gebruik. 'n Kwalitatiewe, interpreterende, beskrywende ontwerp is gevolg. 'n Nie-waarskynlike doelgerigte steekproef is gedoen waartydens 14 deelnemers doelgerig gekies is om aan die studie deel te neem na aanleiding van hulle betrokkenheid by 'n kohorte werkwinkel wat deur die Sentrum vir Kinder-, Jeug- en Familiestudies in Wellington in die Wes-Kaap gereël is. “World Café” is as data-insamelingsmetode gebruik. Tematiese data-analise is gebruik om tema's vanuit die data te identifiseer. Dit het duidelik na vore gekom vanuit die bevindinge dat daar onderskei kan word tussen verhoudingskwaliteite wat gesetel is in die self, verhoudingskwaliteite wat belangrik is vir sosiale kontakmaking en verhoudingskwaliteite wat krities is in leierskap. Die bevindinge dui daarop dat die aanwesigheid van bepaalde verhoudingskwaliteite in individue, in die skoolgemeenskap as sosiale konteks en in die leierskorps moontlik kan bydra tot die bevordering van verhoudingswelstand binne die skoolgemeenskap.

### **SLEUTELBEGRIPPE**

Gestaltparadigma

Eksistensiële dialoog

Gestalt veldteorie

Welstand

Skoolwelstand

Verhoudingskwaliteite

Verhoudingswelstand

Skoolgemeenskappe

## PREFACE

This dissertation is presented in article format in accordance with the guidelines as set out in the Manual for Post-graduate studies – 2013 of the North-West University, and in conjunction with the guidelines of the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. Guidelines for the submission to this journal are attached (see Appendix C).

With regard to the study, consent was obtained from all research participants, as well as permission from the North-West University to conduct the research (see Appendix A).

The researcher would like to note that literature uses the terms children or learners interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the term *learners* when referring to children within a school context.

The researcher used the Harvard referencing method for Section A of the study. APA referencing was used for Section B in accordance with the guidelines of the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. Although the article in this dissertation exceeds the word restriction according to the guideline of the journal, changes will be made to meet the guideline prior to submission of the article for possible publication.

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**SECTION A**  
**PART 1: ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH**

**1. TITLE**

Post-graduate students' reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities.

**2. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Well-being is seen by Pollard and Lee (2003:65-69) as a positive state of the environment where the personal, relational and collective needs of individuals and communities are being met. These needs are interdependent, but they have their own unique set of qualities. Well-being ranges from being defined as an inherently positive state, to a state that ranges on a continuum from being positive to negative. It was found that the physical, cognitive, economic and social domains measure more positive indicators of well-being, while the psychological domain relies more on deficiencies. Well-being is also defined in terms of standard of living, the absence of well-being, or where a collection of different aspects that impact on a person's well-being, is considered. Most authors use separate measures of presumed indicators of well-being (Pollard & Lee, 2003:65-69). Ereaut and Whiting (2008:7) are of the opinion that the definition of well-being seems to vary in different contexts. This is due to the fact that well-being is seen as a social construct and as a primary cultural judgement. Therefore the meaning of well-being cannot be fixed, as it will always be shifting depending on the context. The best approach however to bring about change in well-being, involves a combination of personal, relational and collective strategies (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007:684).

School well-being is a global concept with social relationships and school work as two essential components. In the school context well-being is used to describe how children experience daily life in school (Løhre, Lyderson & Vatten, 2010:1). The researcher forms part of a broader research project, entitled "Relational well-being in school communities". This project links with an international movement to improve health in the school systems, through the development of programs and support. The overarching goal with this movement is to improve both the health of children

and the quality of education (Lee, Cheng, Fung & St Leger, 2006:530; Swart & Reddy, 1999:47). With this in mind the broader purpose of schooling in Australia has been clarified with a focus on the cognitive as well as the social-emotional development of children (Masters, 2004:2). In the UK the term well-being has been very important in policy around children with a recent focus on mental health and well-being within schools (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008:1; Hall, 2010:323). This recent focus might have followed on findings by Pollard and Lee (2003:59, 64) that well-being is a term that is commonly used, but inconsistently defined in child development. They are therefore of the opinion that the time has come to emphasise the positive attributes of children. By looking at strengths and abilities one can discover the core elements of well-being that enable children to flourish. In South Africa the Department of Education also has recognised the importance of good health among learners with a focus on specific health issues and problem behaviour. The focus on improving the understanding of health related issues however is only on a physical level with limited mentioning of relational well-being (Reviews of National Policies for Education, 2008:62).

The inter-relatedness between relationships and well-being within school communities however has been found to be inseparable. In the past school effectiveness has been measured by academic results, but in recent years there is a stronger focus on non-cognitive results (Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer & Rosseel, 2007:279). In this regard children's experience of their connectedness to school has been linked to good health, good academic achievement as well as positive relationships (Løhre *et al.*, 2010:1; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010:92). In a study by McLaughlin and Clarke (2010:97), important characteristics of relationships according to learner's perceptions have been found to be perceived support or caring, perceived fairness, respect, trust and being listened to, feelings of competence, involvement in decision making and being positive. It is thus inevitable that relationships have a central importance in well-being in children. Important aspects of well-being such as acknowledgement, identity, purpose and belonging are believed to develop through relationships. Therefore recent research is aimed at exploring how well-being in schools could be improved through increased emphasis

on the ways in which acknowledgement and respect within relationships are embedded within the culture and curriculum of schools (Graham, 2011:13).

Although progress has been made in research on close relationships within the school community, the focus still needs to change to the impact of social situations on cognition and behaviour (Holmes, 2000:447). Attention, for instance, needs to shift to a relational level where the focus is on interrelatedness between people. It is therefore important to move towards an understanding of the nature of the different relationships that exist in a school community, as all these relationships are interrelated and impact on one another and on the school as a community. For Kitching, Roos and Ferreira (2012:39) the answer does not merely lie within the interrelatedness between people, but they believe “nurturing relationships” may improve the health and well-being of the whole school. Within the classroom the relationship between the teacher and the learners has an impact on the classroom climate. It is for this reason that Witmer (2005:224) considers relationships together with reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic as the foundations of effective education. A positive classroom climate can contribute to an improved sense of well-being.

The interrelatedness between people as well as the fact that this interrelatedness impacts on one another was the motivation for using existential dialogue and the field theory from a Gestalt perspective as the theoretical frame of reference. According to existential dialogue humans are inherently relational, which means that one becomes and discovers who one is through relationships with other people (Andersson 2008:2). Furthermore, according to the Gestalt paradigm, it is the way in which one makes contact with other people that leads to awareness and self-actualisation. Relationships are also seen as an extension of contact (Yontef, 1993:127).

There are four characteristics of existential dialogue that are emphasised by Yontef (1993:127), namely inclusion, presence, commitment to dialogue and dialogue must be lived. The essence of these characteristics are similar to the signs of relational well-being discussed by Evans and Prilleltensky (2007:682), namely caring, respect

for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, collaboration and democratic participation in decision making processes.

The concept of relational well-being ties in with the field theory which states that the field is a whole in which the different parts are in immediate relationship and every part will be influenced by what goes on in the field. When there is reference made to the field, it is important to keep in mind the wholeness of the person in relation to his or her field (Kirchner 2000; Philippson, 2009:13; Yontef, 1993:126). In the same way the school community is constituted as a field wherein all the members will have an impact on the relational well-being of the particular school community. In the South African school community the relationships involve relationships of the learners, teachers, principal, school counsellors, parents, administrators, therapists, maintenance staff and where applicable, hostel staff.

In order to contribute to the broader research project with regards to “Relational well-being in school communities”, this research will focus on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities. For this reason the researcher involved students who took part in a cohort supervision workshop organised by the Centre for Child, Youth and Family studies in Wellington in the Western Cape. These post-graduate students were trained to work within a context of children and their families and school communities, in other words in the context of relational well-being in the school community and therefore they have an existing knowledge of relational well-being. The research question that the researcher therefore intended to answer, was as follows: What are post-graduate students’ reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities?

### **3. RESEARCH AIM**

The aim of this research was to conduct qualitative interpretive descriptive research in order to explore and describe post-graduate students’ reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities. Data gathered in this study forms part of a larger body of knowledge with regards to relational well-being in school communities.

## 4. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PARADIGM AND THEORIES

For the purpose of the research the following paradigm and theories are defined:

### 4.1 Gestalt paradigm

Yontef (1993:44) describes Gestalt theory as a phenomenological-existential theory founded by Frederick and Laura Perls in the 1940's. The German word "Gestalt" cannot be translated into a single English word as it refers to a shape, a pattern, a configuration, where there is equal emphasis on the organised whole and on the notion of the pattern. It relies on phenomenological awareness, where a distinction is made between perceiving, feeling, acting and interpretation of pre-existing attitudes. Gestalt theory focuses more on process than content. The goal of Gestalt exploration is awareness or insight. A person is never seen as different parts, but is observed as an integrated whole with innate potential for growth (Kirchner, 2000; Yontef, 1993:44).

### 4.2 Existential dialogue

Existential dialogue is recognised by its nature of caring, warmth, acceptance and self-responsibility. Martin Buber (in Yontef, 1993:127) refers to existential dialogue as the "I-Thou" dialogue where a person only has meaning in relation to others. The uniqueness of each person is valued and direct and mutual and open relations between persons are emphasised. Existential dialogue embodies authenticity, confirmation and responsibility (Jacobs & Hycner, 1995:4; Kirchner 2000). Yontef (1993:127) identifies four characteristics of existential dialogue:

- *Inclusion*: It is to put oneself into the experience of the other person without judging, analysing or interpreting, while one is able to maintain a sense of self in a separate space.
- *Presence*: It is to be present and show true interest in the other person by expressing oneself regularly to the other person. This creates trust in a relationship and may raise awareness.
- *Commitment to dialogue*: Contact grows from the interaction between people. Contact must be allowed to happen and not be manipulated or controlled.
- *Dialogue is lived*: Dialogue is not only verbal interaction, but it involves doing in order to express and move the energy among people.

### **4.3 Gestalt field theory**

Field theory is a method of exploring an event that is part of a whole field. The field is considered as a whole in which the parts are in immediate relationship and they respond to one another. No part remains uninfluenced by what goes on in the field (Kirchner, 2000; Yontef, 1993:294). A person cannot exist without a field or in isolation from a field and exists only through contact with other people. A person's awareness indicates if they can make contact with their field and can make decisions and choices within this field (Philippson, 2009:13).

## **5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **5.1 Literature review**

The following themes were investigated in the literature review: well-being, school well-being, relational qualities and relational well-being.

Literature for the purpose of this research was obtained from relevant local and international journals, dissertations and books. Search engines included Google Scholar as well as the following databases from the North-West University: EBSCO host, ProQuest, NEXUS and SAePublications.

### **5.2 Empirical investigation**

#### **5.2.1 Research approach and design**

Qualitative research (Creswell, 2007:15; Ritchie, 2009:27) was used for this study. Qualitative research focuses on the "why" of its topic through the analysis of unstructured information. Qualitative research is based on a holistic world view with the following beliefs: There is not a single reality, perceptions are different for each person and change over time and a person's knowledge has meaning only within a given situation or context (Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima & Haider, 2011:2082). Therefore to explore and describe post-graduate students' reflections on the relational qualities of relational well-being, will give meaning to their view points with regards to relational well-being within the context of the school community.

An interpretive, descriptive design was used for the study. Interpretive research, according to St George (2010:1626-1627), is defined by the analysis conducted and the theoretical positioning from which it is conducted. It is therefore centred in how

people interpret and derive their own meanings to their daily actions or design their reality-constituting activity. It focuses on practice questions of enquiry after which the researcher then interpretively described what she learned and understood about the meanings of practice situations. The researcher has to attribute meaning to what she perceives and observes (St George, 2010:1626-1627). The researcher, in other words, describes participants' reflections of relational qualities of relational well-being from within the field that they operate in.

### 5.2.2 Participants

The population for the purpose of this study was a group of post-graduate students, who are enrolled for a Master's degree in Psychology at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) of the North-West University (NWU) and who attended a cohort supervision workshop in Wellington. Convenient sampling was used with aspects of non-probability purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007:75; Ritchie, 2009:100; Teddlie & Yu, 2007:80) to select the participants. The participants were purposively selected based on their involvement in a cohort supervision workshop organised by the CCYF in Wellington in the Western Cape. There were 14 participants, one male and 13 female. Their age range was from 26 years to 51 years. The participants were also fluent in either Afrikaans or English. The participants live predominantly in the Eastern and Western Cape. The participants plan to work within the field of children, their families and school communities and therefore they had an existing knowledge of relational well-being.

### 5.2.3 Research procedure

The researcher obtained permission from NWU to conduct the research. Thereafter, the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants to participate in the study. A World Café event was conducted during the cohort supervision workshop. Data that was gathered during the World Café event was transcribed and analysed and findings were reported and discussed in a research dissertation, which was presented in article format.

### 5.2.4 Data collection method

The researcher made use of the World Café method to collect data (Brown & the World Café Community, 2002:1; Schieffer, Isaacs & Gyllenpalm, 2004:2). The World

Café is an intentional way to create conversations around specific questions of interest. The philosophy behind this method is that each person has his or her own conceptual reality and only through sharing one's viewpoint and by learning about alternative interpretations, can individuals broaden their understanding of different alternatives for action. The aim of this method is to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere where people can think together and innovate collaboratively in order to open up new visions and possibilities for solutions, rather than guiding people to adapt to specific existing knowledge.

During the event the participants were divided into four groups. Each group appointed a host, who stayed behind at the table when the group rotated. The role of the host was to inform the next group what the previous group contributed and to ensure that the discussions remained relevant to the specific question at the table. The host also needed to ensure that everyone contributed to the discussions. The groups rotated to a different table every 20 minutes, which provided the opportunity for all the participants to discuss the different questions. As the conversations connected together, collective knowledge grew and evolved. The conversations allowed participants to experience their collective capability (Schieffer *et al.*, 2004:3). Although participants shared their views with regards to different aspects pertaining to relational well-being in schools during the World Café exercise, the researcher for the purpose of this study only focused on the participants' reflections regarding relational qualities of relational well-being. The task at hand during the World Café session was: Write or draw something of the relational qualities that are important for relational well-being.

Visual representations were made to record the participants' discussions as well as audio recordings in order to keep proper recordings of the event. The researcher also made use of field notes (Creswell, 2007:86) so as to keep an audit trail of the events on the day of the World Café exercise. The recordings were transcribed to use as a data set. During the transcription and analysis of the discussions from the World Café exercise, the researcher identified themes where richer data was needed. The researcher therefore decided to send an open ended question to four of the participants who had previous experience and involvement in the Education Department.

### 5.2.5 Data analysis

Data analysis was done through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible way to identify, analyse and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:6). Analysing data involves a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that one is analysing.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006:15-23) six phases can be distinguished during data analysis. In the first phase the researcher familiarised herself with the data collected. Audio-recording of the interviews were transcribed verbatim for content analysis. In the second phase the researcher started generating initial codes by writing codes for as many potential themes/patterns as possible. The third phase involved sorting the different codes into potential themes. To help doing this, appropriate visual representations were used. In the fourth stage the researcher started reviewing the themes and located only the relevant themes and most frequent themes. During this stage the researcher asked her research supervisor for support and opinion when re-coding the data. At the end of this phase, the researcher had a fairly good idea of what the different themes were, how they fitted together and what the overall story was that the themes told about the data. In the fifth phase the researcher clearly defined what the themes were and what they were not. For each individual theme that emerged, a detailed written analysis was provided. In the final stage written thematic analysis was produced for this dissertation assignment. Verbatim statements from the participants were used (where applicable) to illustrate and explicate the main themes.

### 5.2.6 Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) trustworthiness refers to how researchers can persuade others that the findings of their research are worth paying attention to or worth taking account of.

Trustworthiness was attained in this study by incorporating the following constructs as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985:290), namely:

- **Credibility:** this asks whether the researcher has confidence in the truth of the findings of the research based on the research design, the participants and

the context (Krefting, 1991:215). The six phases of data analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006:15) were used to identify recurring themes through the data analysis of the entire data set. Member checking (Ellingson, 2009:288) with the participants was also used during the World Café session to discuss emerging themes. An open-ended question was sent to four participants after the World Café was conducted and certain themes were identified. This ensured that more detailed and in-depth data was gathered.

- **Transferability:** this refers to the degree to which the findings fit into contexts outside the study situation that are determined by the degree of similarity between the two contexts (Krefting, 1991:216). Even although the researcher presented sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison, it might however impact negatively on the comparison of the data to other populations in the same context due to the small size of the sample group.
- **Reliability:** the concept of reliability implies variability that can be ascribed to identify sources (Krefting, 1991:216). The researcher gave detailed descriptions of data gathering and analysis and interpretation regarding the research in her dissertation. Different methods of data collection were also used.
- **Confirmability:** this refers to the degree to which the findings are a function solely of the participants and conditions of the research and not of other biases or perspectives (Krefting, 1991:216). The neutrality of the data needs to be considered. During the World Café certain themes were identified. The researcher used member checking with the participants to confirm these relevant themes. After further data analysis, the themes were discussed with the research supervisor.

Triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:305) in this study was achieved by the use of different sources, different methods of data gathering and by involving the participants in identifying the themes during the World Café session.

### 5.2.7 Ethical considerations

An ethics number and permission from the NWU ethics committee was obtained before conducting the research. The researcher did not foresee risk of harm to participants during this particular study. In the event of any harm to participants, they would have been debriefed and given the option to withdraw their participation from the research at any time (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008:217).

The researcher conducted the research in a professional, transparent and objective way with moral integrity by adhering to the principles in the following discussion (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008:218). Participants were informed of the aim of the research, of the research process and that they may choose to withdraw from the research at any time. They were informed that there will be no remuneration involved. The researcher also advised the participants that the findings would be reported, but that their names would be withheld (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008:216). Informed consent forms were signed by the participants before the research commenced to give permission for the data to be used in the research project (Tracy, 2010:847). Confidentiality was discussed with the participants and it was verbally agreed that no confidential information that might be brought up during the World Café session would be disclosed outside the session. Confidentiality also entailed that data that can identify the participants would not be reported. The participants were informed that they would receive feedback of the results of the research and the recommendations that were made via email.

All research documentation will, after the research has been completed, be kept in a safe place at the offices of the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (NWU) in Wellington. Respect for intellectual property was held in high regard by avoiding plagiarism and by the correct reference to resources used.

## **6. CHOICE AND STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH ARTICLE**

The dissertation follows the article format as prescribed by the North-West University. The dissertation consists of the following sections:

Section A

Part I: Orientation to the research (Harvard referencing style)

Part II: Literature review (Harvard referencing style)

Section B: Article (APA referencing style)

Article: "Post-graduate students' reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities."

(Proposed journal: *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*)

Section C: Evaluation of the research, limitations, conclusions and recommendations and appendices.

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## **PART 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The literature review moves from a global perspective on the subject matter of well-being to a specific focus on relational well-being in the South African school communities.

The literature on well-being was reviewed to establish definitions of well-being and the importance of well-being. The different domains of well-being were examined with specific focus on well-being in the school environment and relational well-being. The concept of a school community was examined as well as determinants of well-being within this community. During the review emphasis was also placed on children's well-being as children play an important role in the school community.

### **2. WELL-BEING**

#### **2.1 Defining well-being**

Well-being is generally understood as the quality of people's lives. It is seen as a dynamic state that improves when people can fulfil their personal and social goals. Well-being emerges from how people make contact with the world around them during different stages in their lives (Ben-Arieh, 2008:41). Current research on well-being derives from two broad perspectives: the hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness, gaining of pleasure and avoidance of pain and the eudaimonic approach which focuses on meaning and self-realisation (Graham, 2011:4).

The term well-being is furthermore preferred to the term mental health, because it is a more positive and holistic approach to health. Unfortunately, the variability among definitions of well-being and the different domains, makes it difficult to compare findings across studies (Ben-Arieh, 2008:2; Graham, 2011:1; Pollard & Lee, 2003:59). Ereaut and Whiting (2008:7) are of the opinion that the definition of well-being differs in different contexts, due to the fact that well-being is seen as a social

construct and as a primary cultural judgement. The meaning of well-being can thus not be fixed, as it will always change, depending on the context.

Well-being has been defined in the past as the absence of problems. More recently the focus has shifted from survival, needs and weaknesses to well-being, resiliency and asset-based thinking. In other words, there has been a shift in focus from negative outcomes to positive outcomes (Ben-Arieh, 2008:37; Graham, 2011:6; Long, Huebner, Wedell & Hills, 2012:50). In this regard Pollard and Lee (2003:59) are of the opinion that it is also time to focus on the positive attributes of children when focusing on children and well-being. By looking at their strengths and abilities, the core elements that enable children to flourish, can be discovered.

## **2.2 Different dimensions of well-being**

According to Negovan (2010:86), all the different definitions of well-being share a multi-dimensional perspective on well-being which involves subjective, psychological and social well-being as the three principal components of overall well-being. However, when it comes to the sub-facets or different dimensions of these three components, researchers differ as can be seen in the examples that follow. Pollard and Lee (2003:59) identified five different domains of well-being on an individual level or an environmental level: physical, psychological, cognitive, social and economic. Domains that contribute to a good standard of life and to self-fulfilment are material well-being, cognitive development, mental and physical health, a safe environment and societal involvement (Pollard & Lee, 2003:59). Ben-Arieh (2008:2) is of the opinion that childhood well-being is also multi-dimensional and should focus on the immediate lives of children but also take their future lives into consideration. According to Ben-Arieh (2008:41), UNICEF focuses on the following dimensions of child well-being: material well-being, health and safety, education, peer and family relationships, behaviours and risks and young people's subjective sense of well-being. The Foundation for Child Development adds community connectedness and emotional or spiritual well-being to their domains (Ben-Arieh, 2008:41).

The field, according to Ben-Arieh (2008:37-38), is becoming much more expansive as indicators for child well-being across new domains are developed. Internationally there has also been a substantial effort to develop a set of indicators that could be used to measure and monitor childhood well-being across countries and over time. However, the concept of an overall index of child well-being presents numerous challenges like what domains should be assessed? How should each domain be weighted in relation to others? There are also gaps in data where little information is available about certain domains. Therefore most researchers use different measures of presumed indicators of well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2008:37-38).

### **2.3 A global perspective on the importance of child well-being**

Reference to child well-being is found in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, where they refer to the right to survival, the right to development, the right to protection and the right to participation. The European Union expressed its strong political commitment to combating child poverty and promoting child well-being (Gábos & Tóth, 2011:10). It is the responsibility of children's parents, their extended families, local communities and the societies that they live in, to ensure that children have the best available conditions for their well-being. It thus seems that the concept of children's well-being has become an important focus globally. That is why there has been a shift to accountability-based public policy, which requires detailed information and accurate measures of children's well-being and the outcomes that various programmes achieve (Ben-Arieh, 2008:37).

### **2.4 Children's perspective on well-being**

Seeing that well-being is considered as a central component to the realisation of children's rights, Graham (2011:6) highlights the fact that well-being should incorporate the views and perspectives of children and young people themselves. Furthermore, seeing that children are active participants of society their involvement in studies about their well-being should be a primary source of information. According to a study done by Ben-Arieh (2008:11), it was found that children's views of what they think are important for well-being included to have positive interpersonal

relationships with family and friends, to have positive activities to do, to feel safe, to have freedom and a positive sense of self and to have a good physical environment to be in.

## **2.5 Determinants of child well-being**

According to Graham (2011:13) there is substantial evidence that points to key determinants of children's well-being, namely: positive adult-child relationships, a sense of belonging, positive self-esteem and opportunities to be given responsibility and be involved in decision making processes.

## **3. RELATIONAL WELL-BEING**

According to Evans and Prilleltensky (2007:681), the well-being of a person depends on the well-being of his/her relationships and on the community in which he/she lives. This opinion ties in with the field theory that states that the field is considered as a whole in which the parts are in immediate relationship and they respond to one another. No part remains uninfluenced by what goes on in the field (Kirchner, 2000; Yontef, 1993:294). A person can therefore not exist without a field or in isolation from a field and exists only through contact with other people. Certain important aspects of well-being are also developed through relationships, like acknowledgement, identity, purpose and belonging (Graham, 2011:13). From a psychological point of view, relationships refer not only to relations with others, but also to how does one relate to oneself (Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D'Alessandro & Guffrey, 2012:6). According to Fraillon (2004:8), there are four aspects of positive relationships that lead to interpersonal well-being: communicative efficacy, empathy, acceptance and connectedness.

There are two variables in relationships: the attributes of individuals (gender, race, age, personality) and characteristics that define kinds of relationships (relational qualities). Relationships also involve culturally informed cognitive models that coordinate interaction, like shared understandings of rules and norms (Fiske & Haslam, 1996:143). The qualities of relational well-being that were identified by

Evans and Prilleltensky (2007:682) include caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, collaboration, and democratic participation in decision making processes. According to Liang, Tracy, Taylor and Williams (2002:274), qualities of relationships that enable growth are mutual engagement, authenticity and empowerment. These mentioned relational qualities can be compared to the characteristics of existential dialogue (Jacobs & Hycner, 1995:4; Kirchner 2000; Yontef, 1993:127) namely: authenticity, confirmation, responsibility, inclusion, presence, commitment to dialogue and dialogue is lived.

#### **4. WELL-BEING IN SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS**

The school environment has been found to play an important role in learners' overall well-being (Graham, 2011:11; Masters, 2004:2; Statham & Chase, 2010:14). According to Awartani, Whitman & Gordon (2008:54), most education systems have been directed towards relaying information and teaching styles that support passive learning rather than learning by exploration. This has led to the standardisation of curriculum content and assessment that often do not take into account differences on an individual, cultural or needs level. Teachers may focus on producing the best test results rather than on the well-being or real learning needs of the learners. This leads to high levels of stress, self-esteem issues and feelings of helplessness among the learners who cannot cope with such an education system. Due to these reasons there is today a growing global expectation for education systems to take responsibility for the development of the learner as a whole and of the learner's well-being (Awartani *et al.*, 2008:54).

##### **4.1 An international movement towards learners' well-being**

The Universal Education Fund (UEF) is an international movement, founded in 2004 with the purpose to improve health in the school systems, through the development of programs and support. The overarching goal of the movement however is to improve both the health of children and the quality of education (Lee, Cheng, Fung & St Leger, 2006:530; Swart & Reddy, 1999:47). The UEF works in partnership with organisations across the world to work towards its vision of worldwide education that

needs to focus on the well-being of the learners (Awartani *et al.*, 2008:51). The United Nations agencies have made very good progress in the past decade, in promoting health through schools and of creating school environments that support learners and learning (Awartani *et al.*, 2008:52). In the UK, government policy for instance is not just placing increased emphasis on educational achievement, but also on the holistic well-being of learners. However in general, programmes and services in the schools to improve learners' well-being, remain fragmented. Teachers report that they lack time and resources to follow the programmes effectively. There is also little known about the views of the learners regarding their well-being and how they think this could be supported and improved through the school community (Graham, 2011:12).

In the South African context, education faces many obstacles reflecting inequities of years of discriminatory practises such as the previous provision of services along racially segregated lines, disproportionate teacher-to-learner ratios, financial constraints and inadequate training of staff (Swart & Reddy, 1999:47). Therefore the South African Department of Education has recognised the importance of good health among learners with a focus on specific health issues and problem behaviour. The focus on improving health related issues has only been on a physical level and the other dimensions of well-being are still not being taken into account (Reviews of National Policies for Education, 2008:62).

#### **4.2 The importance of relationships within schools**

During a study done by Tew (2010:140) it was found that whenever the relational dynamics in a school community are dysfunctional, members of the community use excessive amounts of energy to manage the situation. The energy that is used to manage adverse dynamics is then lost to building positive relationships and to teaching and learning. Within a school context relationships specifically matter because they affect learners' connectedness to the school and they affect academic outcomes.

School connectedness can be described as experiences of relationships between peers and with teachers, levels of learner satisfaction, feelings of membership of the learning community and aspects of participation and involvement in decision making processes (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010:92; Thapa *et al.*, 2012:6). Social relationships refer to the social learning environment, learner-teacher relationships, and relationships with school friends, group dynamics, cooperation between school and home, decision making in school and the atmosphere of the school community (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002:84). In order to improve the well-being of learners, school communities therefore need to provide an environment where learners have the opportunity to form sustaining and meaningful relationships, which they can perceive as supportive (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010:100).

Witmer (2005:224) is of the opinion that reading, 'riting, 'rithmitic and relationships are the foundations of effective education. It is therefore clear that healthy and productive relationships play an important role in effective education as relationships are seen as one of the foundations in effective education. For this reason new research in schools is aimed at how well-being could be improved through placing more emphasis on the ways in which acknowledgement and respect, within these relationships, could be made part of the culture and curriculum of the schools (Graham, 2011:13). According to Konu and Rimpelä (2002:84) and McLaughlin and Clarke (2010:95) there is a complex dynamic between social, emotional and academic development in the school and therefore good teaching needs to integrate all these elements to improve achievements. Roffey's study confirmed that relational quality is a major factor in resilience and well-being throughout the school community (Roffey, 2012:15).

#### **4.3 Aspects of nurturing and restraining relationships within schools**

A study conducted by Kitching, Roos and Ferreira (2012:41) explored aspects of nurturing or restraining relationships in schools. They identified the following nurturing aspects, namely: connectedness between people, mutual respect and unconditional acceptance of people, caring for one another and transparent communication.

On the other hand restraining aspects included resistance to connectedness, abuse of power, the shifting of responsibility for problems in the school community, disrespect and discriminatory practices. Kitching *et al.* (2012:48) suggested that the complexity of human behaviour in school communities should be acknowledged, and a comprehensive relational approach that includes aspects of nurturing and restraining relationships and emphasises relationships between all members, should be used.

#### **4.4 The school community**

Schools are diverse communities that consist of physical capital (buildings and resources), human capital (knowledge and skills) and social capital (relationships and connections between people). It is the social capital that impacts significantly on the quality of the learning environment and the well-being of the teachers and the learners (Roffey, 2012:8). The school community is further seen as a dynamic system of connected, interdependent relationships and individual minds are formed by the social interactions between the members (Kitching *et al.*, 2012:39; Tew, 2010:141). Fraillon (2004:17) supports the idea of the school community as a dynamic system and therefore defines it in terms of belonging, participation and influence, values and commonality.

Learner well-being cannot be focussed on in isolation from a broader school context. Fraillon (2004:5) in this regard is of the opinion that it is school communities that provide the defining context and have the potential to significantly influence learners' well-being. The school community includes all the people associated with the processes of teaching and learning and it includes the understanding that people are ultimately responsible for the school's physical environment.

Social/emotional adjustment on an individual level impacts on academic performance and problematic social/emotional adjustment factors can indicate deficiencies at the school and community level. An important aspect to bring about sustainable change for better relationships and learning in schools is to acknowledge

that everyone has a perception and the right to be heard. Therefore it is very important that there must be trust and people must feel safe to express an honest view. The effects of stressful relationships in learners' lives need to be countered and the capacity of the school community to provide supportive relationships need to be increased (Murray-Harvey, 2010:112; Tew, 2010: 141; Thapa *et al.*, 2012:7).

Murray-Harvey (2010:104) highlights the fact that there are many factors that operate interdependently within a school community and their combined impact contributes to how learners perceive the quality of their life at school. The activity culture is one of these factors and it influences the construction and implementation of health and well-being in everyday school work (Sohlman, 2008:23). Therefore the well-being of the school community is dependent on schools and schooling to be inclusive, supportive and nurturing (Fraillon, 2004:12).

#### 4.4.1 Relationships within the school community

It was found that the learners' feeling of connection to their teachers and overall school community seems to be very important. This entails for instance mutual respect, teachers who are good role models for learners and make an effort to understand the learners. Connectedness therefore seems to create a positive social and emotional environment that leads to fewer risk behaviours and overall more positive well-being and academic performance (Awartani *et al.*, 2008:52; Weeks, 2009:10).

The teachers' work environment, peer relationships and feelings of inclusion and respect are important aspects for the teachers' well-being. Positive adult relationships thus play an important role in a positive school climate (Thapa *et al.*, 2012:6). The relational dynamics of the school staff can be mirrored among the learners. Children are influenced by the adult relationships in their community and the ones that they personally experience at school (Tew, 2010:140). Attachment to adults who care is at the centre of engagement at school and through school with

society. It suggests an identification with social organisations through attachment (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010:94).

If the teacher-learner relationship is positive, research has shown that the probability of behavioural problems decreases, self-esteem increases, the grade point average improves, learners are more engaged in the classroom and the learners' emotional well-being improves (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010:93; Thapa *et al.*, 2012:6). Learners and teachers need to experience success and be motivated to be in the classroom. It can be achieved by acknowledging strengths, feeling valued, respected and cared for, being and feeling included, creating a safe learning environment, encouraging persistence and reducing anxiety, encouraging positive communication within relationships, creating positive feelings and building resilience (Murray-Harvey, 2010:104; Roffey, 2012:14). In studies that focus on learners' perceptions of what aspects are important in their relationships with their teachers, the following aspects were identified: perceived support or caring, perceived fairness, respect, trust and being listened to, feelings of competence, involvement in decision making, acting on the learner's behalf and being positive (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010:97). Teachers need to be aware of the developmental stages and needs of their learners, so that they can understand them better. The teachers also need to create learning situations that encourage intrinsic motivation rather than to want to control learners (Witmer, 2005:225).

It is not only learners' relationships with their teachers that are potential sources of support and stress, but also those with their family and peers. Close relationships with parents can protect children from negative peer influences (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010:105). When parents are involved in a positive way in their children's education, achievement, motivation and concern for learning increase (Witmer, 2005:224). The ability for learners to make friends in school appears to have a direct effect on how they cope with crisis and their general level of well-being (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010:97).

#### **4.5 The impact of school climate and classroom climate on well-being**

According to Thapa *et al.* (2012:2), school climate can be defined as patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organisational structures. A positive school climate supports people in the school community feeling physically, emotionally and socially safe and people are engaged and respected. Thus a positive school climate seems to promote the well-being of the members of the school community. It is a climate where learners, families and teachers work together to develop and contribute to a shared vision for the school, and teachers set an example through their attitude that emphasises the benefits of and satisfaction from learning (Thapa *et al.*, 2012:2).

Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer & Rosseel (2007:279) define classroom climate as the atmosphere resulting from rules and regulations, how the teacher interacts with the learners and how the classroom's physical environment is experienced. Therefore interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the learners are an important aspect of the classroom climate. A positive classroom climate can contribute to a higher sense of well-being. Learners who attend school because they are highly motivated therefore report a higher sense of well-being than those learners who attend school out of a sense of duty (Van Petegem *et al.*, 2007:279).

#### **4.6 The benefits of school well-being**

The relationship between learner well-being and the other important outcomes of schooling is unequivocal. A higher level of learner well-being contributes to improved outcomes in all other aspects of schooling (Fraillon, 2004:12). Thus research is increasingly suggesting that learners who experience a positive level of overall well-being are more able to learn and integrate information in effective ways, more likely to be involved in healthy interpersonal relationships and more likely to invest in their own and others' well-being and in the sustainability of the planet, as they move into their social, professional and leadership roles in adulthood (Awartani *et al.*, 2008:54).

## **5. SUMMARY**

The literature reviewed shows that well-being is a commonly used term, but it is not consistently defined. Researchers also do not agree on the different dimensions or domains of well-being. Regardless of this there has been a global movement to focus on the importance of well-being, especially with regards to children's well-being.

Numerous studies have been done on well-being in school environments. It was found that there is a global expectation for education systems to focus on the development of the learner as a whole and not only on academic achievement. Specific focus has been placed on determinants of learner's well-being and the impact of well-being on performance.

Literature on the school community focuses on the different relationships within the community and how these impact on relational well-being within the school community. Literature on relational well-being is scant, especially with regards to relational well-being within the South African school community, where more studies are needed.

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## **SECTION B**

### **ARTICLE**

#### **Post-graduate students' reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities**

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#### **Abstract**

The aim of this article is to explore what post-graduate students' reflections are on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in the South African school communities. The Gestalt paradigm, existential dialogue and field theory were used as theoretical frameworks for this study. The study followed an interpretive, descriptive research design. Fourteen post-graduate students who are enrolled for a Master's degree in Psychology at the North-West University (NWU) were purposively selected based on their involvement in a cohort supervision workshop that was organised by the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) in Wellington in the Western Cape. The World Café method was used to determine the reflections of the post-graduate students regarding relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being. The findings that support the theoretical frameworks of this study show that relational qualities embedded in the self, relational qualities that are essential for social connection and relational qualities critical in leadership may enhance relational well-being in the South African school communities.

## **Introduction and problem statement**

The researcher forms part of a broader research project, entitled “Relational well-being in school communities”. This project links with an international movement to improve health in the school systems, through the development of programs and support. The overarching goal with this movement is to improve both the health of children and the quality of education (Lee, Cheng, Fung & St Leger, 2006; Swart & Reddy, 1999). With this in mind the broader purpose of schooling in Australia has been clarified with a focus on the cognitive as well as the social-emotional development of children (Masters, 2004). In the UK the term well-being has been very important in policy around children with a recent focus on mental health and well-being within schools (Ereaut & Whiting, 2008; Hall, 2010). In South Africa the Department of Education has recognised the importance of good health among learners with a focus on specific health issues and problem behaviour. The focus on improving the understanding of health related issues however is mainly on a physical level with limited mentioning of relational well-being (Reviews of National Policies for Education, 2008).

Well-being is seen by Pollard and Lee (2003) as a positive state of the environment where the personal, relational and collective needs of individuals and communities are being met. These needs are interdependent, but they have their own unique set of qualities. Well-being ranges from being defined as an inherently positive state, to a state that ranges on a continuum from being positive to negative. Pollard and Lee (2003), for instance, found that the physical, cognitive, economic and social domains measure more positive indicators of well-being, while the psychological domain relies more on deficiencies. Well-being is also defined in terms of standard of living, the absence of well-being, or where a collection of different

aspects that impact on a person's well-being is considered. Most authors, however, seem to use separate measures of presumed indicators of well-being (Pollard & Lee, 2003). Ereaut and Whiting (2008) are of the opinion that the definition of well-being seems to vary in different contexts. This is due to the fact that well-being is seen as a social construct and as a primary cultural judgement. Therefore, the meaning of well-being cannot be fixed, as it will always be shifting depending on the context. The best approach, however, to bring about change in well-being involves a combination of personal, relational and collective strategies (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007).

According to Pollard and Lee (2003), well-being is a term that is commonly used, but inconsistently defined in child development. They are therefore of the opinion that the time has come to emphasise the positive attributes of children. By looking at strengths and abilities one can discover the core elements of well-being that enable children to flourish.

In the context of well-being and child development, school well-being is considered as a global concept with social relationships and school work as two essential components. In the school context well-being is used to describe how learners experience daily life in school (Løhre, Lyderson & Vatten, 2010). The inter-relatedness between relationships and well-being within school communities, however, has been found to be inseparable. In the past school effectiveness has been measured by academic results, but in recent years there is a stronger focus on non-cognitive results (Van Petegem, Aelterman, Van Keer & Rosseel, 2007). In this regard learners' experience of their connectedness to school has been linked to good health, good academic achievement as well as positive relationships (Løhre et al., 2010; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). In a study by McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) important characteristics of relationships according to learner's perceptions have

been found to be perceived support or caring, perceived fairness, respect, trust and being listened to, feelings of competence, involvement in decision making and being positive.

It is thus inevitable that relationships have a central importance in well-being in children. Important aspects of well-being such as acknowledgement, identity, purpose and belonging are believed to develop through relationships. Therefore, recent research is aimed at exploring how well-being in schools could be improved through increased emphasis on the ways in which acknowledgement and respect within relationships are embedded within the culture and curriculum of schools (Graham, 2011).

Although progress has been made in research on close relationships within the school community, Holmes (2000) is of the opinion that the focus still needs to change to the impact of social situations on cognition and behaviour. Attention, for instance, needs to shift to a relational level where the focus is on interrelatedness between people. It is therefore important to move towards an understanding of the nature of the different relationships that exist in a school community, as all these relationships are interrelated and impact on one another and on the school as a community. The relationship between the teacher and the learners, for instance, has an impact on the classroom climate. A positive classroom climate can contribute to an improved sense of well-being. Nurturing relationships may improve the health and well-being of the whole school (Kitching, Roos & Ferreira, 2012). Witmer (2005) considers relationships so important within education that for her relationships together with reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic are seen as the foundations of effective education.

According to Fiske and Haslam (1996) and Beukes, Roos and Vorster (2012), relational qualities are the context in which interaction takes place and also the characteristics that define kinds of relationships. In this study the focus will thus be on relational qualities that are important in effective and meaningful relationships and interaction and how these relational qualities may contribute to relational well-being in the school communities.

The population for the purpose of this study was a group of post-graduate students, who are enrolled for a Master's degree in Psychology at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) of the North-West University (NWU) and who attended a cohort supervision workshop in Wellington. They were trained to work within a context of children, their families and school communities, in other words in the context of relational well-being in the school community and therefore they have an existing knowledge of relational well-being. The researcher therefore intended to answer the following research question: What are post-graduate students' reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities?

The aim of this research was to conduct qualitative interpretive descriptive research in order to explore and describe post-graduate students' reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities. It is important to note that the post-graduate students reflected on relational qualities in general and not with a specific focus on isolated relationships within the school community. However, the qualities that were revealed in the data are believed would enhance relational well-being within a school community as relational qualities are considered to be universal in all relationships.

## **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework for this study includes existential dialogue and the field theory from a Gestalt perspective. According to existential dialogue humans are inherently relational, which means that one becomes and discovers who one is through relationships with other people (Andersson, 2008). Gergen (2011) is also of the opinion that meaning only resides within relationship with another. Furthermore, according to the Gestalt paradigm it is the way in which one makes contact with other people that leads to awareness and self-actualisation. Relationships are therefore seen as an extension of contact between people (Yontef, 1993).

There are four characteristics of existential dialogue that are emphasised by Yontef (1993), namely inclusion, presence, commitment to dialogue and dialogue must be lived. The essence of these characteristics are similar to the relational qualities discussed by Evans and Prilleltensky (2007), namely caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, collaboration and democratic participation in decision making processes.

The concept of relational well-being ties in with the field theory which states that the field is a whole in which the different parts are in immediate relationship and every part will be influenced by what goes on in the field. When there is reference made to the field, it is important to keep in mind the wholeness of the person in relation to his or her field (Kirchner, 2000; Philippson, 2009; Yontef, 1993). In the same way the school community constitutes as a field wherein all the members will have an impact on the relational well-being of the particular school community. In the South African school community the relationships involve relationships of the

learners, teachers, principal, therapists, parents, administrators, maintenance staff and where applicable, hostel staff.

### **Research design and method**

A qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2009) was utilised to conduct this study. Qualitative research focuses on the “why” of its topic through the analysis of unstructured information. Qualitative research is based on the following: there is not a single reality, perceptions are different for each person and change over time and one’s knowledge has meaning only within a given situation or context (Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima & Haider, 2011). Therefore, to explore and describe post-graduate students’ reflections on the relational qualities of relational well-being, will give their meaning of the relational qualities that are important for effective and meaningful relationships.

An interpretive, descriptive design was used for the study. Interpretive research, according to St. George (2010), is defined by the analysis conducted and the theoretical positioning from which it is conducted. It is therefore centred in how people interpret and derive their own meanings to their daily actions or design their reality-constituting activity. It focuses on practice questions of enquiry after which the researcher then interpretively described what she learned and understood about the meanings of practice situations. This is an important component of the research process as St. George (2010) points out that researchers have to attribute meaning to what they perceive and observe. The researcher in other words describes participants’ reflections on the relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being from within the field that they operate in.

The population for the purpose of this study was a group of post-graduate students, who are enrolled for a Master’s degree in Psychology at the Centre for

Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) of the North-West University (NWU) and who attended a cohort supervision workshop organised by the CCYF in Wellington in the Western Cape. Convenient sampling was used for the study with certain aspects of non-probability purposive sampling (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2009; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). There were 14 participants, one male and 13 female. Their age range was from 26 years to 51 years. The participants were also fluent in either Afrikaans or English. The participants live predominantly in the Eastern and Western Cape. The participants were trained to work in the field of children, their families and school communities and therefore they have an existing knowledge of relational well-being.

### **Data generation**

The researcher made use of the World Café method to collect data (Brown & the World Café Community, 2002; Schieffer, Isaacs & Gyllenpalm, 2004). The World Café as a data collection method is an intentional way to create conversations around specific questions of interest. The philosophy behind this method is that each person has his or her own conceptual reality and only through sharing one's viewpoint and by learning about alternative interpretations, can individuals broaden their understanding of different alternatives for action. The aim of this method is to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere where participants can think together and innovate collaboratively in order to open up new visions and possibilities for solutions, rather than guiding people to adapt to specific existing knowledge (Brown & the World Café Community, 2002; Schieffer et al., 2004).

The participants were divided into four groups that rotated to a different table every 20 minutes to discuss different questions. Each table had a host, who was appointed by the participants, to facilitate the discussions. Although participants shared their views with regards to different aspects pertaining to relational well-being

in schools during the World Café exercise, the researcher for the purpose of this study only focused on the participants' reflections on the relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being.

Visual representations were made to record the participants' discussions as well as audio recordings in order to keep proper record of the event. The researcher also made use of field notes (Creswell, 2007), so as to keep an audit trail of the events on the day of the World Café exercise. The recordings were transcribed to use as a data set. During the transcription and analysis of the discussions from the World Café exercise, the researcher identified themes where richer data was needed. For this purpose the researcher then sent an open ended question to four of the participants who had previous experience and involvement in the Education Department, in order to obtain more in-depth information.

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis was done through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible way to identify, analyse and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), six phases can be distinguished during data analysis:

- In the first phase audio-recording of the interviews were transcribed verbatim for content analysis.
- In the second phase the researcher started generating initial codes by writing codes for as many potential themes/patterns as possible.
- The third phase involved sorting the different codes into potential themes.
- In the fourth stage the researcher started reviewing the themes and located only the relevant themes and most frequent themes.

- In the fifth phase the researcher clearly defined what the themes were and what they were not. For each individual theme that emerged, a detailed written analysis was provided.
- In the final stage written thematic analysis was produced for the dissertation assignment. Verbatim statements from the participants were used (where applicable) to illustrate and explicate the main themes.

### **Trustworthiness of research**

Trustworthiness was attained in this study by incorporating the following constructs as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely:

- Credibility (Krefting, 1991) which was achieved through multiple methods of data collection. It was further achieved through doing a member check (Ellingson, 2009) with the participants during the discussion of emerging themes towards the end of the World Café session. Participants, who were randomly selected, received an open-ended question to answer after the World Café session was conducted and certain themes were identified. Answering the open-ended question ensured that more detailed and in depth data was gathered. The six phases of data analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used to identify recurring themes through the data analysis of the entire data set.
- Transferability (Krefting, 1991) was achieved through the researcher presenting sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison. Even although the researcher presented sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison, it might however impact negatively on the comparison of the data to other populations in the same context due to the small size of the sample group.

- Reliability (Krefting, 1991) was achieved through the researcher's detailed descriptions of data gathering and analysis and interpretation regarding the research process in the research report. Once again, different methods of data collection were also used which allowed for comparison of the data.
- Confirmability (Krefting, 1991) was achieved through the use of member checking during the World Café to confirm relevant themes. After further data analysis, the themes were discussed with the research supervisor and the co-supervisor in order to maintain objectivity from the researcher.
- Triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:305) in this study was achieved by the use of different sources, different methods of data gathering and by involving the participants in identifying the themes during the World Café session.

### **Ethical aspects of the research process**

An ethics number (NWU-00060-12-A1) and permission from the NWU ethics committee was obtained before conducting the research. The researcher conducted the research in a professional, transparent and objective way with moral integrity by adhering to the principles in the following discussion (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008). Participants were informed of the aim of the research prior to the research study. They were, for instance, informed of the research process, what it entails and what will be expected from them and that they may choose to withdraw from the research at any time. They were also informed that there will be no remuneration involved. The researcher did not foresee risk of harm to participants during this particular study. In the event of any harm to participants, they would have been debriefed by counsellors who organised the cohort workshop and these participants would have been given the option to withdraw their participation from the research at any time (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008). Confidentiality entails that data that could identify the

participants would not be reported, therefore no names or personal details were referred to when reporting on the findings of the study. The participants also agreed verbally that any confidential information that might emerge during the World Café session would not be discussed outside the session. The participants were informed that the results of the research and the recommendations would be sent to them via email after the research process was concluded. After the participants were informed of the research process and that the findings would be reported, they all signed informed consent forms before the research commenced (Tracy, 2010). All research documentation will, after the research has been completed, be kept in a safe place at the offices of the CCYF (NWU) in Wellington.

### **Discussion of results**

The table below (Table 1) provides a summary of the main themes with their related sub-themes and categories, identified from the data, and which will subsequently be discussed.

**Table 1: Main themes with their related sub-themes and categories**

<b>MAIN THEME</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
Relational qualities embedded in the self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of self</li> <li>• Positive self-regard</li> <li>• Maintaining equilibrium</li> <li>• Awareness of responsibility</li> </ul>
Relational qualities essential for social connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being present and showing interest</li> <li>• Care and compassion</li> <li>• Being genuine</li> <li>• Being trustworthy</li> <li>• Showing empathy</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiencing stability</li> <li>• An openness to a sense of belonging</li> <li>• Respect and understanding of other people's uniqueness</li> <li>• Being non-judgemental and objective</li> </ul>
Relational qualities critical in leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to empower employees and others</li> <li>• Ability to create relational awareness</li> <li>• Self-nurturing in leadership</li> <li>• Embracing diversity through confirmation and acceptance</li> <li>• Co-operation through horizontal relationships</li> </ul>

At the beginning of each of the group discussions, during the World Café event, the participants decided that it was important to start by agreeing on what their concept or definition of well-being and relational well-being was. This would ensure that their perceptions would be integrated and their ideas of the qualities of relational well-being would be focussed on a similar concept. The participants were further of the opinion that although relational well-being revolves around relationships with others, that relational well-being in actual fact contributes to a more holistic sense of well-being.

All the participants agreed that the basic definition of well-being could be based on the following definition of one of the participants, "It's health: physically, mentally and socially."

Other definitions by the participants of relational well-being involved the following, “It is about how people relate” and “The whole thing about relational well-being is to move the paradigm, so that we work more towards acknowledged relationships and interaction that takes place every day.” In this regard one participant concluded that, “... relational well-being would be moving from individual to group theory.” The participants also agreed that in order to explore relational well-being, one has to take into account how groups of people relate and not focus on individuals alone. Other comments that surfaced with regards to defining relational well-being involved the following:

“And for me, I think without relational well-being, you cannot grow. Don’t you have to take environment into context? Because what is my relational well-being? What is your relational well-being? Isn’t it different?”

It therefore seems that relational well-being is not just defined within an individual or a group, but also within the community in which the individual or group is functioning.

After the participants were clear and agreed on their understanding of relational well-being, they were able to discuss and give their reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being.

### **Main theme 1: Relational qualities embedded in the self**

The theme refers to the intra-psychic qualities that according to the participants may enhance relational well-being in the school communities.

#### **Awareness of self**

The participants indicated that self-awareness and being able to make contact with other people are important qualities of relational well-being. They were of the opinion that a lack of self awareness would impact negatively on a person’s ability to

make positive contact with other people and therefore have a negative impact on their relational well-being. One of the participants stated that, “You must have an awareness of yourself and others ... for relational well-being”.

The research literature confirms the importance of self-awareness.

Awareness, according to Andersson (2008), involves one’s senses, thinking and emotions. He postulates that people have the ability to make positive contact with others, by being self-aware. This self-awareness contributes to their well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2008). Andersson (2008) is of the opinion that people have an inborn drive toward health and growth and the key element for change in the direction of growth, is contactful awareness. This means that one has to be in contact with one’s own experience while making contact with one’s environment and the people one interact with.

### **Positive self-regard**

One of the participants made a remark with regards to self-image which lead to a discussion around self-esteem and confidence and positive self-regard. For this participant to have “self-image” is an important aspect with regards to relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being. The importance to have a self-image in this context revolves around the fact that a self-image gives one the ability, “... to be with others and the confidence to [be with them]?” Participants discussed having a positive self-regard, which includes positive self-image, high self-esteem and confidence, as an important quality that would motivate a person to make contact with others and therefore enhance relational well-being. They were also of the opinion that having a positive self-regard could provide a sense of security in a relationship and prevent a person from being over sensitive or over reacting in situations.

According to Wood, Hogle and McClellan (2009), if a person has high self-esteem it means that one's overall evaluation of oneself and liking for oneself is high and secure. They are also of the opinion that many studies also show that people with high self-esteem enjoy happier, more satisfying relationships. Interestingly, high self-esteem, according to Ben-Arieh (2008) and Graham (2011), is also one of the important factors that children identified as a contributor to well-being.

### **Maintaining equilibrium**

Participants discussed maintaining internal equilibrium as an important quality that enhances self-esteem and contributes to relational well-being. In this regard one participant commented that, "You have to be balanced and stable to go forward, to grow."

Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1974) are of the opinion that the field as a whole, including the self, tends to complete itself to reach the simplest equilibrium possible, but conditions are always changing and therefore the partial equilibrium that has been reached, must be grown into. A person thus only preserves himself/herself by growing and therefore continuously finding new equilibrium.

Physical health has been identified as an important factor that contributes to a person's equilibrium. According to Gábos and Tóth (2011), physical health is one of the main contributors to a good standard of life and to self-fulfilment. The participants discussed physical well-being in general as a contributor to relational well-being. They were of the opinion that being unhealthy or stressed impacts negatively on the way that one will make contact with other people and therefore on one's relational well-being. In this regard one participant mentioned, "Even if you are very tired and stressed, it will impact on your relational well-being."

### **Awareness of responsibility**

Awareness includes knowing that one is in control of and responsible for one's own feelings, choices and behaviour (Andersson, 2008; Yontef, 1993). The participants discussed the importance of taking responsibility for one's own actions and not blaming others as important qualities of relational well-being. The following remark made by one of the participants reiterates taking responsibility for one's own actions, "What about taking responsibility for your own actions? You can't just always go and blame this one or that one." The importance of taking responsibility was made clear in statements like the following one, "I think responsibility is a very big thing in relational well-being." The participants also discussed that the ownership of responsibility is especially important for skills like problem solving and resolving conflict in order to enhance relational well-being. In this regard one participant mentioned, "Problem solving is also part of taking responsibility for your own actions." It could therefore be understood that if one does not take responsibility for one's actions, then one would not be able to solve a problem or miss an opportunity to solve a problem.

### **Main theme 2: Relational qualities essential for social connection**

The theme refers to the relational qualities that are essential for social connection and that may enhance relational well-being. Within the context of this theme the qualities that were identified were as follows:

#### **Being present and showing interest**

Participants discussed being present and showing interest during interaction with another person as important qualities of relational well-being. The findings indicate that when one is truly present and shows interest in the other person, it may also lead to trust in the relationship. In this regard one participant mentioned that,

“To feel acknowledged. You want to feel acknowledged in a relationship.” In other words, by giving acknowledgment to a person it reflects one’s presence and interest.

Jacobs (1989) is also of the opinion that when there is not true presence in the contact between people, only poor-quality contact is possible. Presence, according to Jacobs (1989) and Yontef (1993), involves bringing the fullness of oneself to the interaction with another person. To bring the fullness of oneself to the interaction with another person involves being genuine without pretence, making eye contact, physical touching and movement. In other words dialogue must be lived. True presence leads to mutual engagement or attunement to the relationship, and this is one of the qualities of relational well-being that has been identified by relational model theorists (Liang, Tracy, Taylor & Williams, 2002).

The findings also show that the participants viewed having a sense of humour as an important way for dialogue to be lived and to show presence. They were also of the opinion that humour enhances overall well-being as can be seen in the following statements made by participants: “You must also have a sense of humour.” “That forms part of well-being, which is happiness, smiling, being content ...” “I just think enjoy life. Being able to laugh at yourself.” In studies done by Weeks (2009) and Soutter (2011), it was found that an important part of well-being for teachers and learners was to have fun in the classroom. Humour can thus be very effective in building relationships with children. The participants were also of the opinion that humour creates a sense of relating on a horizontal level and starts to build a foundation for trust and openness. In this regard participants mentioned, “I think humour changes group dynamics a lot” and, “For me, humour, laughing together and having fun are very important in forming relationships – especially in schools.”

### **Care and compassion**

The participants discussed the importance of care and compassion as qualities in a supportive relationship that may enhance relational well-being. One of the participants commented that, "Relational well-being is reflected in the presence of supportive relationships, and is promoted by empathy and opportunities to give and receive caring and compassion." In this regard in studies that focus on learners' perceptions, a valued quality of relational well-being is perceived support or caring (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). According to Evans and Prilleltensky (2007), caring, nurturance, affection and support are all signs of relational well-being.

From a Gestalt perspective in existential dialogue a person puts himself/herself in service of the dialogical in an attempt to restore genuine dialogical relationships. This stance requires responsibility and offers support to others in the relationship (Jacobs & Hycner, 1995). The importance of this dialogical approach was emphasised by the following comment of one of the participant's, "... if you look at the dialogic stance of the people, that is actually going to make or break the relational well-being."

From this discussion it seems evident that care and compassion as relational qualities involve a responsibility towards others in the relationship, but at the same time also requires the skill not just to show compassion and care for others, but also to be able to receive compassion and to be cared for.

### **Being genuine**

Authenticity or being genuine is one of the qualities of relational well-being that has been identified by relational model theorists (Liang et al., 2002). Being genuine can also be identified by openness and honesty that are often defined as key components in personal relationships (Kelley, 2009).

The participants reflected on the importance of being genuine and the positive impact that it might have on open and honest social connection that may lead to relational well-being. They viewed this aspect as important in building relationships as can be seen in the following statement, “You have to be genuine in your relationships” and, “Yes, that is very true”, referring to the importance to be genuine. The participants were of the opinion that by “being true to oneself and knowing your own strengths and weaknesses,” will enhance one’s relationships with other people.

Although being genuine towards another is a quality that one shows towards other people in a relationship, it however seems that in order to be genuine one first needs to be genuine and true to oneself before one can be genuine towards others. Once again this might be linked with being aware of oneself, of who one is and of who one is not.

### **Being trustworthy**

The participants agreed that trust was a crucial quality that enhances relational well-being and through which willingness for social connection is also being created. In this regard one participant made the following comments: “Trust is huge” and, “According to me trust is one of the most important qualities of relational well-being.” One of the participants was also of the opinion that trust will be determined through certain behaviour in a relationship. This participant is further of the belief that, “... trust is important, but you do not start a relationship with trust – you start with respect, caring etc. and this will lead to trust.”

One of the participants was of the opinion that a lack of trust that currently exists in certain of the South African school communities is an obstacle towards relational well-being. Another participant reiterated the importance of the presence of

trust by stating that, “Trust will enhance relational well-being for all parties in the school community.”

Literature also confirms that one of the crucial qualities of relational well-being in the school community has been identified as trust. Trust also creates a safe environment in the school community for positive relationships to develop in and thus contribute to relational well-being (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010; Roffey, 2012; Thapa, Cohen, Higgins-D’Alessandro & Guffrey, 2012).

### **Showing empathy**

The participants stated that showing empathy creates a sense of respect and understanding of another person. Empathy also creates an atmosphere of care and interest in relationships and therefore it enhances relational well-being. In the school community showing empathy will then be essential for social connection, because of the supportive atmosphere that it creates. The participants’ understanding of empathy is reflected in the following remarks, “Being able to place yourself in someone else’s shoes” and, “Empathy is non-verbal communication.” In other words, showing empathy can also be done through one’s body language.

Davis (2009) defines empathy as that it in some way involves the transformation of the observed experiences of another person into a response within oneself. It is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses both cognitive and affective elements. Empathy creates an emotional synchrony between people, thus a match between people in the intensity of their emotional states. Therefore it creates emotional connectedness between people that influences social behaviour (Davis, 2009). This concept ties in with existential dialogue where Martin Buber (in Yontef, 1993) describes the contact between people as an “I-Though” moment when people

meet in their uniqueness with complete acceptance of the other person and this meeting leads to awareness and growth and therefore relational well-being.

### **Experiencing stability**

In their reflections on relational qualities the participants suggested that stability enhances one's willingness to make contact with other people. One of the participants was also of the opinion that being in positive relationships may offer stability, as her statement suggests, "You need stability within yourself, in others and in the environment. You have all different forms of stability. So you need a relationship ... all that general stability."

External stability, according to the participants, involves stability in other people and also in the environment. If a person experiences their environment as stable, it may lead to positive contact with others. One participant defined her understanding of external stability by stating that, "You have to feel comfortable and secure in your environment. If you have a stable environment, you are more willing to open up, be expressive and partake and to give your personal opinion." The physical environment needs to be viable for relationships to achieve stability as well as growth. Thus one of the primary ways that people use their environment in relationships is to manage interactions with others by opening themselves to others or closing themselves off (Werner, Brown & Altman, 2009). It is clear that stability in the environment impacts on a person's participation in the school community which ties in with the field theory (Yontef, 1993) that states that the community is a whole in which the parts are in immediate relationship and they respond to one another. Therefore, no person remains uninfluenced by the degree of stability that is experienced in the community.

The participants were of the opinion that in the school context a stable environment may lead to open and honest communication that enhances relational well-being. In a study done by Weeks (2009) it was found that an essential component of a caring school that enhances relational well-being in the South African context, is that the learners should feel physically and emotionally safe at school. Van Petegem et al. (2007) also mention that a positive and caring classroom climate can contribute to a higher sense of well-being. Learners also view safety and a good physical and home environment as important for their well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2008).

### **Openness to a sense of belonging**

The participants discussed that by having an openness to belonging, it encourages people towards social connection. If a person feels included in relationships and one experiences a sense of belonging to a group or a community, it enhances relational well-being. One of the participants was very clear on this by stating that, “The experience of relational well-being is to belong.”

Belonging refers to the fundamental and universal human motivation and psychological need to develop and maintain stable and caring interpersonal relationships. This basic psychological need leads to overall well-being when satisfied (Maniaci, 2009). The need for belonging is satisfied when an individual's social life is characterised by frequent, pleasant social interactions and by close, mutually caring relationships (Maniaci, 2009). The participants agreed that acknowledgement by another person can also lead to a sense of belonging as the following statement reflects, “Relational well-being is also a sense of belonging. You want to feel acknowledged in a relationship.” One of the most important qualities of children's well-being noted through many international studies, is that of a feeling of

connectedness to their teachers and overall school community and how included they feel (Awartani, Whitman & Gordon, 2008; Ben-Arieh, 2008; Graham, 2011; Kitching et al., 2012; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010; Roffey, 2012; Thapa et al., 2012).

### **Respect and understanding of other people's uniqueness**

The participants agreed that it is essential to respect and understand the uniqueness of others in order to enhance positive social connection and therefore relational well-being. In this regard participants mentioned that, "I just love what Hycner said, to celebrate the uniqueness of the other ..." and, "I believe mutual respect despite our differences is very crucial." From a Gestalt perspective, a dialogic approach celebrates the uniqueness of an individual within the context of the relational. A person's uniqueness emerges in relation to others. This experience of appreciating the uniqueness of the other person is a mutual experience for everyone in the relationship (Jacobs & Hycner, 1995).

The participants are of the opinion that a lack of respect impacts negatively on the school discipline and the behaviour of learners as well as teachers in the school community. Where there is a lack of discipline teachers feel hopeless and demotivated. Respect in educational settings is therefore essential for maintaining social order (Hendricks, 2009). According to Weeks (2009) and Roffey (2012), interaction that promotes respect impacts significantly on the relational well-being of learners and teachers.

### **Being non-judgemental and objective**

The participants were of the opinion that there is often diversity with regards to spirituality and culture in the South African school community. They agreed that in order to promote social connection between diverse people and communities one has to be non-judgemental and objective and gain knowledge about the differences

between people. In this regard participants commented that, “It is about respect for someone else’s spirituality or culture, but also about understanding it and learning from it. You don’t have to agree with it, but you have to respect it” and, “If you are in a group and you know more about the other people in the group and where they come from, then you can respect them more.”

Jacobs (1989) is of the opinion that a person who uses non-judgemental dialogue encourages contact to be made with another person. In being non-judgemental and objective one also includes other people in the community, which promotes social connection. According to Jacobs and Hycner (1995) and Yontef (1993), inclusion creates an environment of safety for relational well-being. Inclusion entails putting oneself as fully as possible into the experience of another person without judgement.

The South African school community could probably be seen as the true reflection of the diverse South African context. Therefore being non-judgemental and objective is a relational quality that is much needed with the diverse South African context where judgement and being subjective so often contributes to complex relationships.

### **Main theme 3: Relational qualities critical in leadership**

The relational qualities that are essential in leadership, in order to enhance relational well-being will be discussed as follows:

#### **Ability to empower employees and others**

According to the participants the leader in a specific community will often set the tone for relational well-being. In the school community, the teacher is one of the people who is seen in a leading role and learners are influenced by the behaviour of the teachers. One participant summarised this aspect as follows: “The teacher is

pivotal in enabling relational well-being to happen. Whoever the leader is or the person at the top, the way they interact with the group will affect how the group is with one another.”

This aspect correlates with the main principle of the field theory. According to Kirchner (2000), although the community is considered as a whole, all the different members in the community are in immediate relationship and no member remains uninfluenced by what goes on in the field or the community.

### **Ability to create relational awareness**

This discussion especially focussed on the school community where participants considered skills training as an important tool to use in order to create relational awareness. The responsibility to organise or facilitate these workshops will lie with the leaders in the school community. Certain participants agreed that the skills training could be more in the form of workshops in order to create awareness about relational well-being and not necessarily with the idea to teach specific skills. One participant summarised this aspect as follows,

“I don’t think it is necessarily about skills training. Because everyone has some of these skills somewhere. I think it is more a session to create awareness. Teachers sometimes need to do reflection in order to become aware of what is important for a positive relationship with a learner. In that way teachers will be more able to assist learners through positive relationships.”

The participants agreed that the environment has to be susceptible for skills training as one participant commented, “It’s easy to say let’s promote relational well-being, but you need expertise, you need staff ...”

The participants also viewed skills training as a tool to empower people by giving them knowledge about relational well-being. Empowerment, which is the experience of feeling personally strengthened and inspired to take action, is one of the qualities of relational well-being that has been identified by relational model theorists (Liang et al., 2002). The participants agreed with the definition of empowerment of one participant who stated that, “We want to empower people to flourish in relationships. Empowerment would be true knowledge. You give them the knowledge about relational well-being.”

The participants felt strongly about the fact that schools should have a more holistic and balanced approach towards schooling in general, where the only focus is not on academic achievements, but also on achieving equilibrium in the school community through relational well-being. One of the participants summarised this aspect as follows, “It will be important for relational well-being ... to leave a space for a holistic approach, but also an academic approach. Both of these ways are very important.” Awartani et al. (2008) confirm this aspect by saying that teachers may focus on producing the best test results rather than on the well-being or real learning needs of the learners. This approach that only focuses on academic achievements leads to high levels of stress, self-esteem issues and feelings of helplessness among the learners who cannot cope with such an education system. This is only one of the reasons why teachers need to be made aware of the importance of relational well-being and how that also impacts on achievement. This can be done through increasing their knowledge of relational well-being through skills training.

### **Self-nurturing in leadership**

According to Oaklander (2007), self-nurturing is the process in which people become more integrated within themselves and therefore more accepting, caring and

actively nurturing to themselves. One participant defined her understanding of self-care as, “So it is about taking care of oneself and taking responsibility for yourself.”

From the findings it became evident that self-care within the South African school community is been considered as an important quality that may enhance relational well-being. However, within the South African context, teachers, due to many reasons, do not have the luxury of self-nurturing. Participants, for instance, highlighted the fact that teachers often have a large number of learners in their classroom, they have many responsibilities and not enough time to fulfil all their duties. This can lead to high stress levels and exhaustion that may impact negatively on relational well-being. In this regard, participants agreed with the following comment that one of the participants made: “It must be so difficult for a teacher with 40 learners in her classroom with all different backgrounds. It must be emotionally exhausting” and, “You also have to look at the well-being of the teachers in terms of exhaustion, high stress levels ... they need to be made aware of what they can do personally to re-energise themselves.”

During a study done by Tew (2010) it was found that, whenever the relational dynamics in a school are in any way impaired, people spend enormous amounts of energy just trying to manage the situation. Energy is therefore used to try to neutralise these adverse dynamics instead of using it to build positive relationships in teaching and learning. Self-nurturing for the leaders in a school community could be valuable to empower themselves by restoring their energy, lowering their stress levels and therefore improving relational well-being. It is the responsibility of the leaders to ensure that they are aware of their stress levels and that they make the time for self-nurturing with the support of the school system that they work in. In the South African context many teachers are stressed and tired because of a high

number of learners in their classrooms and a lack of discipline in the schools. In this regard one participant concluded that, “How difficult must it be for a teacher with forty learners in her classroom. It can’t be easy; it will exhaust you, also on an emotional level.” The participants concluded that this might impact negatively on the teachers’ behaviour in the classroom and thus on the relational well-being of the school community.

### **Embracing diversity through confirmation and acceptance**

Participants discussed the diversity of culture that exists in South African communities. They agreed that these differences can be positive and lead to growth through learning from one another. If the leaders in communities set an example of embracing the differences, it might influence the rest of the community to do the same. This relational quality will then start with the leaders in the school community who set an example. Respect for diversity is also a sign of relational well-being (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007).

Participants agreed that diversity could be embraced through confirmation, because through confirmation a person gets the sense of belonging in a community. When people receive confirmation, especially by those who are significant in their lives, it centres them in their own existence and encourages them to stand their ground (Jacobs & Hycner, 1995). In this regard one of the participants mentioned, “Confirmation gives you a sense of belonging.”

Participants also discussed the important role that acceptance plays in the embracing of diversity. Acceptance has been identified as one of the important qualities of relational well-being (Fraillon, 2004; Keyes, 1998). One of the participants defined her understanding of acceptance as, “Complete acceptance, I accept you just the way you are and I believe in you ...”

Kitching et al. (2012) have also identified respectful engagement, which is engagement by equal individuals through unconditional acceptance despite their dispositions, as an important quality to improve relational well-being in South African schools. One of the participants commented that,

“You know I think if you’ve got good relationships, you know if it is a safe and trusting environment where everyone has opportunities, where it is not a competition, and that it is a movement together, then I think diversity can be an opportunity to grow for people.”

The participants also agreed that if leaders create a perception of fairness and equity with regards to diversity, it may encourage people to make positive contact with other people in their community. Fairness refers to the laws and formal rules that guide human behaviour, but also to individual ideas about right and wrong, about how one should behave, and about what one is entitled to (Kluwer, 2009). Equity on the other hand exists when people perceive the same ratio of inputs and outcomes in relationships. People also feel a right to be treated equally with others who are like them (Kluwer, 2009).

According to Tew (2010), an important quality that needs to be put into place to improve relational well-being is to acknowledge that everyone has a perception and an equal voice to be heard. One participant mentioned with regards to the importance of fairness and equity, “That people feel that they are being treated fairly, you know not just on a personal level, but on a community level. Feel that society also treats them fairly.”

### **Co-operation through horizontal relationships**

Co-operation was identified by the participants as an important relational quality in leadership. They were of the opinion that leaders could improve co-

operation through interacting with the members of the community on a horizontal level or on the same level.

Van Vugt and Van Lange (2009) broadly define co-operation as motivation to further joint interests. A cooperative relationship can be identified by a positive correspondence between people's outcomes, thus a win-win relationship.

The importance of co-operation in the classroom through horizontal relationships was also emphasised by the participants. Participants discussed the example of setting boundaries in a school community. One of the participants described this co-operation as follows, "There needs to be enough space to co-create boundaries, where people can actually create them together. People are more likely to buy in and co-operate when they have a hand in actually creating this. I think that comes in with the group dynamics, where it is more horizontal." Graham (2011) is also of the opinion that a key determinant of children's well-being is for them to be given the opportunity and responsibility to be involved in decision making processes. The participants were of the opinion that, "The teacher needs to be on a horizontal level with the learners and through that facilitate relational well-being in the classroom" and, "The school must work as a whole to improve their relational well-being, because one person cannot make a change." In other words, co-operation by all the members of a community is important to bring about change that may lead to relational well-being.

### **Summary of the research findings**

The participants in this study identified three sets of relational qualities that may enhance the relational well-being in South African school communities, namely: relational qualities embedded in the self, relational qualities essential for social connection and relational qualities that are critical in leadership.

The following relational qualities that are embedded in the self play an important role in relational well-being as it motivates a person to make contact with others in a positive way: self-awareness, positive self-regard, being able to maintain equilibrium and having an awareness of one's responsibility.

Relational qualities that are essential for social connection include being present and showing interest, having care and compassion, being genuine, being trustworthy, showing empathy, having stability, having an openness to a sense of belonging, respect and understanding of other people's uniqueness and being non-judgemental and objective.

Relational qualities that are critical in leadership have been identified by the participants as having the ability to empower employees and others, creating relational awareness, self-nurturing, embracing diversity through confirmation and acceptance and ensuring co-operation through creating horizontal relationships in the community.

### **Conclusion**

The researcher concluded from literature that relational well-being and relational qualities are complex constructs that have not been clearly formulated, especially in the school community. Literature shows that people are relational and relational well-being therefore forms an integral part of everyday life and impacts on all spheres of life including well-being.

The findings of the research suggest that relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in school communities can be divided into qualities embedded in the self, qualities that are essential for social connection and qualities that are critical in leadership. From these findings it seems that there is an individual responsibility that each person needs to be aware of that rests upon them to apply

these qualities to their own life. It will thus imply that within a school community each member of the school community is responsible to apply these relational qualities within their lives first. It seems that relational qualities start with those qualities that are embedded in the self. It is the researcher's opinion that these qualities can be installed in children from a young age through their belief system and through the modelling of these qualities by the significant adults in their lives. According to the field theory, if a person in a community applies these relational qualities to the relationships in that person's field, it will start to impact on the whole community. For this reason the leader in any given community plays a crucial role in the enhancement of relational well-being in the community by setting an example and by empowering other people in the community with awareness and knowledge of relational well-being. It is important to note that the leaders in communities include all leaders from different contexts within the community, for example the family, school and work place.

Relationships play a central role in children's well-being, because they learn through contact with others and they seek stability through their relationships. Many of these relationships are formed in the school community that consists of everyone who is part of the learning and teaching processes in the school. It is thus important for schools to create an environment that promotes relational well-being for the whole school community and through this also promotes learners' achievement. Although this achievement focussed on academic achievement in the past, there has been an important shift to a more holistic view of growth and learning that encourages the holistic development of learners, including the enhancement of their relational well-being. It is clear from literature that the experience of relational well-being through learners impacts positively on their future success and well-being.

The participants raised concerns regarding the current relational well-being in many South African schools. It was highlighted that teachers have high numbers of learners in their classroom with limited resources available to them most of the time. This impacts negatively on the teachers' relational qualities that are embedded in the self and therefore also impacts negatively on the relational qualities that are essential for social connection. This whole process might disturb the relational well-being in the classroom and therefore the learning process that takes place.

### **Limitations of the study**

The school communities throughout South Africa are diverse with different resources and Education Departments. The participants for this study were predominantly from the Western Cape. The contribution towards information regarding South African school communities could possibly have been more inclusive if the World Café session was held with participants who were more representative of all the different South African provinces. The researcher is also of the opinion that the participants were predominantly from a Western culture and should have been more representative of the diverse cultures in South African schools. The reflections of relational qualities from within their own cultures might have added more in depth data to the study.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that more research needs to be done in order to clearly formulate the complex constructs of relational well-being and relational qualities, especially with regards to the school community. Further research will contribute to the existing base of knowledge of these specific constructs and might also further highlight relevant research topics.

The researcher recommends that an awareness of relational well-being should be created in the school communities through presenting informative as well as experiential workshops. These workshops should not only empower people with knowledge and understanding of relational well-being and relational qualities and the impact thereof on a school community, but they should also create self-awareness and thereby develop relational qualities that are embedded in the self and that are essential for social connection. Leadership workshops should then also include the relational qualities that are critical in leadership. It is important that workshops regarding relational well-being and relational qualities are presented to all the members of the school community in different contexts, namely: learners, teachers, members of the school board, support staff, parents, other staff involved with the school and also the policy makers.

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**SECTION C:**  
**EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH, LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this section is to indicate whether the aim that was set for this study was adequately met and whether the research question that was formulated was answered. The researcher further presents a summary of the research findings, a discussion of the conclusions and recommendations which are based on the research results; this will also include possible research opportunities. A discussion of the limitations of this study will also be included.

**2. OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH TOPIC AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The researcher formed part of a broader research project, entitled “Relational well-being in school communities”. This broader research project is taking place because of the global movement towards improving child well-being with a specific focus on the school environment. Although progress has been made in research with regards to well-being in the school community, the focus still needs to change to a relational level and with a specific focus on the interrelatedness between people. The research aim was to explore and describe post-graduate students’ reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities. With the data gathered through the research the researcher therefore aimed to contribute to the broader base of knowledge regarding the field of relational well-being in school communities.

**3. EVALUATING THE ANSWERING OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION**

The researcher intended to answer the following research question: What are post-graduate students’ reflections on relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in South African school communities?

The research question was answered by employing the following steps:

- The researcher conducted a literature review by gathering literature using multiple methods and sources. Literature was sought using library-based research including books, magazines, academic journals and internet-based journal publication search engines such as EBSCOhost, ProQuest, NEXUS and SAePublications.
- Qualitative research was used for this study. An interpretive, descriptive design was used to describe the participants' reflections of relational qualities from within the field that they operate in.
- The population for the purpose of this study was a group of post-graduate students, who are enrolled for a Master's degree in Psychology at the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF) of the North-West University (NWU) and who attended a cohort supervision workshop in Wellington. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the participants based on their involvement in a cohort supervision workshop organised by the CCYF in Wellington in the Western Cape.
- Prior to conducting the research ethical clearance was obtained from the North-West University as well as written consent from all the participants (see appendix A).
- The researcher conducted a World Café session with the participants during which field notes were taken and the discussions were recorded to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data capture. Participants were informed of the use of digital voice recorders. Further data was gathered through sending out an open-ended question that certain of the participants were asked to answer after conducting the World Café session. The reason for gathering further data was to ensure that there was enough data available for in depth analysis.

- During data analysis, the researcher identified three main themes of relational qualities, namely: relational qualities embedded in the self, relational qualities essential for social connection and relational qualities critical in leadership. These themes were discussed in Section B and were verified with relevant literature.

#### **4. LIMITATIONS REGARDING THE STUDY**

The school communities throughout South Africa are diverse with different resources and Education Departments. The participants for this study were predominantly from the Western Cape. The contribution towards information regarding South African school communities could possibly have been more inclusive if the World Café session was held with participants who were more representative of all the different South African provinces.

The participants were predominantly from a Western culture and with the diverse cultures that exist in South Africa it would have been valuable to have participants who were more representative of these diverse cultures. The researcher is of the opinion that their reflections of relational qualities from within their cultures might have added more in depth data that might have been more representative of the diverse South African school community.

#### **5. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The analysis of the participants' reflections on relational well-being in South African school communities, revealed three sets of relational qualities associated with the enhancement of relational well-being in these communities, namely: relational qualities embedded in the self, relational qualities essential for social connection and relational qualities that are critical in leadership.

Relational qualities that are embedded in the self motivate a person to make contact with others in a positive way. These qualities include: awareness of self, positive self-regard, maintaining equilibrium and awareness of one's responsibility.

Relational qualities that are essential for social connection include being present and showing interest, care and compassion, being genuine, being trustworthy, showing empathy, having stability, having an openness to a sense of belonging, respect and understanding and being non-judgemental and objective. These qualities determine how a person might make contact with others.

Relational qualities that are critical in leadership are the ability to empower employees and others, the ability to create relational awareness, self-nurturing, embracing diversity through confirmation and acceptance and ensuring co-operation through creating horizontal relationships in the community.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The researcher concluded from literature that relational well-being and relational qualities are complex constructs that have not been clearly formulated. Although there has been an increase in research and theory on relational well-being, relational well-being remains a fairly new term in the context of the school community. It was clear from literature that people are relational and relational well-being therefore forms an integral part of everyday life and impacts on all spheres of life. Relational well-being also plays an important role in the general well-being of people.

The findings of the research suggest that relational qualities that may enhance relational well-being in school communities can be divided into qualities embedded in the self, qualities that are essential for social connection and qualities that are critical in leadership. From these findings it seems that there is an individual responsibility that rests upon each person in a community to apply these qualities to their own life as well as to the school communities in which they operate, either as a learner, a teacher, a member of the school board or the support staff. Each person needs an awareness of this responsibility and also an acceptance of themselves in order to be able to celebrate the uniqueness of other people that form part of the community. It seems that relational qualities start with those qualities that are embedded in the self. It is the researcher's opinion that these qualities can be installed in children from a young age through their belief system and through the modelling of these qualities by the significant adults in their lives.

According to the field theory, if a person in a community applies these relational qualities to the relationships in that person's field, it will start to impact on the whole community. For this reason the leader in any given community plays a crucial role in the enhancement of relational well-being in the community by setting an example and by empowering other people in the community with awareness and knowledge of relational well-being. It is important to note that the leaders in communities include all leaders from different contexts within the community, for example the family, school and work place.

Relationships play a central role in children's well-being, because they learn through contact with others and they seek stability through their relationships. Many of these relationships are formed in the school community that consists of everyone who is part of the learning and teaching processes in the school. It is thus important for schools to create an environment that promotes relational well-being for the whole school community and through this also promotes learners' achievement. This achievement focussed on academic achievement in the past, but there has been a shift to a more holistic view of growth and learning that includes achievement in areas like relational well-being. This shift is important as it encourages the holistic development of learners that will equip them with more skills and knowledge for future success.

It is clear from literature that the experience of relational well-being through learners impacts positively on their future success and well-being. It was also found in previous studies in literature that learners have a valuable contribution to make regarding aspects of their own relational well-being.

The participants raised concerns regarding the current relational well-being in many South African schools. It was highlighted that teachers have high numbers of learners in their classroom with limited resources available to them most of the time. This impacts negatively on the teachers' relational qualities that are embedded in the self and therefore also impacts negatively on the relational qualities that are essential for social connection. This whole process might disturb the relational well-being in the classroom and therefore the learning process that takes place.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends that more research needs to be done in order to clearly formulate the complex constructs of relational well-being and relational qualities, especially with regards to the school community. Further research will contribute to the existing base of knowledge of these specific constructs and might also further highlight relevant research topics.

The researcher recommends that an awareness of relational well-being should be created in the school communities. This could be done through presenting informative workshops where the concept of relational well-being and relational qualities and the impact thereof on a school community is presented. Experiential workshops are also recommended to create or enhance self-awareness and to develop relational qualities that are embedded in the self and also that are essential for social connection. Leadership workshops should then also include the relational qualities that are critical in leadership. It is important that workshops regarding relational well-being and relational qualities are presented to all the members of the school community in different contexts, namely: learners, teachers, members of the school board, support staff, parents, other staff involved with the school and also the policy makers.

## **8. FINAL COMMENT**

Although relational well-being and the qualities thereof are complex constructs, it is clear that they play a critical role in everyday life and impact substantially on overall well-being. It is the personal responsibility of each person to contribute to the relational well-being of one's community through applying the relational qualities that were identified in this study to their relationships. If an awareness regarding relational well-being is created from a young age, children will grow up to form meaningful and supportive relationships with others that will impact positively on the whole community.

## APPENDIX A: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM



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Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies  
Corner of East and College Street  
**Wellington**  
7655  
Tel: 021 864 3593  
Fax: 021 864 2654

20 May 2013

Dear participant

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

A research project of the North-West University

**Title: IMPORTANT QUALITIES IN RELATIONAL WELL-BEING: POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS BY MEANS OF THE WORLD CAFÉ**

You are hereby requested to engage in a research project to exchange information about your perception of important qualities in relational well-being. Participants will be involved in the research for approximately 90 minutes, with no foreseeable risks. Ethical approval was obtained for the research project which is conducted by the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF), Faculty of Health Sciences at the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus. You are hereby requested to familiarise yourself with the content before you sign the form below.

---

In signing this form I declare that:

I have been informed what the purpose of the research is and that I will participate in a data gathering session, where I will be requested to give my perception of important qualities in relational well-being. I will also engage in a group discussion to identify themes in important qualities in relational well-being. The session will last about 90 minutes.

I understand that there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts when I agree to participate in the study. I understand that the results of the study may be published, but that my name or any identifying information will not be revealed. The North-West University will maintain confidentiality of all records, material and recordings. I have been informed that I will not be compensated for my participation.

I have been informed that any questions I may have concerning this research or my participation before or after my consent, will be answered by the researcher of this study. I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participating at any time of the research process, without

penalty or loss of benefit to myself. In signing this consent form, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights and remedies.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name and Surname  
(Participant)

Signature

Date

**APPENDIX B: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM**

**Biographical Information**

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Race:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sex:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Place of residence:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current qualification:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please give a short description of the relationships that you are involved in at your work place:

Thank you for your participation.

## APPENDIX C: *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS* GUIDELINES

Manuscript submission guidelines: *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*

1. Peer review policy
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- 7.1 Funding acknowledgement
8. Permissions
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  - 9.2 Journal style
  - 9.3 Reference style
  - 9.4 Manuscript preparation
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    - 9.4.2 Corresponding author contact details
    - 9.4.3 Guidelines for submitting artwork, figures and other graphics
    - 9.4.4 Guidelines for submitting supplemental files
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11. Further information

*Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* is an international and interdisciplinary peer reviewed journal that publishes the highest quality original research on social and personal relationships.

### 1. Peer review policy

*Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* operates a strictly blinded peer review process in which the reviewer's name is withheld from the author and, the author's name from the reviewer. The reviewer may at their own discretion opt to reveal their name to the author in their review but our standard policy practice is for both identities to remain concealed. Each manuscript is reviewed by at least two (and generally three) referees.

Papers from graduate students or recent PhDs are especially welcomed and will, if the authors explicitly request it, receive extra attention (i.e. one additional reviewer). All manuscripts are reviewed as rapidly as possible, and an editorial decision is generally reached within 3-4 months of submission.

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## 2. Article types

*Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (JSPR) is an international and interdisciplinary peer reviewed journal that publishes empirical and theoretical papers on social and personal relationships. It is multidisciplinary in scope, drawing materials from, among others, the fields of social psychology, clinical psychology, communication, developmental psychology, family studies and sociology. The Journal considers the following kinds of article for publication:

1. Research Reports, describing new empirical findings;

(a) Full papers

(b) Short reports requiring rapid dissemination

2. Review Articles. The Editor wishes to encourage the following types of review, but request that authors contact them in advance:

(a) general reviews that provide a synthesis of an area of social and personal relationships;

(b) critiques – focused and provocative reviews that are followed by a number of invited commentaries, with a concluding reply from the main author;

(c) *Viewpoint* article – a research-based commentary, preferably on a currently relevant issue, targeting either the research community, the political agenda or both. The emphasis is on policy recommendations, but the article should be based on a succinct and balanced summary of existing research on the issue.

Full papers and review articles are generally restricted to a maximum of 9,000 words including all elements (title page, abstract, notes, references, tables, biographical statement, etc.). Short reports are generally restricted to 3,000 words including all elements (title page, abstract, notes, references, tables, biographical statement, etc.).

We are reluctant to burden our referees with very long manuscripts. Authors who suspect that their articles will have to be cut anyway should make the required deletions before submitting.

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## 3. How to submit your manuscript

Before submitting your manuscript, please ensure you carefully read and adhere to all the guidelines and instructions to authors provided below. Manuscripts not conforming to these guidelines may be returned. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* is hosted on SAGEtrack a web based online submission and peer review system powered by ScholarOne™ Manuscripts. Please read the Manuscript Submission guidelines below, and then simply visit <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jspr> to login and submit your article online.

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For further guidance on submitting your manuscript online please visit ScholarOne [Online Help](#). All papers must be submitted via the online system. If you would like to discuss your paper prior to submission, please refer to the contact details below.

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### **5. Declaration of conflicting interests**

Within your Journal Contributor's Publishing Agreement you will be required to make a certification with respect to a declaration of conflicting interests. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* does not require a declaration of conflicting interests but recommends you review the good practice guidelines on the [SAGE Journal Author Gateway](#).

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### **6. Other conventions**

None applicable.

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### **7. Acknowledgements**

Authors will be asked to provide details on funding when uploading their manuscript to SAGEtrack. As *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* is double blind, authors will be asked to remove the funding information from the manuscript text. Please follow the instructions on the SAGEtrack site. For more information on the guidance for Research Funders, Authors and Publishers, please visit:

<http://www.rin.ac.uk/funders-acknowledgement>

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### **8. Permissions**

Authors are responsible for obtaining permission from copyright holders for reproducing any illustrations, tables, figures or lengthy quotations previously published elsewhere. For further information including guidance on fair dealing for criticism and review, please visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the SAGE Journal Author Gateway.

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### **9. Manuscript style**

#### **9.1 File types**

Only electronic files conforming to the journal's guidelines will be accepted. Preferred formats for the text and tables of your manuscript are Word DOC, RTF, XLS. LaTeX files are also accepted. Please also refer to additional guideline on submitting artwork below.

#### **9.2 Journal Style**

*Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* conforms to APA style; guidelines are outlined in the *Publication Manual* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) published by the American Psychological Society.

### **9.3 Reference Style**

*Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* operates an [APA reference style](#). Click here to review the guidelines on APA to ensure your manuscript conforms to this reference style. [[link to landing page for http://www.uk.sagepub.com/repository/binaries/pdf/APA\\_reference\\_style.pdf](http://www.uk.sagepub.com/repository/binaries/pdf/APA_reference_style.pdf)].

### **9.4. Manuscript Preparation**

The text should be double-spaced throughout and should be standard 10 or 12 point.

#### **9.4.1 Your Title, Keywords and Abstracts: Helping readers find your article online**

The title, keywords and abstract are key to ensuring readers find your article through online search engines such as Google. Please refer to the information and guidance on how best to title your article, write your abstract and select your keywords by visiting SAGE's Journal Author Gateway Guidelines on [How to Help Readers Find Your Article Online](#).

#### **9.4.2 Corresponding Author Contact details**

Provide full contact details for the corresponding author including email, mailing address and telephone numbers. Academic affiliations are required for all co-authors. These details should be presented separately to the main text of the article to facilitate anonymous peer review.

#### **9.4.3 Guidelines for submitting artwork, figures and other graphics**

For guidance on the preparation of illustrations, pictures and graphs in electronic format, please visit SAGE's [Manuscript Submission Guidelines](#).

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#### **9.4.5 English Language Editing services**

Non-English speaking authors who would like to refine their use of language in their manuscripts might consider using a professional editing service. Visit <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/authors/journal/submission.sp> for further information.

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## **10. After acceptance**

### **10.1 Proofs**

We will email a PDF of the proofs to the corresponding author.

### **10.2 E-Prints and Complimentary Copies**

SAGE provides authors with access to a PDF of their final article. For further information please visit <http://www.sagepub.co.uk/authors/journal/reprint.sp>. We additionally provide the corresponding author with a complimentary copy of the print issue in which the article appears (up to a maximum of 5 copies for distribution to co-authors).

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## 11. Further information

Any correspondence, queries or additional requests for information on the Manuscript Submission process should be sent to the Editorial Office as follows:

The Editor

Professor Mario Mikulincer, Dean

The New School of Psychology

Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya

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**APPENDIX D:       EXTRACT FROM THE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE WORLD  
CAFÉ SESSION**

**Group 1:**

Ja, I agree with you.

I think I'm going to start maybe just to write something for us, because the 20 minutes run quite quickly. Ok, so let's start with the definition that you said, that is basically now how we started, that ...

Yes, just to say what relational well-being is...

And I think what well-being is, I think that is also important.

It's health, it's

It's like physically, mentally, socially...

Yes

All that (writing)

Then we started thinking about this, this links with this. What is well-being? And we said it is things like health, maybe we should put it there?

I've got it here.

Ja health

No, that is fine.

But what did we, what did we?

You said with the groups, communication, interaction.

It's not one on one, it's we almost need to look at how the world relates?

So it's,

Yes, that would go there with yours (writing)

So, relational well-being would be moving from individual to group theory

And for me, I think without relational well-being, you cannot grow without it.

Ja.

Ok, moving away from individual to groups (writing)

Ok, make the connections (writing)

And we can maybe draw a little picture here (drawing)

When you start ... you start growing (laughter)

That is also a good quote

What is it? What are the qualities?

Ummm, the qualities that are important for relational well-being.

So, the actual qualities.

Are those personal qualities?

Ja, I think it could be personal, it could be administrative, it could be, I think it could be anything.

It could be things like (interrupted)

Oh, ok

It's quite an open ended question. So maybe we can say that we think firstly the qualities need to be sub-divided into is it personal qualities? Is it...

I can see you are very structured (laughter)

Ok, I'll also help. Ok, so let's decide what we think the qualities are.

But like the groups of qualities now. Like personal or what do you mean?

Ja, I would say we can do personal and then we could split that more.

Yes, but I think we must first acknowledge that we as a group think that qualities, you need to think of it as groups. That you can't pull them all together.

So can we (interrupted)

If I understand correctly, like there is groups of qualities, like personal...

Ok, but how do we group it?

But I think that qualities for us means groups.

I think just qualities also, I know it is relational well-being, but do we take it into context? Which environment? Don't you have to take that also into context? Or do we just focus on the word relational well-being? Because what is my relational well-being? What is your relational well-being? Isn't it different?

Mmmm, ja

Or must we just focus on this is a question of relational well-being. Or can't we just say with the qualities, also, you have to take your environment into consideration.

Well, that is good. I think.

But won't your environment also be a certain kind of quality? Like your environment needs certain kind of qualities to (interrupted)

To flourish.

Yes.

To promote relational well-being you have to take the environment into consideration. So the environment is actually a quality?

Yes. Let's (laughter)

Go for it.

Let's start writing.

Ek skryf baie lelik, so julle sal moet skryf, ek sal prentjies teken.

Ok, so we have spoken about there is social qualities, the environment

Can I do it like this?

Yes.

And personal, do they go under the same?

Yes, because if you subdivide it now, social, personal maybeummm...

We can say The Self, if we work Gestalt, maybe, I don't know.

Ja, it could also be a quality. I mean if The Self is not in a healthy psychological experience it is going to influence relational well-being.

Otherwise, what we must do, is just throw a lot of qualities and then group them later. Otherwise there is so much detail and then the time just runs out.

For me the properties would be ummm things that need to be present for relational well-being to prosper or...

Yes

So, it would be things like communication

Yes

So, maybe let's just make a long list of all the qualities and then we group them afterwards.

Go for it.

Ummm.

So, it is communication

Empathy

Yes

Empathy, I mean ummm

What is there still? What about support?

Yes, yes.

Just put support.

I think support could be subdivided into peer support, your colleagues...

What about community/environment. You can divide it into community..

But I think if you just look at the environment. What qualities does the environment need to promote relational well-being?

That is again, that comes with this, the physical, the mental, the social...

I think environment actually encompasses all of this, because environment for me is also in terms of what are the financial, ummm? It is easy to say let's promote relational well-being, but you need expertise, you need staff. And for me that will then shift your mind set from individual to group. I mean finance, if the community doesn't have finances then none of this can happen. So, I think environment actually touches all of this...

So, what about educational something?

Ja, educational....I don't know what to call it.

What about like strengthening your skills?

Skills.

Why don't we just say skills training?

Is skills training then a quality?

It's needed to promote relational well-being.

Ok

Ummm

Ja, it's so difficult, because you also need to look at the needs of a specific community or something.

Ja

Like if there is no food or whatever.

Their basic needs are not met...

Then how do you work on relational well-being? I don't know where that comes in?

It's necessary to do a needs analysis.

Ja, definitely.

Ok, so maybe say. Rather draw something of the qualities. So, maybe we can say for the qualities to flourish you first need to, this is step 1, you first need to look at the environment and to do an analysis.

Ok, so maybe we must write, "ek skryf baie lelik miskien moet jy eerder skryf."

No, your writing is fine.