

GESTALT GUIDELINES ASSISTING MINE WORKER FATHERS LIVING IN ORANJEMUND  
TO ENHANCE A DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN IN MIDDLE  
CHILDHOOD

by

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## **DECLARATION OF RESEARCHER**

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I hereby declare **GESTALT GUIDELINES ASSISTING MINE WORKER FATHERS LIVING IN ORANJEMUND TO ENHANCE A DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD** to be my own work and that all the references that were used or quoted were indicated and recognised.



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SIGNATURE

18-02-2011

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DATE

## **DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR**

Hereby I declare that I have language edited and proofread the thesis **GESTALT GUIDELINES ASSISTING MINE WORKER FATHERS LIVING IN ORANJEMUND TO ENHANCE A DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD** by Simone Binneman for the degree MDiac.

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

Lambert Daniel Jacobs (BA Hons, MA, BD, MDiv)

15 February 2011

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to develop Gestalt guidelines for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund in order to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. The researcher made use of the first four stages of the Design and Development model of intervention research. These stages include problem analysis and project planning, information gathering and synthesis, design and the early development of the guidelines. For the purpose of this study, focus groups were conducted with father participants and semi-structured interviews were conduct with children participants. The research study was based on existential dialogue with the focus on four main themes, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation. Existing literature from Gestalt approach, middle childhood and culture was used together with functional elements of other existing parent child relationship and family programmes or models, to develop the guidelines.

## **KEY TERMS**

- Parent child dialogical relationship
- Children in middle childhood
- Mine worker fathers: with the focus on shifts
- Culture
- Gestalt guidelines

*To love is not a part of things or a part of life. To love is the whole of things and the whole of life. In my heart is my love for you and in my love for you, life is whole.*

(Venus de Medici – Essay on Love)

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### **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

Namdeb	Namdeb Diamond Corporation (Pty) Ltd, Namibia
D&D	Design and Development Model
IFT	International Federation of Translators
MMFF	McMaster Model of Family Functioning
OHEP	Oranjemund Health and Education Project

# **CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM ANALYSIS AND PROJECT PLANNING**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

With this study, the researcher seeks to assist the father living in Oranjemund to enhance the dialogical relationship with his child in middle childhood. For the purpose of this study, the relationship being studied is that of mine worker fathers who work shifts and whose children are in middle childhood between the ages of 8-12 years old. Imbedded in all parent child relationships should be care. A caring relationship is one that practises commitment to dialogue, inclusion, presence and confirmation, known as the principles of dialogue (Yontef, 2005:95-96). A parent child relationship committed to the above principles of dialogue according to the classical work of Yontef (1993a:218-220) and Schoeman (2006a:6) helps children become more self-supportive and orientated towards healthy growth, gaining the ability towards their own sense of mastery.

In Oranjemund, many children live with their fathers, who work for Namdeb Diamond Corporation (Pty) Ltd (Namdeb). These children live away from their mothers and elders to obtain private education that Namdeb provides for the children of their employees. According to Helmuth (2008:31) mine workers who work for Namdeb come from many different regions of the country other than the southern Karas region, leaving their families behind in those regions. Many of these mine workers work long shifts, making it difficult for them to be available to their children to provide the necessary family or institutional support. In situations like these children, according to Blom (2006:107) might be left with feelings of inadequacy, which in middle childhood come from two sources, the self and the environment (Wait, Meyer & Loxton, 2005:144). This influences the child's capabilities in meeting challenges in life, struggling to become self supportive (Blom, 2006:103).

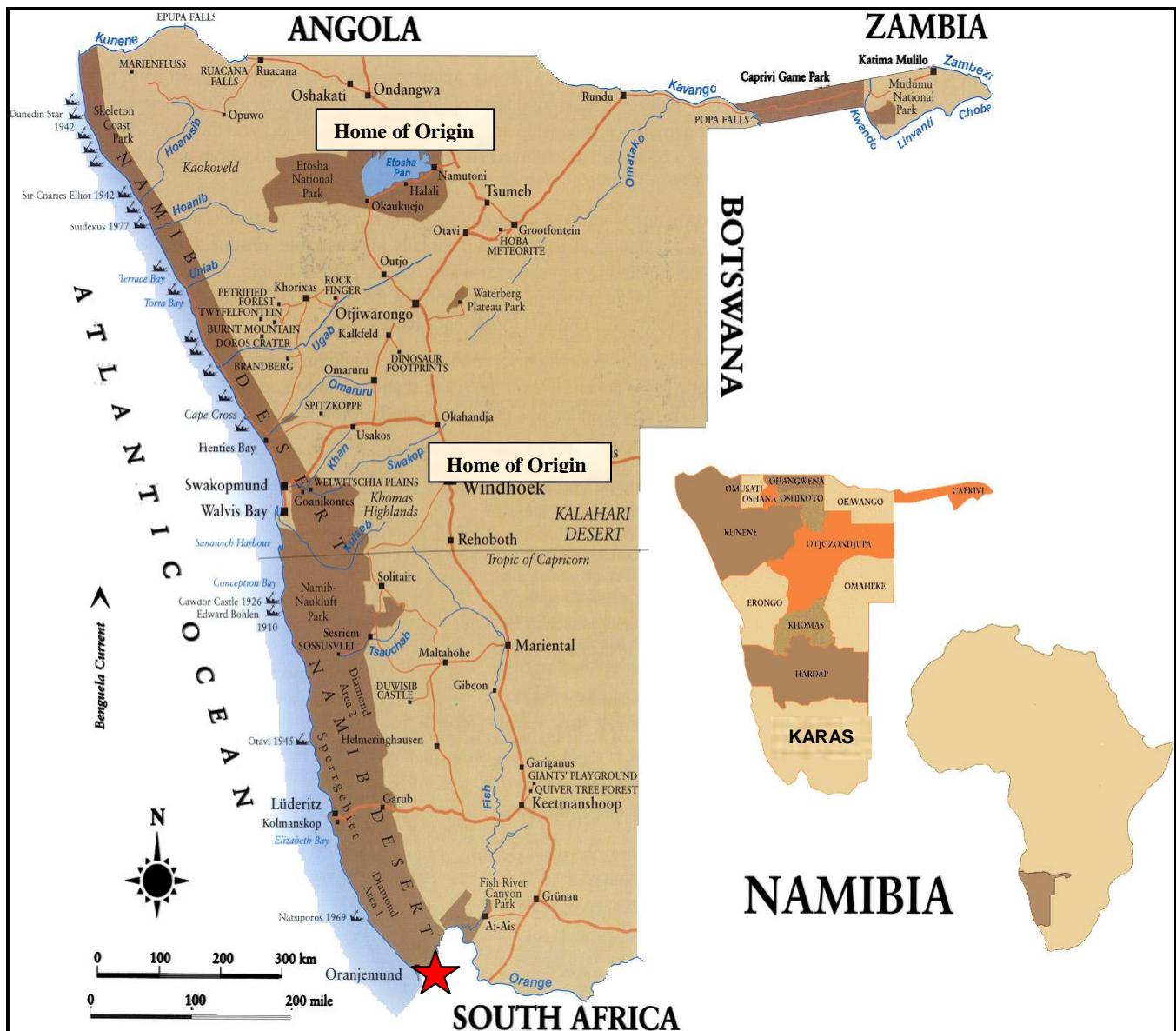
Parents play a very important role in their children's lives, acting as protecting buffers, support systems and role models (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996:285). Fathers who are thus committed to a dialogical relationship might help empower children's

sense of mastery that strengthens self support as well as promote resilience at school. Therefore, this study seeks to develop Gestalt guidelines assisting mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

## **1.2. MOTIVATION, RATIONALE AND PROBLEM FORMULATION FOR THE STUDY**

According to Joyce and Sills (2001:43, 45) the dialogical relationship is one of feeling, sensing and experiencing the other person, acknowledging their existences whilst being fully received by that person. The researcher proposes to place the concept of dialogical relationship in a Namibian context where mine working fathers living in Oranjemund will be made aware of how to enhance a dialogical attitude in their relationship with their children in middle childhood.

During the practical component of the Master's degree, together with the researcher being an educational facilitator at a school in Oranjemund, a heightened awareness was drawn towards mine worker children in middle childhood, as a majority of these children seemed to struggle coping at school. In assessing their development at school, the researcher collected information verbally from teaching staff who stated that a large number of these children struggle to cope in the schooling environment. Due to the travel distances in Namibia, most mine worker children in the diamond mining town of Oranjemund live up to a travelling distance of 1 500 km away from their 'Home of Origin' (see Figure 1.1). This involves that these children live away from their mothers or elders and are raised by their fathers in order to receive subsidised private education that the mine provides. Children reside with their fathers who work long shifts, often leaving the children alone or in the care of a caregiver.



**Figure 1.1 Map of Namibia showing distance between Oranjemund and 'Home of Origin' (Adapted from <http://www.fao.org/fi/oldsite/FCP/en/NAM/body.htm>, 2011, 4 January).**

According to Wait *et al.* (2005:136, 144) parents of children in middle childhood play an important role in a child's industry, where children copy their parent's behaviour and are self-motivated by the rewards they receive from others. What is being observed in Oranjemund is that a large number of fathers are unavailable to their children due to the shifts they work, providing insufficient support. According to the Gestalt approach, human development is a process involving movement from total environmental support to optimal self support (Reynolds, 2005:155). Reynolds

(2005:155) further states that young children lack internal resources against stressors and are reliant on their parents for environmental support. Any environmental influence affecting a child and the distinct field in which the child is embedded in is of importance (Yontef, 1993b; Reynolds, 2005:154, 156, 159; Blom, 2006:19).

To meet today's standards of appropriate parental behaviour studies have noted that parents must maximise their availability to their children. It is the quantity and quality of the interaction between parent and child that has been linked to a more secure parent child relationship (Fine & Lee, 2001:2; Sayer, Bianchi & Robinson, 2004; Booth-Laforce, Oh, Kim, Rubin, Rose-Krasnor & Burgess, 2006:309). The researcher acknowledges that family interactions may vary due to the family's environment and the culture families are embedded in (Zembar & Blume, 2009:283). However, according to Yontef (1993a:220), Hawley and DeHaan (1996:285), Schoeman (2006a:6) and Blom (2006:107) a parent committed to a dialogical relationship has the capacity to strengthen a child's sense of mastery to correctly respond towards the environment that strengthens self support, confirming the importance of the parent child relationship.

A dialogical relationship allows for presence, full contact, confirmation, involvement, authenticity, dialogue, inclusion and trust within a parent child relationship (Joyce & Sills, 2001:53-54; Burber, 2002:115; Yontef, 2005:95-96; Blom, 2006:54-57). According to Schoeman (2006a:5) and Blom (2006:103) this special form of contact validates the growth potential of a child and strengthens the child's sense of self. The above dialogical principles can be used by the fathers as tools to assist in enhancing a dialogical relationship with their children, which acts as secure base for a resilient sense of self (Joyce & Sills, 2001:45).

The purpose of this study is to develop Gestalt guidelines within the context of the Oranjemund community, assisting mine worker fathers to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. In doing so, the researcher through this research study, intends to strengthen the dialogical encounter between mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood.

### **1.3. RESEARCH QUESTION**

The research process begins with a **research question**. According to Graziano and Raulin (in Fouché & De Vos, 2005:100) the research question posed in the research study is an area of interest identified by the researcher to generate clear cut ideas. With the help of previous research and theory together with the researcher's own ideas the aim is to formulate a clearly posed question (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:100). Therefore, the research question emanating from the problem statement is:

**How can Gestalt dialogue be utilised in guidelines in order to assist mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood?**

The research process is aimed at answering the research question.

### **1.4. THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE**

Imbedded in the parent child relationship, a caring relationship practises commitment to dialogue, inclusion, presence and confirmation (Yontef, 2005:95-96). The parental guidelines developed will be based on these four concepts of dialogue, which will help enhance the relationship between the mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood. Furthermore, in this research study child development will be discussed from a Psychosocial and Gestalt development point of view where field theory plays an important role. When children actively organise their field they bring meaning to their experiences through making contact with the environment (Yontef, 1993b; Joyce & Sills, 2001:25; Wait *et al.*, 2005:129).

### **1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A **qualitative research approach** will be used in this research study aiming to "... understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life" (Fouché & Delport, 2005:74). The role of literature in this qualitative study was to verify the data being collected. The data collection in other words formed the framework for theory and literature (Delport & Fouché, 2005:264).

When guidelines are being developed in research, intervention research would normally be conducted. In intervention research, according to the classical work of Thomas (1984:29) “are planned intrusion into the life or environment of an individual, family or other target unit that is intended to bring about change for individuals or others involved”.

According to De Vos (2005c:392) intervention research originates from the joint efforts of two pioneers in the field of development research, Edwin J. Thomas and Jack Rothman. Development research is the development of technology that is essential to professions such as psychology or social work. Thomas noted (in De Vos, 2005c:393), “Technology, in this context, consists of all technical means by which such a profession achieves its objectives.” According to Rothman and Thomas (1994:6) these objectives are the goals towards which efforts of helping are directed towards change in a problem situation.

According to Fouché and De Vos (2005:105-106) intervention research is **applied research** and therefore in this qualitative research study applied research will be utilised. Applied research focuses largely on learning more about improving socially important behaviours, scientifically solving problems and making recommendations to a specific group of people in a particular situation (Thomas, 1984:17; Babbie & Mouton, 2004:28). The nature of the applied research used in this study will be **descriptive** research as the research study aims to set guidelines through investigation by focusing on a ‘how’ question (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:33; Fouché & De Vos, 2005:106).

**Trustworthiness** will be based on Lincoln’s and Guba’s criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (De Vos, 2005a:346; Baxter & Jack, 2008:555). Father participants and children participants were correctly identified for the study and their needs accurately described. The researcher made use of transferability by referring back to concepts and models used in other studies when analysing the data collected. The researcher developed tools; observational sheets, an evaluation form and parental guidelines, to aid mine worker fathers to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children. Finally, the researcher developed

procedural elements so that change agents are able to present the guidelines to mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund.

In this intervention research study the Design and Development model (D&D) was used. The D&D model according to Rothman and Thomas (1994:12) may be conceptualised as a problem-solving process for seeking effective intervention and helping tools to deal with given human and social difficulties. Rothman and Thomas (1994:9) stipulate six phases of the D&D model:

- I. Problem analysis and project planning
- II. Information gathering and synthesis
- III. Design
- IV. Early development and pilot testing
- V. Evaluation and advanced development
- VI. Dissemination

These phases comprise of various steps and for the purpose of this study of limited scope, the model was only concluded up to the first step of phase four, which involves developing a prototype or preliminary intervention.

## **1.6 WORK PROCEDURE**

The first phase of the D&D model is problem analysis and project planning.

### **1.6.1 Problem analysis and project planning**

During this phase, it was important to determine the problem for the research study (De Vos, 2005c:395). Hastings identified the difference between a social problem and a personal problem. According to Hastings (in De Vos, 2005c:395), a social problem is a condition of society which has a negative effect on a large number of people, which has been identified by a specific group, differing from a personal problem. Social problems can be dealt with through collective action and by applying the D&D model to the intervention (De Vos, 2005c:395).

For the purpose of this study the social problems identified (as was discussed in 1.2) were the need for the guidelines, in this case Gestalt guidelines, to assist and support mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance the dialogical relationship between them and their children in middle childhood. During the course of the research study the researcher found that one of the biggest challenges these children faced was the lack of time spent with their fathers. Confirmed by Ajabe (2010) these learners faced more challenges in the school environment and at home. As a result of these challenges, a larger majority of these children struggle with mastery, are less self supportive and lack resilience within their school environment.

Fawcett, Suarez-Balcazar, Balcazar, White, Paine, Blanchard and Embree (1994:27) categorised specific steps, where each operation involved collaboration between researcher and participants, for the problem analysis and project planning phase. The first step was to identify and involve the clients.

#### *1.6.1.1 Identifying and involving clients*

In research the **sample** is drawn from the population for the researcher to generalise from (Patton, 2002:244; Graziano & Raulin, 2007:325). The sample drawn obtains more accurate information of characteristics of the population that was considered for actual inclusion into the research study (Arkava & Lane in Strydom, 2005b:194).

In intervention research according to Fawcett *et al.* (1994:27) the researcher chooses a population with whom to collaborate from the universe. The **universe** according to Arkava and Lane (in Strydom, 2005:193) refers to all the potential participants the research is interested in. The universe for the purpose of this study referred to a) all mine worker fathers with children in middle childhood living in the Karas region in Namibia and b) all children in middle childhood of mine worker fathers living in the Karas region in Namibia. The **population** referred to a) all mine worker fathers with children in middle childhood living in Oranjemund and b) all children in middle childhood of mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund.

The population becomes the sampling frame, setting boundaries on the universe (Seaberg in Strydom, 2005b:193; McBurney in Strydom 2005b:194; Graziano &

Raulin, 2007:327). In this study **non-probability, purposive sampling** strategy was utilised with a clear identification and formulation of the inclusion criteria for the fathers and children. Sampling continued until saturation of data had taken place in terms of generalising and until the theoretical explanation neared an adequate form (Creswell, 2003:187; Strydom & Delport, 2005:328-329; Kelly, 2006a:288-289). The participants that took part in the study were 12 mine worker fathers and 18 children participants.

The **inclusion criteria** of the target population for the **fathers** which helped clarify the specific boundaries were:

- Mine worker fathers with children in middle childhood (8-12 years).
- Fathers are related to children.
- Living in Oranjemund.
- Voluntary participation.
- Have a functional knowledge of the English/Afrikaans language.

The **inclusion criteria** of the target population for the **children** which helped clarify the specific boundaries were:

- Boys and girls in middle childhood (8-12 years) of mine worker fathers.
- Living in Oranjemund.
- Voluntary participation.

As these children could speak English, language was not part of their inclusion criteria.

#### *1.6.1.2 Gaining entry and cooperation from settings*

In intervention research the researcher forms a mutual relationship with the representatives from the setting (Fawcett *et al.*, 1994:29). For the purpose of this study, the researcher first obtained permission from the principal (see Appendix F) and the General Manager of Namdeb (see Appendix G) to conduct the study. The researcher gained written consent from the fathers (see Appendix A) to conduct the study with father's and their children as well as verbal permission from the fathers for the use of a translator that had signed a confidentiality form (see Appendix C) before

the two focus groups took place. The researcher also received verbal consent from the children taking part in the study.

When people are the object of the study, specific ethical aspects should be considered whilst the research is being conducted. Strydom (2005a:57) states that ethical guidelines should become part of the researcher's life, and that the researcher should internalise these guidelines. The researcher attempted to observe, describe and examine participants through active curiosity, whilst bracketing the researcher's own beliefs (Yontef, 1993b; Joyce & Sills, 2001:16-17; Parlett, 2005:47).

The following ethical aspects were kept in mind for the purpose of this study:

- **Avoidance of harm**

It is the researcher's responsibility to protect participants from any physical discomfort that may emerge from the research study (Dane in Strydom, 2005a:58). Father participants were informed at the start of both the two focus groups that they were allowed to leave the group discussions at any time if they experienced discomfort. The children participants were not forced to answer a question if they felt uncomfortable.

- **Informed consent**

Information of the possible advantages and disadvantages, the credibility of the researcher and the goals of the research study were explained to the participants beforehand (Williams *et al.* in Strydom, 2005a:59). The father participants received information about the research study when they were identified and again at the start of both the two focus groups. Verbal permission was also obtained from the fathers to allow a translator into both the two focus groups. Once fathers gave permission a consent form (see Appendix A) was signed. Children gave verbal consent to the researcher.

- **Deception of participants**

The researcher did not intentionally mislead, withhold any information from or offer incorrect information to the participants in order to ensure participation, where they would otherwise possibly have refused to participate (Corey *et al.* in Strydom, 2005a:60).

- **Violation of privacy/anonymity/confidentiality**

The participants signed a confidentiality form (see Appendix B) in order to treat any confidential information disclosed within the two focus groups as being strictly confidential. The researcher took special caution to formulate the research results in such a manner so as to not identify any participant due to the fact that Oranjemund is a relatively small town (cf. Strydom, 2005a:61). It is therefore that the race of participants was not part of the inclusion criteria of this study.

- **Competence of researcher**

Researchers have an ethical responsibility to ensure participants that they are competent to carry out their study (Strydom, 2005a:63). Sieber (in Strydom, 2005a:63) states that it is important that the researcher is adequately qualified and equipped to carry out a research study. The researcher has been helping out at the primary school in Oranjemund for the last 8 years and has been a permanent educational facilitator for 2 years as well as practising Gestalt play therapy under supervision with children in middle childhood. The researcher has completed an honours degree in psychology together with a research study where the researcher learnt valuable research skills. Furthermore the researcher worked closely with her supervisor throughout the research study.

- **Translator**

The researcher made use of a translator in the focus groups to assist father participants that struggled expressing their opinions in English or Afrikaans, being their second or even third language. The translator used in this research study was briefed in advance about the research study. Thereafter the translator read the obligations of a translator from the International Federation of Translators (IFT) website. The IFT is a guide that translators use to serve as a code of ethics (International Federation of Translators, 2010). The translator further signed a confidentiality form (see Appendix C) and swore not to disclose any information that was entrusted to her by the mine worker fathers. This was conveyed to the fathers before the discussions began. The father participants from both focus groups gave their permission for information to be shared with the translator before the focus groups commenced. The translator respected the father participants and treated any information in a professional manner. Information

father participants shared with the translator was further transferred back to the researcher in an accurate manner (IFT, 2010).

#### *1.6.1.3 Identifying concerns of the population*

In a qualitative research study Patton (2002:39) the research setting should be of a naturally occurring relationship and interaction. During this phase of data collection, the researcher attempted to recognise the issues within the significant population, to understand the mine worker father and his relationship with his children in middle childhood as a whole (Fawcett *et al.*, 1994:29). Furthermore, in order to identify the concerns of the population **data collection** consisted of multiple information sources. This increased the reliability of the observations and built a coherent justification of themes, ensuring data triangulation (Patton, 2002:247; De Vos, 2005b:361; Kelly, 2006b:380).

As a method of qualitative data collection, the researcher made use of a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix D) whilst conducting the interviews with the children and an unstructured focus group guide (see Appendix E) when facilitating the two focus groups with the fathers (cf. Greeff, 2005:296, 299). By using the two focus groups, the researcher was able to gain knowledge and understanding of how fathers think and feel about their own abilities to strengthen the dialogical relationship between their children and themselves (Greeff, 2005:299). Furthermore, fathers and children both received the opportunity to discuss their relationship and their needs based on the principles of dialogue; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation (Greeff, 2005:300; Yontef, 2005:95-96). Marshall and Rossman (1999:107-108) conclude, “These personal reflections are integral to the emerging analysis of the cultural group of interest.”

Through informed consent (see Appendix A) and as proposed by Strydom (2005c:281) field notes were taken during the discussion groups with the father participants and in the semi-structured interviews with children participants, whilst the researcher conduct the research. The field notes were later transcribed for evidence and to refer to during data analysis (Patton, 2002:432). The goal was to replicate findings across cases to enable the researcher to predict similar results across cases or contrasting results based on theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008:548, 550).

#### *1.6.1.4 Analysing concerns or problems identified*

A critical aspect of this phase is analysing those conditions that people label as community problems. According to Fawcett *et al.* (1994:30) before data analysis takes place the researcher should ask questions to clarify the needs of the participants as well as aspects that need to change:

- For whom is the situation a problem?
- What are the negative consequences of the problem for affected individuals and the community?
- What conditions need to change to establish or support needed change?
- What aspects have the participants highlighted as necessary for the development of guidelines?

**Data analysis** took place by utilising Creswell's (in De Vos, 2005a:334) data analysis procedures. This includes the following: planning for recording of data; data collection and preliminary analyses; managing or organising the data; reading and writing memos; generating categories, themes and patterns; coding the data; testing the emergent understandings; searching for alternative explanations; representing and visualising in a report. In order to bring order, structure and meaning to the mass of data collected in the two focus groups and in the semi-structured interviews, the researcher took the information apart by using Creswell's spiral of data analysis by dividing the information received from the father participants and the children participants into different themes.

#### *1.6.1.5 Setting the goal and objectives*

De Vos (2005c:398) states that broad goals and specific objectives clarify the proposed ends and means of intervention research. The goal of this research study was to develop Gestalt guidelines to assist mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

The following objectives were identified in order to achieve the above-mentioned goal:

- To identify and analyse the concerns of the population (see 1.6.1.3).
- To gather and synthesise information by using existing sources of information (see 1.6.2.1), studying existing examples (see 1.6.2.2), and by identifying functional elements of natural examples (see 1.6.2.3).
- To design an observational system (see 1.6.3.1) and to specify procedural elements of the intervention (see 1.6.3.2).
- To develop a prototype of the guidelines (see 1.6.4.1) for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund assisting them to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations to parents and to professionals working with families in similar settings.

## **1.6.2 Information gathering and synthesis**

Fawcett *et al.* (1994:31-32) explain that when doing intervention research, it is essential to recognise what others have done to understand and solve the problem, in order not to ‘reinvent the wheel’. The researcher thus made use of various sources of information whilst conducting the study on mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood. These sources were found in existing literature and previous research specifically focused on this field. This included using existing sources of information, studying natural examples, and identifying functional elements of successful models.

### *1.6.2.1 Using existing sources of information*

It is important, when undertaking an intervention research study, that the researcher makes use of existing information such as literature relevant to the particular problem (De Vos, 2005c:399). In this study it was therefore the researcher’s intentions to look at existing literature from the Gestalt approach focusing specifically on literature stemming from existential dialogue; namely commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion, and confirmation (see chapter 3).

Furthermore, De Vos (2005c:399) is of the opinion that intervention researchers must focus on literature from a variety of social science fields, as societal problems do not confine themselves only to one specific discipline. The researcher, having a psychological background, thus also studied literature and societal questions from various social disciplines on various data basis such as education, sociology and social work.

It was further important to the research to not only relate to one particular social science field, but to others as well. Within the school environment there are many interdisciplinary fields that play a part and have important contributions in understanding the needs of children. These help establish new linkages between concepts and methods of various disciplines (Fawcett *et al.*, 1994:32).

#### *1.6.2.2 Studying natural examples*

Fawcett *et al.* (1994:32) state that it can be useful to gather information of how community members facing the particular problem have attempted to address it. For this reason, the researcher conducted interviews with experts in the fields of developmental theories with knowledge of children in middle childhood, the Gestalt approach, education and mine workers in Oranjemund. Through these interviews, the researcher gained insight into which interventions might or might not be successful, and the aspects that may affect success (De Vos, 2005c:399).

#### **The following experts were consulted:**

- Mrs D. Watt, head of the remedial department at the school.
- Mrs A. Ajabe, appointed school counsellor.
- Mrs N. Swanepoel, educational psychologist that visits the school quarterly.
- Miss H. Shanaaz, a Gestalt expert at the Institute for Child, Youth and Family Studies, Wellington.
- Miss P. Thomas, Brand Manager, Namdeb, Namibia.

#### *1.6.2.3 Identifying functional elements of existing models*

The researcher intends to study critical features of previous programmes, models and interventions that addressed the problem in question (Fawcett *et al.*, 1994:33). It

is useful to look at these programmes or interventions in order to assess if they contributed to solving the problem. Whilst studying previous successful or unsuccessful programmes that attempted to address the question, the researcher was able to identify potentially useful elements, which in turn helped to guide the design (De Vos, 2005c:400).

In order to identify useful elements in the programmes and models that the researcher studied the researcher asked the following questions (De Vos, 2005c:400):

- Is there a model or programme, policy or practice that has been successful in changing targeted behaviours and outcomes?
- What made a particular programme, policy or practice effective?
- Is there a model, programme, policy or practice that was unsuccessful?
- What caused it to fail?
- What conditions (e.g. client characteristics, broader environmental factors) may have been critical to success or failure?

The identified models and programmes are discussed in chapter 4.

### **1.6.3 Design**

There are two particular important operations during this phase that will be considered; designing an observational system and specifying procedural elements of the intervention (De Vos, 2005c:400).

#### *1.6.3.1 Designing an observational system*

Fawcett *et al.* (1994:34) state that the intervention researcher should design a method system for discovering the extent of the problem detecting effects following the intervention. The observational system is closely associated with the process of designing the intervention and provides a feedback system for refining early prototypes. Participants most affected should be involved in specifying the behaviours and environmental conditions that need to be changed.

According to De Vos (2005c:400), the observational system consists of three working parts:

- Definitions of the behaviours associated with the problem are defined in operational terms.
- Examples and non-examples of the behaviours are provided to help discern occurrences of the behaviours.
- Scoring instructions are prepared to guide the recording of desired behaviours.

The researcher developed and established Gestalt guidelines that can be used by mine worker fathers to assist them in enhancing the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. The uses of these guidelines are discussed in chapter 5.

#### *1.6.3.2 Specifying procedural elements of the intervention*

In this step the researcher identifies procedural/practical elements for the use in the intervention (De Vos, 2005c:401). These elements will be specified in adequate detail in order for it to be used by other trained change agents. The researcher suggests that the Gestalt guidelines will be presented to mine worker fathers by a professional facilitator in a group session and that it would be followed up by a self monitoring process. The procedural elements for using the guidelines to assist the fathers in enhancing the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood are discussed in chapter 5.

#### **1.6.4 Early development and pilot testing**

Thomas (in De Vos, 2005c:401) defines development as the process whereby an intervention is implemented and used on a trial basis. The intervention is then developmentally tested for its adequacy and the researcher has the opportunity to refine and redesign the intervention. According to Fawcett *et al.* (1994:36) during the early development and pilot testing phase a ‘primitive design’ is developed to a form that can be assessed under field conditions. This phase includes the development of a prototype intervention, conducting a pilot test and applying design criteria to the prototype intervention concept. As this is a dissertation of limited scope, the research

was only concluded up to the first step of the early development and pilot testing phase, namely developing a prototype or preliminary intervention.

#### *1.6.4.1 Developing a prototype or preliminary intervention*

During this step, a draft of the prototype or preliminary intervention is being drawn up (De Vos, 2005c:402). This may include for instance; a detailed description of the intervention tasks, underlying principles of the protocol, as well as the roles and responsibilities of role players. The prototype or preliminary Gestalt guidelines in facilitating fathers in enhancing the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood are discussed in chapter 5.

### **1.7 DEFINITION OF MAIN CONCEPTS**

According to Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:31) it is necessary to define the main concepts involved in the study in order to determine the relationship between the different concepts. The main concepts of this study include:

#### **1.7.1 Parent child dialogical relationship**

A *dialogical relationship* is a special form of contact that validates the growth potential of a child (Schoeman, 2006a:5). It is important for the parents to have a dialogical relationship with their child, as it allows for a mutual connection (Yontef, 1993a:205; Woldt, 2005:xxi). When a parents share a dialogical attitude, they are fully present in the relationship with their child. Caring is real and they are committed to dialogue, where a child is met at their level. Parents that include their children confirm their existence allowing children to feel accepted unconditionally as a whole (Joyce & Sills, 2001:44-47, Burber, 2002:115; Yontef, 2005:95-96). This relationship a parent shares with a child (within the experiential field of awareness) acts as the single most important protective factor for a child (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996:285; Reynolds, 2005:155).

For the purposes of this study, the *dialogical relationship* is seen as a relationship that promotes contact, mastery, unconditional love and healthy growth that allows children to become more self-supportive.

### **1.7.2 Children in middle childhood**

Wait *et al.* (2005:129) define middle childhood in terms of the psychosocial approach of human development. During middle childhood (age 6 to 12 years) children spend a great deal of their days learning and practicing the skills that are valued by society such as reading, writing, arithmetic, sport skills, hunting and fishing. Social development goes together with intellectual and emotional development. During this stage children learn valuable lessons and meanings through communication in their relationships (Wait *et al.*, 2005:129). Furthermore, children in middle childhood according to Schoeman (2006b:20) enjoy receiving messages of positive encouragement and praise that lead to self-acceptances and self-supportiveness. Most children enjoy this phase because it allows for opportunities of socialisation and pro-social behaviour leading to rewarding relationships with parents, teachers and friends (Wait *et al.*, 2005:136; Zembar & Blume, 2009:324).

In this research study the children participants in *middle childhood* are between the ages of 8-12 years old, are both male and female, whose healthy development and mastery go hand in hand with the care they receive in their relationship with their fathers.

### **1.7.3 Mine worker fathers: with the focus on shifts**

The Karas region in Namibia is home for many people, where a number of male workers from outside the Karas region are employed by Namdeb in the diamond mining town of Oranjemund (Helmut, 2008:31).

According to Walsh (2003:70) shift work is defined as working other than the usual morning to late afternoon shift within ones job and affects the time the family spends together. Mine worker fathers spend long hours on the job and spend fewer hours with their children. Spending long hours on the job may lead to risk factors between a father's work and caring for his children. Furthermore, shift work is often found in families at lower socioeconomic levels, adding yet another stressor for such families (Walsh, 2003:70). However, research in Walsh (2003:70) found that where fathers work shifts there may be shared benefits in that the fathers have taken on more

responsibilities such as childcare and house work. Both of these negative and positive consequences will be considered throughout the study.

In this study, *mine worker fathers: with the focus on shifts* is seen as having a negative effect on the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children.

#### **1.7.4 Culture**

Children learn from a specific cultural group what are expected of them (Oaklander, 2006:16). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (in Tseng, 2001:5) define culture as, "... patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups". Mine worker fathers and their children have their own cultural traditions and customs that have an influence on their actions and the way they contact the environment. In middle childhood various practices carried out in the family develop children's sense of identity (Zembar & Blume, 2009:13). It is therefore important to be aware of the various cultural practices and values children have because these have an impact on their attitudes and motivation at school (Zembar & Blume, 2009:216).

For the purpose of this study *culture* plays an important part for mine worker fathers and their children's values, behaviour and experiences. Gestalt guidelines that have been developed are culturally sensitive to include these cultural aspects.

#### **1.7.5 Gestalt guidelines**

The researcher will first define the term *Gestalt* and then the term *guidelines*.

According to English and English in Schoeman (2006b:56) *Gestalt* is "... a form, a configuration or a totality that has, as a unified whole, properties which cannot be derived by summation from the parts and their relationships. It may refer to physical structures, to physiological and psychological functions, or to symbolic units."

Clarkson, Yontef and Jacobs in Blom (2006:18) define the term *Gestalt* as “... the shape, the pattern, the whole form, the configuration. It connotes the structural entity which are both different from and much more than the sum of its parts.”

The *Gestalt* approach views a person as a whole entity and not a sum of its parts, where all experience effect that person (Bowman, 2005:8). This view from the *Gestalt* perspective allows persons to explore their wholeness in order to live as healthy human beings.

*Guidelines* are defined as “... a principle put forward to set standards or determine a course of action (Collins Reference English Dictionary, 1993, s.v. ‘guidelines’).

Guidelines may also be defined as “... a statement or other indication of policy or procedure by which to determine a course of action (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2009, s.v. ‘guidelines’).

For the purpose of this study, *Gestalt guidelines* will be defined as principles put forward to set standards and determine a course of action from the perspective that a person is a whole entity, with the ability to explore and discover his wholeness in order to live as a healthy human being.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the project planning and problem analysis of this research study were discussed. The research methodology, ethical aspects and the definitions of the main themes also formed part of this chapter. In the next chapter the empirical findings of the research study will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 2: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The goal of this research study was to develop Gestalt guidelines to assist mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. In the process of developing the guidelines the researcher trusts that when mine worker fathers and their children utilise these guidelines, that it will promote the children's resilience at school, empowering their sense of mastery and strengthening their self-support.

As was mentioned in 1.5 when guidelines are developed Rothman and Thomas' D&D model is being used as part of intervention research. The first phase of the D&D model, problem analysis and project planning was discussed in the first chapter. This included identifying and involving clients (see 1.6.1.1); and gaining entry and cooperation from settings (see 1.6.1.2). Reference was also made to the following steps of the first phase, namely identifying and analysing the concerns of the population as well as setting goals and objectives (see 1.6.1.3-1.6.1.5). Identifying and analysing the concerns of the population formed part of the empirical findings, which are discussed in this chapter. Identifying and analysing the concerns of the population were influential in the research process as it helped uncover specific problems and needs experienced in the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood living in Oranjemund.

Two focus groups were conducted with 12 mine worker father's and semi-structured interviews with the 18 children as a method to obtain the empirical data. These sample groups (mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood) were selected by means of purposive sampling (see 1.6.1.1). Focus groups were aimed at identifying specific needs of mine worker fathers and the semi-structured interviews were aimed at identifying specific needs of their children in middle childhood with specific reference to the dialogical relationship between the fathers and their children.

## **2.2 IDENTIFYING AND ANALYSING CONCERNS OF THE POPULATION**

In order to identify the concerns of the population, a qualitative approach was used. By using the qualitative approach, it was possible to gain a holistic understanding of the dialogical relationship between the mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood (see 1.6.1.3). This research study comprised of two sample groups; the mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood living in Oranjemund. Information was gathered through conducting two focus groups with the fathers and semi-structured interviews with the children at a primary school in Oranjemund. In this chapter, participants will be differentiated by referring to participants as the father participants and children participants. Field notes were also used to reflect on information obtained. Furthermore, the researcher made use of a translator (see 1.6.1.2) as some of the fathers found it difficult to express themselves in English.

After gaining a thorough understanding of the concerns of participants, information was analysed according to Creswell's spiral of data analysis (see 1.6.1.4). The data was read repeatedly and memos were made in order to find patterns in the data. In order to manage the data key words and sentences were highlighted in the field notes. The information was then classified by taking the information apart and sorting them under four main themes. Within the four main themes, subthemes and their different categories were identified. These four main themes together with the different subthemes and categories are presented in four schematic figures in this chapter (see Tables 2.1-2.4). By using this method, the researcher was able to gain a sense of a holistic understanding of the information as a whole.

## **2.3 IDENTIFICATION OF CONCERNS UNDER MAIN AND SUBTHEMES**

The following main themes were identified from the collected data:

- Commitment to dialogue
- Presence

- Inclusion
- Confirmation

Following, the main themes with their subthemes and different categories will be presented in Tables 2.3.1-2.3.4 and discussed separately.

### **2.3.1 Main theme 1: Commitment to dialogue**

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEME	CATEGORIES
COMMITMENT TO DIALOGUE	Subtheme A: Verbal communication	<i>Needs that have been identified:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fathers' self-disclosure</li> <li>• Open communication</li> </ul>
	Subtheme B: Nonverbal communication	<i>Needs that have been identified:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of children's body language</li> <li>• Importance of touch and tone of voice</li> </ul>

**Table 2.1: Schematic presentation of Main theme 1: Commitment to dialogue**

The first main theme identified from the empirical data was commitment to dialogue. From a Gestalt perspective commitment to dialogue was seen as attuned human contact where participants met each other without aiming (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:55). This involved that both father participants and children participants interacted with one another without controlling the outcomes (cf. Yontef, 2005:96). In the context of this research study it became clear how fathers communicated with their children through verbal communication and how they picked up on their children's nonverbal signals. The researcher noted that father participants who communicated openly with their children knew more about their children's behaviours than that of other father participants.

Two subthemes (refer to Table 2.1) namely, verbal communication (Subtheme A) and nonverbal communication (Subtheme B), have been identified from this main theme and will subsequently be discussed.

#### *2.3.1.1 Subtheme A: Verbal communication*

Verbal communication consists of spoken and written language. It includes a conversation with a person, a 'sms' or a telephone call. When communication takes place interaction usually takes place (Andersen & Taylor, 2004:128). Most father participants mentioned that they verbally communicated with their children after work or in the morning before school.

Some children participants mentioned that although they are able to go to their fathers and speak to them they however do experience that their conversations were often short lived and sometimes their fathers do not listen to them correctly.

From the empirical data one category was identified under subtheme A, namely needs that have been identified with regard to verbal communication. This will be discussed as follows:

- Needs that have been identified

Children participants felt that their fathers did not often disclose information with them as they were expected to disclose information with their fathers. A child participant commented that it was unfair that he had to tell his dad when he got in trouble but his dad never spoke to him when he looked stressed. Older children participants on the other hand felt that even although they are expected to share their feelings with their fathers, their fathers will not understand their feelings. In this regard an older child participant remarked, "I can't always speak to my father because he makes his own interpretations, uses his own solutions and does not listen properly to what I am saying." Some children participants also indicated that they would like to be more involved in grown up conversations. A child participant said, "I tell my dad about things that happen to me because it is expected of me but he never shares with me." Father participants had a strong opinion that they did not have to communicate everything with children as they are still young. A father

participant remarked, “I am not obliged to share information with my children as I make the decisions in the house.” According to Olson and Gorall (2003:520) self-disclosure relates to sharing feelings about oneself and the relationship. Gentzler, Contreras-Grau, Kerns and Weimer (2005:592) are therefore of the opinion that when parents have conversations openly with their children they serve as models for communication. Further the researcher is of the opinion that if fathers disclose more often with their children it might create opportunities to strengthen their dialogical relationship’s commitment to dialogue.

Mine worker fathers need to be aware of the significance of open verbal communication for a dialogical relationship to take place. According to Olson and Gorall (2003:520) the benefits of communicating openly with children is that children obtain listening skills, speaking skills, self-disclosure and regard. Furthermore, when children trust parents not to overact to their behaviours communication is promoted (Zembar & Blume, 2009:360).

Parents need to respect the affective aspects that open communication has for their relationship with their children (cf. Olson & Gorall, 2003:520). Mine worker fathers who have open communication with their children regarding topics of emotional significance increase their children’s support-seeking behaviour and allow their children to feel confirmed in the dialogical relationship (cf. Gentzler *et al.*, 2005:592).

#### *2.3.1.2 Subtheme B: Nonverbal communication*

Communication does not only involve talking and listening. Blom (2006:59) highlights the fact that nonverbal communication is seen as a more accurate form of understanding children’s true emotions than through their verbal communication. According to Gestalt, being able to predict how a person may behave, what affects them and how they may respond to a situation is an important part of recognising nonverbal communication (Joyce & Sills, 2001:53). Recognising children’s body language also forms a part of nonverbal communication.

From the empirical data one category was identified under subtheme B, namely needs that have been identified with regard to nonverbal communication. This will be discussed as follows:

- Needs that have been identified

From the empirical data collected father participants were not always aware of their children's nonverbal cues. According to Andersen and Taylor (2004:128) nonverbal communication is conveyed through touch and gestures. Even a glance is nonverbal communication. Father participants noted that it was not always easy to read their children's body language. A father participant remarked, "I don't always know if my children are hiding their true feelings from me or are keeping secrets?" Andersen and Taylor (2004:130) highlight that body language may involve facial expressions and body position. A waving hand, crossed arms and raised eyebrows all transmit different meanings. When children behave in certain ways it is important for fathers to recognise this body language in order to react appropriately in the situation (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:65). With regard to this research study father participants need to be aware of their children's signals they transmit through body language and its affect on the dialogical relationship.

Touch is also part of nonverbal communication and conveys specific meanings such as 'I am angry or I am sympathising with you'. Some children participants noted that their fathers kissed them in the mornings and at night before bed. Other children participants remarked that their fathers lightly squeezed their shoulders for encouragement or embraced them when the children were sad. Touch may involve any form of contact with another person and importantly touch has a specific meaning to a specific cultural context (Andersen & Taylor, 2004:129).

Some father participants noted that they do not always hug their children due to it being a sign of weakness in their culture, however touched their children in other ways such as roughly patting their boys or putting their arm around their girls when they acknowledged their school or sport achievements. "My child knows when I am proud of them as I shake their hand."

Tone of voice is also a part of nonverbal communication. Tone of voice is conveyed through pitch, loudness, rhythm, length and hesitation of a parent's voice (Andersen & Taylor, 2004:129). A child participant said, "I know when my dad is happy because

he laughs loud and when he is angry his voice gets really deep." Nonverbal communication emphasises not what is said but how it is said (Andersen & Taylor, 2004:129). With regard to this one father participant remarked that, "My children know when they do something wrong because I raise my voice." Recognising nonverbal communication would help mine worker fathers enhance their dialogical relationship with their children. Fathers can use nonverbal communication to their advantage to strengthen their relationship with their children, by picking up on children's nonverbal signals and resolving them before their children feel affected.

### **2.3.2 Main theme 2: Presence**

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEME	CATEGORIES
PRESENCE	Subtheme A: Spending time together	<p><i>Presently happening:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watching TV together</li> <li>• Sports: watching and playing soccer together</li> <li>• Washing the car together</li> <li>• Working in the garden together</li> </ul> <p><i>Needs that have been identified:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to town together more often</li> <li>• Family togetherness, including the mother</li> <li>• Fathers playing with their children outdoors</li> <li>• Going to the beach and having a 'braai'</li> <li>• Watching the children at</li> </ul>

		<p>school sports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending award evenings or parent/teacher meetings</li> </ul> <p><i>Aspects influencing the time spent together:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addiction to alcohol</li> </ul>
	Subtheme B: Parental awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child development</li> </ul>

**Table 2.2: Schematic presentation of Main theme 2: Presence**

The second main theme identified from the empirical data was presence. From a Gestalt perspective, and in the context of this research study, presence was seen as the authentic relationship between father participants and children participants (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:44). If participants could be present to each other's needs and incorporate their senses, they could gain an awareness of one another that will fully give to the encounter of each other (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:45). According to Wait *et al.* (2005:136) parents who have been present in their relationship with their children in middle childhood, have the most significant impact on their children's development. In this regard one of the children participants commented that, "My dad is always there for me, teaching me how to become a better person." This highlights how the children participants experience the presence of their fathers in the relationship they share when father participants make themselves available to their children.

The two subthemes presented in Table 2.2, spending time together (Subtheme A) and parental awareness (Subtheme B), have been identified from this main theme and will subsequently be discussed.

### *2.3.2.1 Subtheme A: Spending time together*

Spending time together is important in the parent child relationship. Time is the ‘ultimate parental resource’ to which children have ‘unlimited rights’ (Sayer *et al.*, 2004:10). Fine and Lee (2001:2) are of the opinion that within the parent child relationship quantity and quality of time spent together should be focused on. The researcher is in agreement, as it was noted during the empirical study that children participants who have had the most involved fathers, were the ones that were able to give the most examples when talking about time spent with their father. Children participants remarked that their fathers do all kinds of activities with them such as watching cartoons together, playing soccer together and working in the garden together.

From the empirical data three categories were identified under Subtheme A, namely what is presently happening with regard to spending time together, needs that have been identified with regard to spending time together and aspects influencing the time spent together. These three categories will be discussed as follows:

- Presently happening

From the empirical data it seems as if father participants enjoy spending time with their children, however due to the long working hours they often only get to spend time with their children at night or on alternative weekends. Supporting the father participants’ viewpoint Ajabe (2010) however remarks that even though mine workers in Oranjemund work long hours, they have enough time to spend with their children if they make time available. According to Sayer, *et al.* (2004:8, 10) since the ideal of involved fatherhood, fathers today are investing more time in their children and are more intimately involved with their children than compared with the past. Furthermore fathers are increasingly structuring their lives to spend as much time as possible with their children (Sayer, *et al.*, 2004:9).

The researcher found that when time was available, some father participants did spend that time with their children. Father participants identified watching TV, sports (watching and playing soccer), washing the car and working in the garden together as time they spent with their children. Father participants commented, “I enjoy

playing soccer with my children, I enjoy working in the garden with my children when I have the time." With specific regards to this study one farther participant commented that it should be an obligation for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to spend some time with their children, especially because their mothers live far away.

- Needs that have been identified

Although father participants felt that they spent sufficient time with their children some of the children participants' experiences of spending time with their fathers was inconsistent to their father's experiences. Some children participants for instance remarked that they do spend time with their fathers but would like to spend more time with them. They further remarked that they love going to town with their fathers and would like to do this more often. A child participant said, "My father only spends short amounts of time with me." Some time constraints comments from the father participants were as follows; "At times you have other commitments you need to attend to", "Sometimes you come home too late from work" and "I'm really tired when I come back from work". The researcher noted that children participants may not always be aware why their father may not have more time for them and might therefore experience that their fathers are not present.

Dealing with time constraints can be difficult but according to Walsh (2003:84) time constraints can be overcome. Time for fun should occur spontaneously and can be in the form of rituals that have particular meanings. Going to the beach together for a 'braai' can become a spontaneous family activity and as some father participants mentioned, can be done once a month. Barnard (1994:140) also advises that parents can promote their relationship with their children by maintaining family rituals and spend time together through holiday celebrations, dinner times and other regular occurring events. Walsh (2003:84) further indicates that fun and pleasurable family activities done at home must not be seen as work. Fathers that encourage play according to Fine and Lee (2001:182) help their children to get in touch with their emotions quicker through body movement. Many chores associated with the upkeep of the home can be more enjoyable if used as opportunities for talking, affection and playfulness. In connection with this research study children participants however

noted, "Cleaning the house and washing dishes with my father is boring." Fathers therefore should be encouraged to make activities more enjoyable.

Father participants were of the opinion that the family as a whole does not spend a lot of time together. "Due the shifts I work I don't always see my family," a father commented. Family togetherness according to the father participants is seen when the whole family spends time together including the mother. According to Walsh (2003:522) a family needs to balance their separateness versus togetherness. Therefore when children are away from their mothers they must still feel connected to them. Fathers indicated, "My children visit their mothers in the holidays or their mother comes to visit Oranjemund during the year". Most children participants only see their mothers twice a year and the family very seldom gets to spend time together. Interestingly some children participants indicated that when the mothers are in Oranjemund they disrupt their afterschool routines and work. In contrast other children commented that they would like their mothers in Oranjemund with their fathers. Supporting this view Ajabe (2010), who has dealt with many of these children, was of the opinion that the most important source of happiness was a need for these children to live together with their mother and father in a committed, loving relationship (cf. Walsh, 2003:13).

Fathers need to have a balance between work and family time so that they may be available to attend school activities such as award ceremonies and sport activities (cf. Walsh, 2003:85). Children participants indicated that they would like their fathers to come to school activities. A child participant commented, "It is nice if I see my father at a school event where I get an academic award or an event I am part of." Father participants indicated that they find it difficult to make it priority when it clashes with work commitments. "I cannot take 'short hours' off work because I will lose money," a father participant voiced with concern. Walsh (2003:85) states that making more family time available is resolvable through better time management and the researcher is of the opinion that family time management is the responsibility of the father participants. According to Thomas (2010) employees at Namdeb are allowed to take time off work for formal business at school that they need to attend to. However, their foreman at work needs to give them permission to get time off for school activities without having to take 'short hours'. It therefore seems as if father

participants need to be informed correctly by their foreman according to the company's policy when it comes to their legal rights with regard to taking time off work for school activities.

- Aspects influencing the time spent together

Alcohol seems to have an influence on the time some mine worker fathers spend with their children. In this regard father participants mention that some mine worker fathers are irresponsible and leave their children alone at home while they (the fathers) go out to drink. In this regard one father participant commented, "Many fathers leave their children alone after work or on the weekends to go to sport bars, where they drink, waste their money and go home drunk to their children."

Alcohol according to Parsons (2003) has severe effects on children. Many children whose parents drink have common symptoms such as low self-esteem, loneliness, lack of friends, guilt, feelings of helplessness, depression and they may be afraid to go to school. This affects the relationships they establish with people such as their teachers and classmates. A stressful environment at home may also prevent children from studying, affecting their school performance (Parsons, 2003). Developing parental guidelines would help make the fathers aware of children's specific needs in middle childhood and how misusing alcohol has a negative effect on children's social and emotional development. Within the context of the study, misuse of alcohol by fathers can have stressful/negative consequences for the dialogical relationship between the fathers and the children.

#### *2.3.2.2 Subtheme B: Parental awareness*

According to the empirical data parental awareness with regard to child development is an important aspect that needs to be addressed in developing guidelines to enhance the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children. In this regard a father participant commented, "It is very difficult to know what is going on in your 12 year old daughter's life as a father. Girls do not tell their fathers everything." Another father participant commented, "How do you know when your children are capable of learning new tasks or when your expectations are too high?" Mine worker fathers are not constantly aware of their children's developmental

needs; this was experienced especially by the older children participants where they commented that their fathers do not always really understand their 'issues'. The development of parental guidelines might help enhance mine worker fathers' awareness of how their children experience their relationship; how their children deal with presenting problems or general life situations (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:65). If fathers are taught to become aware of their children's developmental needs they would promote the development of their children's self-process (cf. Reynolds, 2005:154-155).

- Child development

Mine worker fathers need to be aware of the developmental tasks their children need to accomplish in middle childhood. A father participant made the following comment: "I would like to learn more from the opportunity of parental workshops on how to raise my children." In this research study child development was observed from a joint Gestalt and psychosocial perspective. From a Gestalt point of view human development is a process involving movement from total environmental support to optimal self-support (Reynolds, 2005:155). In accordance with this research study Wait *et al.* (2005:129) distinguish middle childhood as the phase between the age of 6 to 12 years old where children spend a great deal of their days learning and practicing skills that are valued by society such as reading, writing, arithmetic and sport skills. These social development skills children learn go together with their intellectual and emotional development (Wait *et al.*, 2005:129). During the empirical research it was noted that the father participants were not aware of all the developmental tasks their children have to achieve in the phase of middle childhood.

According to Reynolds (2005:156) children's processes are also influenced by who is in their field and what other fields children are embedded in. A child's field is an intimate interconnectedness of forces that is influenced by events and situations that take place within a child's environment and that have an impact on the child (MacKewn, 1997:58; Parlett, 2005:47). From the empirical data it became clear that the presence of father participants had a positive influence on the relationships their children have with others (cf. Schoeman, 2006b:20, 24). Confirming this Wait *et al.* (2006:134) noted that children who have close bonds with their parents are more

socially interactive. Children participants who enjoyed their relationship with their fathers explained, “I have so many friends” and “I get along with lots of people”. Children whose fathers were more present than others also seemed to have a more trusting relationship with their friends and teacher.

It became apparent to the researcher that many father participants knew how to parent but lacked an understanding of developmental tasks in middle childhood. Father participants commented that they are interested in being more educated on the topic through parental workshops. At the end of one of the focus groups a father participant commented that he had already felt in the focus group that he had learnt something beneficial about his relationship with his children which he could apply at home.

### **2.3.3 Main theme 3: Inclusion**

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEME	CATEGORIES
INCLUSION	Subtheme A: Teaching responsibility to children in middle childhood through additional tasks	<i>Presently happening:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housework tasks</li></ul> <i>Needs that have been identified:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homework tasks</li></ul>

**Table 2.3: Schematic presentation of Main theme 3: Inclusion**

The third main theme identified from the empirical data was inclusion. From a Gestalt perspective inclusion in this research study was seen as the way in which father participants and children participants included each other's experiences in a co-created reality, where both are influenced by and influence each other. It was further understood that father participants who practiced inclusion confirm the existence of their children (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:47; Yontef, 2005:95). This took into account how father participants included their children in their everyday activities and how children experienced the way in which their fathers included them in their lives. Furthermore, the researcher focused on the needs of the children participants to be included by their fathers.

One subtheme presented in Table 2.3, namely teaching responsibility to children through additional tasks (Subtheme A) has been identified from this main theme and will subsequently be discussed.

#### *2.3.3.1 Subtheme A: Teaching responsibility to children in middle childhood through additional tasks*

Teaching responsibility to children in middle childhood through additional tasks was a central topic of discussion by mine worker fathers. According to the father participants, "Children learn responsibility through the tasks I give them." The father participants indicated different ways in which they taught responsibility to their children. Most father participants indicated that they taught responsibility to their children through additional household tasks. Most children participants commented, "I am responsible for cleaning the house and garden at home." Erikson refers to 'formality' as a developmental skill children in middle childhood need to gain that involves learning the appropriate ways of doing tasks; at home, school and on the sport field (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2003:176).

From the empirical data two categories under Subtheme A were identified, namely what is presently happening with regard to teaching responsibility to children in middle childhood through additional tasks as well as needs that have been identified with regard to this. These two categories will be discussed as follows:

- Presently happening

In Sayer, *et al.* (2004:10) the term 'the culture of fatherhood' is being used to refer to the increased participation of fathers in routine child care. From the empirical data father participants indicated that in routine child care, teaching children responsibility was of importance. At home fathers responded that they teach responsibility through additional household tasks, "My children have to wash the dishes, wash their own school clothes, rake the garden, wash the car and clean up after themselves (room and bathroom)." Furthermore, father participants felt that children should be taught to do things on their own. Schoeman (2006a:6) is of the opinion that children must discover that they are responsible for themselves because in this way children learn

that by making their own choices they have an influence on the outcomes, which builds inner strength. One father participant commented:

"I have taught my children to clean up after themselves. They clean the bathroom or their room until they are satisfied. It is not always done properly and then I will sometimes clean up after them, without letting them know. In this way they feel responsible for their own things."

Another father participant commented, "My child enjoys getting ready for school herself in the morning because it makes her feel 'big'." This correlates with Blom's (2006:106) opinion that when adults do not choose on behalf of their children, children are able to develop their own sense of responsibility. The research is of the opinion that mine worker fathers were able to include their children in their relationship through the household tasks they shared.

- Needs that have been identified

Most father participants taught their children responsibility through additional household tasks but neglected homework as a platform for teaching children responsibility. The researcher is of the opinion that children should also be taught a sense of responsibility towards school. In middle childhood, children's attitudes are moulded by imitating their parent's attitudes and even those of their teachers (Schoeman, 2006b:24; Zembar & Blume, 2009:305). Father participants indicated that they struggled with the homework due to a lack of English proficiency and the level of school work. A father participant commented, "I don't always understand the homework and the children must complete the homework on their own." Faced with the usual routines of domestic life (cooking, child care, cleaning) but without their wives for support (Andersen & Taylor 2004:424), father participants verbalised that most of the time they coped on their own, however when it came to school related activities such as homework it put strain on their relationship with their children. Most children participants commented that they have to struggle with their homework on their own while a few mentioned that their fathers do help them with homework. It is the researcher's opinion that fathers need to change their approach towards school

work and teach their children to take responsibility for their homework and other related school tasks.

A father participant who taught his children to take responsibility for their school work said, "My children have a structured routine and do their homework on their own, which I just oversee." He commented that his children make mistakes but it was their mistakes that they learned from the next time. An experience of mastery according to Oaklander (2006:29) teaches children to do their own tasks to their own ability, leading to healthy development. In accordance to the above, the same father participant was of the opinion, "Teaching my children to do their own homework helps them to take responsibility for their own errors and achievements at school." The researcher is of the opinion that mine worker fathers must not just show an interest but take on the leadership role when it comes to academics so that children may model their parents' behaviour and learn responsibility through completing school tasks (cf. Zembar & Blume, 2009:219).

#### **2.3.4 Main theme 4: Confirmation**

MAIN THEME	SUBTHEME	CATEGORIES
CONFIRMATION	Subtheme A: Subculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural expectations</li> <li>• Cultural relativism</li> </ul>
	Subtheme B: Child development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belongingness</li> <li>• Emotional safety</li> </ul>
	Subtheme C: Praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentives and rewards</li> <li>• Acknowledging scholastic and sport achievements</li> </ul>

**Table 2.4: Schematic presentation of Main theme 4: Confirmation**

The fourth main theme identified from the empirical data was confirmation. From a Gestalt perspective confirmation is seen as unconditionally accepting another person and validating that other person in a relationship as a whole, which act as a secure base for a resilient sense of self (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:45-46; Yontef, 2005:95). Mine worker fathers need to acknowledge their children's experiential field, which is everything in a child's awareness, including experiences and the way reality is organised (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:24). This includes how fathers confirm their children as individuals, their children's developmental needs and their children's existence within the dialogical relationship.

The subthemes presented in Table 2.4, subculture (Subtheme A), child development (Subtheme B) and praise (Subtheme C), have been identified from this main theme and will subsequently be discussed.

#### *2.3.4.1 Subtheme A: Subculture*

According to Stawman (2009:30) culture is relational. From the empirical data it became evident to the researcher that culture played an important role in the lives of the children participants, which included cultural factors that were not always in children's immediate awareness (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:24; Fernbacher, 2005:123). According to Andersen and Taylor (2004:71) a subculture is defined as a group whose values, norms and behaviour differ from those of the dominant society. In the context of this research, mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund will be seen as a subculture as father participants shared their own cultural beliefs. This includes values, knowledge, morals, customs and habits (cf. Andersen & Taylor, 2004:58). Guidelines being developed would have to be culturally sensitive as cultural activities are a major experience shaping development (Walsh, 2003:257; Zembar & Blume, 2009:13).

- Cultural expectations

Children learn from a specific cultural group what are expected of them (Oaklander, 2006:16). Father participants emphasised how their culture influenced the way they disciplined, taught and acted towards their children. One father participant mentioned: "I do things differently with my children because of my culture. In my

culture children are taught to listen and obey otherwise they get punished." Another father participant remarked, "My children know that certain things are expected of them such as doing household chores. If they do not complete their tasks I will punish them." Children participants confirmed that they had to obey their fathers. A child participant said, "I have to go to church every Sunday even if my father does not because he said so and I must obey him!" Another child participant commented that she had to do a lot of household chores because it was expected of her. A family can function well within subculture group norms as long as all family members desire the family to function in that manner (Walsh, 2003:522).

Ajabe (2010) however is of the opinion that mine worker fathers applied only certain cultural values to child rearing and neglected other parts of their culture that were beneficial for children's developmental tasks (Zembar & Blume, 2009:5). For example affiliation is not often shown through hugging and kissing because masculinity is seen as a strength that constrain men from showing fear, vulnerability or sadness (cf. Walsh, 2003:414). Children participants commented that their fathers very seldom showed them love through words and gestures and this aspect of their culture may have an influence on confirmation within the dialogical relationship.

Telling traditional stories is an important part of teaching children problem solving techniques from their own culture (Kotze, 1999:5). Zembar and Blume (2009:216) are of the opinion that cultural values that are shared with children may have an impact on their attitudes and motivation they apply in the school setting. Life lessons are learnt through stories and mine worker fathers pay no attention to these whilst living in Oranjemund as they would otherwise have back home (Ajabe, 2010). Some children participants commented, "I learn traditional stories when I am on holiday back home (home of origin) and not from my father in Oranjemund." According to Walsh (2003:133) bedtime stories can become opportunities for close quiet time together and no father participants indicated that they read bedtime stories to their children. In the context of this research study fathers could use traditional stories at bedtime for confirming their children's cultural existence and at the same time, spend time with them.

- Cultural relativism

Cultural relativism is the idea that something can only be understood and judged in relation to the cultural context in which it appears (Andersen & Taylor, 2004:61; Calitz, 2005:234). Through the use of a translator (see 1.6.1.2) the researcher was able to understand the reality of the father participants in their cultural field. The father participants disclosed information that the researcher may have otherwise misunderstood without the help of the translator. An example of a misunderstanding was the connection between showing emotions as being a sign of weakness for males (cf. Walsh, 2003:414). In the context of this research study cultural sensitivity needs to be kept in mind when developing the guidelines for mine worker fathers.

#### *2.3.4.2 Subtheme B: Child development*

When developing the guidelines it is important to remember that children have different needs in the different age groups of middle childhood as well as different needs in different family settings. Children respond to the world through their experiences called phenomenology that investigates the subjective meaning of the children's own world (Joyce & Sills, 2001:16). According to the classical work of Oaklander (1988:109) children's senses influence the way they experience and make contact with the environment, and by confirming their senses children validate their emotions connected to their needs (Reynolds, 2005:156; Schoeman, 2006a:13-14).

Emotions according to Yontef and Jacobs (2005:314) are therefore central to healthy functioning as they orientate one to one's relationships in the current field. Emotions are part of the person-environment transaction and children in middle childhood acquire affirmative experiences through this transaction to develop a positive self-regard (Zembar & Blume, 2009:233, 250). Mine worker fathers need to be able to recognise growth enhancing opportunities such as belongingness and emotional safety in which they are able to confirm their children in their particular culture, allowing for industry (cf. Zembar & Blume, 2009:233). From the empirical data the researcher observed that only a few father participants were consistent in confirming their children in middle childhood needs.

- Belongingness

According to Hergenhahn and Olson (2003:508) a sense of belongingness is the need to have friends, a supportive family, identification with a group and intimate relationships. Mine worker fathers need to confirm their children's existence in the relationships they share with their family, teachers and peers so that children feel they belong (cf. Schoeman, 2006b:24). If feelings of belongingness are not met children end up with feelings of loneliness and emptiness (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2003:508). A child participant remarked, "... I love being around my dad because he loves me and he taught me that I must love my teachers and friends too." In accordance with middle childhood most children participants commented that they belonged to friendship groups and that they had many best friends (Wait *et al.*, 2006:134; Zembar & Blume 2009:343). If children are able to use their fathers as a secure base for exploration of relationships, children are able to confirm the positive expectations regarding relationships with their teachers and friends they experience (Booth-Laforce *et al.*, 2006:309).

- Emotional safety

Parents who deal openly with emotions and comfort their children have a strong relationship and serve as positive models to their children (Walsh, 2003:414; Gentzler, *et al.*, 2005:592; Zembar & Blume, 2009:286). Children participants needed their fathers to make them feel emotionally safe in order to confirm their feelings in the dialogical relationship they share (cf. Blom, 2006:92). According to Hergenhahn and Olson (2003:508) safety is the need for children to have structure, order, security and predictability. In the two focus groups very few father participants confirmed their children's emotional needs, especially fathers with daughters. One father participant commented, "When my daughter needs to speak about her feelings I make her phone her mother." Another father participant acknowledged, "I don't always know what to do when my children have tantrums so I leave them to cry." Older children participants emphasised that they spoke to their friends about their feelings rather than their fathers because their fathers did not understand their feelings and what they needed.

Research has shown that parents who are more supportive of their children have a more secure relationship with their children (Gentzler *et al.*, 2005:592; Zembar & Blume, 2009:30). One father participant said, “I ask my children to explain what they are feeling when they are angry/sad instead of screaming it out irrationally.” His child participant confirmed this and said that when he was angry once about his friends talking behind his back his father spoke to him about it until he felt better. Gentzler *et al.* (2005:592) state that where parents and children were able to speak about emotions and children positively observed their parents reactions to their emotions, children’s emotions were confirmed. With regard to this study parental guidelines would need to include strategies to help mine worker fathers confirm their children’s emotional needs.

#### *2.3.4.3 Subtheme C: Praise*

With the help of encouragement and praise children are able to confirm themselves. Father participants praising their children will help confirm their strengths that will lead children to perform better at school (cf. Barnard, 1994:140; Andersen & Taylor, 2004:451-452). Many father participants expressed that they give incentives and rewards to confirm achievements at school and children participants confirmed this.

- Incentives and rewards

According to Collins, Bronte-Tinkew and Burkhauser (2008) by giving incentives and rewards parents can motivate their children to increase their work effort at home and their overall performance at school. Incentives may strengthen children’s commitment to learning, which improves academic performance (Kalb & Loeber, 2003:648). Some children participants indicated, “My father rewards me by praising and giving me money to buy sweets or airtime if I did well in my tests”. Incentives work well in middle childhood and according to Collins *et al.* (2008), incentives that have been found to work the best include; special enrichment activities, computer time, extended sport time and television/movie watching. A father participant commented, “I would like to use incentives to praise my children but I have run out of ideas how to encourage my children to do better at school.” Fathers need to be made aware of incentives and that they work well for praising children and

empowering their sense of self. Furthermore, it is the researcher's opinion that while rewarding children fathers can spend time with their children enhancing the dialogical relationship.

- Acknowledging scholastic and sport achievements

Children whose parents converse regularly with them about school experiences, both good and bad, perform better academically (Zembar & Blume, 209:219). Children work harder if they are defined as good pupils and motivated by their parents. A child participant said that her teachers and her father are always praising her for her school work, "I work hard, get good marks and my father always tells me that I am better than my siblings." A child participant said that his father encourages him to improve his style in the sports he excels in. Through the development of guidelines mine worker fathers can be taught to acknowledge desirable behaviours scholastically and on the sports ground. Acknowledging achievements in the context of praise confirms the dialogical relationship.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

The focus of the empirical study was to establish guidelines for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. From the empirical data and relevant literature, various suggestions were made that could strengthen the dialogical relationship between the mine worker fathers and their children. The last step of the first phase of the D&D model was setting the goals and objectives. The goal of this research study was to develop Gestalt guidelines to promote a dialogical attitude in mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood (see 1.6.1.5). In the next chapter, an in-depth literature review on Gestalt dialogue within the dialogical parental child relationship will be conducted.

# **CHAPTER 3: GESTALT CONCEPTS TO ENHANCE THE DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINE WORKER FATHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD**

## **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The goal of this research study was to develop Gestalt guidelines to assist mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. The focus of chapter 2 was to complete the first phase of the intervention research. It involved a discussion of the empirical data which was gathered from the identified population. From this data the needs of the identified population were identified which will be used to develop the parental guidelines.

In this chapter the second phase of Intervention research will be carried out, namely to gather information from existing literature (cf. De Vos, 2005c:398). For the reason of developing Gestalt guidelines for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund with children in middle childhood, information about the Gestalt approach is presented in this chapter. The researcher will focus on defining Gestalt, Gestalt philosophy and Gestalt concepts. The Gestalt concepts will also be based on an integrated discussion within Gestalt theory that specifically relates to existential dialogue. The focus will further be on the four main themes that were identified and discussed in chapter 2, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation. Within these four main themes other Gestalt concepts namely contact, here and now, awareness, relational field, phenomenology, responsibility, organism and environmental field and the paradoxical theory of change were recognised as of importance to this research study and will also be discussed. The researcher is aware of other Gestalt concepts but due to the research study being of limited scope, the researcher will in the following discussion only be focusing on the Gestalt concepts which are specifically applicable to the study.

### **3.2 THE DEFINITION OF GESTALT**

Gestalt is a German word, which has no equivalent meaning in English (Clarkson, 2004:1; Blom, 2006:10). A common definition of a Gestalt is, "... a whole is larger than the sum of its parts" (Gestalt Center of Gainesville, 2007). According to Larcher (2003) the definition was originally noted by Köhler as, "A whole is different from the sum of its parts", but over time it was altered to become "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." The reasoning behind the original idea suggested by Köhler was that when one looks at something as a whole, it takes on meaning and identity different from its parts. A whole is something beyond itself and should not be viewed through reductivistic concepts (Larcher, 2003). Clarkson, Yontef and Jacobs (in Blom 2006:18) regard Gestalt as, "the shape, the pattern, the whole form, the configuration. It connotes a structural entity which is both different and much more than the sum of its parts." From a Gestalt approach each person is distinct and significantly different from all others and perceives the world in their own unique ways (Korb, Davenport & Korb, 2007). The Gestalt concept in other words can be seen as a completed unit of human experience where every person is seen as a unique formulation that involves the discovery and exploration of a person's own shape, pattern and wholeness (Clarkson, 2004:1; Gestalt Center of Gainesville, 2007).

### **3.3 THE GESTALT PHILOSOPHY**

The Gestalt approach believes that people are first and foremost experiencing beings. The process of experiencing is called *Gestalten* and is seen as recurring circles and experiencing wholes (Gestalt Center of Gainesville, 2007). Individuals experience different Gestalten through Gestalt formation and Gestalt formation takes place at different levels of the human systems. Van der Helm, van Lier and Wagemans (2003:212) state that, "... Gestalt formation does not simply proceed from smaller to larger Gestalts but rather, involves a complex interplay between local and global human systems." These Gestalten that are interconnected arise in the environment and help develop better states of equilibrium (Van der Helm *et al.*, 2003).

A concept in Gestalt theory known as the ‘triadic’ process is seen as the movement through equilibrium, disequilibrium and modified equilibrium by which people actively address needs or new possibilities as they are being changed by encounters in the environment (Mortola, 1999:311). This ‘triadic’ process is central to the ongoing process of making contact and withdrawal from figures of interest in the environment (Yontef & Fairfield, 2005:7). According to Perls (in Mortola, 1999:310) “... an organism is continuously striving for the maintenance of an equilibrium which is disturbed by needs and regained through their gratification.” This processes of establishing equilibrium, losing equilibrium and establishing a modified equilibrium is needed for a constant healthy ongoing process of living (Mortola, 1999:311). Leading a healthy life according to Perls (in Korb *et al.*, 2007) is done through moving from dependence upon the environment for necessary support towards a self-supported independent and interactive relationship with the environment.

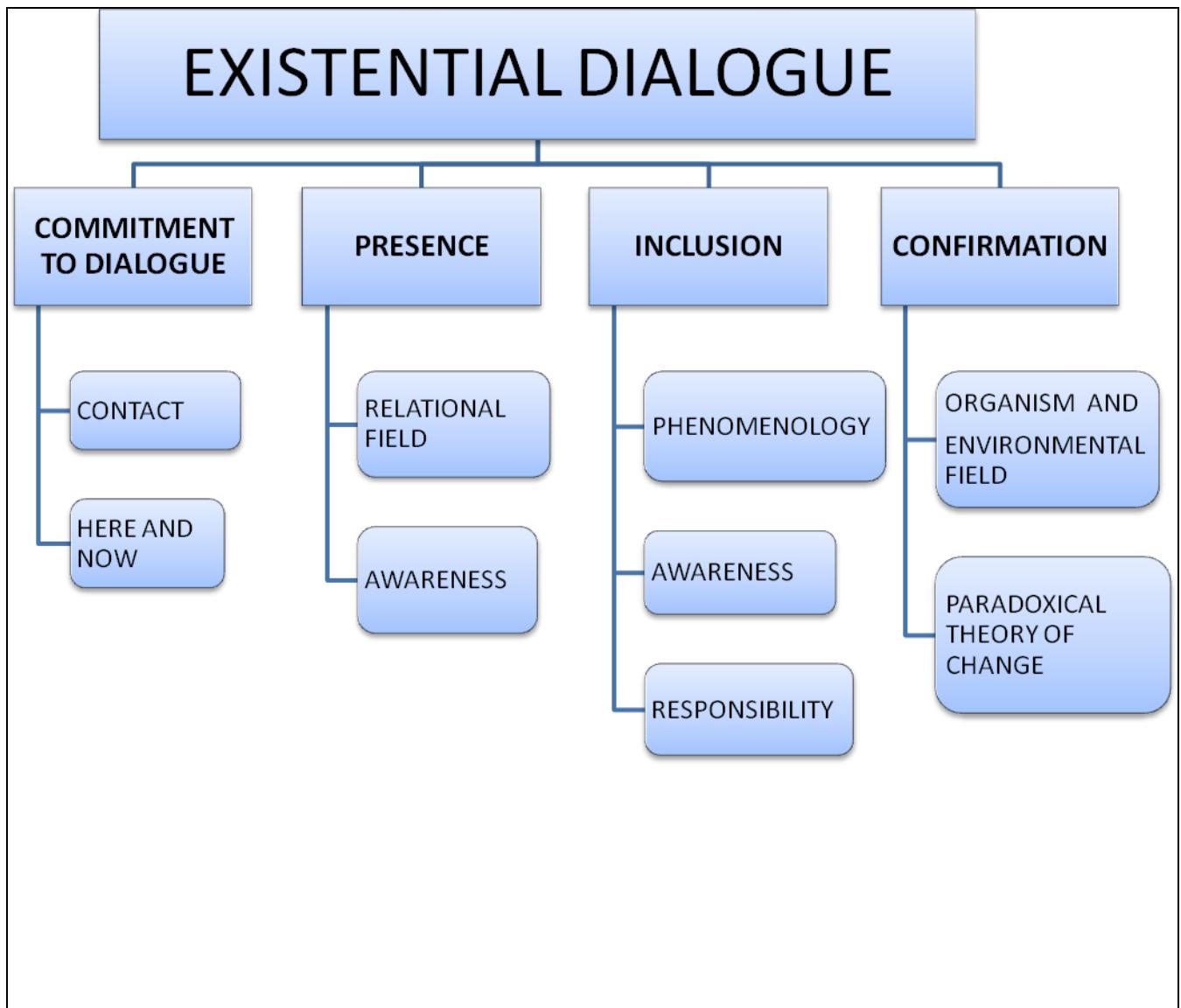
With regard to the abovementioned establishing guidelines for mine worker fathers in Oranjemund might allow these fathers and their children to consider new possibilities in their environment that are available to them in order to enhance the dialogical relationship they share. When a person according to Yontef and Fairfield (2005:7) gets into the position where he or she notices a range of possibilities and is free to choose among these different options, a person starts to function at a more optimal level. Consequently, that person starts to function as a healthy whole.

### **3.4 GESTALT CONCEPTS**

In Gestalt theory a particular form of a relationship is utilised which is called existential dialogue and is the main focus of the research study. The term ‘dialogical’ does not simply mean to communicate with each other but rather the fact that human beings are inherently rationale (MacKewn, 1997:80; Burber, 2002:115). Yontef (1993a:200) is of the opinion that, “Existential dialogue is what happens when two persons meet together as persons, where each person is impacted on and responsive to the other.” According to Joyce and Sills (2001:43) a dialogical relationship consists of feeling, sensing and experiencing the other person, “... acknowledging their existences whilst being fully received by that person”.

Within a dialogical relationship exists a special form of contact which according to Yontef and Jacobs (2005:318) is built over time. Joyce and Sills (2001:43) highlight the fact that human beings yearn for contact, but perhaps even more for genuine dialogue. Existential dialogue however is important for healthy contact to take place and involves the senses, awareness, appropriate use of body, the ability to express emotions and use of intellect (Oaklander, 2003:144). Healthy contact furthermore entails a full awareness of presence, inclusion, confirmation and commitment to dialogue within the relationship (Reynolds, 2005:163).

Commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation were identified and discussed in chapter 2 as the four main themes of the research study. In order to develop Gestalt guidelines to assist mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood, these four main themes will subsequently be discussed in conjunction with the Gestalt concepts that according to the researcher is applicable to the study (refer to Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1: Main themes and Gestalt concepts of the research study**

### 3.4.1 Commitment to dialogue

Commitment to dialogue is seen as attuned human contact where people are open to the interpersonal process that entails people to meet each other without aiming or controlling the outcomes (Yontef, 1993a:127; Joyce & Sills, 2001:55; Yontef, 2005:96). According to Yontef (2005:83) commitment to dialogue aids in a significant increase of awareness that allows for the individuals involved to be changed by each other through the interaction and contact they make. Out of the existential meeting new awareness and growth occur that support further contact within the dialogical relationship, enhancing the relationship.

Blom (2006:59) is of the opinion that nonverbal communication is important for dialogue because it is seen as a more true form of children's emotions. Father participants and children participants able to pick up on nonverbal signals therefore understand better what is being said which commits them more to the dialogue. Being able to predict how a person may behave, what affects them and how they may respond to a situation is an important part of communication (Joyce & Sills, 2001:53).

#### *3.4.1.1 Contact*

If a person wishes to fulfil a need, closure of a need can only be achieved when the person acknowledges an unfulfilled need and experience the emotions that accompany the fulfilment of that need (MacKewn, 1997:17; Stawman, 2009:15). In the context of this research study, this entails making contact with the environment in order to fulfil the need. Contact therefore will allow for fuller encounter between the participants and their environments which will allow for the satisfaction of a need or the demands in the relationship to be met (cf. Reynolds, 2005:163). According to Yontef and Jacobs (2005:301) awareness of interruptions of contact however is important. By meeting at the boundary of the organism and environmental field father participants and children participants can allow for full contact to take place and at the same time be able to deal with interruptions of contact that may be influencing their relationship.

In addition contact will only be possible to the extent that support is available to children participants. Adequate support is a function of the total field and requires both self-support and environmental support. It is vital that father participants are committed to the dialogical encounter as this renders a supportive parental relationship (cf. Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:315). Support is everything that helps integrate children's understanding of their relationship in order for them to make sense of their experiences (Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:315). Supportive father participants can therefore help their children to make sense of their experience in the relationship (see 2.3.4.2). This will increase awareness which allows for children participants to get in touch with what is emerging in the here and the now within their relationship, and at the same time strengthening the dialogical encounter (cf. Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:301; Yontef, 2005:83).

### **3.4.1.2 Here and now**

The here and the now is the direct experience of present awareness (Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:317). According to Yontef and Jacobs (2005:317) a person's field is newly constructed moment by moment and where the past does have an affect on people, it is how the past is dealt with now that is of importance. Father participants need to acknowledge how their past relationship with their children has an influence on how their children are making contact with them now in the present relational field. The here and the now is essential for healthy living as it is through this contact that one gets in touch with one's own existence (Joyce & Sills, 2001:27).

The organisation of one's experiences happens in the here and the now and entails that children recognise their needs in the present (Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:300). Senses influence the way contact is made with the environment and by acknowledging their senses children confirm their emotions connected to their needs (Reynolds, 2005:156; Schoeman, 2006a:13-14). The researcher is of the opinion that children participants need to become aware of unwanted needs that may be interrupting their self process (cf. Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:315). Awareness in the here and the now can assist father participants to empower their children's sense of self by helping their children recognise what may be disrupting their self process to effectively deal with their needs (cf. Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:301; Oaklander, 2006:50). As mentioned by Ajabe (2010) children participants are not effectively being taught by their fathers what is expected of them (see 2.3.4.1). Instead habitual modes of spending time together are having adverse affects on commitment to dialogue.

### **3.4.2 Presence**

In the context of this research study, presence was seen as the authentic relationship between father participants and children participants (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:44). If participants are present to each other's needs and incorporate their senses, they gain an awareness of one another that will fully give to the encounter of each other (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:45). Yontef (2002:24) is of the opinion that dialogue needs to encompass presences as this allows a person to make fuller

contact with another person and in the context of this research study will permit mine worker fathers to genuinely be there for their children's needs.

To be authentic according to Daniels (2004) rests on a basic attitude that people have towards their relationship that will contribute to the dialogical encounter. Father participants practising an authentic attitude will be experiencing as being real which will allow for them to be their true selves in the encounter with their children which forms the basic trust with their children (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:42). Once children participants trust their fathers it will strengthen the relationship which will allow for presence to be enhanced. Presence becomes a truthful, authentic expression rather than a pretend way for participants to force spending time with each other, which does not aid towards a dialogical relationship (cf. Yontef, 2002:24). To practice presence in the dialogical relationship, father participants must not pretend to be something they are not and children participants must not pretend to feel something they do not (cf. MacKewn, 1997:86). Genuinely being there for one another with an attitude that is real will strengthen the presence of participants in their relationship they share. According to Wait *et al.* (2005:136) (also see 2.3.2.2 and 2.3.4.2) parents who have been present in their relationship with their children have had the most significant impact on their children's development in middle childhood.

### *3.4.2.1 Relational field*

Gestalt theory regards awareness and human relations to be inseparable (Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:311). To understand relational field in the context of this research study, a definition of field theory needs to be given in order to understand how the field impacts on a relationship. Field theory is best described by Kurt Lewin (in Parlett, 2005:46):

In psychology various forces, vectors and influences act together to produce a specific, unique outcome in a particular situation at a particular time. Each force affects the others in a complex interactive relationship.

According to Burber (in Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:311), "All living is meeting". In order for father participants and children participants to meet each other it entails that they make contact at the border of the individual and the environment (cf. Yontef,

2005:87). The environment can be considered as the field of interacting forces that affects the relationship (Yontef, 2009:41). When two people make contact, an interacting field emerges (Parlett, 2005:45). Contact is very important and can only occur if participants are present in the relational field. If either one of the father participants or the children participants is not available to their relationship contact cannot be made and the dialogical relationship cannot be strengthened. This became clear in chapter 2 in the discussion where mine worker fathers have been using alcohol and were not available at home to care for their children (see 2.3.2.1).

A personal presence in the field entails practising self-disclosure (Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:320). Self-disclosure is a powerful mechanism in the relational field because people are able to disclose their experiences openly with one another (Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:319). Father participants need to have a willingness to practice open communication that shows their commitment for being present and which might also strengthen their children's sense of self (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:53; Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:319). With the appreciation of the children's sense of self, father participants may more readily, where and when applicable, disclose their reactions to their children. Fathers should also allow children to discuss issues with them when they are ready to do so as the researcher is of opinion this shows respect for their children's process. This allows for the relationship to become a caring and sensitive one that enhances the children's self-process (Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:319).

From the empirical data it became clear that different variables had an impact on presences in the field for the father participants and children participant's (cf. Stawman, 2009:22). It is the researcher's opinion that father participants that were present in the relationship with their children influenced the way their children evaluated themselves against their peers (see 2.3.2.2). Children whose fathers encouraged them more often seem to feel more positive about themselves enhancing the relationship.

### *3.4.2.2 Being present through awareness*

Being present through awareness will enhance both the mine worker fathers and their children's attentiveness towards the relationship. Awareness here encompasses an awareness of the children's processes by father participants and

how children draw on their fathers to satisfy their needs (cf. Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:302). Perls (in Blom, 2006:52) defines awareness as the ability to be in touch with one's own existence, to notice what is happening around and inside one, to connect with the environment, other people and oneself. According to Joyce and Sills (2001:28) awareness is both knowing and being. This understanding of awareness allows one to be fully present to the dialogical relationship, building awareness of contact with the environment and with one's emotions (Joyce & Sills, 2001:27). Yontef (in Joyce & Sills, 2001:27) defines awareness as:

Awareness is a form of experience which can be loosely defined as being in touch with one's own existence, with what is ... the person who is aware knows what he does, how he does it, that he has alternatives and that he chooses to be as he is.

A heightened awareness of emotions leads to a change in behaviour as the conditions for wholeness and growth are created. This emotional process is integral to the Gestalt formation that leads to a healthy individual (Yontef, 2005:83; Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:314). Participants process changes all the time and being responsive allows participants to become clear about what they think, feel and decide in the current moment (cf. Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:314). In the context of this research study being aware therefore entails that children participants are able to react and respond to the emotions that they experience when relating to their fathers. Through this awareness children participants will be able to draw on their fathers correctly to satisfy their needs such as openly talking about problems (see 2.3.1.1).

Father participants in contrast can be made aware that their presence in the relationship will make it easier for their children to call on them. Fathers and children need to be made aware that their feelings, senses and thoughts and how they react in different situations has an impact on the relationship they share (cf. Blom, 2006:53). If participants are both present in a mutual way needs are satisfied, together with full acceptance of the other person's process that is continually in change (cf. Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:302).

### **3.4.3 Inclusion**

Inclusion entails confirming the existence of the other by entering as fully as possible into their subjective world (Joyce & Sills, 2001:47; Yontef, 2005:95). MacKewn (1997:86) is of the opinion that inclusion allows a person to be affected by another person's experiences, while at the same time retaining a sense of self. Father participants need to include their children in their realm of understanding so that their children's sense of self may be confirmed. A child's sense of self is an important aspect of development and Oaklander (1988:280) is of the opinion that no child is born with a poor sense of self. How children feel about themselves is central to their environment and in the context of this research study it is how their fathers include them in their relation field that is essential (cf. Blom, 2006:102).

Within the context of this research study the researcher believes that strengthening children's self-support entails that father participants include their children's experiences in their field. When there is inclusion in the relationship it creates a safe environment for the 'phenomenological experience' where father participants recognise and understand their children's world and affirm them (cf. MacKewn, 1997:86). This will promote better contact between father participants and children participants and subsequently strengthen the dialogical encounter. Thus when inclusion is practised together with authentic presence, father participants are aware of what emerges in the contact and what conditions for growth and healing need to be created in order to enhance the dialogical relationship (cf. Yontef, 2002:25). In addition, a secure sense of self permits children to make contact in self-supportive ways (see 2.3.4.2), calling on their fathers to satisfy their needs (Blom, 2006:103).

#### *3.4.3.1 Phenomenology*

Phenomenology investigates the subjective meaning and experience of a person's own world and in the context of the study would entail that participants understand how each other functions and interpret any circumstances (cf. Yontef, 1993a:59; Joyce & Sills, 2001:16). Subjective meaning can be seen as being actively organised in terms of present needs, what meaning is contributed to a situation, how contact is made with the environment and what lies outside of awareness in the larger field of influence (Yontef, 1993a:287; MacKewn, 1997:55; Joyce & Sills, 2001:25).

Phenomenology, the method of investigating the nature of existence, is a part of field theory and is shaped uniquely by the environment influences that affect it (Yontef, 2002:16; Blom, 2006:19). Lewin (in Stawman, 2009:27) describes phenomenology as ‘life spaces’ that is the phenomenal field of the individual limited only to the individual. In accordance to the study, phenomenology entails constructing an understanding of father participants and children participants in their ‘life space’ in order to be able to understand the uniqueness of their dialogical encounter (cf. Reynolds, 2005:154). The researcher is aware of the fact that this aspect will need to be taken into account when developing the guidelines.

According to Yontef (1993a:58) all aspects of the field are significant and interconnected. In this research study culture plays a big role when participants’ ‘life spaces’ are taken into account. Culture operates as a complex system of introjects, frequently out of awareness which may hold certain aspects of a person’s subjective meanings (cf. Stawman, 2009:30). From the empirical data it was clear that father participants had certain strong opinions about the meaning they gave to certain situations which have an effect on their attitudes and their behaviours towards their children (cf. Clarkson, 2004:29). This for instance had an influence on the way father participants practised discipline and showed love (see 2.3.4.1) in their relationship with their children.

### *3.4.3.2 Practising inclusion through awareness*

Practising inclusion through awareness entails that people would understand their own processes. According to Blom (2006:79), “... process refers to the way people present themselves to the world and satisfy their needs.” For awareness to be strengthened father participants need to be aware of how their process allows them to make contact with their children and how their children’s process allows them to make contact in the relationship. Including the different processes in the relational field allows one to make fuller contact that leads to one connecting with the environment and others better (Blom, 2006:52-53). This creative adjustment strengthens awareness of one’s experiences and actions, where one’s process modifies that allows for new feelings of self-worth and the growth of self-support (Yontef, 2005:86; Oaklander, 2006:46). It is the researcher’s opinion that children participants’ self-process could be strengthened through teaching children to be

aware of new possibilities of contact that will allow them to become more self-supportive and reach out more readily to their fathers (cf. Lobb, 2005:27; Yontef, 2005:86). In addition, father participants that support their children's self process help their children to further express blocked emotions coming into better contact with their self-process (cf. Oaklander, 2006:50). In the context of the research study, father participants who included their children within their relational field helped to promote change in their children (see 2.3.3.1). This change which can be seen as creative adjustment strengthens children's self-process as they learn that they can make their own choices, adjust their emotions and function healthier.

### *3.4.3.3 Responsibility*

As awareness grows so does realisation that even though people are not responsible for everything that happens to them, they are indeed responsible for how they feel about it, the meaning they assign to it and how they manage it (Joyce & Sills, 2001:37; Clarkson, 2004:15). Joyce and Sills (2001:37) note that, "Owning and accepting responsibility for our experiences and responsibility for our community helps us make contact-full living." According to Korb *et al.* (in Blom, 2006:53) taking responsibility for the self means being able to react to expectations and actions in the self and in others. Responsibility further entails that children discover they are responsible for the outcomes of the choices they make and that they exercise this freedom in relationships (cf. Blom, 2006:53; Schoeman, 2006a:6).

When parents choose on behalf of their children, children are restrained from developing a sense of responsibility (Blom, 2006:53). When children participants are left to make their own choices without interference they become responsible for those choices they make (Blom, 2006:106). Blom (2006:53) is also of opinion that exercising a choice to do a task is part of teaching children responsibility. Therefore, in the context of this research study father participants should teach their children to practice responsibility in all parts of their children's field such as at school and at home (see 2.3.3.1) through additional tasks. Father participants who respect their children's ability to make their own choices by having their children be more responsible for what takes place in the relationship, will strengthen the dialogical encounter.

### **3.4.4 Confirmation**

Confirmation is unconditionally accepting another person and validating that other person in a relationship as a whole, which sets a foundation for a secure, resilient sense of self (Joyce & Sills, 2001:45-46; Yontef, 2005:95). Confirmation is further seen as acknowledging the existence and potential of a person (Yontef, 2002:24). Confirmation allows for the affirmation of a person's self process in the dialogical encounter and the researcher is of the opinion that in the context of the study this is done by validating all experiences that affect the children's field (cf. MacKewn, 1997:86).

Children participants need to be confirmed in two parts of their field. Firstly, the experiential field that is everything children are aware of and the way they organise reality. Secondly, the larger field that is part of the greater context the child exists in such as their cultural field (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:24). In this research study confirmation entailed that father participants confirmed their children's 'life spaces', the developmental needs for middle childhood and their existence within the cultural field (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:24; Walsh, 2003:257; Zembar & Blume, 2009:13). Father participants supporting their children in all parts of the field allow for confirmation of children's self process which plays a part in enhancing a child's self-esteem (cf. Oaklander, 2006:50). Children participants whose fathers unconditionally accepted them confirmed their children's potential (see 2.3.4.2) and when this happens the dialogical relationship is strengthened (cf. Yontef, 2005:95; Booth-Laforce *et al.*, 2006:309).

#### *3.4.4.1 Organism and environmental field*

The organism and environmental field is understood as the environment defined by the individual and that it is impossible to take the individual out of this context (Yontef, 2009:42). According to Blom (2006:19) there is interdependence between the person and his/her environment that is of importance. The definition of self is meaningless without the environment, which in this research study includes relational support such as the father, who is able to maintain, restore and transform the positive self-experiences of his children (cf. Stawman, 2009:21). Therefore confirming another person must be done by changing the way contact is made

between the boundary of organism (father participants or children participants) and the environmental field (cf. Stawman, 2009:13). Once father participants and children participants make fuller contact with each other's 'self' in the field, the dialogue is strengthened.

With regard to confirmation, any process, problem or creative adjustment is a function of the relationship between the participants in the field and should be approached holistically (cf. Parlett, 2005:47; Yontef, 2009:42). What makes 'self' a process is that one keeps on rediscovering new possibilities of making fuller contact (Hoosain, 2010). According to Lobb (2005:27) creative adjustment allows the organism to make better contact with the environment and this strengthens the dialogical encounter.

#### *3.4.4.2 Paradoxical theory of change*

According to Yontef (2002:25) the paradoxical theory of change predicts that "... identification with one's actual state, experience and existence is ground that supports personal growth." This change according to Melnick and Nevis (2005:106) however can only happen through awareness and according to Joyce and Sills (2001:37), "Change occurs when one becomes what one is and not when one tries to become what one is not." Father participants are able to change and strengthen their relationship with their children if they allow for the natural process of organismic self-regulation to take place (cf. Joyce & Sills, 2001:37).

In the context of this research study organismic self-regulation entails that true growth takes place because of one's conscious awareness of what is occurring in one's current existence (organism and environmental field) and how one is affected and affects others (relational field). Through confirmation by adults children realise what they genuinely enjoy and what they are genuinely capable of (cf. Melnick & Nevis, 2005:106; Yontef & Jacobs, 2005:301). The organismic self-regulation therefore teaches children to accept themselves (Joyce & Sills, 2001:37).

According to Woldt and Toman (in Yontef, 2005:84-85) field theory is an integral part of the paradoxical theory of change and in the context of this research study the following aspects need to be kept in mind for change to take place:

- The whole context in which a person lives is considered
- Change anywhere in the field affects all parts of the field
- Subjective awareness affects context
- All observations are from a particular place, time and perspective.

The enhancement of the dialogical relationship in itself is a continual process of change and not a static one that father participants and children participants need to keep working on. Father participants therefore can enhance their relationship by confirming their children's achievements (see 2.3.4.3). This will influence the way their children perform at school, on the sports ground or feel about themselves, strengthening children's sense of self.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the definition of Gestalt, Gestalt philosophy and Gestalt principles associated with the enhancement of the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood were discussed. In accordance with the main focus of existential dialogue the four main themes namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation were discussed together with an integrated discussion of other Gestalt principles of importance to this research study. One of the goals of the guidelines would be to create awareness in order for father participants to become more involved in their relational field and for children participants to gain a sense of awareness of their own 'life spaces' in their organism and environmental field. A heightened awareness in making fuller contact strengthens the dialogical encounter, bringing forth change that could lead to the enhancement of the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood.

In the next chapter, functional elements of existing parent child relationship interventions that could be utilised for this study will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 4: FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS OF EXISTING PARENT CHILD RELATIONSHIP MODELS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 4 forms part of the third step of the second phase of the D&D model. The first two steps were previously discussed, namely the study of natural examples (chapter 2) and the use of existing sources of information (chapter 3). The third and final step of this phase is for the researcher to identify functional elements of existing models or programmes (see 1.6.2.3). Although this research study seeks to establish Gestalt guidelines for the enhancement of the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children, the researcher integrated other relevant literature that did not necessarily focus on Gestalt, however still made a valuable contribution in establishing the Gestalt guidelines for mine worker fathers.

In this chapter, the functional elements of the following relevant models and literature will be discussed:

- A model of mindful parenting
- The McMaster model
- The five love languages of children
- Caring dads

### **4.2. A MODEL OF MINDFUL PARENTING**

The model of mindful parenting looks at healthy parent child relationships (Duncan, Coatsworth & Greenberg, 2009:255). Mindful parenting is a framework whereby parents intentionally bring moment-to-moment awareness to the parent child relationship. This is achieved through developing parents' qualities of listening and attentiveness when interacting with their children. Parents are taught to practice emotional awareness, compassion, self-regulation in parenting and to be

nonjudgmental when interacting with their children (Duncan *et al.*, 2009:255). According to Brown and Ryan (in Duncan *et al.*, 2009:256) mindfulness is defined as, “a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experiences that allows for full awareness of what is happening in the moment.” Incorporating mindful awareness into parenting interactions allows parents to attend to their children’s present needs. Mindfulness allows parents to develop a higher quality relationship with their children. In addition the model suggests that parents who practice mindfulness by continuously accepting their children’s needs can create a longer lasting satisfactory parent child relationship enhancing the long term relationship (Duncan *et al.*, 2009:256).

#### **4.2.1 Functional elements of mindful parenting**

Practicing mindful parenting contributes to a positive parent child relationship with greater flexibility, responsiveness and wellbeing of children (Duncan *et al.*, 2009:261). The model of mindful parenting encompasses five dimensions that parents are taught to use in their parenting practices (Duncan *et al.*, 2009:257). The following functional elements of the mindful parenting model were identified and will subsequently be discussed within the context of the study.

##### *4.2.1.1 Listening with full attention*

According to Duncan *et al.* (2009:259) listening with full attention involves attention and awareness of what children are experiencing in the present moment. True listening involves being sensitive to the content of conversations, children’s tone of voice, facial expressions, body language and developing an internal representation of the children’s perspective. With regard to this research study listening with full attention will involve that mine worker fathers truly listen when their children are talking about their feelings. This will allow them to be present within the encounter and give children the impression that their father is focused on them. Being present will give mine worker fathers the opportunity to focus on their children’s body language and tone of voice so that they may attend to the real meaning of what is being said. It is important for mine worker fathers to develop an internal representation of their children’s perspectives when they are interacting so as to

know how to interact with their children best. This will serve as a protective function for children.

#### *4.2.1.2 Emotional awareness of self and child*

According to Duncan *et al.* (2009:260) emotional awareness of the self and child involves responsiveness to children's needs and emotions. Mindful parents have the capacity to correctively identify positive or negative emotions in themselves and in their children that allows them to make conscious choices on how to respond to emotions rather than reacting habitually to experiences.

With regard to this research study emotional awareness of the self and child will involve that mine worker fathers correctly identify their children's emotions in order to make better contact and help in satisfying their children's needs. It is also important for mine worker fathers to recognise their own feelings and emotions when interacting with their children as this influences the relationship. Mine worker fathers should try to keep to conscious choices when responding to their children's emotions in the present moment rather than reacting habitually to the current experience (negative or positive) that will have an influence on the dialogical encounter.

#### *4.2.1.3 Self-regulation in the parent child relationship*

According to Duncan *et al.* (2009:260) self-regulation in the parenting relationship involves the parent's ability to pause before reacting during parenting interactions in order to exercise greater self-regulation. In addition, teach children how to label, express and talk about their feelings, which can promote their own self-regulation abilities.

With regard to this research study self-regulation in the parenting relationship will involve that fathers promote their own self-regulation by practicing not to react impulsively during parenting interactions. To exercise better self-regulation mine worker fathers need to first think about their selection of parenting practices before they react.

The way in which the mine worker fathers respond to their children has an important socialising effect for their children and how they may react in other relationships. To

promote children's self regulation, mine worker fathers can teach their children how to label, express and talk about their feelings that will promote their own self-regulation abilities.

#### *4.2.1.4 Compassion for self and child*

According to Duncan *et al.* (2009:260) compassion for the self and child involves positive affection, support and empathic concern for one's children and for oneself as a parent. Through compassion parents are able to unconditionally love a child, gain the ability to meet the appropriate needs and to comfort distress in their children such as difficulties at school the children may be experiencing.

With regard to this research study compassion for the self and child will involve that mine worker fathers need to be taught a more empathic concern towards their children and even for themselves. By practicing more forgiving and less harsh discipline techniques will allow children to feel a greater sense of positive affection and support from their fathers. Through compassion for the self and child mine worker fathers might be able to meet a greater amount of needs of their children that helps comfort any form of distress children may be feeling at the time.

### **4.3 THE McMaster MODEL: A VIEW OF HEALTHY FAMILY FUNCTION**

The McMaster Model of Family Functioning (MMFF) according to Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller and Keinter (2003:582) has been developed for the assessment of healthy family functions. The model is based on the system approach that sees the family as an open system consisting of subsystems (Epstein *et al.*, 2003:583). The MMFF admits that a healthy normal family is a difficult concept to assess but the MMFF model concentrates on the positive features families have attained that allow them to function optimally.

The MMFF does not cover all aspects of functioning and focuses specifically on the emotional and physical health of family members (Epstein *et al.*, 2003:582). The model further takes the position that knowledge of the culture a family belongs to is of importance because health and normality are linked to culture (Epstein *et al.*, 2003:584).

### **4.3.1 Functional elements of the McMaster model**

From the MMFF model Epstein *et al.* (2003:587) provide a discussion towards healthy family functioning by which different guidelines can be considered for healthy family processes. MMFF is made up of six dimensions that have been implemented to help understand how a family meets and addresses healthy family functioning (Epstein *et al.*, 2003:584). The following functional elements of the MMFF were identified and will subsequently be discussed within the context of the study.

#### *4.3.1.1 Communication*

According to Epstein *et al.* (2003:589) communication involves instrumental and affective areas of communication in which there are two independent dimensions, namely; clear and direct, clear and indirect, masked and direct or masked and indirect communication. Most effective communication is clear and direct. Furthermore, communication can be seen as the exchange of verbal communication as well as behaviour. With regard to this research study communication will involve that mine worker fathers and their children communicate in a clear direct manner in both instrumental and affective communication. In instrumental communication, mine worker fathers and children should relate through basic communication about normal happenings in their day. In affective communication, mine worker fathers and their children should discuss issues of emotions where clear messages are brought across to each other. Communication should be open and effective and fathers should be available to their children as often as they can be.

#### *4.3.1.2 Roles*

According to Epstein *et al.* (2003:590-591) roles involve necessary roles and roles of the other. Roles entail repetitive behaviour patterns by which family members fulfil family functions. Role functioning is assessed by how the family allocates responsibilities and handles accountability for the roles. Roles are most effective when all the family functions are clearly allocated to the appropriate individual and accountability is taken for them. With regard to this research study roles will involve that all family members be allocated specific roles. Mine worker fathers should function in their roles as care givers for their children in middle childhood. With regard to children's roles, mine worker fathers should allocate tasks and functions to

their children necessary to support developing skills of their children's personal achievements, emotional, social and educational development that in the researcher's opinion will strengthen a sense of belongingness as well. Mine worker fathers can practice role maintenance by communicating decisions they have made to their children and enforcing discipline on the children to adhere to their roles and take accountability for them. These roles help include a presence of a sense of responsibility in all family members.

#### *4.3.1.3 Affective involvement*

According to Epstein *et al.* (2003:595-596) affective involvement involves the extent to which family members show interest in and value particular activities and interests of other family members. Empathic involvement in other family members' lives is most effective. With regard to this research study affective involvement will involve the amount of interest that mine worker fathers demonstrate towards their children in general as well as in their children's school and sport activities. Mine worker fathers who invest in their children show a great deal of affective involvement, nurturance and support that encourages children's development. In contrast it is also important for children to show an active interest in their father, appropriate to their age, as the relationship is reciprocal.

### **4.4 THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES OF CHILDREN**

The focus of Chapman and Campbell's (1997:19) book is parenting through meeting children's needs for love. Children are primarily emotional beings and the way they make sense of the world is through their emotions (Oaklander, 1988:109; Campbell & Chapman, 1997:25; Reynolds, 2005:156; Schoeman, 2006a:13-14). With the use of popular psychology Chapman and Campbell (1997:17) explain how unconditional love supports children's emotional strengths to meet challenges experienced in childhood, promoting growth and optimal functioning. Unconditional love can be seen as loving children regardless of difficulties and what parents expect their children to be (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:20). It is only unconditional love that can prevent problems such as resentment, feelings of being unloved, guilt, fear and insecurity in children (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:17).

The researcher is aware that this particular literature comes from the popular psychology paradigm, however certain functional elements may be beneficial to this research study in the development of parental guidelines. By practising expression of unconditional love mine worker fathers can allow for a more loving relationship between them and their children.

#### **4.4.1 The basic love languages**

The focus on love and meeting children's needs for love is an important aspect of parenting (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:19). For children to feel loved parents must learn to speak their unique love language. According to Chapman and Campbell (1997:26-27) a parent can communicate love to their children by:

- **Motivation through parents' behaviour**

Parents need to verbalise and communicate love through behavioural expressions as their children sense how their parents feel about them through their emotions. Parental behavioural expressions of love are divided into five love languages; physical touch, quality time, gifts, acts of love and words of affirmation.

- **Speaking the primary love language of children**

Parents should be aware that children have a primary love language that best communicates love to him or her. Parents need to know which love language their children react best to in order to fulfil their emotional needs of love. Children need all the five love languages in order to be emotionally strengthened by their parents.

#### **4.4.2 Functional elements of the Five Love Languages of Children**

The primary focus of the five love languages of children is for children's need for love and how parents are able to provide love emotionally to their children affecting the relationship they share (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:22). The functional elements of the five love languages of children in the context of this research study will subsequently be discussed.

#### *4.4.2.1 Physical touch*

All children need physical contact. A hug is a powerful tool that can be used early in the morning before school that reinforces emotional security from mine worker fathers (cf. Chapman & Campbell, 1997:40).

Mine worker fathers can also achieve physical touch by playing games with their children in the garden that combines both spending quality time and physical touch. Mine worker fathers can learn to hold their younger children when reading a story and give a pat on the back or 'high fives' to older children with encouraging words that stimulate touch.

#### *4.4.2.2 Words of affirmation*

In relationship words are powerful. Affirming words allow children to experience love through expressions that strengthen children's inner sense of worth (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:45).

- **Words of affection and endearment**

Words can take on stronger meanings when expressed with affectionate feelings (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:46). Mine worker fathers should practice to sound more affectionate towards their children that would allow children to feel more secure and make closer contact with their fathers.

- **Words of praise**

Mine worker fathers should express words of praise that are genuinely meaningful such as expressing their happiness when children have performed well in a task and took responsibility for their own choices.

- **Words of encouragement**

Fathers should encourage their children to attempt more in their relationship with others. Listening to friends when they speak practices presence in the relationship and teaches social skills (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:48).

- **Words of guidance**

Encouraging words guide children towards moral and ethical development (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:51). Mine worker fathers should learn to guide their children through positive loving responses and not shout at them. For instance if children do not understand their homework and fathers cannot do it as well, scolding has negative consequences for the relationship.

#### *4.4.2.3 Quality time*

Spending quality time with children makes them feel truly loved and conveys messages that children are important. Spending quality time together does not mean leaving the house. Focused attention can be given at home such as doing homework together. As children become more influenced by their peers it is important that fathers strengthen their personal time they spend with their children. Mine worker fathers should share their own feelings through open discussions, such as talking about their mother or their culture that may evoke moral, value and spiritual issues. This kind of real communication allows children to feel trusted (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:63). Story telling should become bedtime rituals where mine worker fathers could share important information about their culture which would allow children to identify their feelings.

#### *4.4.2.4 Acts of service*

Acts of service are understood as parents serving as role models to their children (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:84). Parents become a model by teaching children skills as they develop and by which children base their behaviour on. Importantly, acts of service must be age appropriate and mine worker fathers should only help in task areas where children cannot help themselves. Fathers can teach children new skills by giving children more difficult chores around the house, organising their own homework and afternoon schedules. These daily acts children perform will have long term effects on children's developmental skills (Chapman & Campbell, 1997:89). Through acts of compassion, children build pro-social behaviour, where moral development and skills learnt at home help benefit other people in need (Zembar & Blume, 2009:324).

#### 4.5 CARING DADS: HELPING FATHERS VALUE THEIR CHILDREN

Based on literature and in the researcher's opinion parenting programs for males are limited (Fine & Lee, 2001:187). The *Caring Dads* program is a unique intervention program designed specifically to target change in the areas of abusive parenting strategies, in the attitudes and beliefs that support unhealthy parenting (Scott & Crooks, 2007:224). Figure 4.1 is an illustration of the nurturing wheel fathers in *Caring Dads* are asked to compare their behaviour with.

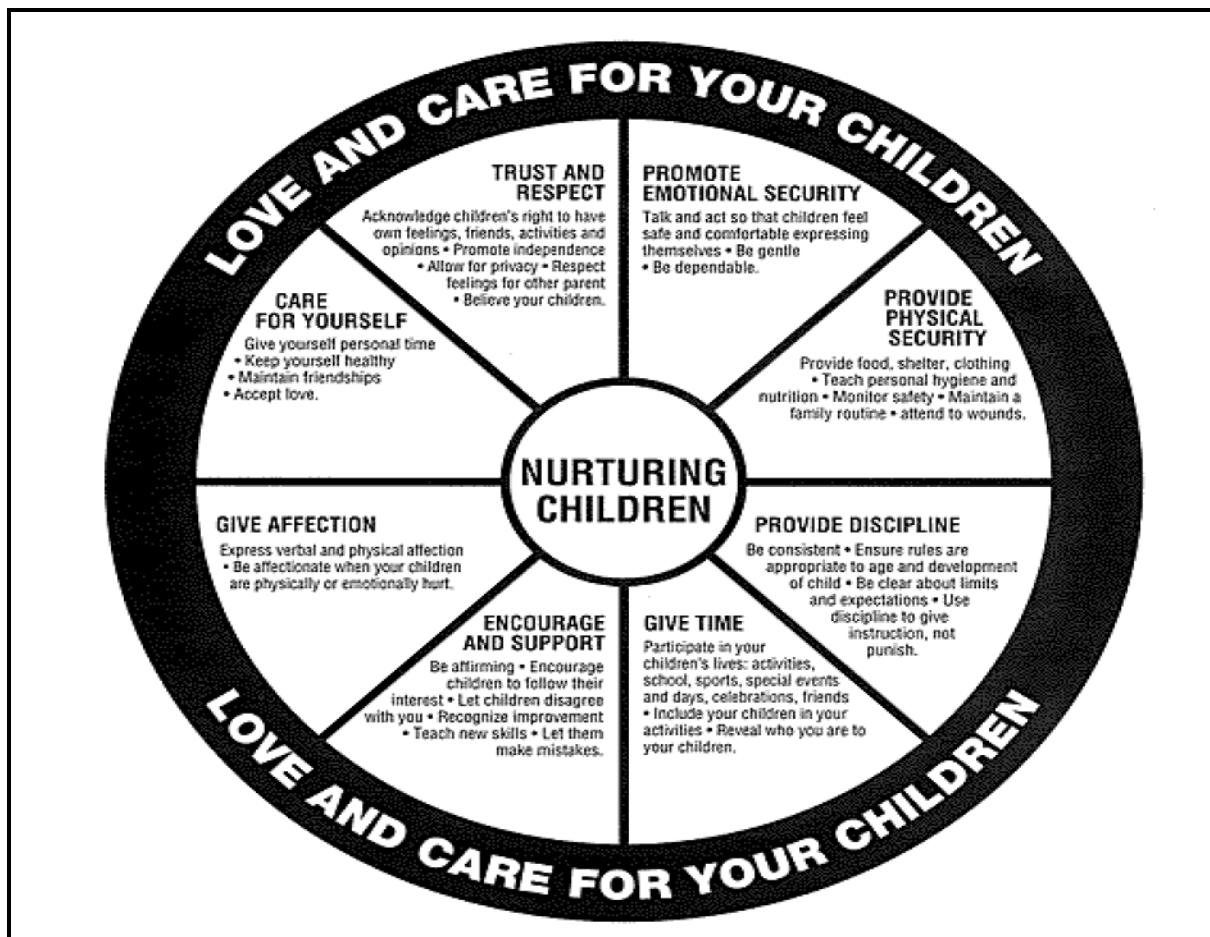


Figure 4.1: Nurturing wheel (Adapted from Scott, 2006:7).

The positive outcomes of the *Caring Dads* program is its focus on helping men recognise attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that support healthy father child relationships through the development of interacting skills with children (Scott & Crooks, 2007:225). The researcher recognises that this research study does not focus its attention on abusive parenting styles, however the goals outlined in the *Caring Dads* program are of relevance in helping develop parental guidelines for

mine worker fathers to enhance their relationship with their children in middle childhood.

#### 4.5.1 Functional elements of Caring Dads

The *Caring Dads* program has five therapeutic goals to help improve interacting skills between fathers and their children (Scott, Crooks, Francis, Kelly & Reid, 2004:2). During the *Caring Dads* program fathers are taught to cope in healthy ways with frustrating situations and are made accountable for the fathering choices they make that affect their children (Scott *et al.*, 2004:1). The functional elements of the *Caring Dads* program in the context of this research study will subsequently be discussed.

##### 4.5.1.1 Increase awareness of child-centred fathering

According to Scott *et al.* (2004:3) increased awareness of child-centred fathering entails that attention is placed on helping fathers become child-centred instead of parent-centred. Figure 4.2 is an illustration of the parenting continuum that fathers may use as a guideline to compare parent-centred abusive behaviours with children-centred behaviours that strengthen the father child relationship.

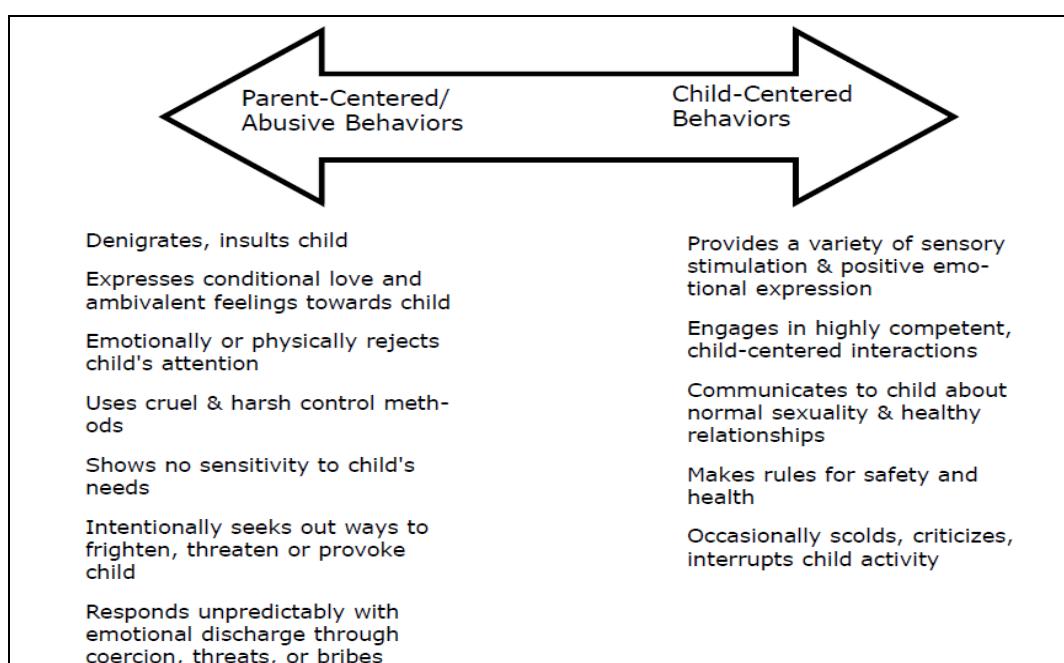


Figure 4.2: Father parenting continuum (Adapted from Scott, 2006:8).

With regard to this research study child-centred parenting will involve that mine worker fathers should be taught that negative parental behaviours are detrimental for the parent child relationship and should be encouraged to promote nurturing and child-centred parenting where the focus is specifically on the children (see Figure 4.2). Mine worker fathers can provide a variety of sensory stimulations and positive emotional expression for their children by spending quality time with them. Communication about healthy relationships and normal sexuality is also important to discuss with children towards the end of middle childhood. Rules can be put in place for children's safety and health reasons. These are but a few positive parenting behaviours mine worker fathers should think about and compare with their old parenting styles.

#### *4.5.1.2 Applying skills of child-centred parenting*

According to Scott *et al.* (2004:3) applying skills of child-centred parenting entails developing child management skills that are important for good parenting practices. Fathers need to be taught how to manage difficult behaviours, identify children's behaviour they would like to change whilst evaluating if this meets the fathers' needs or that of their children. Emphasis should be placed on rewarding children for positive behaviour and minimising consequences for bad behaviour.

With regard to this research study applying skills of child-centred parenting will involve teaching fathers better child management skills. Mine worker fathers should be taught to communicate those behaviours in their children they have difficulty in managing and identify the behaviour they would like to change. This can further be openly discussed with their children or with other individuals that have an influence on their children's lives.

It is important to keep in mind that when mine worker fathers discipline a certain behaviour of a child that the change in behaviour that the fathers aim for should meet both the needs of the fathers as well as that of their children. When disciplining their children, mine worker fathers should therefore rather place an emphasis on rewarding children for positive behaviour and minimising consequences for bad behaviour (cf. Fine & Lee, 2001:8).

#### *4.5.1.3 Rebuilding trust with children and planning for the future*

At the end of the *Caring Dads* program fathers may feel that they are interacting differently with their children but that their children are not reciprocating. Rebuilding trust with children entails that fathers be consistent with the new tools and skills they have learnt from the *Caring Dads* program. Planning for the future entails that fathers work together in assistance with other individuals and systems that have an impact on their children's lives such as school, teachers, peers and mentors (Scott *et al.*, 2004:3).

With regard to this research study rebuilding trust with children and planning for the future will involve that mine worker fathers make use of the tools they have been given from the parental guidelines. The guidelines are not static and the relationship is ever changing and mine worker fathers should continuously apply the new tools and skills they have learnt to the parent child relationship. Mine worker fathers should further call on the help of other mine worker fathers if they are in need and work together with the teachers at school so that their parent child relationship may constantly be strengthened.

## **4.6 CONCLUSION**

The focus of this chapter was to identify functional elements of existing parent children relationship programs and models that can be used in establishing Gestalt guidelines for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund with children in middle childhood. The researcher is of the opinion that by focusing on previous models and programs other than the Gestalt will help enrich ideas in the developing of Gestalt guidelines.

In chapter 5 the researcher will describe the process of developing and designing Gestalt guidelines to assist mine worker fathers in enhancing their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

## **CHAPTER 5: DESIGN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter focused on functional elements of existing parent child relationships and family programmes or models. In this chapter, attention will be given to the last two phases of the D&D model of intervention research. This includes the design phase and early development of preliminary guidelines for fathers to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. The beginning of this chapter will give attention to the design phase, where after the Gestalt guidelines will be discussed. The steps of the design phase include designing an observational system (see 1.6.3.1) and specifying procedural elements of the intervention (see 1.6.3.2).

### **5.2 DESIGNING AN OBSERVATIONAL SYSTEM**

The observational system is a feedback system for naturalistically observing events, discovering the problem and measuring the outcome of an intervention. Assessments of these changes are established through direct observation, self-monitoring or self-reporting (De Vos, 2005c:400-401).

In chapter 2 needs were identified within the parent child relationship.

Using this information together with literature in chapter 3 as well as functional elements of existing parent child relationships and family programmes or models in chapter 4, the researcher has designed four observational sheets (see Table 5.1-5.4) together with an evaluation form (see Worksheet 5.1).

For the purpose of this research study the outcomes of the intervention will be done by means of direct observation, self-monitoring and self-recording where mine

worker fathers are able to use the observational sheets and the evaluation form as tools in combination with the established guidelines to enhance the dialogical relationship between them and their children in middle childhood.

As this is a research study of limited scope the researcher only included the mine worker fathers' experiences in the observational sheets. If the research study continued to the last phase of the intervention process the researcher would have included a column in the observational sheets where the children's personal experiences were included as dialogue is reciprocal.

### **5.2.1 Observational sheets and evaluation form: Addressing targeted needs**

The purpose of these observational sheets (see Table 5.1-5.4) and the evaluation form (see Worksheet 5.1) is for mine worker fathers to self-record what is presently happening in the dialogical relationship between them and their children in middle childhood and self-monitor if the dialogical encounter is being enhanced through the aid of the guidelines.

Mine worker fathers need to do a self-assessment with each observational sheet, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation. The observational sheets will allow mine worker fathers to self-record their view point on their children's experiences and self-monitor their own personal experience of the dialogical encounter, whilst considering new developments required for enhancing the dialogical relationship.

The researcher further expects mine worker fathers to complete an evaluation form (see Worksheet 5.1) to assess their awareness of the different responsibilities they have as fathers (parents). In order to create a further awareness of responsibility as a parent, mine worker fathers will self-record their general responsibilities on Worksheet 5.1 to create an awareness of what responsibilities are being fulfilled at home. Mine worker fathers can self-monitor their relationship on a quarterly basis and self-record their observations to distinguish if the dialogue between them and their children is being enhanced.

**Table 5.1: Observational sheet No. 1: Commitment to dialogue**

<b>Functional elements enhancing commitment to dialogue</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Fathers' viewpoint on children's experience</b>	<b>Fathers' personal experience</b>
<b>Communication –Verbal</b>	(e.g.) Conversations, phone calls, 'sms'	(e.g.) Child shares more about self, child keeps in contact, child likes talking to father, child lies to father, child hides homework from father	(e.g.) Enjoys listening to child, avoids the child, difficult to talk to child, difficult to share more about self and initiate conversations
<b>Communication – Nonverbal</b>	(e.g.) Drawing, eating, humming, pulling faces, playing games, kicking the soccer ball.	(e.g.) Child keeps eye contact, child is open and generally happy, child's body language is constrictive, child avoids eye contact and shows signs of irritation	(e.g.) Easy to sit in silence with the child, can pick up on a child's body cues, finds difficulty in understanding meaning behind what child is presenting
<b>Self-regulations in the parent child relationship</b>	(e.g.) Practicing silence, recollecting thoughts, talking, labelling and expressing feelings	(e.g.) Child pauses and thinks, can recollect thoughts, child reacts impulsively, child is aggressive towards father, child does not listen and interrupts father	(e.g.) Decisions are made calmly, responds positively or negatively to child, impulsive when parenting, father and child are unable to express feelings

<b>Child-centred parenting</b>	(e.g.) Giving incentives and rewards; money, toys. Showing love; hugging, kissing, playing. Discussing decisions, disciplining; time out, confiscating cell phone, smacking	(e.g.) Child communicates openly, child respects father's decisions, child is involved in decision making, child insults or rejects father, child ignores father	(e.g.) Child is compliant, child reacts well to parenting techniques, difficult to be assertive, child complains a lot
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**Table 5.2: Observational sheet No. 2: Presence**

<b>Functional elements enhancing presence</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Fathers' viewpoint on children's experience</b>	<b>Fathers' personal experience</b>
<b>Spending time together</b>	(e.g.) Watching TV, playing soccer, washing the car, garden work, going to town	(e.g.) Child is eager, energetic, excited, tired, not willing, bored, sad, irritated or angry	(e.g.) Eager to spend time with child, excited, finds it difficult to make time, too exhausted to spend time with child
<b>Affective Involvement</b>	(e.g.) Participation in sports, cultural activities, project work, taking/fetching	(e.g.) Child enjoys being active, child enjoys father's involvement, child is excited, child feels forced, child	(e.g.) Very involved, struggles with time management, neglects important dates, being involved

	from play dates, attending the PTA – Parent Teacher Association	does not want to be around father	is not a priority, expects child to manage or cope on own
<b>Listening with full attention</b>	(e.g.) Telling stories, open conversations, practising orals for school, ‘show and tell’, role play	(e.g.) Child enjoys father’s attention, child is interested in father’s conversation, child talks a lot, child avoids father, child is irritated, weary or switched off	(e.g.) Enjoys conversing with child, gives child full attention, builds trust, avoids child, difficult to not get distracted by phone or other commitments
<b>Emotional awareness of the self and the child</b>	(e.g.) Bath time, eating breakfast, dressing for school, homework, studying, eating supper, bedtime	(e.g.) Child carries on happily on their own, child is dependent on father to complete tasks, child gets frustrated quickly, child complains	(e.g.) Concerned for child’s wellbeing, allows child to struggle on their own, is often absent, helps child too often and too quickly
<b>Relationships</b>	(e.g.) Plays games outside or on computer, reading, climbing trees, playing shop-shop, playing with toys, listening to music	(e.g.) Child enjoys socialising, child is easy going, child is authoritative, child avoids contact, child is submissive	(e.g.) Encourages spending time together and making contact, is interested in child’s activities, wants to be a good role model, ignores games

**Table 5.3: Observational sheet No. 3: Inclusion**

<b>Functional elements enhancing inclusion</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Fathers' view point on children's experience</b>	<b>Fathers' personal experience</b>
<b>'Life space'</b>	(e.g.) Expressive through singing, going to church, involved in cultural activities, plays with toys erratically	(e.g.) Child enjoys cultural activities, child enjoys routine activities, child rather enjoys quiet play, child enjoys helping around the house, child is lazy and lethargic	(e.g.) Enjoys teaching child cultural and spiritual customs, gets irritated by child and explodes quickly, child is too hyperactive, child is quiet and withdrawn
<b>Teaching responsibility at home</b>	(e.g.) Dishes, washing school clothes or bath, raking garden, sweeping	(e.g.) Child is assertive, child enjoys cleaning, child does not need to be asked to do chores, child is lazy, child won't clean up by him/herself	(e.g.) Enjoys finding the time to teach children chores, has time to teach children tasks, too tired at the end of the day, expects the older children to teach the younger children
<b>Teaching responsibility at school</b>	(e.g.) Homework, planning, studying for exams, packing school lunch, taking part in	(e.g.) Child is assertive, child enjoys learning, child enjoys tasks, child is active, child helps younger siblings	(e.g.) Helps child with school activities, enjoys teaching child responsibility, neglects child's school work,

	sports, choir	with homework, child avoids school activities, child gets in trouble for not doing homework	expects child to cope on his own
<b>Compassion for the self and child</b>	(e.g.) Involvement in school activities and school work, life skills like cooking and mending things around the house, discipline techniques	(e.g.) Child enjoys the extra effort and attention, makes more contact with father when father is more empathetic, child tries to be in control	(e.g.) Empathetic concern for child, addresses child's needs; talks to a child when he/she is sad, teaches child life skills, supportive, authoritarian discipline techniques
<b>Acts of service</b>	(e.g.) Role play, chores, acts of compassion; helping siblings at home or at school	(e.g.) Child enjoys being role model and having responsibilities, child encourages younger siblings, child is influential, child is not interested	(e.g.) Child is main priority, child is taught developmental skills, father is accountable, father is nonexistent, expects teachers to teach child

**Table 5.4: Observational sheet No. 4: Confirmation**

Functional elements enhancing confirmation	Activities	Fathers' viewpoint on children's experience	Fathers' personal experience
Culture	(e.g.)	(e.g.)	(e.g.)

	Cultural customs, teaching values and morals, telling traditional story	Child enjoys participating, child avoids father, child is knowledgeable, child has the wrong impressions, child is embarrassed about their own culture	Strict, good role model, important to carry over tradition, enjoys spending time teaching customs and values to child, culture is nonexistent at home
<b>Physical touch</b>	(e.g.) Hug, high five, pat on the back, holding child while reading, kisses	(e.g.) Child enjoys affection, child is expressive, child avoids contact, child is inhibited,	(e.g.) Touches child, shows affection, seldom touches child, avoids contact, reserved and distant
<b>Praise</b>	(e.g.) Incentives for school work, rewards for school or sport, merit chart	(e.g.) Child works hard to get praised, child discloses to father, child is ashamed of lack of progress, child has low self-worth and does not believe in him-/herself	(e.g.) Acknowledges child, rewards, often gives child positive reinforcement, discourages child from achieving, belittles child, gives child negative comments
<b>Belongingness</b>	(e.g.) Supportive gestures; encouraging words, taking part in activities together, writing letters to each	(e.g.) Child enjoys being included in family activities, child can easily express feelings to father, child fears father, child feels	(e.g.) Makes child feel safe and included, dependable, compassionate towards the child, negligent, absent

	other, 'smsing'	misunderstood	
<b>Words of affirmation</b>	(e.g.) Praising, encouraging, guiding	(e.g.) Positive words make the child smile, child expresses love through words, child excels better when encouraged, negative words hurt a child easily	(e.g.) Open and loving towards the child, boosts the child's morale, scolds the child often, emotionally abuses the child, swears at the child

#### Worksheet 5.1: Evaluation form

<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>If achieved: Indicate (Y) Yes  If not achieved: Indicate (N) No</b>	<b>If <u>NO</u>, name one example of what can be done to improve on this responsibility</b>
<b>Child receives three meals a day</b>		
<b>Child has clothes</b>		
<b>Child has a bed to sleep in, with a pillow and blankets</b>		
<b>Child has food for break time at school</b>		
<b>Child has stationary to write with</b>		
<b>Child has place where they can do homework, or learn when they are studying for tests or</b>		

<b>exams</b>		
<b>Child has the correct school clothes that is neat and in the correct size</b>		
<b>Father attends school meetings</b>		
<b>Father signs homework book(s) regularly</b>		
<b>Father attends sport events of the child</b>		
<b>Child has clothes for sports such as P.E., swimming and sneakers (takkies)</b>		
<b>Child baths daily</b>		
<b>Child is clean; has soap, spray, brush, toothbrush</b>		
<b>Child has toys</b>		
<b>Child has a garden to play in</b>		
<b>Child can do basic skills such as making his/her own breakfast (the older child in middle childhood), dressing, household chores</b>		
<b>Child goes on outings together</b>		

<b>with father</b>		
<b>Child gets praised through words, incentives and rewards</b>		
<b>Child is informed about traditional values, morals and customs</b>		
<b>Father spends time with the child playing, reading, talking</b> <b>*At least 20 minutes every day</b>		
<b>Child is shown love through hugs, kisses and words</b>		
<b>Child gets taken to doctor when ill</b>		
<b>Child has positive contact with the mother</b>		
<b>Child is emotionally and physically safe.</b> <b>E.g. child is not being harmed or in danger of an adult</b>		

### **5.3 PROCEDURAL ELEMENTS OF THE INTERVENTION**

The procedural elements of the intervention are in preparation for the final product of the research and often become part of the practice model. The purpose of the procedural elements is to provide details about how the intervention should be used by trained change agents (De Vos, 2005c:401). The researcher has developed Gestalt guidelines (refer to 5.4) specifically for the use of mine worker fathers in order to enhance the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. The researcher suggests that the Gestalt guidelines be presented to mine worker fathers by a professional facilitator in a group session and that it would be followed up by a self monitoring process. In order to implement the developed guidelines, important aspects of the procedural elements would apply. Firstly, the facilitator giving the presentation should posses the following qualities:

- The facilitator should have a sound knowledge of the Gestalt approach and have an understanding of the four pillars of dialogue in Gestalt.
- The facilitator should have an understanding of the specific Gestalt concepts used in the study, namely; contact, here and now, relational field, awareness, phenomenology, responsibility, organism/environmental field and the paradoxical theory of change.
- The facilitator should have a clear understanding of the specific culture group to which the guidelines will be presented, the role culture plays within this group and for individuals in general.
- The facilitator should have a sound knowledge of the developmental stage of middle childhood.
- The facilitator needs to have a good overview about mine worker fathers and their children living in Oranjemund.
- The facilitator should be experienced in facilitating group sessions.
- The facilitator must have the ability to work with males and present the guidelines in a manner where information is explained on a level where mine worker fathers will be able to understand and self-monitor.

Secondly, it is suggested that the facilitator should oversee the group sessions and teach the mine worker fathers how to apply the above mentioned observational sheets. The following suggestions can be useful for the group sessions:

- The amount of group sessions should be left to the discretion of the facilitator presenting the sessions.
- Group facilitation needs to take place on a quarterly basis during the school year.
- The group facilitator should allow fathers the time to fill in the evaluation form (refer to Worksheet 5.1) to observe the fathers' awareness towards their responsibilities as a parent.
- The facilitator should teach fathers how to apply the guidelines at home through practical demonstrations such as role play, video recordings, reading material and group discussions.
- The facilitator should create opportunities for the fathers to interact with each other and share ideas and experiences on the topics of culture and middle childhood.
- The facilitator should furthermore present the guidelines in such a way that the fathers can discuss and assess the effectiveness of the guidelines.
- Fathers should get homework after the quarterly sessions to self-monitor the father child relationship by using the observational sheets (refer to Table 5.1-5.4) presented in the research study, where fathers can fill in and self-record changes in the parent child relationship.

#### **5.4 GESTALT GUIDELINES TO ASSIST FATHERS IN ENHANCING THE DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD**

A diverse amount of information for parental guidelines was obtained from participants, literature and functional elements from existing models or programmes. The following Gestalt guidelines, which were developed from all these information, might be useful to mine worker fathers in enhancing the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

### **5.4.1 Commitment to dialogue**

According to Yontef (2005:83) commitment to dialogue aids in a significant increase of awareness where involved individuals are changed by each other through the contact they make. Mine worker fathers need to learn how to make fuller contact with their children as dialogue occurs in the contact. As was discussed in 3.4.1 contact takes place verbally or nonverbally. The following guidelines with the focus on contact and here and now, have been developed with regard to commitment to dialogue and will subsequently be discussed.

#### *5.4.1.1 Contact*

Contact takes place when a person interacts with another person or the environment (see 3.4.1.1). It is important for mine worker fathers to make contact with their children in order to establish a secure relationship and so that they may become aware of interruptions in their children's process where needs are not met. Children participants (see 2.3.2.1) admitted that the time their fathers spent with them was inconsistent and that they wanted their fathers to be more available to them. The following guidelines have been developed and can be used by mine worker fathers to enhance contact:

- Mine worker fathers need to become aware of any interruptions in contact happening at the boundary between the environment and their children (see to 3.4.1.1). If fathers for instance notice that their children are using negative attention to fulfil a need then it might indicate an interruption of contact at the boundary between their child and the environment. It is then suggested that fathers support their children in fulfilling the need, by teaching their children to fulfil the need in alternative ways such as openly discussing a problem, asking for support or learning from responsible adults how to behave in certain situations.
- Fathers can enhance their children's contact making skills by teaching them how to use their sense, namely; smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch. Fathers can stimulate senses by playing games to enhance movement, cooking to enhance smell, gardening, sand and planting flora to enhance touch. These

stimulating activities enhance the senses that strengthen the ability to recognise interruption in their process more readily and validate emotions (see 2.3.4.2).

- Mine worker fathers need to extend the support available to their children by taking time out in their day for conversations (see 4.4.2.2). If fathers show more support through affectionate words, praise, encouragement or discussing daily incidents, children will be able to make better sense of their experiences. With the help of their father's guidance children cope better in situations that allow them to contact their environment correctly for support.
- Mine worker fathers should serve as models for communication by having open conversations with their children. Fathers should learn to share their feelings with their children as they expect their children to share their feelings with them. Disclosing information helps a great deal in gaining trust in a relationship. Fathers can share experiences such as talking about moral values, culture, church and their mother on a regular basis (see 4.4.2.3).
- Mine worker fathers should be encouraged to recognise signs of nonverbal communication in their children. Nonverbal communication is seen as a more accurate form of understanding children's true emotions (see 2.3.4.2). It is however important for fathers to understand that they should not interpret their children's nonverbal communication, but when they become aware of it to make their children aware of their nonverbal communication. If children are then prepared to talk about it, the father can pursue the conversation. By allowing children to discuss issues when they are ready to do so, shows respect for the child's process (see 3.4.2.1) and this act in itself might also enhance the parent child relationship. When children behave in certain ways it is important that their fathers understand why they are reacting the way they are and fathers can discuss issues like these amongst each other in the group discussions.
- Mine worker fathers need to make use of child-centred parenting (see 4.5.1.1) in order to learn how to make fuller contact with their children. Child-centred parenting is a way of parenting that involves encouraging fathers to use more interacting skills where the focus in the relationship is specifically on the

children. Interacting skills can involve promoting talking, physical contact, praising and teaching children traditional customs.

#### *5.4.1.2 Here and now*

According to Yontef and Jacobs (2005:317) the here and the now is the direct experience of present awareness. Mine worker fathers and their children need to be continuously aware of incidents that cause a break in contact so that they may address them correctly. The following guidelines have been developed and will be discussed:

- Mine worker fathers need to acknowledge how their past parent child relationship might have had an influence on how their children are presently making contact with them. Children may be breaking contact in areas where fathers have not been consistent in the relationship (see 2.3.2.1). Rebuilding interruptions in contact is important and will take time, so importantly fathers must have patience when building their relationship with their children.
- Father participants must be aware that their existing presence in the relationship will make it easier for their children to call on them (see 3.4.2.2). Fathers can show a greater presence by showing an interest in their children, by being more open and available for their needs at home and for school.
- Mine worker fathers can empower their children by helping them recognise unwanted feelings that are interrupting their self-process. In situations like these mine worker fathers can encourage their children to ask questions like, "Why am I feeling this way?" By doing this they can help their children to deal effectively with unwanted feelings (see 3.4.4.2).
- Mine worker fathers must not allow habitual modes of spending time with their children get in the way of their relationship (see 2.3.3.1). Habitual modes of behaviour have adverse affects on the relationship because fathers become negligent and fail to make time to teach children what is expected such as in their culture (see 2.3.4.1). Fathers can practice more spontaneous behaviour by surprising children and taking them for an outing, changing their daily routine or teaching them how to make a traditional meal.

- Mine worker fathers need to practice self regulation (see 4.2.1.3) by not reacting impulsively during parenting interactions. To exercise better self-regulation mine worker fathers need to pause and think what the current experience is making them feel and then apply the best parenting practice for the situation. Fathers can develop a chart for punishments or rewards according to severity. For example, punishments or rewards should be different for boys and girls as well as being age appropriate.

## **5.4.2 Presence**

Yontef (2002:24) is of the opinion that dialogue needs to encompass presences as it is presence that allows for meeting the person of the other. If mine worker fathers meet their children half way at the boundary of the other, they make contact and are more fully present to the relationship.

In order to attend to the concept of presence with regard to the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children, guidelines with the focus on the relational field and being present through awareness have been developed and will be discussed as follows:

### *5.4.2.1 Relational field*

According to Parlett (2005:45) when two people make contact a field full of interaction emerges. Mine worker fathers and their children should focus on being tuned in to their relationship and each other. In the empirical research (see 2.3.2.1) it was evident that this aspect was lacking between the fathers and their children due to not spending enough time with each other.

The following guidelines can be used to help mine worker fathers address this need:

- Mine worker fathers should know how to parent children in middle childhood as children in middle childhood have specific developmental needs to attend to. In this developmental phase children for instance spend a great deal of their days learning and practicing skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic

and sport skills (see 2.3.1.2). Fathers should encourage these skills by doing more creative activities with them, buying them board games that require them to use mathematical skills, encourage children to read as well as participate in a variety of sports to get the exposure.

- Mine worker fathers should form close bonds with their children as this allows for children to become more trusting and socially interactive with others (see 2.3.2.2). Showing empathic involvement through concern, talking, understanding and speaking to children about their feelings is very effective in teaching children how to interact and show concern for others in their relationships. Children who had a more secure relationship with their father had more friends as they were more trusting of others (see 2.3.2.2).
- Mine worker fathers must have an authentic attitude towards their children (see 3.4.2). Fathers have the most significance on their children's development when there is an open relationship present between father and child. Children are more trusting and open in sharing their needs when they experience their fathers being genuinely interested in their well being.
- Mine worker fathers should have open discussions about morals, values and spiritual issues with their children in middle childhood (see 4.4.2.3). This aspect is specifically important as children in middle childhood move on to the adolescent developmental phase, where they might be easily influenced by their peers. It will also only be possible to have such discussions if an open relationship exists between the fathers and their children in middle childhood.
- Mine worker fathers should have a balance between work and family time, in order for them to spend quality time with their children. Spending time with children can occur spontaneously in the form of rituals like having a 'braai', washing the car, reading stories and going shopping together (see 2.3.2.1). Later on these rituals might have particular meanings to the relationship and might also help to create an open relationship between the fathers and their children.
- Mine worker fathers must acknowledge desirable behaviours in their children by attending school activities such as award ceremonies and sport activities as this communicates to the children that their parents value their efforts (see 2.3.2.2 and 2.3.4.3).

- Mine worker fathers should take control of bad habits. Mine worker fathers who abuse alcohol are unavailable to take care of their children or spend time with their children and this has an adverse effect on the relationship (see 2.3.1.1).

#### *5.4.2.2 Being present through awareness*

Perls (in Blom, 2006:52) defines awareness as the ability to be in touch with one's own existence, to notice what is happening around and inside one, to connect with the environment, other people and oneself. Fathers that are aware of what is happening in their relationship are connected to their environment (children) creating a stronger sense of being present to their children.

The following guidelines might help create awareness within mine worker fathers in order for them to be more present in their relationship with their children:

- Mine worker fathers should develop internal representation of their children's perspectives (see 4.2.1.1). Mine worker fathers that interact more with their children are more aware of their children's experiences that leads to fathers recognising children's needs, emotions, moods and body language quicker strengthening presence in the relationship.
- Mine worker fathers need to be responsive (see 4.2.1.2). Fathers should learn how to correctly identify positive or negative emotions in themselves and in their children that will allow them to make better conscious choices on how to respond to emotions. Fathers need to communicate clearly what they think, feel and what their decisions are with regard to certain aspects as well as teach their children to do the same. This awareness will strengthen mine worker fathers' alertness to the needs arising in the relationship.
- Mine worker fathers should listen with full attention (see 4.2.1.1). Fathers that truly listen are more aware of what is happening in the relationship creating effective communication that allows for a genuine presence to what is being said or not. Fathers should furthermore encourage their children to listen and speak to others (see 4.4.2.2). Listening, being sincere and showing compassion for friends strengthen presence in the relationship.

### **5.4.3 Inclusion**

Inclusion entails confirming the existence of the other by entering as fully as possible into their subjective world (Joyce & Sills, 2001:47; Yontef, 2005:95). It is very important for mine worker fathers to have their children feel included in the relationship they share as this allows for a trusting, supportive, fuller contact encounter.

The guidelines that were developed with regard to inclusion were done with the following concepts in mind namely phenomenology, practising inclusion through awareness and responsibility and will be discussed as follows:

#### *5.4.3.1 Phenomenology*

According to Yontef (1993a:59) phenomenology investigates the subjective meaning and experience of a person's own world. It is important that mine worker fathers respect their children's own worlds and interpret their children's experiences correctly as this allows for the children to feel understood and included in the relationship. The following guidelines can be used to help mine worker fathers to address this aspect:

- Mine worker fathers should understand their children's 'life spaces' (see 3.4.3.1). Every child is unique and reacts differently to specific situations. Mine worker fathers should know how their children respond to discipline or praise and react accordingly in their parenting practices.
- Mine worker fathers should become aware of the larger field of culture and its impact on their children's lives. Culture operates as a complex system of introjects frequently out of awareness (see 3.4.3.1). Culture can especially have an influence at school, where children may be misunderstood or punished for behaviour that is not acceptable. Children may also feel different to their peers if they come across unfamiliar cultural habits. Fathers can discuss these sensitive issues with their children as well as with the teachers in order to prevent possible misunderstandings.

- Mine worker fathers should show their children love according to children's love language (see 4.4.1). Some children enjoy showing love through physical touch, others enjoy hearing it through words and others enjoy praise or spending time with their fathers. Fathers need to acknowledge the ways their children enjoy receiving and giving affection.

#### *5.4.3.2 Practising inclusion through awareness*

Mine worker fathers need to be aware of their own process as well as their children's process in order to make fuller contact and strengthen the dialogue between them. Perls (in Blom, 2006:52-53) is of the opinion that having an awareness of different people's processes allows one to make fuller contact in the relational field. The following guidelines can be used to help mine worker fathers to practice inclusion through awareness:

- Mine worker fathers need to gain knowledge of their children's process (see 3.4.3.2). Parents who support their children's self-process help their children to express blocked emotions (Oaklander, 2006:50). Mine worker fathers can show their children how to recognise their own processes, for instance how to handle their anger. This awareness will help children develop new feelings of self-worth and self-support needed for growth. As children grow they learn that they can make their own choices, adjust their emotions and function healthier. Children that become more self-supportive make fuller contact in the dialogical encounter.
- Mine worker fathers should make their children feel like they belong. Emotions are part of the person's environmental transaction and children in middle childhood acquire affirmative experiences through this transaction to develop a more positive self-regard (see 2.3.3.2). If children's feelings of belongingness are met children will feel their existence matters in the relationship. Fathers should become aware of including their children through positive self-regard through acts of love such as hugs, laughing, kind words and disclosure.
- Mine worker fathers should show compassion for their children so that they may feel cared for. This involves positive affection, support and empathic

concern for one's children and for oneself as a parent (see 4.2.1.4). Through compassion mine worker fathers comfort distress in their children such as obstacles at school (learning difficulties, struggling to cope with the work load) because children feel that they have the needed support.

- Mine worker fathers should have more involved conversations with their children so that children may feel important and included in the relationship (see 2.3.4.1). Fathers can give children more decision making opportunities around the house such as the 'state' of their bedroom and bathroom, what food they would like to eat, what punishment children feel is fair. This strengthens the dialogue in the relationship as issues are fairly discussed.
- Fathers need to be role models through teaching their children age appropriate skills (see 4.4.2.4). By teaching children age appropriate skills fathers become involved in their children's development; personal achievements, emotional, social and educational development. Fathers can help in task areas where children cannot help themselves. Fathers may encourage their children to take on difficult chores around the house or organise their own homework in the afternoon. This allows fathers to practice inclusion which in the long run enhances the dialogical relationship.

#### *5.4.3.3 Responsibility*

As awareness grows so does realisation that even though people are not responsible for everything that happens to them, they are indeed responsible for how they feel about it, the meaning they assign to it and how they manage it (Joyce & Sills, 2001:37; Clarkson, 2004:15). Mine worker father's need to become aware of the responsibility they have towards their children as a parent as well as passing this sense of responsibility on to their children. Mine worker fathers need to teach their children that they are the only ones responsible for their actions and the choices they make as well as outcomes of these choices. The following guidelines can be used to help mine worker fathers to attend to this aspect:

- Mine worker fathers should be aware that they are the main care givers of their children as their wives do not live in Oranjemund (see 1.1). Fathers therefore need to take responsibility for all the duties that go together with

being a care giver for a child in middle childhood. These duties include aspects such as physically taking care of their children but also aspects pertaining to their children's developmental needs, which include their emotional, physical and cognitive needs.

- Mine worker fathers should teach their children to take responsibility for the choices they make. Children in middle childhood however also need to know that by being responsible for their own choices they also need to take responsibility for the outcomes of those choices (see 2.3.3.1). This involves choices not just with regard to doing household chores or their homework, but also with regard to the different relationships that they are involved in. By giving children a sense of responsibility will help build inner strengths as well as create a feeling of being included in the household.
- Mine worker fathers should praise their children through words as this gives children a sense of pride and motivates them in their attempts to be responsible (see 4.4.2.2).
- Mine worker fathers should communicate discipline with their children. It is important for parents to communicate the decisions they have made so that their children understand why they are being punished and what the consequences for the punishment are. Enforcing discipline helps children to adhere to their roles at home and to take accountability for these roles and the responsibility attached to the role (see 4.3.1.2).
- Mine worker fathers should apply child management skills (see 4.5.1.2). Fathers should focus on children's behaviour they find difficult to manage such as tantrums, or lying and have a discussion with their children on how they could manage the behaviour together. This allows fathers to include their children in taking responsibility for the consequences of bad behaviour.
- Mine worker fathers should be responsible and plan for the future (see 4.5.1.3). New tools received from the guidelines should continuously be in use. Fathers should further be consistent with the skills they have learnt in order to keep making better choices and fuller contact with their children. This will allow the relationship to be enhanced throughout their children's lives.
- Mine worker fathers should know that it is their responsibility to involve other individuals and systems that have an impact on their children's lives such as

the school, the teachers, peers and mentors in order to help strengthen their children's support systems and relationships (see 4.5.1.3).

#### **5.4.4 Confirmation**

According to Yontef (2002:24) confirmation is acknowledging the existence and potential of a person. Mine worker fathers must be able to confirm their children and their experiences so that they may learn to accept themselves (see 2.3.4). It is believed according to Duncan *et al.* (2009:261) that mindful parents who are positive, share (emotionally) and have a greater sense of trust with their children, support their children's healthy growth and receive them fully. The following guidelines with regard to confirmation have been developed; the organism and environmental field and paradoxical theory of change and these will subsequently be discussed:

##### *5.4.4.1 Organism and environmental field*

According to Blom (2006:19) there is interdependence between a person (organism) and his or her environmental field. In this research study the organism and environmental field is seen as interdependence between the mine worker father and his children. The relationship cannot function without the both of them. The mine worker father is the relational support (environment) that his children (organism) depend on to meet their needs (see 3.4.4.1). The following guidelines can be used to help mine worker father's address the importance of the interdependence between himself and his children in enhancing a dialogical relationship:

- Mine worker fathers should understand that a dialogical relationship cannot function or exist without the input of both the fathers and their children. This implies that the fathers and their children need to make themselves available to the relationship in order to confirm each other as human beings. It is only when both the fathers and their children commit themselves to do this, that the contact between them will be meaningful (see 3.4.4.1 and 4.3.1.1).
- Mine worker fathers should approach their relationship with their children in middle childhood holistically. Therefore any process, problem or creative adjustment should be seen as a function of the relationship between the

fathers; their children and the environment (see 3.4.4.1). By contacting their children in all parts of the environmental field will enhance fuller contact between the fathers and their children.

- Mine worker fathers should maintain, restore and transform positive self-experiences in the father and child relationship (see 3.4.4.1). Children need to experience positive expectations connected to their relationship such as their father surprising them with gestures, going to special events together or having a goal for the relationship with their fathers to strengthen security. These positive experiences children have strengthen trust in their fathers.
- Mine worker fathers should teach cultural customs to their children that are specific to the culture they are in. Oranjemund has a diversity of cultures and mine worker fathers should discuss different traditional aspects with their children to clear up confusion. In some cultures showing emotions is seen as a sign of weakness for males (see 2.3.3.1). Children may not understand why some friends receive physical affection from their parents. Mine worker fathers should explain to their children that love and affection can be shown in many different ways.
- Mine worker fathers should share traditional stories with their children (see 2.3.3.1). Traditional stories play an important part in teaching children problem solving techniques and life lessons. Cultural values that are shared with children through stories have an impact on their attitudes and motivation they apply in life and at school.
- Mine worker fathers need to have nurturing parenting skills (see Figure 4.1). Fathers can draw on parenting practices that have positive outcomes on the parent child relationship by discussing and sharing attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that support healthy parent child relationships such as teaching children to care for themselves, promoting physical and emotional safety, providing discipline and spending time with children.

#### *5.4.4.2 Paradoxical theory of change*

According to Yontef (2002:25) the paradoxical theory of change predicts that "... identification with one's actual state, experience and existence is ground that supports personal growth." In accordance with the research study, true growth takes

place through one's conscious awareness of what is occurring in one's current existence and how one is affected and affects others (see 3.4.4.2). Mine worker fathers should; firstly, make their children aware of how their current experiences are shaping their lives and secondly confirm their children so that they may be able to accept themselves. Children who are able to acknowledge their true self fulfil their personal needs better allowing for growth to take place. The following guidelines can be used to help mine worker fathers to guide their children towards personal growth:

- Mine worker fathers should teach their children the importance of touch (see 4.4.2.1). Mine worker fathers can hold their younger children when reading stories and give pats on the back or 'high fives' to older children with encouraging words that stimulate contact through touch.
- Mine worker fathers should teach children to be affectionate. Mine worker fathers should guide their children through positive loving responses how to react to others. Instead of shouting, kind words make children feel more secure and safe. This creates strong bonds and makes children feel closer to their fathers. Fathers can teach their children to use encouraging words in their relationship with others (see 4.4.2.2). Encouraging words guide children towards ethical development and towards more meaningful, honest relationships.
- Mine worker fathers should praise their children (see 2.3.3.3). Praising children through using incentives works well for children in middle childhood. Mine worker fathers should confirm their children through special enrichment activities such as computer time, extended sport time and television/movie watching for positive reaffirmation where children can be allowed to relax and be themselves. Giving incentives through praising children leads to the empowerment and a greater sense of self.
- Mine worker fathers should talk regularly with their children and motivate them to do better at school. Encouraging children to talk about their experiences allows for open conversation where problems can be spoken about. In addition, if fathers believe their children are good pupils and their children define themselves as good learners as well; this will motivate children to work harder at school (see 2.3.4.3).

## **5.5 CONCLUSION**

In chapter 5 the researcher discussed the development of observational systems to be used by mine worker fathers to observe, self-monitor and self-record their parent child relationship. The procedural elements of the intervention were discussed for the use of trained change agents. Finally, the researcher developed Gestalt guidelines for mine worker fathers to apply to the parent child relationship for the enhancement of dialogue with their children in middle childhood.

In the final chapter of this research study conclusions will be drawn and recommendations made for further research.

## **CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The last two phases of the D&D model of intervention research were carried out in the previous chapter, namely; the design phase and preliminary development of Gestalt guidelines for mine worker fathers to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

In this chapter, the researcher will evaluate the extent to which the goal and objectives of this research study have been achieved. Recommendations will be made for further study and final conclusions drawn and discussed.

### **6.2 RESEARCH QUESTION**

The research question emanating from the problem statement is:

**How can Gestalt dialogue be utilised in guidelines in order to assist mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood?**

The research process is aimed at answering the research question and in order to answer the research question the following steps of the intervention research were followed.

### **6.3 THE INTERVENTION RESEARCH PROCESS**

This research study made use of the D&D model. As this is a dissertation of limited scope, the research was only concluded up to the first step of the early development and pilot testing phase, namely developing a prototype or preliminary intervention. To assess whether the goal and objectives of this research study have been achieved, it is necessary to re-evaluate the intervention process that was followed. This will be discussed in the following section.

### **6.3.1 Problem analysis and project planning phase**

#### *6.3.1.1 Identifying and involving clients and gaining entry*

The researcher identified and involved the participants for this research study by selecting a sample of a) 12 mine worker fathers with b) 18 of their children in middle childhood (8-12 years) living in Oranjemund through voluntary permission. The fathers live together with their children away from the mothers that reside at the home of origin. In order to conduct the empirical study the researcher first obtained permission from the principal (see Appendix F) and then gained written consent from the father participants (see Appendix A) to conduct the study with father's and their children and verbal consent from the children participants. In addition the researcher received permission from the general manager of Namdeb to undertake this study with Namdeb employees (see Appendix G). The researcher completed the first phase successfully by identifying and involving clients and gaining entry to the community. This procedure is discussed under 1.6.1.1 and 1.6.1.2 in chapter one.

#### *6.3.1.2 Identifying concerns and analysing identified problems*

The researcher undertook a qualitative research approach for this research study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with children participants and focus groups were conducted with father participants at the school. The researcher made use of a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix D) whilst conducting the interviews with the children and an unstructured focus group guide (see Appendix E) when facilitating the focus groups with the fathers. By using focus groups, the researcher was able to gain knowledge and understanding of how fathers think and feel about their dialogical relationship between their children and themselves. Fathers and children both received the opportunity to discuss their relationship and their needs based on the principles of dialogue, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation.

Whilst conducting the focus groups with the father participants and the semi-structured interviews with the children participants, the research made use of field notes, observation and a translator to identify the needs with regard to the father child dialogical relationship. The collected data was analysed by means of Creswell's spiral of data analysis (see 1.6.1.4) by dividing the information received from the

father participants and the children participants into four main themes, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation. This step of the first phase of the D&D model was successfully completed with data collected being verified with relevant literature (see chapter 2).

#### *6.3.1.3 Setting the goal and objectives*

The primary goal of this research study was to develop Gestalt guidelines for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. In order to achieve this goal the researcher conducted intervention research and used the D&D model within the framework of applied research.

The following objectives were identified in order to achieve the above-mentioned goal:

- To gather and synthesise information by using existing sources of information (see 1.6.2.1), studying existing examples (see 1.6.2.2), and by identifying functional elements of natural examples (see 1.6.2.3).
- To design an observational system (see 1.6.3.1) and to specify procedural elements of the intervention (see 1.6.3.2).
- To develop a prototype of the guidelines (see 1.6.4.1) for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund assisting them to enhance a dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations to parents and to professionals working with families in similar settings.

#### **6.3.2 Information gathering and synthesis**

##### *6.3.2.1 Using existing sources of information*

The researcher conducted a literature study by gathering information from existing literature sources which was discussed in chapter 3. The literature study conducted was based on existing literature sources from the Gestalt approach. The researcher focused on defining Gestalt, Gestalt philosophy and Gestalt concepts. The Gestalt concepts that were identified and discussed for the purpose of this research study, included contact, here and now, awareness, relational field, phenomenology, responsibility, organism and environmental field and the paradoxical theory of

change are also discussed. The discussion of these Gestalt concepts was based on an integrated discussion within the Gestalt theory that specifically relates to existential dialogue and with the focus on the four main themes that were identified and discussed in chapter 2, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation. These Gestalt concepts were incorporated in the guidelines for mine worker fathers to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood which was discussed in chapter 5.

#### *6.3.2.2 Studying natural examples*

The researcher consulted various literature sources on the Gestalt approach as well as experts and community members in the fields of developmental theories with knowledge of children in middle childhood, education and mine workers in Oranjemund. The researcher consulted a school counsellor and the head of the remedial department at the school in Oranjemund that work with these children on a daily basis. An educational psychologist was also consulted that visits the school on a quarterly basis. In addition, a play therapist at Huguenot College helped in defining certain Gestalt concepts. This procedure is discussed under 1.6.2.2 in chapter 1.

#### *6.3.2.3 Identifying functional elements of successful models*

In this phase of the D&D model, the researcher studied successful models and programmes that contributed to developing parental guidelines for mine worker fathers in order to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

The functional elements of the following relevant models and programmes include:

- The Model of Mindful Parenting contributes to a positive parent child relationship with greater flexibility, responsiveness and wellbeing of children (see 4.2).
- The McMaster Model provides a discussion towards healthy family functioning by which different guidelines can be considered for healthy family processes (see 4.3).
- The Five Love Languages of Children focuses on how parents are able to provide love emotionally to their children (see 4.4).

- The Caring Dads program helps improve interacting skills between fathers and their children (see 4.5).

The researcher was able to incorporate functional elements of these models and programmes into the Gestalt guidelines that were developed. These models and programmes were discussed in chapter 4.

### **6.3.3 Design**

#### *6.3.3.1 Designing an observational system*

The first step of the third phase of the D&D model was to design an observational system whereby the preliminary guidelines can be assessed by fathers through the means of direct observation, self-monitoring and self-recording. Fathers are able to use the observational sheets as tools to enhance dialogue in their relationship with their children in middle childhood (see 5.2). The observational system consisted of four observation sheets (see Table 5.1-5.4) that highlight the four main themes of this research study, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation. In addition an evaluation form was developed to heighten awareness among mine worker fathers with regard to their responsibilities as parents of their children. This information is discussed under section 5.2 and 5.2.1 in chapter 5.

#### *6.3.3.2 Specifying procedural elements of the intervention*

The second step of the third phase of the D&D model of intervention research was to specify procedural elements for the intervention. The procedural elements that were developed are important to keep in mind when implementing the developed guidelines for mine worker fathers. It is therefore suggested that facilitators of the guidelines should familiarise themselves with these procedural elements. This information is discussed under section 5.3 in chapter 5.

### **6.3.4 Early development and pilot testing**

#### *6.3.4.1 Developing a preliminary or prototype intervention*

This was the final phase of the D&D model of intervention research and included designing preliminary Gestalt guidelines useful for mine worker fathers in order to

enhance the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood. The focus was given to the four main themes that were identified in this research study, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation. Within these four main themes other Gestalt concepts namely contact, here and now, awareness, relational field, phenomenology, responsibility, organism and environmental field and the paradoxical theory of change are also used. This was discussed under section 5.4 in chapter 5.

#### **6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The researcher recommends that mine worker fathers incorporate the proposed guidelines into their daily routine with their children. The researcher finds it important to stress the fact that the proposed guidelines are not a set of rigid rules that fathers should abide to. Rather the proposed guidelines should be seen as a basket of tools that are available for fathers to aid them in strengthening the dialogical relationship with their children.

Before the guidelines can be implemented, fathers need to accept the responsibility of parenting and take on the role of the main caregiver in their children's lives (refer to Worksheet 5.1). Fathers should commit themselves daily to their children through listening with full attention and conveying an interest in their children's experiences so that children may feel understood. Fathers can broaden their understanding about middle childhood and children's developmental needs by talking to teachers, other parents and social support systems such as the social worker in town. Having a support system with other mine worker fathers in the same circumstances can also be beneficial for fathers.

Fathers need to use child centred parenting practices with their children. Fathers need to show their children affection on a daily basis through touch, encouraging words, praise and by spending time with their children. It is very important for fathers to make contact with their children in an empathetic and truthful manner. Fathers need to be aware of children's daily experiences and the affect their experiences have on their children's mood, by picking up on body language. Fathers need to spend more time with their children and teach their children about their culture

through traditional story telling. The researcher is of the opinion that the Gestalt guidelines can successfully be used by mine worker fathers in order to enhance their dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

## **6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

The number of father participants that took part for the purpose of this research study was limited, thus the findings of the study may be limited. The researcher would have liked to have a larger number of mine worker fathers included in the research study as the researcher felt that the fathers that participated were the more involved fathers. In order to benefit the research study the researcher would have liked to obtain information from all the mine worker fathers that have children at the school, however due to the limited scope of this study it was not possible. This issue could propose for further research.

Although the researcher found extensive information and other research studies on the parent child relationship, the researcher found it difficult to find information specifically on the father child relationship. Studies on father parenting programmes are relatively new and information conducted on the father as the main caregiver is scarce.

Furthermore, the researcher was unable to find any previous studies that had children living with their fathers, away from their mothers, where the parents are still married. The researcher is of the opinion that this makes Oranjemund a very unique community. In addition, it was also difficult to find any literature from a Gestalt point of view where children lived with their fathers which may have given the research study important insights surrounding the father child relationship.

Finally, the emphasis of the research study was placed only on the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children in middle childhood. However, when developing guidelines it needs to be taken into account that a variety of other dynamics such as the different age groups in middle childhood, birth order, family dynamics and socioeconomic status may also have an influence on the relationship.

## **6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In this research study the researcher only focused on certain aspects regarding existential dialogue, namely; commitment to dialogue, presence, inclusion and confirmation within the parent child relationship in order to develop the guidelines. However it is recommended that a more extensive Gestalt research study could be done on the dialogical relationship between mine worker fathers and their children as other dynamics such as culture and family dynamics play a role as well. Further, this research study's focus was only on parental guidelines and could be extended in the future to include guidelines for the children to promote their own self-support. This might greatly benefit children living in Oranjemund.

The researcher felt that mine worker fathers have a great need for support with their children. It is recommended that research be done to develop a sustainable support system for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund and simultaneously gain Namdeb's involvement in this endeavour. The researcher also found that alcohol had a severe effect on the relationship between mine worker fathers and their children. The father participants that attended the group discussions explained how many other mine worker fathers in the same situation misused alcohol that affected their parenting practices. Further research should be done on how to get fathers to practice "involved fathering" through the development of social programmes, workshops or focus groups that could be run through Oranjemund Health and Education Project (OHEP) in the Oranjemund community. Furthermore, awareness should be created by Namdeb as part of their social responsibility towards employees regarding the benefits of a healthier parent child relationship. Through creating awareness, mine worker fathers learn to use their environment to make fuller contact with their children and become more responsible.

## **6.7 CONCLUSION**

The researcher concluded that a dialogical attitude in mine worker fathers heightens a sense of awareness and the ability to make fuller contact with their children. Together with developed Gestalt guidelines as relationship tools, mine worker fathers will be able to maintain an enhanced dialogical relationship that provides

continuous environmental support for their children. This will be a healthy relationship that stimulates growth where all members are making fuller contact with each other, learning to be responsible for the outcomes of the relationship and where children mature to become more self-supportive at home and at school.

In conclusion and in accordance to Joyce and Sills (cf. 2001:45) children who receive this opportunity to experience a true loving relationship with their father will contain the foundations for a secure resilient sense of self.

The following quote from Vogt and Sirridge (in Fine and Lee 2001:196-197) concludes this research study:

The role of the father is clear ... he must arm his children with the ability to take care of themselves ... And while his children are under that protection, they will need to grow in their own strength and develop their own capabilities to discern what is right. A father who makes a commitment to guide his children into the world gives his children an invaluable gift of potency, and in the process, takes his place with all the fathers from current and previous lifetimes who have done their duty.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A: Consent form for participants**

#### **CONSENT FORM**

I \_\_\_\_\_ am aware that Simone Binneman is doing research for the University of South Africa. The purpose of the research is to establish parental guidelines for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund in order to enhance the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

I am aware: (that)

All information during this research study will be kept confidential, and that I will remain anonymous.

The research undertaken is not done by Simone Binneman as part of her work at Oranjemund Private School; however the research study will benefit the school and parents.

All personal information will be handled in an ethical and professional manner.

A translator will be present at the focus group and has signed a confidentiality form.

Information will be used to draw up a parenting programme or guidelines.

I am part of this study out of free will and that I can withdraw at any time.

---

Signed

---

Date

## **APPENDIX B: Confidentiality agreement for participants**

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ am aware that Simone Binneman is doing research for the University of South Africa. The purpose of the research is to establish parental guidelines for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund in order to enhance the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

I undertake that I will treat any confidential information disclosed by whatever means within the focus groups as being strictly confidential.

I will take all reasonable measures to maintain its status as such.

---

Signed

---

Date

## APPENDIX C: Confidentiality agreement of translator

### CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FOR TRANSLATOR

I the translator, C.Thomas am aware that Simone Binneman is doing research for the University of South Africa. The purpose of the research is to establish parental guidelines for mine worker fathers living in Oranjemund in order to enhance the dialogical relationship with their children in middle childhood.

I undertake that I will treat any confidential information disclosed by whatever means within the focus groups as being strictly confidential.

I will take all reasonable measures to maintain its status as such.

C.Thomas

Signed

31/05/2010

Date

## **APPENDIX D: Semi-structured interview schedule with children**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH THE CHILDREN**

(Certain aspects will be covered underneath each question)

#### **Question 1: Presence**

- a) How do you and your dad show each other you care for each other?
- b) In what other way would you also like your dad to care for you?

#### **Question 2: Inclusion**

- a) What does your dad do to show you that he understands how you feel?
- b) In what other way would you also like your dad to show you that he understands your feelings?

#### **Question 3: Confirmation**

- a) How do you experience your dad's love/praise for you?
- b) How does he show it to you?
- c) In what other way would you like him to show you love/praise?

#### **Question 4: Commitment to dialogue**

- a) How does your dad listen to you, when you have something good to tell him?
- b) How does your dad listen to you, when you have a problem?
- c) In what other way(s) would you like him to react?

## **APPENDIX E: Unstructured focus group guide with fathers**

### **UNSTRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP GUIDE WITH THE FATHERS**

Opening question:

How do you experience your relationship with your child?

Possible probing questions within the focus groups:

a) How are you present to your children?

How would you like to show your presences?

b) How do you spend time with your child?

How would you like to spend time with your child?

c) How do you include your children in your daily events?

How would you like to include your children in daily events?

d) What responsibilities do you give your child at home to include them in the household?

What responsibilities would you like to give your child to include them in the household?

e) How do you show your children love/praise?

How would you like to show your children love/praise?

f) How do you listen/react to your children's needs?

How would you like to react to your children's needs?

g) What are your 1) best qualities and 2) concerns in your relationship with your children?

f) If you could develop parental guidelines, what would you like to see in it?

Is there a need for guidelines?

Parental workshops?

## APPENDIX F: Letter of permission from the principal



ORANJEMUND PRIVATE SCHOOL  
PRIVAAATSKOOL ORANJEMUND  
OSKOOLA YUUMWENE ORANJEMUND  
PO BOX 11  
ORANJEMUND  
NAMIBIA  
TEL No: 00264 63 238180  
FAX No: 00264 63 238188  
email: [dieter.meyer@namdeb.com](mailto:dieter.meyer@namdeb.com)

29 March 2010

Ms. Simone Binneman  
PO Box 11  
Oranjemund Private School  
ORANJEMUND  
NAMIBIA

Dear Ms. Binneman

### MASTER's DEGREE RESEARCH PROJECT.

I refer to our discussions on Friday, 26 March 2010 and the documentation presented to me regarding your Master's Degree in Play Therapy at Hugenote College in Wellington, South Africa.

You herewith have my permission to engage with school parents regarding the above research project. Please note that participation from parents must always be voluntary and confidential information from and about individuals must be respected at all times.

The School Management Team would like to wish you all best with your specific project and your Masters studies in general. We are proud of you and confident that the outcome of your studies will be excellent.

With best wishes

D Meyer  
PRINC/PAL

## APPENDIX G: E-mail of permission from the General Manager of Namdeb

**Empirical research conduction for Thesis** [Inbox](#) | X

☆ 25 Mar 2010 Name: Ms Simone Binneman Professional Status: Masters in ... Mar 25

from **Mundell, Mitford (Namdeb)** <Mitford.Mundell@namdeb.com>

to **Simone Binneman** <simone.binneman@gmail.com>

cc "Meyer, Dieter" <dieter.meyer@namdeb.com>

date Fri, Mar 26, 2010 at 11:02 AM

subject RE: Empirical research conduction for Thesis

hide details Mar 26 [Reply](#) ▾

Hi Simone

You have my full support. I wish you everything of the best with such a worthy study topic. Perhaps it can become something we can drive from Namdeb management side in future?

Regards

Mitford