

The PERMA model, wellbeing, and *Whoop-Up*:

A musical variety show for adult members of a school community

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Abstract

The positive impact of group music-making on subjective well-being has been shown in various contexts, yet very few studies have focused on community musicals. The purpose of this intrinsic case study was to explore well-being of adults who participated in *Whoop-Up*, a musical variety show consisting of singing, dancing and acting, for parents, staff members, alums, alums' parents, and friends of a primary school. Data were explored through the lens of the PERMA framework. Twenty-one adults aged between 21-75 involved in *Whoop-Up* in 2018 volunteered to participate in the study. The findings indicate that participants experienced positive benefits in all the sub-domains of subjective wellbeing according to the PERMA framework. Meaning was the most salient dimension, followed by Engagement, Relationship, Positive Emotions, and Accomplishment. The findings suggest that participation in *Whoop-Up* may impart a deep sense of meaning for participants, embedded in positive emotions, which could foster strong interpersonal relationships between parents, teachers, alums, and the school environment as a whole.

Keywords

Adults, meaning, well-being, school community, variety show, PERMA framework

Introduction

Collaborative artistic and music community activities have recently been the focus of many studies, showing their impact on flourishing and wellbeing, which is related to eudaimonia (Hargreaves and Lamont 2017; Kunz 2011; Lamont et al. 2018; Seligman 2011). In this study, wellbeing encompasses an individual's subjective personal perception of their overall happiness and satisfaction with life. Research suggests that community music-making fosters a sense of belonging and wellbeing in participants from various cultural and societal backgrounds (Higgins and Willingham 2017; MacDonald et al. 2012; Lee, Krause and Davidson 2017; Schiavio et al. 2019). External and internal factors motivate engagement in musical activities (Krause, North, and Davidson 2019). External factors include skilled facilitators, being with like-minded people, and ensuing feelings of social connectedness (Corenblum and Marshall 1998; Pitts and Robinsons 2016). Internal factors driving participation include perceived health benefits and a sense of social and emotional connection (Hallam and Creech 2016; Krause et al. 2018). Music participation has also been shown to promote relaxation and help with stress management (Cavitt, 2005; Helsing et al., 2016; Jutras, 2006). Furthermore, group benefits include a sense of fulfilment (Bartleet and Higgins 2018) and the satisfaction of adding meaningful contributions to a community (Joseph and Southcott 2014; Lee, Krause, and Davidson 2016; Teater and Baldwin, 2014).

In order to flourish, humans need a balance of both hedonic and eudaimonic elements of wellbeing (Sirgy and Wu 2009; Seligman 2011, 2018). Seligman's (2011) PERMA model of wellbeing combines the perspectives of hedonia (a pleasant life) and eudaimonia (a meaningful and fulfilling life) and describes it in five dimensions: Positive emotions (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), and Accomplishment (A).

Positive emotions, the hedonic element of wellbeing, is considered the foundation of wellbeing (Seligman 2011; Webster 2014) and is related to subjective feelings of joy, hope, empathy, gratitude, contentment, and empathy. *Engagement* refers to being completely immersed in activities such as work, a hobby, or personal interest. This element is closely related to flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). The third dimension, *Relationships*, acknowledges our need for social interaction, a sense of belonging, and connection with others (Seligman 2011). *Meaning*, refers to having a sense of purpose, particularly when pursuing worthwhile goals (De Muijnck 2013). *Accomplishment* is at the heart of motivation and leads to heightened self-esteem and self-actualisation (Power 2016).

Huron (2006) believes that engaging with music-making addresses a primordial function in humans in providing a depth of emotional experiences such as surprise, awe, chills, and comfort. Researchers have found that music involvement improves mood, lowers stress, and participants derive pleasure and enjoyment through participation (Dingle, Brander, Ballantyne, and Baker 2013; Hallam and Creech 2016, Lamont 2012). Furthermore, participating in music activities results in feelings of accomplishment and achievement through overcoming challenges (Lamont et al. 2018; Lee, Davidson, and Krause 2016; Lee, Krause and Davidson 2017), improving self-confidence, a by-product of accomplishment when mastering new skills (Bartolome 2013; Joseph and Southcott 2014; Waddington-Jones, King and Burnard 2019).

Group music-making promotes both prosocial feelings and behaviour (Bojner Horwitz, Korošec, and Töres 2022), and social interaction is often the main motivating factor for participation in music activities (Bartolome 2013; Judd and Pooley 2014). Literature on the positive impact of music participation on relationships shows far-reaching effects on personal, family and community connections (Ascenso, Williamon, and Perkins 2017; Lee,

Krause and Davidson 2017; Schippers and Bartleet 2013). Furthermore, involvement in music activities provides meaning through identity formation, a sense of purpose, autonomy and community connection (Creech et al. 2014; Dabback, 2008; Joseph and Southcott, 2014; Lee, Krause and Davidson 2017).

Whoop-Up is an adult voluntary amateur musical production offered to current parents, alums, alums' parents, friends of the school, and staff members at a private boy's primary school. *Whoop-Up*¹, started and produced by an alumnus of the school, has been featured approximately every four years since 1975. The aim of the production is to foster a sense of community among those affiliated with the school, particularly for the new parents who quickly feel a greater sense of belonging in the school community. It is a variety show consisting of singing, dancing (solo and ensemble), and acting skits. A production team consisting of WHPS Old Boys², parents, and teachers, conceptualise the show several months before advertising for members among parents and teachers via posters and word of mouth. After refining the details around a theme, musical and dance numbers, the play, and technical requirements, all interested members are invited to audition for any activity of their choice. Those who would prefer not to perform can join the technical crew. The audition process is informal and no prior skills of any kind are required. Rehearsals take place on Sunday evenings from 18h00 to 21h30 over eight weeks. Preparations culminate in two performances, of which 100% of the proceeds are donated to a community charity organisation. The 2018 production of the *Whoop-Up* included approximately 90 adults. Members of the production team take on diverse roles in facilitating various aspects of the

¹ *Whoop-Up* is a generic title for the school event, derived as a play on words from name of the school, WHPS Waterkloof House Preparatory School.

² Many ex-WHPS pupils choose to keep contact with their prep school and become members of the WHPS Old Boy's Association. The Old Boys Association (OBA) organise fundraising and social events to develop school facilities and foster relationships within the school community. While many more OBA participated in the production, only two members of the OBA responded to the invitation to participate in the study.

show, such as directing acting scenes, coaching dancing and musical numbers, preparing the technical aspects relating to lighting and sound, and, organising props and costumes. The founding member played an instrumental role as overall director, given his experience of the directing the show over the years, and his enthusiasm and passion for amateur theatre, and loyalty toward the school. His mantra throughout the production was “Are you having fun?”.

There is little literature on community musicals in South Africa and no study which we know has explored well-being through the lens of the PERMA framework in an adult amateur school production context. Page-Schipp et al. (2018) explored the well-being and spiritual benefits of adults participating in an amateur community musical in South Africa. Their findings show typical positive benefits, from the pleasure and joy of group music making to experiencing a spiritual connection, on the well-being of amateur performers through community music-making.

Parents of school-going children experience many pressures that compromise their well-being, from a lack of valuable family time, financial pressures, and general pace of life resulting in stress and anxiety. Consequently, many parents are uninvolved in school activities, adding to feelings of social isolation.

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between well-being outcomes and participation in a school musical for adults through the lens of the PERMA framework. The following broad research question guided the study: How does being involved in *Whoop-Up*, a school musical for adults, affect participants’ subjective experience of well-being?

Materials and Methods

We used a qualitative intrinsic case study approach involving semi-structured interviews to explore well-being in participants of a school musical. An intrinsic case study design is appropriate in the investigation of an existing unique situation (Creswell and Poth 2018). Unlike an instrumental case study which involves broader more generalisable contexts, an intrinsic case study aims to provide rich insights into a distinctive situation, such as the *Whoop-Up* production at WHPS.

Procedure and participants

Following ethical clearance from the University Ethics Board and permission from the school to conduct the study, a purposive non-probability sampling strategy was used to invite members of the 2018 production of the *Whoop-Up* to participate in the study. Members were contacted via email and invited to semi-structured interviews. Twenty-one adults (15 females, 6 males) aged between 21 and 75, representing multicultural demographics, agreed. Of the participants, eleven were parents, four alums' parents, three staff members, one past staff member, and two members of the Old Boys Association.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out three months after the production. Participants were given a letter of information about the research purpose and protocols, and written consent was obtained from each interviewee. The interview included general questions about the participant's role in the *Whoop-Up*, followed by questions guided by the PERMA framework. Representative questions included: "Describe your experience of participating in *Whoop-Up*?"; "What was the most salient ...". (See Appendix A). The audio-

recorded interviews were approximately 45 minutes. Synonyms were assigned to all participants.

Analysis

Following the verbatim transcription of the interviews, a thematic analysis was undertaken using a deductive approach, grouping emergent ideas according to PERMA framework. The two authors independently scrutinised the text and themes and coded them into representations of the five PERMA model elements. A third independent researcher was involved to discuss statements and themes in order to reach a consensus. Statements were then grouped into themes according to elements from the PERMA framework, and then assigned subthemes. A tally was kept of the number of times participants referred to statements relating to the each dimension of the framework.

Findings

Table 1 presents the findings of the deductive analysis according the main dimensions of the PERMA framework, and subthemes

Positive Emotion (136)

All participants experienced positive emotions such as joy, interest, and contentment. In addition, the subthemes reveal that participants reminisced about positive childhood performance activities and reiterated the positive emotions and fun related to the current preparation process and the performance itself.

Memories of childhood performances

Most of the participants reported positive memories of performance as children. These positive experiences led participants to approach *Whoop-Up* with a positive frame of mind.

You know when I was in high school and at varsity I completely loved performing. And then it was almost like wow, I had forgotten how much I had enjoyed it back then. – Amanda³

The *Whoop-Up* afforded some participants an opportunity to realise unfilled dreams. For others the production evoked fond childhood memories of regular theatre attendance, which in turn fostered a life-long love for theatre.

When I was much younger it was my dream, basically my destiny to be on stage, and I never did that. So it was fun to pretend, with *Whoop-Up*, that I ended up there. – Stacey

It's part of who I am. [...] I like to have fun, I like the thrill of the theatre, I like the lights and the make-up and the costumes. You know, just all of it. I mean I've been brought up with all of that, so I feel like it's taken me back to when I was young. And when I was young I was a very happy little person. – Carol

Fun and enjoyment during the production

Every participant mentioned 'fun' and 'enjoyment'. For some, the 'fun-factor' was the main motivator, and the opportunity to laugh at themselves and with others.

It was great fun, because... um... you know some of it was quite hard. You know when you're not 20 anymore and you can't remember a dance move and it gets quite intense. But you do it, kind of together. And you laugh at yourself and you laugh at each other and that makes it easier. It makes your own sort of fumbling and bumbling a little easier to handle when everyone around you is kind of doing it in the same way. – Amanda

Positive emotions resulting from the performance

³ Pseudonyms were provided for all participants.

The performance gave many participants a ‘high’, and the adrenaline and euphoria lingered after the performance through interaction with the audience.

Ja, it was such an adrenaline high. It was really amazing. It kind of felt like we fed off the energy of the crowd. We were jumping down and dancing with some of the audience members in the front there. It was really kind of them feeding off us and vice versa thing. It was wonderful. – Amanda

It’s like an exhilaration, and you rush into the audience and they treat you a little bit special because you were one of the participants and you know, you are one of the stars of the show. It’s great. You feel like you’ve done something special. – Diana

Engagement (152)

Engagement is defined as a state of being deeply involvement and sensitive to context (Seligman, 2011).

Commitment

Participants were committed to the production process and made an effort to attend rehearsals, which was seen as a weekly priority for the duration of *Whoop-Up* .

I think you got to commit, and if you commit you’ve got to bring your part and you got to be there. Because you let people down. So people rely on you. Once you’re committed then that’s it. – Simon

Everyone there... this is one of the things I can say about *Whoop-Up* . To commit to a rehearsal every week, that person wants to be there. Nobody told you, you have to be there. You choose to be there. – Mary

Freedom to choose

Participants appreciated the freedom of choosing their own level of involvement without pressure. This created a sense of ease as little focus was placed on the skill level of any individual participant.

And then what's also nice about it is you can choose your... because there are so many facets of *Whoop-Up* you can choose what you want to do. Whether you want to be part of, the sexy girls and do the bikini thing. Or, you're not comfortable with that then you leave that alone. You'll rather do the nun thing because you're totally covered up. You do what you are comfortable with and you're not pressured to do it at all. So you do what you are comfortable with and ja, that was... that was very nice. – Joy

And I think that's an important component of it, so laughing and giggling and kind of not being scared to jump up and just perform and it doesn't matter what you look like, sound like, act like. Just the mere fact that you're up there doing it is kind of what counts. And everybody laughs at everybody. So I think that makes a big difference. – Mike

Flow-like experiences

A few participants mentioned deep engagement and flow-like experiences.

It's funny, during the performances it's an interesting thing. It's as if I switch off... how can I explain it? Like I zone out. I do what I need to do to the best of my ability and I enjoy it, but I'm not focused on my own emotions or how other people might be feeling. I enjoy hearing that the audience is enjoying the performance. They laugh when they should laugh, clap when they should clap. But it's as if I'm zoned out for a little while. – Mary

It goes so quickly. It feels like you're still there at four o'clock, in full makeup and when you turn your head it's 10 o'clock that evening and you're dead tired and your feet hurt. It goes so quickly. – Erica

These experiences vividly indicate the dimensions of flow. Mary being unaware of her own emotions during performances, and Erica experiencing the quick passage of time.

Relationships (134)

Existing relationships were enhanced and new relationships were formed during *Whoop-Up*.

Community

Being more involved in the community was a main motivator for participation in *Whoop-Up* .

It is seen as a great opportunity for newcomers to get involved and to stay connected to the community, and to maintain these strong bonds post *Whoop-Up*.

Well I think it brings people together, definitely. That's a big thing. It's a social event. It challenges a lot of people, especially if you start at WHPS and you're an outsider. You get in *Whoop-Up* and you're an insider. Immediately. You become a WHPS person. – Dawie

I thought it was a great way to meet the other parents and to get to kind of become part of the school community. Um, and it's kind of like a giant ice breaker. – Diana

Friendships

Participants forged new friendships and solidified existing friendships through their participation in the production. *Whoop-Up* cast also gave participants an opportunity to socialise across generations.

It was a nice opportunity for us to make friends with parents of kids who are in other grades. So I really enjoyed that. We met some people that I'm now, you know, quite good friends with. So I think the most meaningful experience of *Whoop-Up* for me was just making friends with people I otherwise probably never would have been in contact with. – Amanda

It was amazing to socialise with the Old Boys. You have this man sitting next to you, and he is literally 80 years old, and you're having a glass of wine together. It was so nice to be with them in a social environment. It was unbelievable. Some of the young moms are probably 25 and Uncle Scott turned 80 this year. So ja, it was amazing. – Erica

Camraderie

Mutual feelings of camaraderie resulted among the participants feeling supported and finding a sense of belonging.

I will definitely do another production. You know it's just the camaraderie and that sense of belonging to a certain group of people. It's enough to keep me going back. It's great fun. – Diana

You realise the guy next to you is actually having the same issue you know, and you're both equally insecure, you're a little bit inhibited, um... and immediately there's a bond in any case because you both can have a good laugh about how bad you are. And after one session it's like, ok we're all in this together so let's just belt this thing out. – Ryan

Family

There is much emphasis on family life in *Whoop-Up*. Couples who participated together invariably involve their children while rehearsing at home.

For Ben and me and our relationship and being able to do something like that, I mean it's a very unusual thing to be able to do with your partner, which is really fun actually, and something totally different. – Helen

But I think the second time, which was probably my favourite one, was because Mike and I did it together. And I think that was really nice. And I just remember, both times that we did it

together, we were sitting in the kitchen and learning the songs. We're singing the songs at home and the kids joining in and, you know, singing at supper and breakfast or whatever. And that for me was pretty cool. Just you know, bringing everybody together and I thought that was cool. – Joy

Meaning (245)

Meaning refers to finding a sense of purpose in life (Newman, Tay, and Diener, 2013).

Meaning was an essential element of well-being for the participants, reported at an individual introspective level, and as a result of the broader community.

Agency

Participants described how they experienced a sense of agency by allowing themselves the time to participate in the production. It afforded a break from their everyday routine and a way to escape their responsibilities, and an act of self-care in a sense.

You know what, one of the things that I think *Whoop Up* gives you, is that it actually gives you the freedom to just be you. You know what, you're not judged, and I think also getting on the stage on those, on the actual show nights. You have a hall full of parents who actually also suddenly see you in a completely different light. – Claire

So this is kind of like doing something for yourself. To remind you that you actually are still there, even though you're everything to everybody else. You're a mother, you're a teacher, you know, you have to do all of these things. You actually can still do your ballet or your dancing or your singing or something arty that you actually really always enjoyed. – Carol

Belonging

Whoop-Up has been a fixed event in the school calendar for many years, and as such, is evidence of the established commitment to the school community.

The meaningful thing is that it's the continuity of it. *Whoop-Up* endures, it continues. Because it has a core of people that make sure that the next one happens, even though there will be members of the cast who are no longer involved with the school. I think that is the most meaningful thing for me is that, its continuity and its enduring nature. And then what it means to the school community. – Gary

Meaning through participation

Participants enjoyed the opportunity to do something out of the ordinary.

You know the fact that you're getting up on stage, something so out of the ordinary for most of us. I mean I don't ever, I think the last time I got up and sang or did anything musical was when I was in High School, so that was many moons ago. So it's just the chance to go out and do something completely different. And just express yourself in a way that you would never normally do. – Diana

For many participants *Whoop-Up* provided an opportunity to live their dreams.

I think it was like a throwback to earlier years when my aspirations with my musical talent was much higher. To realise that this is probably the pinnacle of what I'll reach. – Stacey

For others, the *Whoop-Up* was a means to live out their passion and continue performing for enjoyment.

It affords you the opportunity to fulfil a passion... to pick up on a, sort of something which was in your childhood, and now you can't do it, because you've chosen a certain path, but you still got a love and a passion for it, so, you can do it in a very relaxed sort of manner. It gives you so much pleasure and happiness that I think it actually helps you in a lot of other ways. – Ryan

Participants also experienced a meaningful impact on family relationships through the performances.

It was so very important for me just to show a small piece of myself to, not only the greater community, but to my family and just to enjoy that with them. The nights when my family was there I gave 220 percent. The other nights, yes, I did as much as I can, but I enjoyed myself more. But I was very, very, very serious about those nights with my family and I wanted to show them that I can do this and that it's beautiful and I wanted them to join me and it was such a nice experience for everyone as well. – William

Accomplishment (127)

Seligman (2011, 24) states that accomplishment is “often pursued for its own sake, even when it brings no positive emotion, no meaning, and nothing in the way of positive relationships”. Interestingly, this dimension was least mentioned by participants, despite acknowledging feelings of accomplishment through self-focused and holistic achievement.

Accomplishment through personal investment

Personal investment related to members pushing their boundaries and limits. Stepping out of one's comfort zone requires bravery, and participants had overwhelming feelings of accomplishment once they were able to do so.

Because it was, like I say, not something I would ever have imagined I would do. Put myself in that kind of position, in front of strangers essentially. No I was, we were super proud of ourselves. – Renata

Participants experienced accomplishment through personal growth, realising they had performed better than expected, had more courage than expected, and were brave.

I kind of felt this is something no one can ever take away from me. I did it, I did it successfully. You know it was a great experience and you really felt, like a sense of achievement. – Amanda

Accomplishment through performance

Despite being amateurs participants felt proud of the fact that they were able to produce a quality production and perform and their best. A sense of accomplishment was achieved when participants felt satisfied with their performance at the end of the evening.

I think the secret to the success is that we are all just regular people. It is moms and dads and Old Boys who all practice for the performance. And then at the end of it there is a professional production. People mustn't forget it's still moms and dad who do this. – Erica

Of course, after each performance you feel great, because the show was a success. Even if there were a few mistakes people still come up to you afterwards to say how much they enjoyed a specific song or scene. – Denise

A favourable reaction from and connection with the audience resulted in a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment.

And when I see the crowd lifting and responding and laughing and clapping and what have you. That's my fulfilment. You know, that's my sense of achievement and accomplishment. Is to see that response from the people watching. – Ryan

Discussion

The PERMA model offered a valuable framework to explore experiences of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing among adult participants of a school musical. Overall, the findings of this study seems to be consistent with other research which found associations between

musicking, participation and well-being (Creech et al. 2014; Clements-Cortes, 2013; Hallam and Creech, 2016; Stewart and Lonsdale, 2016).

Positive emotion

Participants associated *Whoop-Up* with positive memories of performing experiences in their childhood, and the production provided the opportunity to relive the positive memories of childhood and family life. These results support the findings of other studies in which adults fondly remember positive musical experiences (Dabback, 2008; Clements-Cortes, 2013;). According to Creech et al.(2014) and Judd and Poole (2014), positive childhood experiences and parental influence can result in a desire for lifelong participation in music activities.

Each participant described the *Whoop-Up* as an experience filled with ‘fun’ and ‘enjoyment’. For some, having fun was their primary motivation for participating in the production. In addition, shared pleasure experiences are a major motivating factor and affect group performance (Dingle et al. 2013; Judd and Pooley 2014; Lee, Davidson and Krause 2016; Ascenso et al. 2017; Page-Shipp et al. 2018).

The live performances evoked strong positive emotions and euphoria. Successful teamwork, performing for an audience, and interacting with the audience after the performance, created an overall sense of elation. Prior research shows that the shared experience of live performances were rated as the favourite aspect of participating in a choir, enhanced by performing to a receptive audience, which had a positive impact on performers (Dingle et al. 2013; Lamont 2012; Ascenso et al. 2017).

Engagement

Engagement was evident in the participants' deep commitment and effort needed to improve skills and abilities. Deep commitment has been identified as an essential element of engagement (Lee, Davidson and Krause 2016; Ascenso et al. 2017; Lamont et al. 2018; Page-Shipp et al. 2018). The fact that participants could choose their level of involvement with no external pressure for perfection provided a sense of autonomy, which led to increased levels of commitment. Being autonomous means being true to oneself, integrating different aspects of one's personality, and having intrinsic motivations for activities instead of relying on external factors (David, Boniwell and Conley Ayers 2013). These findings corroborate the ideas of Bailey and Davidson (2005), who found that positive rewards for participation do not hinge on skill and ability but rather lie in the participation itself. Similar to previous research that showed participation in music activities has great potential to induce a flow state, many participants described flow-like experiences (Lamont 2012; Croom 2015; Waddington-Jones et al. 2019).

All the participants mentioned they would participate in a subsequent production of *Whoop-Up*. This finding suggests that engaging flow-like experiences in productions such as these may predict motivation for long-term commitment to similar artistic projects, concurring with research in music activities which motivates continued participation in the performing arts (Lamont 2012; Judd and Pooley 2014; Page-Shipp et al. 2018).

Relationships

Social interaction and community may be the most critical factors contributing to overall well-being. This production afforded participants opportunities to build new relationships and strengthen existing ones, creating a deep camaraderie, shared support, and motivation. Existing research shows that participants value a choir's social interaction and

family-like atmosphere more than the performance experiences (Bartolome 2013; Judd and Pooley 2014). Several studies have shown that music making is an effective way to become enmeshed within a community (Dingle et al. 2013; Judd and Pooley 2014) and camaraderie is often experienced in group music making, especially when singing is involved (Bailey and Davidson 2005; Joseph and Southcott 2014; Lamont et al. 2018).

The participants of this study acknowledged and attributed the production's success to the facilitators' vital role in building and maintaining good relationships and providing a supportive, joyful, and stress-free environment. In contrast, Lee et al. (2017) found that facilitators are seen as effective mediators who ensure meaningful engagement. However, our study found that the relationship between facilitators and participants was pivotal in fostering mutually respectful relationships resulting in focused engagement and a deep sense of commitment. A broader implication of the study suggests that spontaneous family involvement may have long-lasting positive effects on children's perceptions of the arts and the family. Research shows that parental involvement plays a vital role in forming children's musical interests (Bell, 2004).

Meaning

Meaning provides a sense that one's life makes a difference (Ascenso et al. 2018), and it is fitting that this is the most prominent component of PERMA framework in this study, corresponding with prior studies using the PERMA model (Lee, Davidson and Krause 2016; Ascenso et al. 2018; Lee, Krause and Davidson 2017). Meaning in this study was associated with improved perceptions of sense of self, which concurs with Ascenso et al. (2017) and Ruud (1997), who emphasise an important link between music participation and a sense of identity. Furthermore, participants felt that being part of something bigger than themselves created a sense of belonging and value. Several studies acknowledge that purpose in

participation is an element that provides meaning to individuals (Joseph and Southcott, 2014; Lee, Davidson and Krause 2016; Waddington-Jones et al. 2019).

It was meaningful to some participants with unfulfilled aspirations of becoming performers that they could realize their passion for performance. In addition, the performance was significant even to those with no musical background and minimal previous exposure to the performing arts. These findings are consistent with several studies that show that participants experienced validation, acceptance, and restored confidence in themselves through participation in community music (Ascenso et al. 2017; Joseph, Page-Shipp and Van Niekerk 2018; Lamont et al. 2018).

Accomplishment

Accomplishment was described as personal investment, overcoming challenges, and pushing personal boundaries, resulting in improved confidence and personal growth. Previous studies have demonstrated that increased confidence comes from overcoming challenges and stepping out of one's comfort zone (Joseph and Southcott 2014; Waddington-Jones et al. 2019). Croom (2015) acknowledges that feelings of accomplishment are vital in pursuing well-being, however, accomplishment was the least mentioned PERMA element across our study's data set. Similar to the findings of Lee, Krause and Davidson (2017), this result may suggest that accomplishment is not the main motivator for taking part in a community musical, especially given the emphasis on building community, camaraderie, and having fun.

While the elements of the PERMA model were clearly evident throughout the analysis, it became increasingly clear that hedonic (positive emotions) and elements of eudaimonia are interrelated, validating similar suggestions by Heintzelman (2018) and, Martela and Sheldon (2019). Participants' recollections of performance in their youth evoked *positive emotions*. However, these experiences also had *meaning* in that positive

childhood experiences served as motivation to continue engaging in the performing arts. There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by the participants in this study and those described by Dabback (2008), who found that positive childhood experiences led to music participation later in life, which resulted in reclaiming musical identity. The interaction and relationships with other cast members and the audience enhanced the fun and enjoyment experienced by participants. These findings correlate with those of Ascenso et al. (2017) who found that sharing musical moments with others increased the experience of positive emotion in participants.

Cast members' experiences of *engagement* in "thrilling performance experiences" created feelings of *accomplishment*, partly due to praise from audience members. The excitement and praise led to feelings of euphoria and pride. According to previous studies, positive emotion is an essential link between engagement and accomplishment (Lamont et al. 2018). As positive emotion increases, so do the experiences of all the other components of PERMA (Lee, Davidson and Krause 2016; Ascenso et al. 2018).

Conclusion

What does an amateur school music production for adults, such as the *Whoop-Up*, afford participants? While positive emotion was at the centre of participants' experiences, it was a catalyst for the other eudemonic elements of wellbeing. The fact that meaning was the most salient dimension of the PERMA framework in this study suggests that the *Whoop-Up* provided adult members of a school community with much-needed opportunities for social belonging and self-connection, important predictors of wellbeing (Sen et al. 2022).

Several limitations are acknowledged. This case study was conducted within the context of one private school with a fairly small cohort of participants. We also acknowledge

a particularly strong prior existing loyalty to this school which may not be common in other private or public schools. Further research could include public and private school communities, explore the dynamic role between parents and teachers during a production, and the impact on parents' perception of and loyalty toward a school. Furthermore, the PERMA framework could be used in other contexts as a useful tool through which to explore elements of wellbeing as a result of collaborative community artistic endeavours in school settings. Other wellbeing frameworks and well as a mixed-method approach could be considered to further understand nuances wellbeing in school settings. Further research could focus on the role of facilitators in community music activities, and identify which skills can best facilitate enjoyment and participation.

This study, the first of its kind in South Africa, explored elements of well-being through the PERMA model in an amateur school musical production, contributing to the growing body of evidence on the well-being benefits of community music making. *Whoop-Up* provided adult participants of this school community opportunities for meaningful fulfilling engagement, an increased sense of self, belonging, and an opportunity to live out dreams and passions and foster a love of arts.

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