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**A MIXED METHOD EVALUATION OF THE SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING  
OF FIRST YEAR TERTIARY STUDENTS DURING ORIENTATION**

**Johannes Hendrikus de Kock**

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree**

**Magister Artium in Clinical Psychology**

**at the**

**North-West University**

**Potchefstroom Campus**

**Supervisors: Prof. V. Roos & Prof. M.P. Wissing**

**Potchefstroom**

**October 2010**

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- My sisters, Alti and Thelmi. You are a true motivation.
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- The North-West University's psychology department for providing me with the opportunities and training to grow as both person and psychologist.

## SUMMARY

### **A mixed method evaluation of the subjective well-being of first year tertiary students during orientation**

**Key words:** Mixed method evaluation, well-being, orientation programs, first-year students

The aim of orientation programs at tertiary academic institutions is to introduce newcomers to the attitudinal and behavioral standards of their new academic and social situation, and these programs usually have a formal and an informal component. Formal orientation is officially developed and monitored by the university. Informal orientation is associated with socially orientated initiation or hazing activities administered by senior students in the seclusion of hostels and are often not monitored by the university, resulting in human rights violations such as racial discrimination, physical abuse and psychological bullying. Because both components of orientation take place during the same time frame and in the same broader context, orientation programs as a whole have been receiving negative attention and criticism in the media. Research has, however, also uncovered many positive elements in orientation programs – in both the formal and informal components. Literature suggests that universities put in place a high quality formal and informal orientation program to ensure the well-being of first-year students.

Well-being is regarded as the subjective appraisals that people make about the quality of their lives based on their experiences, relationships, feelings and overall functioning in life. Two approaches towards subjective well-being are identified: the first is the hedonic approach, focusing on emotional well-being (EWB) and is equated to positive feelings, subjective happiness and satisfaction with life; the second is the eudaimonic approach, focusing on

psychological well-being (PWB) and social well-being (SWB) which not only conceptualizes well-being in terms of meaning and purpose, but also as positive functioning in life on personal and social levels. The aim of this study was to determine the shifts in well-being of first-year students during an orientation program (with both the formal and informal components included) at a tertiary institution and to explore the experiences associated with these shifts.

A sequential mixed method research design was used where quantitative and qualitative research approaches were combined to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. A convenience sample of first-year hostel residing students (mean age=19 years) was used for the quantitative study. Students completed the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) before (n=102), during (n=371) and after (n=358) the orientation program. Twenty-one demographically representative first-year hostel residing students (mean age=18.5 years) were purposive selected to participate in the qualitative study consisting of a focus group discussion and semi-structured in-depth individual interviews which took place after the programs' completion.

The quantitative results indicated that first-year students' well-being remained unchanged before, during and after orientation in all facets except in SWB. First-year students' SWB increased practically significantly over the course of the orientation program. The qualitative findings suggested that first-year students' well-being fluctuated from high before the orientation program to low during the program's initial phase to high again after the program's completion. Experiences associated with SWB were perceived to be the central experience associated with an increase in well-being. Recommendations are made regarding

the promotion of the social and personal well-being of first-year students during an orientation program.

Word count: 500

## OPSOMMING

### **'n Gemengde metode evaluering van die subjektiewe welstand van tersiêre eerstejaarstudente gedurende oriëntering**

**Sleutelwoorde:** Gemengde metode evaluering, welstand, oriëntering, eerstejaarstudente

Die doel van oriënteringsprogramme aan tersiêre akademiese instellings is om nuwelinge bekend te stel aan die houding- en gedragstandaarde wat in hulle nuwe akademiese en sosiale situasie geld en daarom bestaan hierdie programme gewoonlik uit sowel 'n formele as informele komponent. Formele oriëntering word amptelik deur die universiteit ontwikkel en gemonitor. Informele oriëntering word geassosieer met sosiaal georiënteerde inisiasie, of ontgroeningsaktiwiteite, wat in die afsondering van koshuise deur senior studente beheer word en dikwels nie deur die universiteit gemonitor word nie – sodat dit kan lei tot die skending van menseregte soos byvoorbeeld rassediskriminasie, fisiese mishandeling en psigologiese afknouery. Omdat beide die komponente van oriëntering gedurende dieselfde tydperk en binne dieselfde breër konteks plaasvind, word oriënteringsprogramme as 'n geheel negatief in die media belig en gekritiseer. Navorsing het egter uitgewys dat sowel die formele en informele komponente van oriënteringsprogramme ook baie positiewe elemente inhou en in die literatuur word aanbeveel dat universiteite 'n oriënteringsprogram met hoë kwaliteit formele en informele komponente in plek stel, ten einde die welstand van eerstejaarstudente te verseker.

Welstand word beskou as die subjektiewe beoordeling van lewenskwaliteit wat mense op grond van hulle ervarings, verhoudings, gevoelens en hul algehele funksionering in die lewe, maak. Twee benaderings tot subjektiewe welstand word geïdentifiseer, waarvan die eerste 'n



hedonistiese benadering is wat op emosionele welstand fokus en wat gelyk gestel word aan positiewe gevoelens, subjektiewe geluk en tevredenheid met die lewe; terwyl die tweede die eudaimonistiese benadering is waarin daar op psigologiese en sosiale welstand gefokus word en welstand nie net in terme van betekenis en doel gekonseptualiseer word nie, maar ook as 'n positiewe funksionering in die lewe - op sowel persoonlike as sosiale vlak. Die doel van hierdie studie is om die verskuiwings te bepaal wat plaasvind in die welstand van eerstejaarstudente tydens 'n oriënteringsprogram (waarby sowel die formele as informele komponente ingesluit is) aan 'n tersiêre instelling; en om die ervarings wat met hierdie verskuiwings geassosieer is, te ondersoek.

'n Sekwensiële gemengde metode navorsingsontwerp is gebruik, waarin benaderings van kwantitatiewe en kwalitatiewe navorsing gekombineer is om 'n grondige begrip van die fenomeen te verskaf. 'n Gerieflikheidsteekproef van eerstejaarkoshuisstudente (gemiddelde ouderdom = 19 jaar) is gebruik in die kwantitatiewe studie. Studente het die *Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF)* en die *Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)* voor (n=102), tydens (n=371) en ná (n=358) die oriënteringsprogram voltooi. Een-en-twintig demografies verteenwoordigende eerstejaarkoshuisstudente (gemiddelde ouderdom = 18.5 jaar) is deur doelgerigte selektering gekies om deel te neem aan die kwalitatiewe studie wat bestaan het uit 'n fokusgroepbespreking en semi-gestruktureerde in-diepte individuele onderhoude wat ná afloop van die program gevoer is.

Die kwantitatiewe resultate het aangedui dat die welstand van eerstejaarstudente tydens en ná oriëntering ten opsigte van alle fasette behalwe sosiale welstand, onveranderd gebly het. Deur die verloop van die oriënteringsprogram het eerstejaarstudente se sosiale welstand prakties beduidend toegeneem. Die kwalitatiewe bevindinge dui daarop dat die eerstejaarstudente se

welstand van hoog vóór die oriënteringsprogram tot laag tydens die program se aanvanklike fase, tot weer hoog ná voltooiing van die program, fluktueer het. Ervarings wat met sosiale welstand geassosieer is, is beskou as die sentrale ervaring wat met 'n toename in welstand geassosieer is. Aanbevelings word gemaak vir die bevordering van eerstejaarstudente se sosiale en persoonlike welstand tydens die verloop van 'n oriënteringsprogram.

Aantal woorde: 540

## **PREFACE**

The candidate opted to propose an article, with the support of his supervisor.

Prof V. Roos

## CONSENT

### **Permission to submit the article for examination purposes**

I, the supervisor, hereby declare that the input and effort of J.H. De Kock, in writing this article, reflects research done by him on this topic. I hereby grant permission that he may submit this article for examination purposes in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium in Clinical Psychology.

Signed on this day.....at the  
North- West University.

.....

Prof V. Roos

Supervisor

## **INTENDED JOURNAL GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS**

This dissertation will be submitted to the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* (JMMR) to be considered for publication.

### **Instructions to Authors**

The JMMR scope includes exploring global terminology and nomenclature for mixed methods research, delineating where mixed methods research may be used most effectively, creating the paradigmatic and philosophical foundations for mixed methods research, illuminating design and procedure issues, and determining the logistics of conducting mixed methods research. The JMMR uses a double-blind review process and manuscripts are generally reviewed by three scholars, at least one of which serves on the JMMR editorial board. The journal aims to have each manuscript go through its initial review within 4 months of receipt.

### **Manuscript Submission**

The JMMR uses an online submission and review platform. Manuscripts should be submitted electronically to <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jmmr>. Authors will be required to set up an online account on the SageTrack system powered by ScholarOne. From their account, a new submission can be initiated. Authors will be asked to provide the required information (author names and contact information, abstract, keywords, etc.) and to upload the "title page" and "main document" separately to ensure that the manuscript is ready for a blind review.

### **Manuscript Expectations**

The JMMR publishes two types of manuscripts: original research and methodological/theoretical discussions. Manuscripts that report original mixed methods research in the social, behavioral, health, and human sciences must:

- fit the definition of mixed methods research by collecting and analyzing data, integrating the findings, and drawing inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods;
- explicitly integrate the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study; and
- discuss how they add to the literature on mixed methods research in addition to making a contribution to a substantive area in the scholar's field of inquiry.

Original research manuscripts that do not show integration or discuss how they add to the mixed methods literature will be returned to the author(s).

## **Manuscript Requirements**

### **Title Page**

Prepare a title page that includes the manuscript title, authors and affiliations, contact information for the corresponding author, and author acknowledgements, if relevant. The author names should only appear in the title page document. Manuscripts should be prepared with author names blinded throughout to facilitate the review process.

### **Style**

All manuscripts should conform to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (Fifth Edition). The entire document should be double spaced and left justified, use a 12-point font, and have pages numbered consecutively. Authors should prepare an abstract and 3-5 key words. The manuscript should be prepared in MS Word (.doc) or rich text format (.rtf) and include: the text, references, endnotes, appendix(ces), tables, and figures. References, endnotes, tables, and figures must be on separate pages. Tables and figures may also be placed into separate files. Indicate the approximate placement of each

table and figure within the text with a comment such as "Insert Figure 1 about here." Please use endnotes instead of footnotes. Authors should use U.S. spellings and all references to authors within the manuscript should be blinded (such as by replacing author names in citations with XXXXXX).

### **Word Limits**

The full manuscript (including references, appendices, and tables) should not exceed 10,000 words in length for empirical studies. In addition, authors should prepare an abstract limited to 120 words.

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### **Obtaining Permissions**

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## **Review Criteria**

The review criteria for original research include:

- Noteworthiness of the problem
- Theoretical framework
- Fit of questions to mixed methods design
- Mixed methods design
- Mixed methods sampling
- Mixed methods analysis and integration
- Insightfulness of discussion
- Writing quality
- Quality of conclusions
- Contribution to mixed methods literature
- Interest to JMMR readership



**TITLE OF MANUSCRIPT, AUTHORS AND CONTACT ADDRESSES**

**A Mixed Method Evaluation of the Subjective Well-Being of First Year Tertiary  
Students During Orientation**

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**MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION**

A Mixed Method Evaluation of the Subjective Well-Being of First-Year Tertiary Students  
During Orientation

Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the shifts in well-being of first-year students during an orientation program. A sequential mixed method research design was applied and a convenience sample of hostel residing students (mean age=19 years) was used for the quantitative study. Students completed the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) and the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) before (n=102), during (n=371) and after (n=358) the program. Twenty-one students (mean age=18.5 years) were purposive selected to participate in the qualitative study consisting of a focus group discussion and semi-structured in-depth individual interviews. Students' well-being remained unchanged during and after orientation in all facets except in social well-being. Recommendations are made regarding the promotion of first-year students' social well-being.

*Key words:* Mixed method evaluation, well-being, orientation programs, students

Orientation programs at academic institutions have been receiving a lot of negative attention and criticism in the media (Jordaan, 2008). The aim of orientation programs is to introduce newcomers to the attitudinal and behavioral standards of their new academic and social situation, and these programs usually have a formal and an informal component (Welch, 2004).

Formal orientation is a university's officially developed and monitored program in terms of which new students are orientated to their new academic and social context. According to Gardner (2001), formal orientation provides newcomers with the "basic training" they need to adjust on an academic, social, personal and spiritual level to a particular university context. Research has shown that newcomers specifically want to be introduced to the academic and social aspects of their new environment (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1987; Berger & Milem, 1999). Harvard University was the first university to formalize an orientation program in the late 1600s (Welch, 2004). Such formalization implied that the university approved the orientation activities in which the newcomers were engaged. Up until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of these programs consisted of a series of hazing activities that were used to filter out newcomers who could not adapt to the social norms of the university. Hazing activities are nowadays considered types of informal orientation or social initiation (Welch, 2004).

Informal orientation is any form of orientation that is not included in the academic institution's formal orientation process (Welch, 2004). It refers to socially orientated initiation activities that are often not monitored or approved by the university, that normally take place in the seclusion of a hostel and that are administered by groups of senior students. The informal orientation programs at tertiary institutions in South Africa include social initiation practices in many guises. They are constantly identified, investigated and monitored

(NWU Progress Report, 2008) to ensure they adhere to the standards stipulated in national law (South African Human Rights Commission, 2001).

According to Jansen van Rensburg (1990), social initiation has a long history at South African universities. The media, however, do not view social initiation during orientation programs in a positive light (Gower, 2009) largely because some universities still administer the hazing rituals that dominated orientation programs in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Du Plessis, 2008). Other concerns about informal social orientation programs are that they often involve racial discrimination, physical abuse and psychological bullying, all of which have been reported at several universities (Mabuza, 2008; “UP Students Expelled”, 2009). A recent incident that drew national and international attention was a racially based initiation ritual at the Reitz Men’s Hostel of the University of the Free State (Van Rooyen & Coetzee, 2010). Although it targeted hostel staff members, the incident focused media attention on all types of social initiation, especially of first-year students (Gower, 2009).

Research has, however, also uncovered many positive elements in orientation programs – in both the formal and informal components (Welch, 2004). Some benefits, according to Berger and Milem (1999), are that students who successfully integrate into the prevailing dominant behavioral patterns of the social and academic subsystems are more likely to persevere and achieve success at the particular university. In the USA, research findings indicate that participation in such programs leads to better marks and higher levels of student retention (Tinto, 1987). In South Africa, research has shown that many newcomers at universities consider formal orientation programs worthwhile and necessary to accustomise them to their new social and academic environment (Roos, Potgieter & Wissing, 2005). Roos et al. (2005) argue that the strengths and resources of first-year students need to be identified to enhance meaningful engagement in their new environment. Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle and Keller-Wolff (1999) believe this meaningful engagement could, in turn, facilitate social as

well as academic transition in a new institution. According to Gardner and Hansen (1993), putting in place a high quality formal and informal orientation program is a priority for universities to ensure the well-being of first-year students.

Well-being is regarded as the subjective appraisals that people make about the quality of their lives based on their experiences, relationships, feelings and overall functioning in life (Ryff & Singer 2000). Ryan and Deci (2001) identified two main approaches towards subjective well-being: the first is the hedonic approach, which focuses on emotional well-being (EWB) and is equated to positive feelings, subjective happiness, pleasure, pain avoidance and satisfaction with life; the second is the eudaimonic approach, which conceptualizes well-being in terms of meaning and purpose, and positive functioning in life. Ryff (1989) and Ryff and Keyes (1995) proposed a six-dimensional model of psychological well-being (PWB) that illustrates the challenges that people have to overcome as they strive towards self-actualization and full functioning. The six dimensions are autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations and self-acceptance. PWB thus represents how individuals experience themselves in terms of functioning on an individual level. Keyes (1998) added a social well-being (SWB) component to the eudaimonic approach, which indicates whether or not a person is functioning optimally in his or her social life. Included here are levels of social integration, social contribution, social actualization, social coherence and social acceptance. SWB thus represents how individuals experience themselves in terms of functioning in a group.

The aim of this study was to determine the shifts in well-being of first-year students during an orientation program at a tertiary institution and to explore the experiences associated with these shifts. For the purposes of the study, the impact of the formal and the informal orientation programs will be assessed simultaneously.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

A sequential mixed method research design was used where different but complementary data were collected to obtain a meaningful descriptive and interpretive understanding of how the first-year students in the study experienced well-being during an orientation program. In the study, qualitative procedures explore the perceived shifts in the well-being of first-year students during an orientation program at a tertiary institution as well as the experiences associated with these shifts in well-being. The quantitative instruments, which focused on well-being as a multi-faceted construct, substantiated the qualitative results with statistical data.

The literature suggests that combining research approaches provides a better understanding of a phenomenon than a single research approach used alone. A mixed method approach allows multiple perspectives of the phenomenon under investigation, explaining it more comprehensively (Gergen, 1997; Glassman, 2001; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Creswell, 2008). According to Creswell (2008), the mixed method “mirrors real life” and, as the participants in the present study were studied in their natural settings, an even fuller understanding of their perceptions of their well-being during orientation was gained. The nature of the study lent itself to the use of a phenomenological approach to inform the qualitative methodology through which meaning was derived from the participants’ reflections on the phenomenon of orientation (Husserl, 1913).

### **Research Context**

The study took place at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University (NWU). It is known as the “city of expertise”, boasting 30 schools and five tertiary institutions (Potchinfo, 2009). The North-West University in Potchefstroom has developed into one of the bigger universities in South Africa, with approximately 32 000 students (full-

time and distance education students), after it merged with the University of the North West in Mafikeng in 2004. The Potchefstroom campus has been the focus of much negative attention in the media regarding the perceived slow pace of racial integration and because of alleged human rights violations during its orientation process (Steyn & Van Rooyen, 2010; Gower, 2009).

The formal orientation program at North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) is based on student integration (NWU Progress Report, 2008) and is not unlike the model proposed by Tinto (1987). The formal as well as the informal orientation programs start three weeks before the first lectures commence and end a few days before lectures start. During this time, new students are introduced to the campus as an academic and social institution. Participants in the orientation process are usually newcomers to the university and are expected to adhere to certain traditions during both the formal and informal orientation. Formal activities include registering for a course, exploring the campus and getting to know how the university's facilities and services function (e.g. how to use the library services, how to contact the security services, what to do in the case of an emergency, where to pay your bills and how to secure financial aid, where to go if you are unwell, whom to contact if you want to join a student organization). In the past, informal activities included socializing (usually between ladies' and men's hostels), attending a popular fruit festival, going to dances and learning about hostel traditions and initiation rituals. Each hostel involves its first-year students in these rituals to introduce them to the hostel's culture and traditions. These include showing respect for older students, using a certain flight of stairs in the hostel, singing a particular song while walking on campus, walking together as a hostel on campus, wearing matching clothes on campus and greeting other hostels with a song as they are passed. Senior students hold informal positions of power, and there are also those in formal power positions whom newcomers are expected to show respect (e.g. students on the Student



Representative Council (SRC) and House Committees (HCs), and the Dean of Students).

Members of the HCs are seen as “caregivers” and “instructors” who work closely together with first-year students for the duration of the orientation program. First-year students have to write an exam after the orientation program to show what they have learnt about the university’s social and academic norms (NWU Progress Report, 2008).

### **Participants**

**For quantitative data gathering.** A convenience sample of participants completed the quantitative questionnaires. The students were recruited via the HCs of the various hostels. Those students who were interested gathered at a public meeting where the researchers explained the study to them and gained their informed consent. Three subgroups took part: the first subgroup (n=102; first-year hostel students) who participated before the orientation program commenced; the second subgroup (n=371; first-year hostel students who could have been included in the first subgroup) who participated during the orientation program, two weeks after the first sample, and the third subgroup (n=358 first-year hostel students who could have been included in the first or second subgroup) who completed the quantitative questionnaires after the orientation program had ended, six weeks after the second sample. The gender and race ratios in the subgroups were more or less representative of all first-year students who were hostel residents at the university.

**For qualitative data gathering.** Twenty-one first-year hostel students were selected through purposive sampling. The participants were selected so as to be demographically representative of first-year students taking part in the university’s orientation program. The rationale for limiting the study to hostel students was because their attendance of all the activities in the university’s orientation program was mandatory and controlled whereas day students’ participation in the program was less governed and to a large extent optional (NWU Progress Report, 2008). First-year hostel students were regarded as a group of people who

could provide an in-depth understanding of their perceptions of well-being during the orientation program. The selected participants had a mean age of 18.5 years with an age range between 17 and 20 years. At the time of sampling, they were all bona fide first-year students. They consisted of two black male, three black female, four colored male, two colored female, five white male and six white female students. Fourteen of the participants preferred to talk in Afrikaans, and seven of the participants preferred English. According to the NWU (2008), the selected participants were a more or less demographically representative sample of first-year hostel students at the NWU's Potchefstroom Campus.

### **Data collection**

**Quantitative data collection.** The Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) (Keyes, 2002, 2005) was used to measure the participants' mental health and well-being and is based on Keyes' Mental Health Continuum model, which is regarded as one of the most authoritative models of mental health. It measures the hedonic (in terms of EWB) and eudaimonic aspects (in terms of PWB and SWB) of well-being. It also classifies individuals as being either flourishing, moderately mentally healthy or languishing depending on the person's state of overall well-being.

The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985) measured the participants' satisfaction with their lives. It is one of the most widely used indexes of subjective well-being (Corrigan, 2000) and is considered culturally unbiased (Keyes et al., 2008). The use of these scales before, during and after the orientation helped to determine the perceived shifts in the participants' well-being during the university's orientation program.

**Reliability and validity of the quantitative instruments.** According to Keyes et al. (2008), the MHC-SF (Keyes, 2002, 2005) demonstrates acceptable internal consistency (above 0.70) and good construct and criterion validity with existing measures of subjective

well-being in a South African context. The overall Cronbach alpha reliability index was 0.89 for the present study. The three subscales for the MHC-SF – Emotional Well-Being (EWB), Social Well-Being (SWB) and Psychological Well-Being (PWB) – revealed Cronbach alpha reliabilities of 0.78, 0.82 and 0.89 respectively. Wissing, Wissing, Du Toit and Temane (2006) found the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) valid for use in an African context. The Cronbach alpha reliability index was 0.79 for the present study. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), Cronbach alphas should not be less than 0.70 in the human sciences. Alfonso and Allison (as cited in Pavot & Diener, 1993) reported a test-retest correlation coefficient of 0.89 for subjects retested after two weeks thus suggesting its suitability for use before, during and after the orientation program.

**Qualitative data collection.** One audio taped semi-structured focus group interview and 21 in-depth audio-taped semi-structured individual interviews explored what the first-year students perceived well-being to be, what shifts in their subjective well-being occurred during the orientation program and what experiences were associated with these shifts. During the focus group interview, questions and statements such as: *Describe well-being in your own words; What happened to your well-being during orientation?; What experiences did you associate with changes in your well-being during orientation?* Requests/Questions put to the participants in the in-depth individual interviews included the following: *Please describe well-being in your own words; Please describe your well-being before you came to the university; How did your perception of your well-being change during the orientation program?; Please describe situations to illustrate how and why – or why you believe – your well-being changed.* The focus group interview was conducted in Afrikaans as all the participants felt comfortable in their ability to communicate in Afrikaans. The individual interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and English depending on the particular participant's preference.

*Trustworthiness of the qualitative data analysis.* Recommendations for a trustworthy study were followed as proposed by Krefting (1991) as well as Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility, referring to the truth value of findings were achieved by employing recognized research methods and triangulating them, that is, using focus group and individual interviews for data gathering, and using multiple techniques for data analysis; combining qualitative and quantitative results to provide a multi-angled description of the phenomenon in question; examining the research results in order to relate the findings to previous findings (in the literature). Triangulating the research approaches as well as using the data-gathering methods and analysis as discussed above enhanced the legitimating, trustworthiness and transferability of the final conclusions (Guba, 1981, Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Transferability, which concerns the degree to which results can be used in other situations, was achieved by describing the research context, fieldwork and phenomenon in question in great detail.

Applicability, which concerns the degree to which findings fit the context, was achieved by purposively choosing demographically representative samples of participants and studying them in their naturalistic setting. A lengthy period of time was spent in the research setting as the first author, who had experienced the NWU Potchefstroom Campus's orientation program as a first-year hostel student, had also been closely involved with the orientation program for three years in a monitoring capacity. The first author kept a reflective field journal of his experiences during the program to avoid any distortions about the phenomenon under study. This contributed to the dependability of the research.

Dependability strategies were employed to ensure consistency, that is, the results and the interpretation of the study were supported by the qualitative as well as the quantitative data, and "overlapping methods" such as focus group and individual interviews as well as questionnaires were also used.

Neutrality was striven after by establishing confirmability, that is, ensuring that the findings were, as far as possible, the experiences of the participants of well-being during the orientation program and not those of the researcher. The tools used by the first author to achieve neutrality were continuous journaling and the practicing of reflexivity as prescribed by Guba (1981). Member checking with the participants before sharing the final report gave confidence to the final product. An audit analysis was also conducted by the second author. Detailed descriptive data were furthermore collected from the participants, and the context of the study was described in detail.

### **Procedure**

Ethical approval was obtained from the Dean of Students and further permission for the study from the Student Representative Council (SRC) and the various hostel House Committees (HCs). Informed consent was obtained from all the participating first-year students who also had to complete an assent form before they were allowed to take part in the study. The quantitative data were collected in three phases: before, during and after the orientation program. The participants completed the MHC-SF (Keyes, 2002, 2005) and the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) during each of the three phases of data collection. The qualitative data were gathered two months after the completion of the orientation program thus giving the participants enough time to reflect on their experiences before, during and after the orientation program. Individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 21 first-year students followed a focus group interview with ten demographically representative participants. The individual and the focus group interviews were conducted by an intern clinical psychologist familiar with the research context and orientation program and trained in qualitative research methodology. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim after which thematic analysis (TA), constant comparison analysis (CCA) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) were conducted. Following the various analyses, member

checking with the focus group participants was done to test their overall consent with the derived themes, which were then audited by the second author. The originally obtained Afrikaans data were translated into English by a qualified language editor. Once the qualitative themes had been finalized, the quantitative results were included to substantiate the overall findings numerically and statistically (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

### **Data Analysis**

**Quantitative Data Analysis.** Descriptive statistics and Cronbach reliability indices were determined for the MHC-SF (Keyes, 2002, 2005) and the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985). The percentages of flourishing, moderately mentally healthy and languishing participants at each of the three times of evaluation (before, during and after the orientation program) were established. Effect sizes were used to determine whether the scores on all the subscales differed significantly between the three evaluation times (before, during and after the orientation program) (Ellis & Steyn, 2003). The same was done with the subscales of the MHC-SF. Because the sample was not selected according to the statistical principle of randomness, the comparison of the different effect sizes over the three evaluations was considered the most appropriate method (Ellis & Steyn, 2003). Cohen's (1988) guidelines were applied to determine the level of practical significance: an effect size of 0.2 was interpreted as a small effect, an effect size of 0.5 as a medium effect an effect size of 0.8 as a large effect.

**Qualitative Data Analysis.** The verbatim transcripts made from the voice recordings of the focus group and individual interviews were analyzed with the help of TA, CCA and IPA. These three methods of analysis were done concurrently.

As TA does not subscribe to an implicit theoretical epistemology, it was used as the umbrella method to describe patterns and eventually derive themes from the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The specific strengths of IPA and CCA were introduced into the

overarching TA because triangulation methods generally lead to enhanced legitimating thus implying superior trustworthiness and transferability of the final conclusions (Guba, 1981, Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In choosing the methods of analysis, careful consideration was given to optimizing triangulation and to avoiding clashing theoretical assumptions: The use of IPA was justified because phenomenology informed the study's qualitative research approach while CCA's lack of exclusive theoretical underpinning (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) corresponded with that of TA (Braun & Clarke 2006).

TA was done according to the guidelines laid down by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Braun and Clarke (2006) in terms of which the first author initially familiarized himself with and immersed himself in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts and listening again to the audiotapes until he gained a global understanding of the phenomenon.

A coding system was then developed according to a semantic, theory-driven approach aimed at organizing the data into meaningful groups around certain aspects of the data. The result was a less rich description of the overall data but a more detailed examination of certain aspects of the data. Specific questions thus informed the coding: *what was perceived to constitute well-being?; how and when did it change during the orientation program?; and what experiences were associated with these changes?* This coincided with IPA's idiographic approach and focused the data analysis on how the first-year students in the study made sense of the phenomenon in question. During coding, the focus shifted between trying to make sense of how the participants experienced well-being during the orientation and how the first author interpreted this meaning-making process. Adhering to IPA, the first author throughout attempted to understand the participants' attempts to make sense of their experiences of well-being (Smith & Osborne, 2003). Initial coding was done inclusively to ensure that all individual data extracts were organized into meaningful groups. Coding and recoding was a constant process throughout the data analysis and was done according to CCA guidelines

(Merriam, 1998; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The initial coding was modified several times until the first author was satisfied with the thematic maps that were constructed.

Initial overarching themes were constructed by collating and combining the different codes. The themes were again analyzed in IPA fashion and then grouped together to form superordinate themes conveying a broader understanding of how participants made sense of their experiences of well-being during the orientation program (Smith & Osborne, 2003). All the themes were reviewed and refined until candidate themes formed a coherent pattern and individual themes were considered valid for the entire dataset. The data from the focus group and individual interviews were analyzed until data saturation was achieved. Themes and subthemes were subsequently defined and named. Adhering to CCA tradition, the first author proceeded to do member checking with the participants (Merriam, 1998). After the participants' feedback was analyzed, the themes were audited by the second author and refined once again before the final themes were named and written up in the report.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The research was conducted with the permission of the Ethics Committee of the North-West University (ethical clearance numbers: 05K14 and NWU-00002-07-A2). Permission to conduct the study during the university's orientation program was granted by the Dean of Students. Further permission was obtained from the Student Representative Council (SRC) and the House Committees (HCs) of the various hostels. Research participation was voluntary, and no student was allowed to participate without first completing an informed consent form.

### **Results**

The results of the quantitative data are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3, and the results of the qualitative data in Table 4. An integrated discussion follows Table 4.



Table 1

*Descriptive statistics and reliability indices of measures for Groups 1, 2 and 3.*

Group	N	Subtest	M	SD	Min	Max	Cronbach alpha
1	102	MHCSF-EWB	15.0	2.3	6	18	0.78
		MHCSF-SWB	17.9	4.9	7	30	0.82
		MHCSF-PWB	29.4	4.9	12	36	0.85
		MHCSF-Tot	62.3	10.3	33	84	0.89
		SWLS	26.3	5.1	12	35	0.79
2	371	MHCSF-EWB	14.1	2.3	4	18	0.78
		MHCSF-SWB	19.1	5.1	5	30	0.82
		MHCSF-PWB	28.7	4.7	12	36	0.85
		MHCSF-Tot	62.0	0.2	30	84	0.89
		SWLS	26.4	5.2	6	35	0.79
3	358	MHCSF-EWB	14.0	2.7	3	18	0.78
		MHCSF-SWB	20.6	4.7	6	30	0.82
		MHCSF-PWB	27.9	5.4	6	36	0.85
		MHCSF-Tot	62.5	11.3	17	84	0.89
		SWLS	26.3	5.4	5	35	0.79

*Note.* Group 1 = Before orientation program; Group 2 = During orientation program; Group 3 = After orientation program. MHCSF-EWB = Mental Health Continuum Short Form:

Emotional Well-being. MHCSF-SWB = Mental Health Continuum Short Form: Social Well-being. MHCSF-PWB = Mental Health Continuum Short Form: Psychological Well-being. MHCSF-Tot = Mental Health Continuum Short Form: Overall Mental health. SWLS = Satisfaction With Life Scale.

As shown in Table 1, all scales and sub-scales showed acceptable reliability indices, and mean scores and standard deviations are more or less in line with that found in other similar groups.

Table 2

*Percentages of first-year students in various mental health categories over time.*

Group	Flourishing	Moderately mentally healthy	Languishing
Time 1 (n = 102)	85.29%	13.73%	0.98%
Time 2 (n = 371)	83.83%	14.82%	1.35%
Time 3 (n = 358)	84.08%	15.36%	0.56%

*Note.* Time 1 = Before orientation program; Time 2 = During orientation program; Time 3 = After orientation program.

Table 2 shows that all three groups showed very high percentages of flourishing participants, and few students who were languishing.

Table 3

*Effect sizes of differences among the groups for all variables.*

Subtest	Effect sizes: Groups		
	1 with 2	1 with 3	2 with 3
MHCSF-EWB	0.38	0.38	0.06
MHCSF-SWB	0.24	0.56	0.30
MHCSF-PWB	0.13	0.28	0.16
MHCSF-Tot	0.03	0.01	0.05
SWLS	0.02	0.01	0.03

*Note.* Group 1 = Before orientation program; Group 2 = During orientation program; Group 3 = After orientation program. MHCSF-EWB = Mental Health Continuum Short Form: Emotional Well-being. MHCSF-SWB = Mental Health Continuum Short Form: Social Well-being. MHCSF-PWB = Mental Health Continuum Short Form: Psychological Well-being. MHCSF-Tot = Mental Health Continuum Short Form: Overall Mental health. SWLS = Satisfaction With Life Scale.

In Table 3 it is indicated that only in the case of MHCSF-SWB there is a practical significant (medium effect size) between groups, with participants after the orientation program showing higher levels of social wellbeing in comparison with those tested before the program.

Table 4

*Summary of themes and subthemes from the qualitative data.*

<b>Main themes:</b>	<b>Subthemes:</b>
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<b>Description of Well-being</b>	<p>Totality of human existence/ “menswees”</p> <p>To be in control</p> <p>To feel good about yourself</p> <p>To have positive social interaction</p>
<b>Experiences Associated with Well-Being</b>	Having freedom and control
<b>Prior to Orientation</b>	<p>Possessing a high sense of self-worth</p> <p>Having social support</p>
<b>Experiences Associated with Well-Being During Orientation</b>	<p>Experiences Associated with a Decrease in Well-Being:</p> <p><i>Disillusionment with university life</i></p> <p><i>Loss of a high sense of self-worth</i></p> <p><i>Being disrespected</i></p> <p><i>Uncertainty and fear</i></p> <p><i>Physical exertion</i></p> <p><i>Insufficient free time</i></p> <p><i>Disappointment with leaders</i></p> <p>Experiences Associated with an Increase in Well-Being:</p> <p><i>Increasing social support</i></p> <p><i>Making sense of the orientation program’s purpose</i></p> <p><i>Realising the necessity of hardship</i></p> <p><i>Regained freedom</i></p>

<b>Reflection About Well-Being</b>	Social support and well-being
<b>After Orientation</b>	Opportunities for self-transformation
	Relevance of hardship for well-being
	Importance of self-reflection for well-being

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### **Integrated Discussion of the Findings**

The results obtained from the quantitative and qualitative data-gathering methods are integrated in the following descriptions and are supported by descriptive extracts from the qualitative data and, where applicable, by statistical results. A literature control is included with the discussion of each theme.

#### **Description of Well-being**

Well-being is regarded as the subjective appraisal that people make about the quality of their lives based on their experiences, relationships, feelings and overall functioning in life (Ryff & Singer, 2000). Both the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches regarding well-being as proposed by Ryff (1989), Ryff and Singer (2008) Keyes (1998) and Ryan and Deci (2001) correlated to some extent with what the participants described well-being to be. In the present study, well-being was defined as the totality of human existence, to be in control, to feel good about yourself and to have positive social interactions.

**Totality of human existence.** The totality of human existence suggests that well-being is a multi-faceted construct that encompasses all the various dimensions that subjectively contribute to one's existence. The majority of the participants believed that well-being included physical, spiritual, cognitive, emotional, personal and social dimensions as evidenced by the following extracts.

*Ek dink well-being is 'n “over-all thing”, jou hele menswees / I believe well-being to be an overall-thing ... your whole human condition. (Participant AB, 18 year old male)*

*Ek dink ... dit (well-being) gaan maar oor jou hele menswees, al die fasette van jou menslikheid, wie jy is ... jou geestelike ... sosiale ... spirituele ... fisiese dele, al daai goed saam / I believe well-being to encompass the totality of being human, including all the facets that makes up a person ... spiritual, social, physical ... all of those aspects together. (Participant JH, 18 year old female)*

*Well-being is 'n klomp goed ... fisies, emosioneel, sosiaal, intellektueel, geestelik, jou omgewing, jou pelle / Well-being is a lot of things ... physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, your environment, your friends. (Participant JJ, 18 year old female)*

**To be in control.** Being in control refers to having the power and freedom to function autonomously and to govern the different dimensions of your life. The participants said that the ability to keep the various dimensions of well-being in balance also contributed to well-being. The following extracts illustrate this subtheme.

*Hoe jy al die aspekte van jou menswees beheer, balanseer en bestuur is belangrik vir jou well-being / The way you control, balance and manage all the facets of your being is important for well-being. (Participant SS, 18 year old male)*

*Well-being is ... just being free in your mind, free to do whatever you like, free to express yourself to other people, not that other people tell you how to do it, just handling things in your own way. (Participant KG, 18 year old female)*

**To feel good about yourself.** Feeling good about yourself refers to accepting and being comfortable and satisfied with yourself. As illustrated by the following extracts, the

participants reported feeling comfortable with and accepting of themselves in all areas of functioning as fundamental in experiencing well-being.

*Well-being is vir my om goed te voel oor jouself op alle vlakke van jou menswees / Well-being, for me, means to feel good about all the different facets of yourself, your whole “being”. (Participant HP, 18 year old male)*

*Ek dink dit (well-being) het te doen met jouself, hoe jy jouself sien, wat jy wil doen en hoe jy oor jouself voel, as jy goed voel oor al jou dele, dan sou ek sê het jy well-being / I suspect that well-being has to do with how you view yourself, how good you feel about yourself and if you feel good about all the different parts you have well-being. (Participant EK, 18 year old female)*

**To have positive social interaction.** Having positive social interaction refers to positive social relatedness and implies the ability to interact with others and to function positively in a group. Several participants singled out social relatedness as a main contributor to their subjective perception of well-being:

*Well-being is vir my die inskakeling by 'n groep / For me, well-being means to fit into a group. (Participant TA, 18 year old male)*

*Ek dink well-being gaan daaroor om veral oor jou verhoudinge met ander goed te voel / I think well-being is about feeling good about your relationships with others. (Participant UP, 19 year old male)*

*(Well-being) is jou interaksie met mense, hoe jy praat met mense, die vriende wat jy het, hoe jy jouself gedra by hulle / Well-being is your interaction with others, the way you speak with them, how you act around them and the friends you have. (Participant ZW, 18 year old female)*

From the participants' responses, one could say that well-being is a multi-faceted construct including individual and relational components that correlate closely with four of the six PWB dimensions of PWB as proposed by Ryff (1989) and Ryff and Singer (2008):

*Being in control.* This subtheme correlates with the autonomy and environmental mastery dimensions of PWB. The participants reported a strong link between having the freedom and autonomy to decide on how these dimensions should be balanced and their experience of well-being. The need for balance between the different dimensions of well-being correlates strongly with Ryff and Singer's (2008) view that balance is a crucial factor in experiencing well-being.

*To have positive social interaction.* This subtheme correlates with the positive relations dimension of PWB, which also correlates with Keyes' (1998) addition of a social well-being component (SWB) to the eudaimonic well-being model where social integration and social acceptance are the dimensions used to describe well-being.

*To feel good about yourself.* This subtheme correlates with the self-acceptance dimensions of PWB. Furthermore, the accompanying positive feelings such as feeling in control or good about oneself are associated with EWB (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002) suggesting that the hedonic side of well-being is also included in the participants' description of well-being.

### **Experiences Associated with Well-being Before Orientation**

The main experiences associated by the participants with well-being before the start of the orientation program were having freedom and control, having social support and possessing a high sense of self-worth.

**Having freedom and control.** Having freedom and control refer to the ability to master one's environment, to have the freedom to function autonomously and to be one's own authority on how to govern one's life. The participants regarded the recent completion of



their schooling, the prolonged unsupervised holidays and turning 18 prior to the orientation program as a type of liberation and emancipation from authority:

*Jy is nog in matriek-vakansie-mode as jy hier aankom / You are still in matric-holiday-mode when you arrive here. (Participant DP, 18 year old male)*

*Ons het uitgestap uit matriek uit, jy voel nou jy is so groot, vry, jy is reg vir die lewe, en jy weet waarheen jy wil gaan en wat jy gaan kom swot / You walk out of matric feeling grown-up, free and ready for life, you know where you want to go, what you want to study. (Participant DIP, 18 year old male)*

*My well-being was baie goed ... dinge het uitgewerk, dit het by die prentjie ingepas van hoe ek my lewe wil run / My well-being was very good ... things worked out and fit the picture that I had for my life. (Participant CP, 20 year old male)*

*Jy was in beheer gewees van jouself ... jy't al's gedoen wat jy wou doen / You were in control of yourself ... you did everything that you wanted to do. (Participant KL, 18 year old female)*

**Having social support.** Having social support refers to having friends and relatives for a support system. Most of the participants reported that they had a stable group of long-time friends as well as family members in close proximity before coming to the university. The following extracts serve as examples of this subtheme.

*Voordat ek PUK-toe gekom het, was my sosial deel obviously baie goed gewees, want ek't my vriende al lank geken / Before I came to the PUK, my social facets were obviously very good as I knew my friends for a long time. (Participant KL, 18 year old female)*

*Voor die tyd (voor oriëntering), was my familie naby en ek het hulle support enige tyd gehad as ek vra / My family was close before orientation and I had their support whenever I asked. (Participant BW, 18 year old female)*

**Possessing a high sense of self-worth.** Having a high sense of self-worth refers to feeling good about oneself and being satisfied with one's life. Most of the first-year students had finished high school where they experienced very high levels of well-being shortly before attending the orientation program. The majority of the participants reported that they were respected and even regarded as local heroes in their high schools. They reported having an almost inflated sense of self before the start of the orientation program. Some of the participants expressed this as follows:

*Jy kom nou-net uit matriek uit, jy was soos in alles, die main-man in jou vorige skool, jy het so goed gevoel oor jouself... jy dink "ne ja", jy is nou redelik waar jy moet wees ... jy reg is vir watookal voorlê / You're just out of matric and you were the main-man there, so you felt good about yourself ... you think "yeah!", you're now kinda where you have to be and you feel ready for whatever lies ahead. (Participant DIP, 18 year old male)*

The participants' reports of experiences associated with well-being prior to the orientation program correlate with the PWB, SWB and EWB dimensions of well-being used previously to define well-being as a construct (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998 & Ryff & Singer, 2008).

*Having freedom and control.* This subtheme correlates with the autonomy and environmental mastery dimensions of PWB.

*Having social support.* This subtheme correlates with the positive relations dimension of PWB as well as with the social integration and social acceptance dimensions of SWB.

*Possessing a high sense of self-worth.* This subtheme correlates with the self-acceptance dimension of PWB and also with Maslow's (1968) view that positive self-regard is a characteristic of self-actualizing people. Ryff (1989) describes the different dimensions

of eudaimonic well-being as challenges on the way to self-actualization. Jahoda (1958) believes a high self-regard is essential for mental health and contributes to well-being. The positive emotions such as feeling free, being in control, belonging and feeling good about oneself that were experienced prior to orientation correlate with experiences of EWB (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

The quantitative results suggested that the participants experienced a high level of well-being prior to the orientation program: for the 102 participants, the average score obtained on the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) was 26.3 . This falls in the “satisfied’ (6<sup>th</sup>) category of Diener’s classification of seven categories (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The participants’ average score on the MHCSF-Tot (Keyes, 2002, 2005), measuring the participants’ overall well-being from a combined score of the test’s subtests, was also high (62.3) suggesting that the first-year students experienced an overall state of high well-being (see Table 1). According to the MHC-SF (Keyes, 2002, 2005), 85, 29% of the participants who completed the form prior to the orientation program were “flourishing” (see Table 2), which is a markedly higher percentage than that achieved in the USA and other South African samples (Keyes et al., 2008; Wissing et al., 2008) again suggesting the subjective experience of the high well-being of the participants prior to the orientation program.

### **Experiences Associated with Well-being During Orientation**

While all of the 21 participants reported a decrease in their well-being during the initial phase of the orientation program, all 21 described a gradual increase in their well-being as the orientation program progressed towards its closing stages.

**Experiences associated with a decrease well-being.** The main experiences associated with a decrease in well-being were disillusionment with university life, loss of uniqueness, feelings of disrespect, uncertainties and fear, physical exertion, insufficient free time and disappointment with leaders (see Table 4).

***Disillusionment with university life.*** Disillusionment with university life here refers to the shattering of idealistic expectations of what university was going to be like. The participants reported expecting to be free and in control of their own lives upon entering university, but, during the initial phase of orientation, they were faced with restrictions and placed under the HC's authority. This made the first-year students feel restricted in their functioning and not in charge of their own lives – feelings that contributed to their appraisal of a decrease in their well-being. The participants' disillusionment with university life is illustrated by the following extracts.

*You have your own expectations of what it's gonna be like, but when you actually go to the PUK it's not what you expected ... I thought, okay I'm going to have a fantastic student life ... I was so excited ... Yo! And then when I came here, I was like, okay ... I'm not in control here. (Participant KG, 19 year old female)*

*It (well-being) really, really dropped. I think it's the disappointment in ... I had too much expectations like 'I'm going to do that, and that and that' ... and when I came here it wasn't like that ... I was expecting ... to do my own thing. (Participant KL, 18 year old female)*

*Daai beperkinge slaat jou ... dit veroorsaak die val in jou menswees ... Ek het nogal baie ingeperk gevoel / Those restrictions hit you hard ... they cause the fall in your well-being ... I really felt restricted. (Participant CP, 20 year old male)*

***Loss of a high sense of self-worth.*** Loss of a high sense of self-worth refers here to the newcomers feeling special, exceptional and having a high sense of self-worth prior to the start of the orientation program and feeling less unique and insignificant after the program. At their schools, they were in some cases regarded as local heroes, but, in the orientation program, they were forced to work together in a group, they received the same treatment as everybody else and they had to wear the same clothes as other first-year students from the

same hostel thus contributing to a sense of loss of uniqueness. This loss of uniqueness brought about a diminished sense of self-worth, an experience associated with a decrease in well-being:

*In die eerste week het dit (well-being) redelik gedaal ... om uit matriek uit te kom as 'n big-shot senior, en om dan universiteit toe te kom en jy is onmiddelik soos nul op 'n kontrak / In the first week my well-being dropped ... to get out of matric as a big-shot senior and then coming to university where you immediately are seen as insignificant. (Participant HB, 18 year old male)*

*Dit (well-being) het verseker geval toe ek hier by die PUK aangekom het ... jy was in matriek, jy't redelik baie van jouself gedink, jy het 'n goeie selfbeeld gehad en toe met oriëntering toe val alles, hulle het jou laat besef jy is nie eintelik so goed nie, hulle het jou laat besef jy's eintlik net soos enige ander mens ... ook die squad staan, dieselfde klere dra / My well-being certainly dropped when I came to the PUK ... you just got out of matric, you had a healthy self-image and then with orientation it all just fell ... They made you realize that you're actually just like any other person ... also standing in squads and wearing the same clothes as the others. (Participant SS, 18 year old male)*

*Hulle onderdruk jou half, jy kan nie wees wie jy rêrig is nie, almal moet dieselfde as almal wees / They kind of push you down that you can't be who you normally are because everyone has to be the same. (Participant ABR, 18 year old male)*

**Being disrespected.** Being disrespected refers here to the first-year students feeling broken down personally by the HC in the process of integrating them into a particular hostel's social culture. Being disrespected appeared to be a shock and in some cases even a traumatic experience for some of the participants as they reported feeling worthless and disheartened, associating this experience with a diminished sense of well-being:

*Die manier hoe die HK nie ons eers gevra het om sekere dinge te doen nie, maar dit geskreeu het, sonder asseblief of dankie ... skel hulle ons, soos: "haal af julle hoedens en kyk af!" ... jy het minderwaardig gevoel / The way the HC didn't even ask us to do certain things, but rather screamed orders at us without a please or a thank you ... like "take off your hats and look down!" That made me feel worthless. (Participant SS, 18 year old male)*

*Hulle (die HK) fokus so erg op dit wat jy verkeerd doen, jy kan nie iets reg doen nie, so jy kry hierdie idee van jy is sleg, jy's pateties ... dan word jou selfbeeld afgekraak, en jy is nie eers altyd bewus daarvan nie, maar dan kom jy dit agter in die manier waarin jy optree / They (the HC) focus only on the negative and you get the feeling that you can't do anything right and that you're pathetic and bad ... your self-confidence gets broken down, and you're not even always aware of it, but you can see it in the way you act. (Participant AC, 18 year old female)*

*Net voor die middel van oriëntering ... jy weet as jy wil begin huil, dan maak jou stem so snaakserig ... ek het net baie afgekraak gevoel. Ek het niks selfvertroue gehad, niks nie ... jy begin dit later ernstig opgeneem as hulle heeltyd op jou skreeu / Just before the middle of orientation ... you know when you want to cry and your voice goes all funny ... I had no self-confidence ... You start to take it seriously when they scream at you the whole time. (Participant AB, 18 year old male)*

*Dit raak nogal diep aan my ... hy (die HK) is net so persoon soos ek, nou moet hy vir my afbreek dat ek in die grond moet kyk ... Dis asof hulle my menswees afdruk, of so het ek dit ervaar / It touches me quite deeply... The HC, a person just like me breaking me down and telling me to look at the ground ... I experienced it as them pushing down my being. (Participant ABR, 18 year old male)*

***Uncertainty and fear.*** Uncertainties here refer to the first-year students not knowing what to expect or what was required of them in a given situation or activity. Fear refers to the first-year students' apprehension, especially with regard to their performance and the consequences of their behavior. Uncertainty and fear were reported in connection with the first-year students' relationship with their HC: many of the participants experienced uncertainty about what the HC expected of them and feared that the HC would disapprove of their efforts thus making them feel unworthy. Pressure to perform was reported, which caused anxiety in most of the participants – an emotion associated with a decrease in well-being:

*Almal wil iets meer doen maar hulle is amper te bang, want jy weet nie wat is reg of verkeerd nie, want dit voel as jy enige iets doen is dit verkeerd / Everybody wants to do something more, but you are too scared because you're not sure of what is right or wrong because it feels that whatever you do is wrong. (Participant DIP, 18 year old male)*

*Elke keer die aand voor die tyd vertel hul (die HK) jou bietjie van wat jy moet doen, maar nou nie als nie, so jy neuk elke aand op want jy weet nie presies wat om te doen nie en dan kom jy terug en jy weet hulle gaan jou uittrap / Everytime they (the HC) would tell you a bit of what you're supposed to do, but not everything, so every night you screw up cause you didn't know what to do and then when you come back you get scolded. (Participant DP, 18 year old male)*

*Ek het heeltemal vergeet ek verjaar van al daai stres omdat ek nie geweet het wat om te verwag nie / I totally forgot my own birthday because of all the stress of not knowing what to expect. (Participant CP, 20 year old male)*

Furthermore, according to most of the participants, privileges were taken away from them if they did not perform to the HC's liking, an experience associated with diminished well-being:

*Slegte wellbeing was ervaar as jy soos nie hard genoeg gesing het nie en dan kom jy by die koshuis en daar word vir jou gesê (deur die HK): "Julle het nie trots nie, en julle lyk swak" ... en dan moet ons weer afkyk en weer ons gewone klere aantrek / Bad well-being was experienced when you like didn't sing loud enough and when you get back to the hostel they (the HC) would tell you: "You're not proud and you looked bad" ... and then you had to look down and dress in normal clothes. (Participant AN, 18 year old female)*

The participants reported, simultaneously, uncertainty and fear relating to their adjustment to their new environment: they reported experiencing fear as a result of losing their previous support systems and being taken out of their "comfort zone" when leaving home for university thus contributing to a decrease in well-being:

*Aan die begin toe ek hiernatoe kom toe's dit nogal awkward en scary, want al my vriendinne is Stellenbosch toe ... so ek het niks vriende gehad nie / In the beginning when I came here it was quite awkward and scary, because all of my friends went to Stellenbosch ... so I had no friends. (Participant KL, 18 year old female)*

*Ek hou daarvan om nuwe mense te ontmoet, maar dit was moeilik, ons was baie eerstejaars, ek het niemand geken nie, ek het soms af en bang gevoel / I enjoy meeting new people, but it was tough because we were many first years and I didn't know anyone so I felt scared and down sometimes. (Participant ABR, 18 year old male)*

Uncertainty was reported when the participants had to work together with people they normally would not have interacted with. Not being certain appeared to coincide with a



decrease in spontaneity, which the participants considered an experience associated with a decrease in well-being:

*Dit was moeilik dat jy saam met ander moes werk ... hulle dink anders oor goed as wat jy dink / It was tough that you had to work with others ... they think differently about things than you do. (Participant CP, 20 year old male)*

*Hier was sterk leiers gewees, so jy moes vir jouself gesê het: “Okay nou bly ek ‘n bietjie stil”, en dis daai ding van dat jy moes aanpas vir ander mense, wat my well being afgebring het / There were some strong leaders, so you had to tell yourself “Okay, now I have to keep quiet for a bit”, and that thing of adjusting for the sake of others caused my well-being to drop. (Participant AN, 18 year old female)*

*Dit het gevoel soos ‘n klomp nuwe mense wat my judge, en jy sien jy pas nie regtig in met die ander nie, maar jy kan nie uitkom nie want jy word tussen verskillende mense gesit, geforce ... in die begin was dit half makliker om afsydig en stil te wees / It felt like a bunch of new people judging me, and you can see that you don’t really fit in, but you can’t get out because you’re forced to be with them ... in the beginning it was easier to isolate yourself and to be quiet. (Participant HH, 18 year old male)*

**Physical exertion.** Physical exertion here refers to the first-year students pushing themselves to the edge and sometimes beyond their physical capacities. All of the female participants, but none of the male participants, complained about being forced to eat large meals in a short space of time, an experience associated with a decrease in well-being:

*Die eet was baie erg, dit was hopeloos te veel kos, hulle het ons gedwing om ‘n hele vol bord kos te eet, hoog geskep, drie keer ‘n dag. Dit was ook naby aan mekaar ... drie, vier ure uitmekaar, dit voel of die kos uit jou keel kom, dan moet jy nog eet, en mens kan nie meer nie / The eating was very bad ... it was hopelessly too much – plates filled to the brim, three times a day in quick succession, maybe three or four*

*hours apart. It felt like the food would come back out, but you had to eat even though you couldn't anymore. (Participant AC, 18 year old female)*

Many of the participants considered sitting or standing in the same position for long periods of time during formal activities an experience that was associated with a decrease in well-being:

*Jy mag nie beweeg nie, jy moet die heelyd regop staan ... dan fisies begin jou arms en bene seer raak, jou gat raak seer en jy moet heelyd aanhou ... jou nek het ook seer geword van al die afkyk / You weren't allowed to move, you had to stand up straight the whole time and then your arms, legs and butt started getting sore ... your neck also got sore from all the looking down. (Participant HH, 18 year old male)*

Sixteen of the 21 participants reported lack of sleep as an experience linked to diminished well-being. The following extracts serve as examples.

*Tydens orientering kon jy nie baie geslaap het nie ... ok tien uur is nou ligte af, maar obviously kan jy nie dan afsluit nie want jy moet nog stort en klere was so jy kom eers an 12 regtig in die bed ... dan moet jy nog en die volgende oggend half ses jou HK gaan wakker maak / You couldn't get enough sleep during orientation ... although your lights had to be out by 10 o'clock, you only got to bed at around 12, because you still had to shower and wash clothes ... and then you had to get up at 5h30 to wake up your HC. (Participant BW, 18 year old female)*

*Omdat jy nie slaap nie raak jy vinniger geïrriteerd / Because you don't sleep, you get irritated more easily. (Participant JH, 18 year old female)*

**Insufficient free time.** Insufficient free time here refers to the first-year students being too busy with the orientation program schedule to find time for themselves and their friends.

Most of the participants reported not having enough time to “do their own thing”:

*Die besige schedule ... ek het nie baie tyd gehad vir myself nie ... om bietjie my eie ding te doen nie / The busy schedule ... I didn't have a lot of self-time ... to do my own thing. (Participant SS, 18 year old male)*

*Jy sien uit na Sondag want dis jou rusdag ... omdat hulle (die HK) jou dan moes uitlos ... die res van die tyd moes jy net die oriëntasie rooster volg en dan was daar nie tyd dat jy nie jou eie ding doen nie / You look forward to Sundays cause its your rest day because the HC has to leave you alone then ... the rest of the time you had to follow the orientation program's schedule and then there was no time to do your own thing. (Participant AB, 18 year old male)*

The majority of the participants experienced insufficient time to socialize with friends and to reflect on the orientation program which was associated with diminished well-being:

*Ek't te min tyd gehad om met my pelle te praat ... jy wil so baie goed deel met hulle oor wat jy beleef ... ek dink dit sou baie gehelp het om dit meer van my hart af te kon kry ... partykeer het mens skaars tyd vir 'n SMS om te sê: "ek lewe nog" / I had too little time to chat with my friends ... you had so many things to share about what you're experiencing ... I think that it would have helped to get some of that off my chest ... sometimes you didn't even have enough time to send an SMS saying: "I'm still alive." (Participant JJ, 18 year old female)*

**Disappointment in leaders.** Disappointment in leaders here refers to the participants experiencing the HC as inconsistent and untrustworthy, contrary to what they had expected from these "role models". Sixteen of the 21 participants complained about HC members being inconsistent in their behavior. Such behavior seemed to make them distrust the "caretakers" of the orientation program, leaving them disappointed and confused:

*Die een oomblik skreeu en skel hy (die HK-lid) op jou en die volgende oomblik het hy die Bybel op die arm ... Dis skynheilig en heavy conflicting ... dit wys nie integriteit*

*nie / The one moment the HC member would scream and scold you and the next he would have his Bible under his arm ... that hypocritical and heavy conflicting, showing no integrity. (Participant SS, 18 year old male)*

*Dan verander hulle (die HK) so vinnig, en dan voel ek half, sjoe! – mens moet tog dieselfde wees, nie een oomblik só en die volgende oomblik só nie ... ek het gevoel ek kan hulle minder vertrou dan, want jy weet nooit waar jy met hulle staan nie / They (the HC) change so quickly, and I feel, sjo! A person has to be more constant, not one moment like this and the next like that. It made me feel that I lost trust in them because you never know where you stand with them. (Participant AN, 18 year old female)*

*Mense in hoë posisies soos die HK is veronderstel om die voorbeeld te stel ... so dit is vir my teleurstellend as leiers opdragte gee ... en hulle leef dit nie uit nie / People in high positions like the HC are supposed to set an example ... so I'm disappointed if they give orders and don't live according those orders themselves. (Participant CP, 20 year old male)*

The participants' reports of experiences associated with well-being during the initial phase of the orientation reveal that the components of well-being that were experienced before the orientation had diminished (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002 and Ryff & Singer, 2008).

*Disillusionment with university life.* This subtheme correlates with a loss of the autonomy and environmental mastery dimensions of PWB, and the accompanying unpleasant feelings of being restricted imply a decrease in EWB.

*Loss of a high sense of self-worth.* This subtheme correlates with a loss of the self-acceptance dimension of PWB, and the associated feelings of being insignificant imply a decrease in EWB.

*Being disrespected.* Being disrespected with the associated feelings of worthlessness, being broken down and disheartened – correlates with a loss of the self-acceptance dimension of PWB and also implies a decrease in EWB.

*Uncertainty and fear.* Uncertainty and fear with the associated negative feelings of anxiety about not knowing what to expect and worthlessness when not performing to the HC's expectations correlate with a loss of the environmental mastery and self-acceptance dimensions of PWB and a decrease in EWB. The uncertainty and fear relating to the participants' adjustment to their new social setting also correlates with the loss of the positive relations dimension of PWB and the social integration and social acceptance dimensions of SWB. Furthermore, being forced to work together with people they normally would not have interacted with, and the associated negative feelings of restriction and being told what to do, correlates with the loss of the autonomy and environmental mastery dimensions of PWB and a decrease in EWB.

*Physical exertion.* Physical exertion with the associated negative feelings of being tired and being told what to do correlates with the loss of the autonomy and environmental mastery dimensions of PWB and a decrease in EWB.

*Insufficient free time.* Insufficient free time with experiences of being forced to adhere to the orientation program's busy schedule and not having enough self-time or time to socialize with peers correlates with the loss of the autonomy and positive relations dimensions of PWB and the social integration and social acceptance dimensions of SWB.

*Disappointment with leaders.* Disappointment with leaders with the accompanying negative feelings of distrust and confusion correlates with the loss of the positive relations dimension of PWB and the social coherence dimension of SWB and a decline in EWB.

The reported negative feelings and the loss of positive emotions associated with each reported subtheme during the initial phase of the orientation suggest that the participants

lacked EWB, the hedonic side of well-being. According to Fredrickson and Joiner (2002), experiences of negative emotions narrow individuals' thought-action repertoire, discourage novel ideas and focus attention on basic survival, which was in the participants' case to get through the orientation.

The above reports suggest a dramatic decrease in the participants' well-being during the initial phase of the orientation. The following extract indicates the severity of the decrease in the participants' well-being during the initial phase.

*So net voor die middel van oriëntering ... so net na die eerste week ... het ek net baie afgekraak gevoel ... ek dink in die eerste week het my well-being regtig gesuck ... dit was so erg – ek't oriëntering gehaat / Just before the middle of orientation, just after the first week ... I felt broken down ... my well-being sucked during that first week ... it was so tough – I hated orientation. (Participant DIP, 18 year old male)*

However, according to the quantitative results, there was not such a dramatic drop in well-being during the initial phase of the orientation program as the qualitative results suggested. Bearing in mind that the quantitative sample was drawn only seven days into the orientation program, the relatively mild fluctuations in the scales' measurements of well-being seemingly contradict the dramatic decrease in well-being shown in the qualitative results.

For the 371 participants in the quantitative sample, the average score achieved on the MHCSF-Tot (Keyes, 2002; 2005) was 62.0 (high) indicating no major changes in overall well-being from the first sample. The subscales of the MHCSF (Keyes, 2002; 2005), EWB, SWB and PWB, were 14.1, 19.1 and 28.7 respectively and showed no significant fluctuations from the first sample (see Table 1). The percentage of flourishing individuals dropped from 85.29% in the first sample to 83.83%, and the percentage of languishing individuals increased from 0.98% to 1.35% suggesting a very slight, almost inappreciable, drop in mental health

based on overall well-being (see Table 2). With effect sizes showing differences between the first and second samples, no practically significant changes with large effect sizes were noted in either the MHCSF-Tot (0.03), its subscales EWB, SWB, PWB (0.38, 0.24 and 0.13 respectively) or the SWLS (0.02) (see Table 3). However, emotional wellbeing (EWB) dropped practically significantly ( $d=0.38$ ).

The average score obtained on the SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) was 26.4. This falls in the “satisfied” (6<sup>th</sup>) category of Diener’s classification of seven categories (Pavot & Diener, 2008), which suggests that the sample drawn during the initial phase of the orientation program experienced satisfaction with life in respect of hedonic well-being similar to the satisfaction of the sample drawn before the commencement of the orientation program (see Table 1). There is thus a discrepancy between the qualitative and quantitative findings in this regard.

**Experiences associated with an increase in well-being.** The main experiences associated with an increase in well-being as the orientation program progressed were social support, freedom, making sense of the orientation program’s purpose and realizing the necessity of hardship (see Table 4).

***Increasing social support.*** Social support here refers to social integration as well as feeling included and approved by the group. The participants further defined this group support as coming from their peers, the HC and other senior students. As shown in the following extracts, the participants indicated that, as the orientation program progressed, social support was the primary experience that caused their well-being to increase again after its drop during the initial phase of the orientation program.

*I would say that it (well-being) increased again ... because I got to know the people that I live with and then I socialized with them. (Participant KG, 19 year old female)*

*Wat my meeste weer positief laat voel het ... was maar die ouens om jou, die ouens wat deur dieselfde as jy gaan, dis klein goedjies waar jy sien die een ou tel die ander op en sê: "kom ons kan deur dit kom!", dan weet jy jy's ok ... ek sou dit dalk nie sonder hulle gemaak het nie / What contributed the most to make me feel more positive again was the guys around you that went through the same as you, you see one picking up another by saying: "Come on! We can get through this!", then you know that you're ok ... I might not have made it without them. (Participant DIP, 18 year old male)*

*Ek reken die vriende wat ek begin maak het was die 'prime' ding wat gemaak het dat dit (well-being) vir my weer goed was later / I reckon that making friends was the "prime" thing that made my well-being better again. (Participant DP, 18 year old male)*

The first-year students also acknowledged the value of their HC's and senior students' approval, acceptance and approachability. This made them feel cared for, valued and worthy:

*Ek't nie selfvertroue gehad nie ... en toe het ons prim (leier van die HK) met my kom praat en gese dit gaan ok wees en dat ons eerstejaars is eintlik baie belangrik vir die koshuis ... van toe af gaan dit beter met my well-being / I didn't have any self-confidence and then our prim (leader of the HC) told me that everything was gonna be alright and that first years are actually very important in the hostel ... my well-being picked up from there. (Participant ABR, 18 year old male)*

*Hulle (die HK) het my só ge-ondersteun ... ek kon nie alles fisies doen nie maar hulle het altyd verstaan en altyd begrip gehad ... dit was awesome van hulle gewees ... Die HK het nogal uitgekome dat hulle daar is om jou te ondersteun ... hulle is daar om jou te support as jy probleme het of so / They (the HC) supported me so much ... I couldn't physically do everything, but they always understood ... that was awesome of*



*them ... they came out to actually be there if you need them, like when you have problems or something. (Participant AZ, 18 year old female)*

***Making sense of the orientation program's purpose.*** This refers to the first-year students finding subjective meaning in the purpose or goal of the orientation program. The researchers attempted to make sense of the participants' efforts to attach meaning to their increase in personal well-being after the dramatic drop in their well-being during the initial phase of the orientation. The participants who endeavored to make subjective sense of the purpose or goal of the orientation program associated this meaning making process with feelings of acceptance, calmness and understanding:

*First, I didn't get the whole purpose of orientation, but then I understood ... I started to understand and I embraced it. (Participant KGM, 18 year old male)*

*Toe het dit (my well-being) geleidelik weer begin klim ... deur die insigte wat ek gekry het ... ek het self beseef wat die doel is met oriëntasie, en die goed in perspektief begin sien ... dat dit eintelik 'n goeie ding is hierdie / My well-being started increasing with the insight that I gained about the purpose of orientation ... I started seeing things in another perspective – that orientation actually is a good thing. (Participant HH, 18 year old male)*

*Dit was vir my erg dat hulle op jou skree en jou regtig sleg laat voel, maar ek het toe beseef dis 'n proses waardeur jy moet gaan om deel te word / It was bad that they screamed at you the whole time, but I realised that it is a process that you have to go through to be accepted. (Participant AC, 18 year old female)*

*I realised that they didn't just do it (orientation) for fun, just to treat people badly, they knew how life was outside so they probably thought: "How can we teach these youngsters to be ready for life on the outside?" (Participant KL, 18 year old female)*

***Realizing the necessity of hardship.*** This refers to the first-year students' insight that hardship or suffering is sometimes necessary for good qualities, experiences and increases in well-being to come to the fore. The participants added that well-being had to be deserved. They said that hardship or suffering was a prerequisite for well-being to be deserved and enhanced:

*Ek dink as die harde deel van oriëntering dalk nie daar was nie sou ons dalk nie op die einde die klimaks of satisfaksie bereik het nie / I reckon that if the tough parts of orientation weren't there, we probably wouldn't have reached that climax or satisfaction at the end of it. (Participant CP, 20 year old male)*

*Ek dink die meeste van oriëntering was positief op die ou eind, mens moet deur slegte tye gaan om goeie tye te beleef / I think that orientation was positive overall because you had to go through the bad times to experience the good times. (Participant EK, 18 year old female)*

The participants argued that hardship also led to social integration. Many reported that suffering together, sharing hardships/discomfort and forced integration, although initially perceived as negative, ultimately led to social integration, which was an experience associated with an increase in well-being. Social integration was defined by the participants as forming friendships with other first-year students, group cohesion, racial integration and acceptance. The participants talk about the significance of sharing hardships in the formation of friendships in the following extracts.

*Om saam te suffer maak die band tussen die eerstejaars beter en jy vorm vriendskappe / To suffer together makes the bond between first years stronger and friendships develop. (Participant SS, 18 year old male)*

*Jy is gedwing om dinge saam te doen ... dis eintlik vreemd en positief as ek terug kyk, want mens kan nie dink dat jy vriendskappe onder sulke moeilike omstandighede*

*opbou nie, maar jy doen juis / You are forced to do things together ... and its actually strange when you think about it – that friendships can form under such difficult circumstances, but that’s exactly where it happened. (Participant JH, 18 year old female)*

*Dis die ding van ‘n groep ... op die ou-end help almal mekaar daardeur want jy weet die ou langs jou is in dieselfde situasie as jy, dis nie net jy nie ... dis vir hom ook sleg en hy sukkel ook ... om dit te weet het my well-being baie gehelp / That’s the thing about the group ... everybody goes through the same as you ... he also struggles and knowing that you’re not going through those things alone helped my well-being a lot. (Participant HP, 18 year old male)*

The participants report the significance of shared hardships in the formation of group cohesion and belonging to a group in the following extracts.

*Dit het nie goed gegaan nie, en ek reken mens praat nie altyd met mense as dit goed gaan nie, as oriëntering nie gebeur het nie, as als goed net was, sou die hele interaksie ding wat my well-being toe op laat gaan het, nooit gebeur het nie / It wasn’t going well and I reckon you don’t always speak with others when it is going well ... so if orientation didn’t happen, the whole interaction-thing that contributed to my well-being increasing, wouldn’t have happened. (Participant SS, 18 year old male)*

*Ons was baie skrikkerig, hulle het ons bang gepraat, en waar jy as groep saam gestaan en vriende geword het, het ons besef ons kan nie mekaar nou drop nie, ons moet nou bymekaar staan sodat ons hierdeur kan kom / We were quite scared, and as a group, where we became friends, we realised that we can’t drop each other now – we have to stand together to get through this. (Participant AZ, 18 year old female)*

*Ek het gesien hoe verskillende groepe as ‘n eenheid saamwerk, hoe mense van wydverspreid af, in so kort tyd, so vinnig kan saamwerk en goeters kan saam doen,*

*bymekaar kan staan as dinge moeilik gaan, dit was vir my baie cool, dit het my gemotiveer om aan te gaan ... daar is iets kosbaars om daai eenheid saam met jou medemens soos te kan aanneem / I saw how different groups of people can work together as a unit in a very short time, how they could stand together in tough times ... I thought that was very cool and it motivated me to endure ... there is something precious in forming that togetherness with others. (Participant EK, 18 year old female)*

As shown in the following extracts, the participants reported hardship as necessary for racial and cultural integration.

*Veral in die koshuis leer jy rerig met heeltemal ander kulture se mense oor die weg kom, ons is gedwing om 24 uur van die dag saam te wees, ook deur daai tawwe tye dink ek bou dit 'n baie beter broederskap / In the hostel, where you are forced to be together 24 hours a day, you really learn to get along with people from different cultures ... going through tough times together even formed feelings of brotherhood between us. (Participant DP, 18 year old male)*

*To be forced wasn't fun, but it was also good ... because if they didn't force us, I wouldn't have interacted with the other people ... I would have been choosey you know – I would chat with her, and her and not her ... I would probably only have mixed with my own culture ... then after orientation I could socialise with them and interact with them (other cultures) without any disturbance, without any disrespect or whatever. (Participant KL, 18 year old female)*

*Ons was baie min kleurlinge, maar ek weet nie hoe het hulle dit reggekry nie, want naderhand het ons almal, al die rasse net soos saamgesmelt, 'n hele eenheid ... seker maar omdat ons geforseer was om saam te werk / We were only a couple of*

*coloureds, and I'm not sure how they did it – probably by forcing us to work together, but all the races integrated. (Participant ABR, 18 year old male)*

*Because of being forced, I definitely interacted with people I wouldn't normally interact with ... first it was the blacks only who interact with each other, the whites and then the colourds ... but as time went on I could actually talk to a white person, "Oh hoe gaan dit met jou, wat wat wat wat"... yeah that was nice. (Participant KG, 19 year old female)*

Acceptance was described in terms of a *rite of passage* to become full-fledged, socially accepted students at the university:

*Kyk, jy kon seker gekies het om nie deel te neem nie, maar ek dink nie jy sou dan rerig aanvaar geword het as deel van die koshuis nie ... as jy aanvaar word voel jy meer deel van hulle almal en beter oor jouself / Look, you could probably have chosen not to participate, but then you wouldn't have been accepted as being a true part of your hostel. By being accepted, you feel that you belong as a part of them and you feel better about yourself. (Participant AB, 18 year old male)*

**Regained freedom.** Freedom here refers to being able to govern and control your own life. Most of the participants reported that they experienced an increase in well-being during the latter stages of the orientation program as they were given more freedom and were less supervised by the HC than during the initial phase of the orientation program:

*Soos oriëntering aangegaan het, het hulle (die HK) jou net gelos vir 'n ruk, spasie gegee, en nie heeltyd daar gestaan en jou dopgehou nie ... jy kon praat en net soos bietjie jou ou self wees weer ... bietjie asem haal / As orientation progressed, they (the HC) left you alone for a while, gave you some space, not watching you the whole time ... then you could speak a little and be your old self again ... you could breathe. (Participant HB, 18 year old male)*

*Wel naderhand het die HK ons meer en meer vryheid gegee en dit was great / Well, after a while the HC gave us more and more freedom and that was great. (Participant BW, 18 year old female)*

This freedom also appeared to be accompanied by more time to reflect on the process of orientation as well as time to socialize with peers, associating this with a positive shift in well-being:

*Met tye waar mens daai ekstra bietjie spasie gegee is, het jy tyd gehad om jouself te wees en te dink oor ander goed behalwe wanneer gaan hulle volgende op jou skreeu. So jy't 'n rustigheid ervaar wat baie positief was, want dit gee jou kans om te kan om te gesels met ander ouens en om jouself in die hele oriëntering-ding in te praat / At times when we were given some space you had some time to just be yourself and to think about other things than: "When will they scream on me next?" So you experienced a kind of calm which was very positive and it gave you a chance to chat with others and to get yourself motivated into the whole orientation-thing. (Participant DP, 18 year old male)*

*Op tye as dit sleg gaan het jy daai houding van ek wil loop ek wil weggaan, ek wil in 'n flat gaan bly, maar tye waar jy tyd het en kan rustig raak besef jy: "Maar jy is al so vêr in die ding in jy kan nou net sowel deurdruk" / During the bad times you get that attitude of: "I wanna get out and go live in a flat", but at times when you get time to be calm you realise that you have already endured much and might just as well go all the way now. (Participant DIP, 18 year old male)*

The participants' reports of experiences associated with well-being during the orientation program revealed that the PWB, SWB and EWB components of well-being that decreased during the orientation's initial phase increased in the program's latter stages (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002 and Ryff & Singer, 2008).

*Increasing social support.* Increasing social support with accompanying positive emotions such as belonging, and feeling worthy, valued and cared for correlates with the SWB dimensions of social integration, social acceptance and social contribution, and with the positive relations dimension of PWB, implying an increase in EWB. With social support identified as the primary experience leading to an increase again in the participants' well-being, it is argued that SWB informs and precedes PWB and EWB. According to Prilleltensky (2005), traditionally the focus of programs to enhance well-being was primarily on the individual. However, the present study suggests that the well-being of the collective influences the well-being of the individual. This points to what Prilleltensky (2005) calls the interdependence of the different sites of well-being.

*Making sense of the orientation program's purpose.* This subtheme correlates with the purpose in life dimension of PWB and the social coherence dimension of SWB. The associated positive feelings of acceptance and understanding suggest an increase in EWB. Fredrickson (2001) argues that positive emotions broaden people's thought-action repertoire encouraging them to be more resourceful and inventive as they are then less focused on primary survival needs. Where the participants experienced negative emotions during the initial phase of the orientation, their focus appeared to be to merely get through the program. Once they understood the orientation's purpose, they displayed a new vigor and willingness to participate fully in the program. This correlates strongly with the concept of zest proposed by Russel (1958). Zest, among other things, refers to having a reflective stance on life. Making sense of the orientation program's purpose, and making sense of the subjective suffering as a prerequisite for achieving the subjective goals, appeared to be attainable only when the first-year students reflected on their experiences.

*Realizing the necessity of hardship.* Realizing the necessity of hardship to form friendships, to be accepted and to belong, and believing that their environment created the

opportunity to integrate across race and cultural boundaries, correlates with the SWB dimensions of social integration, social acceptance and social actualization as well as with the positive relations dimension of PWB. The positive emotions of success and accomplishment experienced when the hardships had been endured suggest an increase in EWB.

*Regained freedom.* Regained freedom here refers to the newcomers being less supervised and regaining the ability to govern and control their lives and environments thus correlating with the PWB dimensions of environmental mastery and autonomy. Jahoda (1958) regards the environmental mastery component as an individual's ability to control his environment according to his needs, while Ryan and Deci (2000) consider this dimension together with autonomy as indicating that the individual concerned is the author of his own life. Jung (1933), in relation to the first-year students' experiences of HC approval and disapproval fading, speaks about being free from social convention on one's way to personal growth. When the first-year students could govern their own time, they chose to share experiences and chat and reflect about the orientation with their peers, which correlates with the autonomy and positive relations dimensions of PWB and with the social integration, social acceptance and social contribution dimensions of SWB. The positive feelings of control and belonging imply an increase in EWB.

### **Reflections About Well-being After Orientation**

Seventeen of the 21 participants reported that their subjective appraisal of their well-being had increased to a point higher after the orientation than before it started. The experiences associated with this increase in well-being were social support and self-transformation.

**Social support and well-being.** Social support here refers to belonging to a group and feeling included:



*So ek dink eintlik op die einde is mens se 'well being' beter want jy het 'n support stelsel van ander mense ... omdat jy geforseer was om hulle te leer ken en saam hulle die goeters te doen, nou het jy jou pelle se support, maar jy het ook die HK se support / I reckon that one's well-being is better afterwards, because you now have a support system. By being forced to get to know others and to work together you made friends and also have the HK's support. (Participant HP, 18 year old male)*

Furthermore, belonging to a group was an experience that was accompanied by the participants feeling worthwhile and valued. The participants evidently attached significance to hardship in the formation of social support:

*Ek dink dit (my well-being) is eintelik beter as voor oriëntering, want nou voel ek heeltemal beter oor myself as voorheen, en ek het baie meer interaksie met mense as voorheen / I think my well-being is actually better than before orientation – I have more interaction with others and I feel better about myself. (Participant SS, 18 year old male)*

*Voor oriëntering was dit (well-being) so 8 uit 10 gewees, en toe in die begin van oriëntering het dit geval seker na so 'n 5 uit 10, ek het gevoel ek wil uit die koshuis uitgaan, en 'n woonstel kry ... dit was so erg op 'n tyd ... ons het toe meer verhoudings opgebou, en ek het self dinge geleer waarop ek trots is ... en dis regtig lekker nou, ek dink dis naby aan 'n 10 uit 10 nou, na oriëntering / Before orientation my well-being was about 8 out of 10, and during the initial phase of orientation it fell to about 5 out of 10 – it was so bad at a stage that I felt like moving out of the hostel and getting a flat ... but then we started forming relationships and I learnt things that I am proud of ... and I really enjoy it now (afterwards)... I think my well-being is now close to 10 out of 10. (Participant AN, 18 year old female)*

In an attempt to make sense of the purpose of the orientation program, the participants considered belonging to a group as a goal of the program:

*My well-being actually increased to be higher than before I came here ... I realised what the whole purpose of orientation was to make friends ... so I was like, okay that's what it's all about! so let me just go with it ... so then I learned a lot of things about myself and about other people in the process ... it increased it (well-being).*

*(Participant KL, 18 year old female)*

**Opportunities for self-transformation.** Self-transformation refers here to the participants making sense of the orientation program's purpose in terms of how they were transformed. Such self-transformation takes place on different levels. The transformation from childhood to adulthood is illustrated by participants seeing orientation as their preparation for a life after university in a world where well-being does not come easily, where you have to work hard and sometimes even suffer to get to the top or deserve well-being:

*My well-being built up when I realised this stuff that we're doing during orientation isn't actually to make us feel bad ... the HC are trying to make us realise that life is actually tough, they are building us up so that we will be able to live in the outside world ... so I started taking it as a preparation for my manhood and life outside varsity and I felt better knowing that. (Participant KGM, 19 year old male)*

*Mens kan dit nie net maklik hê nie, mens moet hard werk en dit verdien ... dit was in skool ook so gewees, dit werk orals so ... in die werkplek ook, jy stap nie net daar in as 'n CEO nie .... mens moet gewoon raak om altyd aanvanklik onder te begin om jouself op te werk en dit later te verdien / You can't just have it easy, you have to work hard to deserve things ... it works like that everywhere ... you don't just walk into*

*your job as the CEO ... you have to get used to starting at the bottom and working yourself up to deserve it. (Participant AN, 18 year old female)*

*Oriëntering was vir my 'n voorbereiding vir wat nou gaan gebeur. I mean, jy moet nou laat gaan slaap, die kursus wat jy loop is moeilik en jy moet hard werk ... partykeer voel jy net moedeloos, dis nie meer soos skool nie, jou ma is ook nie meer hier om jou ruggie te vryf en te sê: "dis ok my kind ek sal jou help" nie ... jy is nou alleen en met oriëntering leer jy dat jy nou vir jouself moet sorg / Orientation for me, was a preparation of what is to come. I mean, now you have to go to bed late, your studies are tough and you have to work hard ... at times you just feel dishearted and its not like in school anymore where your mom is there to rub your back saying: "It's ok my child, I'll help you" ... no, now you're alone and orientation teaches you to take care of yourself. (Participant AC, 18 year old female)*

**Relevance of hardship for well-being.** Hardship can include hard work and pushing of one's own boundaries (personal growth) and is needed for the development of character strengths:

*Alhoewel jy vir 'n hele tyd afgebreek is, het jy sterker uit dit gekom ... en daar is goeie karaktereenskappe wat ontwikkel het ... dit het baie meer gegroei in die slegte tye / Although you were broken down the whole time, you came out stronger at the end ... and there are good characteristics that developed a lot more during the tough times. (Participant HH, 18 year old male)*

*Die harde en moeilike tye in oriëntering is nie lekker nie, maar jy begin daarin kante van jouself sien wat jy nooit eintlik geken het nie ... jy begin karaktereenskappe wys wat goed is wat jy voel dan: "jis, ek het nie geweet ek kan dit doen of so optree nie" en dit gee jou selfvertroue / The hard and tough times of orientation wasn't fun, but you see sides of yourself that you didn't know existed. You show characteristics that*

*are good and then you feel “Wow, I didn’t know I could behave like that!” And that gave me self-confidence. (Participant DIP, 18 year old male)*

The participants’ reports suggest that hardship provides the space needed for a person’s positive characteristics to come to the fore. However, it appears that this can happen only when sufficient freedom is experienced for introspection and self-reflection.

**Importance of self-reflection for well-being.** Self-reflection refers to the opportunity to deconstruct a subjectively bad experience and repack it in a more positive way. Research (Du Preez & Roos, 2008) suggests that the ability for self-reflection is a key factor in the process of self-development and personal growth. The ability to deconstruct an experience also serves as a consciousness-raising process as evidenced by the participants’ ability to make sense subjectively of the purpose of the orientation. Self-reflection also contributes to greater awareness of the dynamics of interrelatedness, which in turn can lead to empathy and can serve as a precursor to social, racial and cultural integration. Self-actualizers, according to Maslow (1968), have strong feelings of empathy for others regardless of race or culture. These are all experiences associated with an increase in well-being. The following extract illustrates this finding.

*Oriëntering was nie vir my lekker nie, maar ek sal defnitief sê dis nodig ... dit het my meer goed as sleg gedoen ... mens leer baie oor jouself in daai tyd. As jy in die aand in die bed lê, as jy tyd het om ‘n bietjie rustig te wees, is dit waaraan jy dink, jy dink aan wat gebeur het die dag en wat gaan môre gebeur, en jy besef dis in daardie moeilike situasies waar jy jouself vind / I didn’t enjoy orientation, but I’d definitely say that it is necessary ... it did me more good than bad ... you learn a lot about yourself during that time. That is what you think about when you lie in bed at night and you have time to be calm. You think about what have happened and what will*

*happen tomorrow and realise that it is in the tough times that you find yourself.*

*(Participant CP, 20 year old male)*

The participants' reflections about well-being after the orientation revealed that more dimensions of well-being were experienced than before or during the orientation (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002 and Ryff & Singer, 2008).

*Social support.* Social support implies positive feelings of belonging and inclusion, but also of feeling valued and worthwhile, thus suggesting EWB and correlating with the social integration, social acceptance and social contribution dimensions of SWB and with the positive relations dimension of PWB. The participants also considered belonging to a group and social growth (social interaction across cultures) as a goal of the orientation program. Experiencing their social structures and community as providing the opportunity to face the challenges of social integration correlates with the social actualization and social coherence dimensions of SWB.

*Opportunities for self-transformation.* Opportunities for self-transformation where independent functioning and the development of strengths were seen as a purpose of the orientation program, correlates with the personal growth, autonomy and purpose in life dimensions of PWB. The fact that the participants believed that well-being had to be deserved and that they felt good about themselves for achieving well-being by enduring hardship implies experiences of EWB. Ryff and Singer (2008) argue that well-being construed as growth is influenced strongly by a person's context thus implying that the environment provides people with the opportunity to grow. Subjective suffering was seen by the participants as a prerequisite for the transformation of the self (which includes self-growth), and hard work was seen as a requirement for deserving well-being. It thus appears that the challenging environment experienced during orientation provided the first-year students with the opportunity to grow personally. Russel (1958) suggests that effort and hard

work are needed to achieve subjective well-being, and Frankl and Lasch (1992) suggest that meaning-making sometimes takes place under dire circumstances. Campbell (1949) argues that the opportunities to discover strengths within ourselves usually occur when life seems most challenging.

*The relevance of hardship for well-being.* Hardship was seen by the participants as providing the space needed for personal positive characteristics to come to the fore, correlating with the personal growth dimension of PWB.

*The importance of self-reflection for well-being.* Self-reflection with the associated positive feelings of worth, control and growth correlates with the self-acceptance, environmental mastery and personal growth dimensions of PWB and also implies EWB.

### **Implications of the Findings**

The quantitative results of the sample recorded after the orientation program suggest a minor increase in overall well-being according to the average score of 62.5 (high) achieved on the MHCSF-Tot. This score is somewhat higher than that of the sample recorded before the program (62.3) and the score of the sample recorded during the program (62.0), but it is still not practically significant. None of the MHC-SF subscale scores showed large practically significant fluctuations when compared with the previous samples' scores. On the basis of this sample's average SWLS score (26.3), there appears to be no difference in the participants' subjective well-being before (26.3) and after the program with both samples falling in the "satisfied" (6<sup>th</sup>) category of Diener's classification of seven categories (Pavot & Diener, 2008) (see Table 2).

When comparing the various mental health categories over the different samples (see Table 2), it can be seen that the percentage of flourishing students dropped by just more than one percentage point (from 85.29% to 84.08%) while the percentage of languishing students

fell from 0.98% to 0.56% suggesting an insignificant change in the students' mental health over the course of the orientation program.

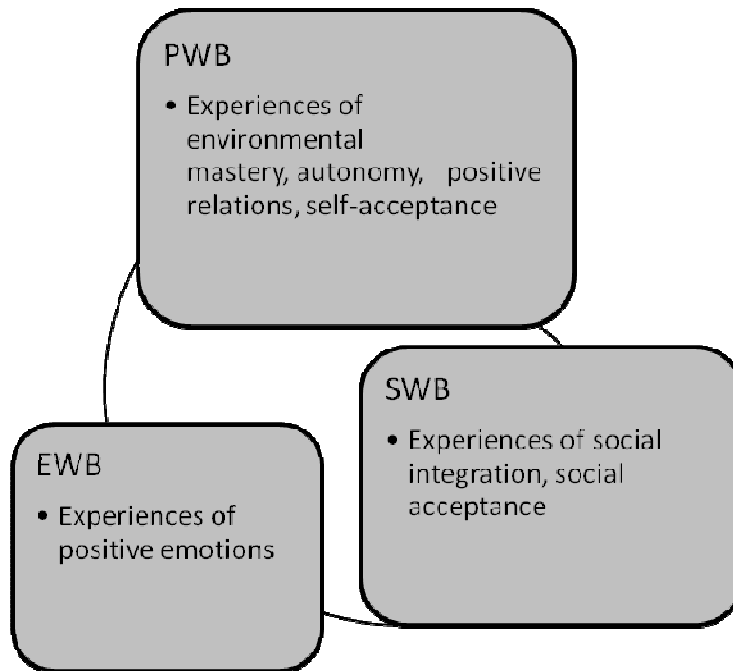
When comparing the effect sizes (see Table 3) of the differences on the MHC-SF subscales over time, there appears to be a practically (medium effect size) significant increase in SWB ( $d= 0.56$ ) from before the orientation until after the program had finished. None of the other MHC-SF subscales or the SWLS show practically appreciable fluctuations when effect sizes of the first sample are compared with those of the last sample (see Table 3).

According to the quantitative results, the only practically significant change in well-being was found when comparing the first with the last quantitative sample, with SWB increasing appreciably. The other changes in well-being were inappreciably minor suggesting that the first-year students experienced a very constant, stable appraisal of their well-being throughout the orientation program.

The qualitative findings suggest, however, that the first-year students experienced marked fluctuations in well-being from high before the orientation to low during the initial phase and to high again after the program's completion (see Figure 2). A reason for the disparity between the findings of the different approaches may be that the data gathering for the two approaches was not done in the same time frame: the quantitative data were gathered in real-time, as the participants experienced the orientation program, and the qualitative data were gathered after the completion of the orientation program thus giving a retrospective perception of well-being during the program. Another reason for the difference in the findings may be that the qualitative enquiries were more sensitive to the participants' experiences of change in well-being than the quantitative measures.

The shifts in well-being, indicated by the qualitative findings appear to be linked to the experiences of the different dimensions of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998; Ryff & Singer, 2008) over the different phases of the orientation

program. Figure 1 indicates what experiences participants link to their definition of well-being.



*Figure 1.* Participants' description of what comprises well-being.

Figure 2 shows how this definition changes drastically during the different phases of orientation. Using a mixed methodology provided a better understanding of these fluctuations, especially the increase in well-being.



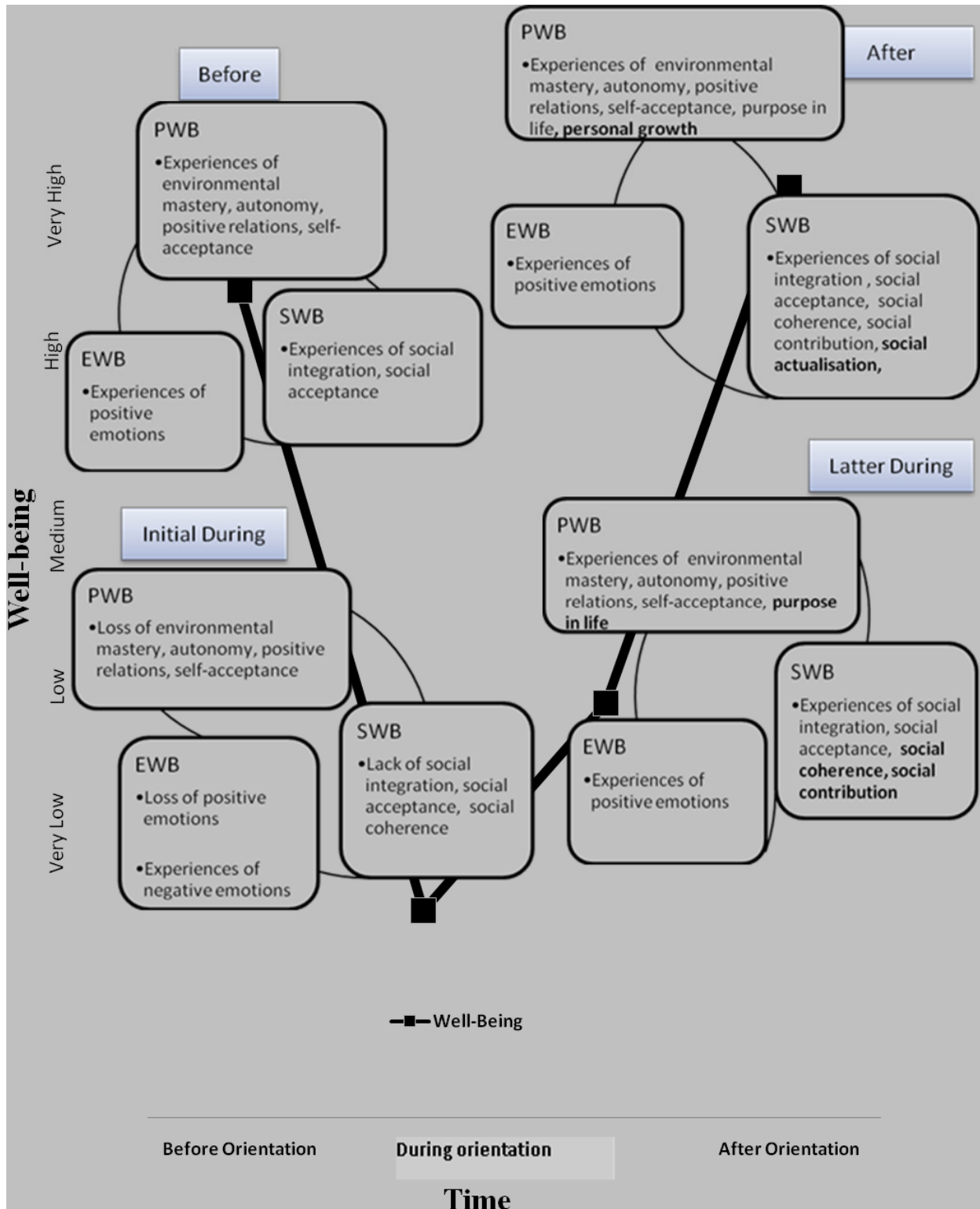


Figure 2. Shifts in participants' well-being with associated experiences over the course of the orientation program.

The different levels of well-being depicted in Figure 2 (ranging from very low to very high) associated with the participants' experiences during the different phases of the orientation were determined by the qualitative data analysis, which included triangulating multiple techniques to enhance the legitimacy of the analysis.

The similarity in the qualitative findings regarding the PWB, SWB and EWB dimensions of well-being (Ryff, 1989; Keyes, 1998; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002; Ryff & Singer, 2008) experienced prior to the orientation, and the participants using these dimensions in their definition of what well-being comprises (see Figure 1), implies that, from a qualitative point of view, the participants experienced well-being before the start of the orientation (see "Before", Figure 2).

The qualitative data analysis indicated that the participants distinguished between two distinct phases experienced during the orientation program: an initial phase and a latter phase. During the initial phase of orientation, a decrease in the levels of the four identified dimensions of PWB and the two SWB dimensions used to describe well-being were reported. Furthermore, a loss of EWB characterized by a decrease in positive emotions and experiences of negative emotions was noted during this phase. The qualitative results therefore suggest a dramatic decrease in the participants' well-being during the initial phase of the orientation (see "Initial During", Figure 2).

A fifth dimension of PWB, purpose in life, was added as the participants searched for meaning and purpose as the orientation program progressed. Social coherence and social contribution were added to SWB during the latter phases of the orientation. This, together with the accompanying positive emotions experienced suggesting EWB, implies an increase in well-being (see "Latter During", Figure 2).

The participants' reflections on experiences associated with well-being after the orientation (see "After", Figure 2) reveal that the five dimensions of PWB experienced during

the latter phases of the orientation were again experienced but also that the sixth PWB dimension, personal growth, had been added. All five (with the addition of social actualization) of the SWB dimensions were evidently also associated with reflections about well-being after the orientation. This suggests an increase in well-being from before the start of the orientation when only two of these dimensions were reported (see “Before”, Figure 2) and correlates with the practically significant increase in SWB measured by the MHC-SF from before to after the orientation program. This is significant as the participants reported social support (alluding to SWB) as being the primary reason (instigation) for the increase in well-being – this finding correlates with the only quantitative finding to show a practically significant fluctuation (increase). Experiences of EWB, marked by positive emotions, were also reflected on after the orientation program. From the qualitative results, it can then be concluded that the participants experienced higher well-being after the orientation than before it started.

### **Limitations of Study**

The interviews that served as the source of the qualitative data were conducted after the completion of the orientation program. This means that only students who were able to endure the subjective hardships associated with orientation were interviewed, implying that the study may represent the views of demographically representative newcomers who found the strength, support and resources to make it through the orientation rather than a representative sample of first-year students including those who dropped out when hardships were experienced. Also, the quantitative samples were conveniently chosen and not according to the statistical principle of randomness. This may limit the generalizability of the results to other, similar populations. Furthermore the convenience samples used during the three phases may have included students who were included in more than one of the samples,

possibly sensitizing them to the expected outcomes. The quantitative and qualitative data were also not collected in the same time frame.

### **Recommendations**

Well-being is a holistic experience, and recommendations are therefore made to enhance the social and the personal well-being of first-year students as they participate in orientation programs.

Social well-being can be promoted by the continuation of activities geared towards promoting social interaction and racial/cultural integration. Furthermore, creating an environment where first-year students' strengths are recognized, rather than breaking down the students, may help enhance their personal well-being. In the context of this study, a loss of well-being can be expected by students merely attending the orientation program without the need for HCs to break down first-year students further in an effort to decrease their well-being to a point where strengths are developed. Amending policy on the power of HCs, or on the communication of the responsibilities that accompany this power, appears necessary. If the latter could be achieved, the elevated authority of HC members could be used constructively (Roos et al., 2005). Taking into account the context-bound nature of self-reflection and personal growth, HC members could contribute by creating a safe space and sufficient time for worthwhile self-reflection. Self-reflection is regarded as crucial for first-year students to make sense of the orientation program's purpose, which in turn may lead to personal growth and the development of personal strengths.

### **Conclusion**

The results illustrate the first-year students' perceptions of well-being and how these perceptions shifted during an orientation program in an academic context and the experiences associated with these shifts. By triangulating the qualitative and quantitative methods, an in-

depth understanding of well-being and the experiences associated with its shifts was obtained. Of all the dimensions used to define well-being, SWB was found to be the main instigator of an increase in well-being. Recommendations are made regarding the promotion of the social and personal well-being of first-year students during an orientation program.

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