

**Exploring elements of well-being among members taking part in a  
community musical project**

**by**

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## Abstract

The link between music and well-being has been widely studied by researchers. However, the impact of short-term involvement in community music on well-being has not been sufficiently examined. This research aimed to explore the elements of well-being among participants in a community musical project, the *Whoop Up*. The PERMA model was used as a theoretical framework, providing a lens through which to better understand experiences of well-being.

A qualitative approach was followed using a case-study design. Participants included 30 adults of the community musical, which took place at a private boys' school in Pretoria, South Africa. Data was collected in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of a qualitative questionnaire with open-ended questions, designed to probe elements of the PERMA model. The open-ended responses provided the researcher with an overview of the participants' well-being experiences, and guided the interview schedule used in the next phase. Phase 2 consisted of semi-structured face-to-face interviews designed to encourage participants to reflect on their subjective experiences of well-being related to the elements of the PERMA model: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

The results strongly reveal that participants of the *Whoop Up* experienced all the elements of well-being related to the PERMA model. Positive emotions experienced during participation included fun, enjoyment, feelings of exhilaration, and euphoria. Engagement was reflected in commitment and freedom and ease of participation. Experiences of flow and a sense of loss at the conclusion of the production indicated that participants were deeply engaged. Meaningful engagement led to a desire for continued involvement in the performing arts. Relationships were widely impacted. Interaction with the community, peers and family members were positively affected through participation. Meaning was the most prominent element of PERMA. Individuals experienced a sense of meaning relating to self, the impact of the *Whoop Up* on the greater community, and the opportunity for expression in performance. Accomplishment was experienced through personal investment and performances.

The results of this study show that elements of the PERMA model related to hedonia and eudaimonia are more profoundly linked than expected. The study found that positive emotion, an element of hedonia, strongly overlaps with engagement, relationships, meaning

and accomplishment and cannot be seen in isolation. The study contributes to our understanding of the relationship between hedonia and eudaimonia and the subsequent value of community music.

**Keywords** Well-being, community music, amateur production, PERMA

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background and rationale

The responsibilities and pressures of life, career, finances, parenting and supporting a family, result in highly stressed family life, where parents often have little time to take part in extramural activities. Since 1975, Waterkloof House Preparatory School (WHPS) has offered parents and staff members an opportunity to take part in an amateur musical production, the *Whoop Up*.

David Chamberlain, an alumnus of WHPS, is the founding member and producer of the *Whoop Up*.<sup>1</sup> David (affectionately known as Dawie) has been involved with this production since its inception up until the present. Assisted by two Old Boys, Dawie wrote the first *Whoop Up*. The show consisted of original material and was performed as a variety show for two nights to an audience of 100 people. According to Dawie the rationale for the *Whoop Up* performances, undertaken every three to four years, is that the school “...needed something to pull it together, to get morale going, to get esteem up, to get people talking to each other” (Chamberlain, interview 2 March 2020). Thus, the aim of the production is to involve parents, teachers and any other affiliated members, in an effort to foster social interaction and unity within the school community.

The WHPS Old Boys’ Association (OBA) lies at the heart of the production. These men, all alumni of WHPS, remain deeply involved in the school community. At the *Whoop Up* they create a welcoming atmosphere, especially to new members of the community. The *Whoop Up* consists of musical numbers which include singing and dancing (solo and ensemble), acting skits, most notably and famously, the largely reduced, verbatim scripted Shakespeare plays, performed in under 20 minutes. A fun fixture in the *Whoop Up* production is the spectacle “Old Boys’ Ballet” which has been part of the production since its inception. The show involves an enormous time commitment over approximately eight weeks, and culminates in two sold-out performances.

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<sup>1</sup> Permission has been granted by the headmaster of the school and David Chamberlain to use full names in this dissertation. See letter of consent in Appendix A

There has been increased interest in research exploring the impact of being involved in musical activities on adult life. Researchers have found a positive impact on well-being in terms of social aspects (Joseph & Southcott, 2014), health benefits (Hallam & Creech, 2016), as well as feelings of personal growth and accomplishment (Bartolome, 2013). The social benefits of music have been written about extensively over time and found to be instrumental in the construction of social identity and interaction (Coffman, 2002; Crozier, 1997; Solbu, 1987). Being involved in musical groups fosters positive relationships and facilitates a sense of community and belonging in adults, as well as opportunities for self-expression (Hays & Minichiello, 2005). Ruud (1997) found that music participation could serve as a portal to experience communality and healthy attachment to others. Through group collaboration, members achieve group goals and construct both a social and musical identity through their involvement (Dabback, 2008). Importantly, Dabback (2008) found that music participation could inspire participants to transcend social stereotypes. Most recently, Tay, Pawelski and Keith (2018) showed that there is a definite link between the arts and their effects on well-being. They suggest that more investigation is needed to better understand the link. Similarly, Lamont, Murray, Hale and Wright-Bevans (2018) showed that involvement in a community choir and engaging in musical activities had a positive effect on general well-being.

The *Whoop Up* presents an opportunity to explore the motivation for participation and impact of involvement in a musical on the well-being of participants. Seligman (2011), as part of the positive psychology movement, introduced a model suitable for studying well-being –the PERMA model. The model as an acronym refers to the following elements of well-being:

- Positive emotions – feeling good
- Engagement – being completely absorbed in activities
- Relationships – being authentically connected to others
- Meaning – purposeful existence
- Achievement – a sense of accomplishment and success

The model presents a suitable method to study elements of well-being among the participants of the *Whoop Up*.

Extant research suggests that more needs to be done to explore the links between the arts and well-being. Well-being is the perception of an individual regarding their own life, where having a high level of life satisfaction is becoming increasingly important in today's society

(Diener & Ryan, 2009). According to Diener and Ryan (2009), high levels of well-being may improve one's life in four key areas, leading to health benefits; improved social relationships; benefits to society; as well as financial and work-related benefits. Coffman (2002) has identified five areas that contribute to the quality of life of an individual, which are similar to the elements identified by Diener and Ryan (2009). Coffman's (2002) areas are physical and material well-being, personal development, relationships with others, social activities, and recreation. Similarly, Huppert (2009) found that a higher level of well-being has shown an improvement in the manner in which individuals perceive their relationships, engage with their communities, as well as their overall satisfaction with life. In all these studies, it is clear that an improved level of well-being impacts many different areas of our lives. It is therefore of the utmost importance that continued research is done in this field as suggested by Tay et al. (2018).

The voluntary participation, popularity, and ongoing enthusiasm for the *Whoop Up* productions amongst parents and staff over the years is a defining feature of the school. Produced entirely by individuals affiliated with the school, participation in the *Whoop Up* reveals not only a commitment to the school but also a keen motivation and enthusiasm among participants. As a former staff member of the Department of Performing Arts, I have been involved in three productions, namely those performed in 2011, 2015, and most recently in March 2018. The latest production included the largest cast to date, with close to 100 participants.

I am intrigued by the commitment and motivation of staff and parents (most of whom have no music, acting or dance experience) to participate in this musical production. What is it about this event in the school calendar that draws people together and in what ways do productions of this nature impact the well-being of its participants? The WHPS *Whoop Up* provides a perfect opportunity to explore the links between participants and their subjective experiences of well-being in a school community.

## **1.2 Aims of the research**

The aim of this study is to explore the cast members' experiences of well-being when participating in a *Whoop Up* so as to gain a deeper understanding of the links between

participation and the well-being of the cast. The PERMA model will be used as a lens through which to explore elements of wellbeing.

### 1.3 Research questions

The primary research question is:

In what ways does participating in the amateur musical production *Whoop Up* impact well-being among participants?

Secondary research questions:

1. According to the PERMA model, which positive emotions did the participants experience through their involvement in the *Whoop Up*?
2. According to the PERMA model, how did the participants experience increased engagement through their involvement in the *Whoop Up*?
3. According to the PERMA model, how were relationships forged between the participants through their involvement in the *Whoop Up*?
4. According to the PERMA model, what sense of meaning did the participants experience through their involvement in the *Whoop Up*?
5. According to the PERMA model, how did the participants experience accomplishment through their involvement in the *Whoop Up*?

### 1.4. Methodology

A qualitative approach was taken for this study using the instrumental case study research design. See Chapter 3 for a full description of the research approach, design, procedure, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and a discussion on the validity and reliability of the study.

### 1.5 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study and includes the background, aims, and research questions.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of literature related to the topic. The concept of well-being is defined and an overview of tools to measure and investigate well-being are included. The PERMA model is discussed and the impact of music on well-being is explored.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological procedures used for this study. Information regarding the research approach, design, participants, data collection and analysis, ethical procedure and the reliability and validity of the study is presented.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the analysis. The five elements of the PERMA model are the main themes and various subthemes are identified and discussed in five sections.

Chapter 5 is the discussion and presents the findings as it relates to literature.

Chapter 6 includes a summary and conclusion for this study as well as the limitations and implications for future research.

The dissertation concludes with a list of sources and appendices.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

There is no shortage of literature regarding well-being. This is an area of interest which has gained considerable traction in recent years, and research into this field has shown a significant rise since the 1980s (Cooke, Melchert & Connor, 2016). This literature review will define the concept of well-being within the frameworks of the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches, and present conceptualisations of hedonia and eudaimonia, and discuss the overlapping elements within these two approaches. The PERMA model as a well-being model will be investigated and various studies using the PERMA model as a theoretical framework or measuring tool are discussed. The impact of music on well-being is investigated with specific reference to the activities which foster well-being, community music and the South African context. Each of the elements of the PERMA model will be discussed as it relates to the arts.

#### 2.2 Well-being and the hedonic and eudaimonic approach

Psychologists have spent many years researching well-being (Cooke et al., 2016; David, Boniwell & Conley Ayers, 2013, Diener, 2000). When approaching the study of well-being, there are two main paradigms within which the researcher can work: the hedonic and eudaimonic approach, respectively (Ryan & Deci, 2001). On the one hand, the hedonic school of thought states that well-being is based on the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of pain or displeasure. Philosophers such as Aristippus focused on the notion that pleasure is the highest good (David et al., 2013). Other philosophers followed this view of hedonism. Hobbes argued that happiness is achieved through the successful pursuit of human appetites. The philosopher Sade stated that striving for sensation and pleasure is the ultimate goal of life, and Bentham believes that a good society is built upon an individuals' attempt to maximise pleasure and self-interest (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Eudaimonia, on the other hand, is a term made popular by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle (David et al., 2013). The term is often translated simply as happiness, however, a more accurate translation would be excellence or flourishing. Unlike hedonia, eudaimonia is more than just basic happiness. It is an active behaviour, seeking pursuits to attain excellence in life. Hedonia, as it relates to well-being,

can be viewed through the narrow lens of the pursuit of bodily pleasures, as well as a broader definition that encompasses self-interests and human desires (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The eudaimonic approach, however, is concerned with the processes required for flourishing and the quality of life of people over time (Cooke et al., 2016; Lamont, 2012; Smith & Reid, 2018). It relates to pursuits and actions that develop internal qualities and require of the individual to abide by their morals and principles (David et al., 2013). When working within this paradigm, the researcher explores the processes which enable self-fulfilment and purpose. These two approaches can be seen as virtue (eudaimonia) set against pleasure (hedonia) (Huta & Ryan, 2010).

### **2.2.1 Conceptualisation of hedonia and eudaimonia**

Over time, various approaches to the conceptualising of hedonia and eudaimonia have seen discussion. When looking at the history of research within the field of well-being, hedonia is the study of subjective well-being (SWB) as opposed to eudaimonia as the study of psychological well-being (PWB) (Keyes, Shmotkin & Ryff, 2002). A widely used model of SWB by Diener focuses on the level of well-being that individuals experience when reflecting on their own lives and state of mind (Diener, 2000; Diener & Ryan, 2009). These evaluations have two emotional components – positive affect and low levels of negative affect, and one cognitive component – satisfaction with important life domains such as work, relationships and health (Diener, 2000; Diener & Ryan, 2009). The subjective view of life satisfaction hinges on an evaluation of life over time, whereas positive/negative mood affect relate to the immediate experiences of an individual (Keyes et al., 2002). In the field of SWB, self-report measures are most commonly used. However, researchers also use non-self-report methods in order to have a more holistic view of well-being and life satisfaction (Diener & Ryan, 2009).

The study of PWB, however, is much less defined and researchers have their own views and opinions regarding the elements which bring about PWB (Keyes et al., 2002). The notion that basic happiness (SWB) is a result of PWB, but not its core component, is one generally accepted view (McDowell, 2010). Researchers have used numerous theories and reached various conclusions as to the causes of well-being, many of which find their basis in a process-driven paradigm of eudaimonia.

## Measuring well-being

A view of eudaimonia formulated by Ryff (1989), is that PWB can be measured at trait level. Ryff states that true well-being is achieved when individuals flourish in spite of the challenges of life, developing the Psychological Well-Being Scale (ibid.). Keyes et al. (2002) later focused on a scale that measures well-being on six dimensions of “challenged thriving”.

- Self-acceptance – people will strive to feel good even though they are aware of their own limits
- Positive relations with others – people will strive to form deep and meaningful relationships with other individuals
- Environmental mastery – people will adapt and change their immediate environment in order to meet their needs and wants
- Autonomy – people strive to remain true to themselves within a larger social context
- Purpose of life – people strive to create meaning in life
- Personal growth – people strive to continuously improve their abilities and talents.

These six dimensions clearly show the processes required for achieving high levels of well-being which is key to the eudaimonic paradigm.

Waterman (1990) formulated a description of eudaimonia comprising six feelings relating to an individual’s meaningful daily activities. He called this ‘personal expressiveness’. These activities would make the individual feel alive, express their true self (i.e. autonomy), where you are intensely involved in them, and they are what you are destined to do. They will make one feel fulfilled, and one will feel confident and competent when engaged with them (David et al., 2013). These feelings do, to an extent, comprise feelings relating to hedonia, however, personal expressiveness encompasses activities that focus on developing one’s potential and activities, which have a high level of challenge and skill, as with flow activities. Waterman (1990) also drew parallels between personal expressiveness and intrinsic motivation, flow, as well as self-actualisation. Waterman later devised a Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being that taps into six dimensions of well-being, namely: self-discovery, perceived development, investment of effort in pursuit of excellence, intense involvement in activities, and enjoyment

of personally expressive activities (Waterman, Schwartz, Zamboanga, Ravert, Williams, Agocha, Kim & Donnellan, 2010).

### **Flow and self-determination theory**

Other theorists forward the notion that eudaimonia results from being involved in experiences of complete absorption and skilful engagement in a challenging activity. This is referred to as flow, a concept introduced by Csíkszentmihályi (1990). The flow experience includes simultaneous feelings of complete concentration and control, while the individual becomes less self-aware (Tse, Nakamura & Csíkszentmihályi, 2020). Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2009) describe flow according to nine dimensions, three of which are pre-conditions to flow: 1) balance between skill and challenge; 2) clear goals; and 3) integration of action and awareness. The other six are “experiential characteristics” namely: 1) focused concentration; 2) rewarding experience; 3) integration of action and awareness; 4) feeling of control; 5) lack of self-consciousness; and 6) distortion of sense of time. When one is engaged in the flow experience, there is no immediate sense of happiness or increased well-being, as this would require flow to be interrupted. It is only after the experience that the benefits to well-being are experienced (David et al., 2013). The flow experience therefore relates to PWB, as it is due to the process of engaging in a stimulating activity that well-being is improved. Research has also shown that regular engagement in activities that induce a flow state result in factors of well-being, such as life satisfaction and competence (Tse et al., 2020).

Ryan and Deci (2000) developed a theory of self-determination (SDT), which proposes three basic psychological needs must be met in order to attain optimal well-being in terms of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Their view of eudaimonia is similar to that of Ryff (1989), where autonomy, competence and related, however, Ryan and Deci (2001) feel that SDT have the components necessary to promote well-being, whereas Ryff (1989) uses these components to define well-being. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), autonomy is at the heart of PWB. Autonomy describes living true to oneself without the interference of extrinsic factors (David et al., 2013). As an example Ryan and Deci (2001) refer to a study by Nix, Ryan, Manley and Deci (1999) which showed that an individual who was pressurised into an activity felt happiness at the successful conclusion, however feelings of vitality were not present. Alternatively, finding success as well as having autonomy in the process led to feelings of both

happiness and vitality. Happiness is closer to hedonia, whereas vitality is closer to eudaimonic well-being. SDT also describes the conditions necessary for an individual to have motivation in their life (Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). This motivation can be either intrinsic or extrinsic in nature (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Individuals who are intrinsically motivated for an activity often experience positive consequences in terms of greater persistence and performance, and improved SWB (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It is most likely that an individual will experience intrinsic motivation if the three psychological needs – autonomy, relatedness, and competence – are met (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT has been used as a framework in well-being studies to understand and investigate elements of well-being (Livesey, Morrison, Clift & Camic, 2012; Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). These researchers used thematic analysis and interpreted themes in the context of SDT.

Seligman's description of PWB is that it is a *life of meaning*, which requires of the individual to be aware of the consequences of their actions and choose to do what is good and right (Seligman, 2002). Seligman has made clear distinctions between the pursuit of meaning, the pursuit of pleasure, and the pursuit of engagement. The pursuit of meaning falls within eudaimonia, whereas the pursuit of pleasure is more hedonic in nature. The pursuit of engagement does relate to flow activities. However, it leans toward absorption rather than excellence and personal development (David et al., 2013). Studies have shown that a combination of all of these pursuits resulted in greater well-being as opposed to each on their own. This shows that optimal well-being is achieved when an individual follows many paths and processes toward self-improvement (David et al., 2013).

Huta and Ryan (2010) suggest that we must not look at hedonia and eudaimonia as opposing views, but rather, as two separate motives for activities. Activities focused on experiencing pleasure are hedonic in nature and activities that aim to improve and develop the self are eudaimonic in nature (David et al., 2013). In their study, Huta and Ryan found that hedonia and eudaimonia had overlapping elements, as well as distinctive features. When combined, these two paradigms may result in the complete experience of flourishing in life (Ryan & Huta, 2009).

### 2.2.2 Parallels within hedonia and eudaimonia

Smith and Reid (2018) have identified overlapping elements of hedonia and eudaimonia in well-being research. It is possible to take the elements of SWB as it relates to the hedonic approach, and combine these with the eudaimonic paradigm, which urges one to think about the processes involved.

Coffman (2002) found that while individuals are considering how to increase longevity, they are also focused on how to attain a good quality of life. Factors that are instrumental in improving quality of life include physical well-being, relationships, social activities and interactions, personal development, and recreation (Flanagan, 1982)<sup>2</sup>. According to Flanagan (1982), the perceived quality of life of an individual relies on the interaction of four domains: physical and psychological well-being, the environment, and relationships. Once again, a combination of frameworks is evident in this study. Physical well-being relates to how individuals feel at a specific point in time (hedonic), whereas the factor of personal development implies a process (eudaimonic). Secondly, Flanagan (1982) speaks of an individual's perceived quality of life, which implies a level of SWB (hedonic). This indicates that SWB and PWB have shown parallel factors for many years, where researchers only started investigating these parallels much later.

Huppert (2009) defines well-being as the combination of two elements, namely: positive feelings, and the effective functioning in everyday life. These two elements are dependent on one another, as high levels of well-being are crucial to ensure effective functioning in today's society. In order to function effectively, an individual must have a sense of control over their destiny, have a purpose in life, have positive relationships as well as work on developing their potential. Huppert (2009) also states that long-term well-being does not imply that an individual will not experience negativity in their lives. The secret to sustained well-being hinges on how the individual navigates these negative experiences. This point of view clearly shows that there is an overlap in the hedonic and eudaimonic approach to well-being. The presence of happy emotion is hedonic in nature, however, Huppert (2009) discusses the elements needed for effective functioning. These elements exist in line with the eudemonic

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<sup>2</sup> This source indicates that parallels between hedonia and eudaimonia have been evident for many years.

approach, as this involves various courses of action entered into by an individual, which ultimately lead to improved well-being.

In 2011, Seligman introduced the PERMA model as a model that defines elements of PWB (Seligman, 2011). Seligman states that these five elements can each be measured independently, and furthermore, the independent measurements of each element strongly correlate with the other (Seligman, 2018). In positive psychology, the hedonic and eudaimonic tradition are both considered vital in order to attain overall well-being, and the PERMA model was unique in the sense that it had elements from both of these theoretical frameworks (Goodman, Disabato, Kashdan & Kauffman, 2018; Lamont, 2012).

The PERMA model has been successfully used in well-being studies as a model to identify elements which contribute to an overall increase in well-being and quality of life (Kern, Waters, Adler & White, 2015; Lamont et al., 2018).

### **2.3 The PERMA model as a tool to investigate and understand well-being**

According to the PERMA model, psychological well-being rests on five pillars: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. *Positive emotions* refer to feelings of general happiness and contentment, in line with the hedonic paradigm, which focuses on feelings of pleasure (Cooke et al., 2016). *Engagement* refers to how psychologically involved a person is in everyday activities. *Relationships* refer to the social nature of individuals - whether they feel supported by their relationships and to the extent they are integrated in social situations. *Meaning* refers to feeling that life is part of something bigger, that life has value. Finally, *Accomplishment* refers to striving towards goals and making improvements in one's life (Seligman, 2011). The last four pillars mirror the elements of eudaimonia in terms of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. If any of these pillars are stimulated during an engagement in the arts, it may be inferred that overall well-being will improve (Kern et al., 2015).

Lee, Davidson, and Krause (2016) conducted a study investigating the motivations of older people to participate in community singing groups. The themes that emerged from the study were discussed from various perspectives, one being the PERMA well-being model. The

researchers discovered that the themes could be linked to the elements of PERMA. Positive emotion was found in the pleasure the participants experienced when singing. The importance of singing and the sense of purpose that the groups provided participants indicate that they were engaged in the process. Good, strong leadership and the fellowship between members resulted in improved relationships. The participants indicated that singing in a group gave them the ability to overcome the challenges of aging which relate to meaning and the challenge of learning repertoire and performing to audiences satisfied the element of accomplishment. The researchers argue that the close link between the emergent themes of the study and the PERMA model show that PERMA is a useful model and framework to explain the effect on well-being of group singing. Furthermore, the study confirms that the PERMA model can assist researchers to understand the link between music participation and well-being (Lee et al., 2016).

Building on their previous research, Lee, Krause and Davidson (2017) investigated the impact of school music programmes on well-being within a school context. Here, they used the PERMA model as a theoretical perspective to examine case studies as these relate to the elements of PERMA. Positive emotions were experienced by the students in relation to themselves and the activities. A noteworthy finding was the positive emotions towards self. Relationships between students, teachers, and the greater community were described most often. The elements of meaning and engagement were identified in the school leaders providing opportunities for students to engage in the music programmes, and their understanding of the value of these programmes. Accomplishment was experienced in personal feelings of success and public performances. In this study, the researchers found that the PERMA model was an effective tool to identify the elements of well-being which benefited school communities (Lee et al., 2017).

Researchers used the PERMA model to guide a study investigating the experience of well-being of professional musicians (Ascenso, Williamon & Perkins, 2017). The components of PERMA were used to identify elements which enhance well-being. The results showed that all the elements of PERMA were identified in the themes of the study. Relationships, once again, emerged as the strongest indicator of well-being for professional musicians. Ascenso et al. (2017) suggest that further research is needed with a larger sample of professional musicians, using the PERMA model as a theoretical framework. Other areas which may

benefit from further research using the PERMA model are music teachers, music students, and musicians of other genres, such as jazz, or pop music (Ascenso et al. 2017).

One year later Ascenso, Perkins and Williamon (2018) conducted a study using a large sample of professional classical musicians. The five elements of PERMA were assessed and the results showed a high level of well-being among classical musicians, including all the elements of the PERMA model. The researchers reiterated the need to extend the study of well-being using the PERMA model to the field of music education. They state that the PERMA well-being model can be successfully used to investigate well-being in professional and educational arenas (Ascenso et al. 2018). Lamont et al. (2018) used the PERMA model as an analytical guide to interpret the experiences of increased well-being of participants singing in a community choir. The PERMA model was used in the second phase of data analysis to bring together emergent themes. All the themes derived from the data could be connected to the elements of PERMA. Positive emotions were experienced through engaging in the music activity. Connections with others led to improved social relationships, which in turn resulted in a meaningful experience. A sense of achievement and accomplishment was achieved through learning and performing music. The researchers believe their study showed the value of the PERMA model in explaining why music activities lead to enhanced overall well-being (Lamont et al., 2018).

Recently, a study by Waddington-Jones, King, and Burnard (2019) revealed that all the elements of the PERMA model were present during a collaborative composition project. Various themes emerged, which were then compared to the PERMA model. Themes of enjoyment, togetherness, and empowerment could all be related to the elements of PERMA. Waddington-Jones et al. (2019) state that an interesting aspect of the study is that the elements of the PERMA model emerged through an inductive analysis of the data as opposed to a direct application of the model to the data. Furthermore, they suggest that the study shows the potential of the PERMA model as an investigative tool into community music and well-being (Waddington-Jones et al., 2019).

## **2.4 Music and well-being**

There have been numerous studies exploring the link between involvement in music and well-being, where Swijghuisen Reigersberg (2017) call for the continued collaboration between

researchers to ensure that this link is understood. Ruud (1997) found that there is sufficient evidence to suggest a strong correlation between music, health and well-being. In his study, Ruud (1997) suggests that music interventions ought to be focused on the improvement of well-being of society as a whole. According to him, music has the potential to improve health and well-being in four key areas. It can enhance an awareness of emotions and improve feelings of vitality, lead to a greater sense of empowerment, create an environment of belonging and togetherness, and music experiences can create meaning (Ruud, 1997). If one refers back to the PERMA model discussed in the previous section, clear parallels can be drawn between Ruud's (1997) findings and the elements of the PERMA model. The elements of positive emotion, achievement, relationships, as well as meaning are substantiated by Ruud's (1997) findings.

Studies have shown that individuals experience a higher level of well-being when involved in music, as opposed to other recreational activities (Creech, Hallam, Varvarigou, McQueen & Gaunt, 2013; Hallam & Creech, 2016; Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). Creech et al. (2013) found that the perceived well-being of participants engaged in music activities were significantly higher than those who participated in other recreational activities. The findings of this study showed that an active involvement in music activities resulted in the participants experiencing a positive outlook on their lives, an increased sense of autonomy and control, as well as positive social relationships. Hallam and Creech (2016) similarly found that active music making showed consistently higher levels of well-being as opposed to participants involved in other non-music related activities. The participants in this study reported benefits on a social, emotional, cognitive, and health level. Hallam and Creech (2016) discuss the reason why music may have such a great effect on overall well-being as opposed to other activities. The comparison groups in this study were involved in activities that included physical activity, intellectual stimulation, socialisation, as well as creative activities. They surmise that music activities may be the only activity that stimulate all these elements, and therefore, result in higher levels of well-being.

These findings are also mirrored in a study by Stewart and Lonsdale (2016), who examined the well-being of three groups of participants engaged in the various activities of choral singing, solo-singing, and playing a team sport. The findings showed that the choral singers and athletes experienced a greater sense of social cohesion, in addition to reporting higher

levels of well-being, than solo singers. This finding suggests that the feeling of belonging to a group is more important to the participants' experience of well-being than the act of singing itself. A study by Pearce, Launay, and Dunbar (2015) focused on social cohesion found that singing facilitated social bonding quicker than other non-music related activities. The bonding experiences of three groups were compared: a singing group, creative writing group, and a creative crafts group. All three groups reported an increased bonding experience, however, the singing group reported these experiences much earlier in the study than the other two groups. These findings concur with Stewart and Lonsdale (2016) and indicate that a sense of belonging is an important factor in experiencing positive well-being and that music is an effective tool in achieving this element of well-being.

#### **2.4.1 Well-being in professional musicians**

Many of the studies concerning music and well-being focus on professional musicians (Ascenso et al., 2017; Ascenso et al., 2018; Lamont, 2012; Williamson & Bonshor, 2019), or choral singing (Clements-Cortes, 2013; Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). Williamson and Bonshor (2019) investigated well-being in brass bands in an attempt to compare their findings to the findings of an overwhelming body of literature regarding well-being related to choral singing. They used five well-being categories in their research: physical, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The researchers found that there is a strong correlation between the well-being benefits experienced by choral singers and brass band players in all of the categories investigated. This suggests that improved well-being is experienced when people are engaged in any music making activity. Ascenso et al. (2018) found that professional musicians experienced high levels of well-being and scored higher than the general population on three of the five elements of PERMA, namely positive emotion, relationships and meaning. In another study, Ascenso et al. (2017) found that the heightened sense of well-being experienced by professional musicians revolve around the relationship element of PERMA. The findings of these three studies, albeit it in a professional context, highlight the importance of social interaction and relationship building in the quest for improved well-being. In contrast to professional musicians, who dedicate their lives to music, positive effects on well-being are also experienced when people engage in music activities for a relatively short term. Clements-Cortes (2013) studied a group of elderly people who participated in a

singing programme for 16 weeks. At the conclusion of the programme, the participants reported increased social interaction, feelings of happiness, reduced anxiety, and fun.

#### **2.4.2 Well-being and community music**

There are studies that discuss the link between music and well-being within the framework of community music (Ansio, Seppälä & Houni, 2017; Lee et al., 2016). Studies often focus on the effects of well-being on groups that will benefit from interventions for various reasons. The elderly (Coffman, 2002; Lamont et al., 2018) and disadvantaged (Bailey & Davison, 2005; Dingle, Brander, Ballantyne & Baker, 2013) members of society report well-documented positive benefits when engaged in music activities.

In a study by Ansio et al. (2017) music was introduced in the school community. The impact of community music on the teachers and facilitators was measured. The researchers found that the participants experienced new perspectives, positive emotions, and an increased sense of community as a result of the music activities in their classrooms. These findings correlate with certain elements of the PERMA model, namely meaning, positive emotions and relationships. Lee et al. (2016) investigated the motivations of older participants when engaging in singing groups. Motivating factors included uplifting emotions, fellowship with others and the enormous pleasure of singing with little pressure. All the motivating factors in this study aligned with the PERMA model, which confirm the link between music participation and positive well-being.

There are fewer studies investigating the link between music and well-being on the general public or middle-class citizen who seek out music activities purely for recreational reasons (Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Judd & Pooley, 2014). Within this section of research, the focus remains on group singing as opposed to amateur musical productions. Joseph and Southcott (2014) studied three community choirs and found that participants experienced an improved sense of personal well-being, mentioning physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being. Importantly, the benefit to emotional well-being was mentioned by each participant across all three case studies. Choir rehearsals were seen as positive experiences, where an increase in self-confidence was reported. The participants have a positive attitude toward everyday life, and they reported a feeling of belonging, almost like a family. All three cases studies also mentioned the importance of engaging with the greater community.

Judd and Pooley (2014) explored the meaning and importance of group singing to members of the general public. The participants reported that choral singing was uplifting and relaxing, and promoted positive emotions. Furthermore, group singing helped the participants cope with the everyday stress experienced at home and at work. All the participants referred to the social nature of belonging to a choir. Positive emotions and relationships; elements of the PERMA model; are reflected in the findings of these studies, showing that engaging in music activities for the general public also serves as a means to improve overall well-being.

#### **2.4.3 Well-being through music in the South African context**

A search of South African literature on this topic did not yield many results. Music within the community in the South African context mainly deals with disadvantaged communities and the effect that music can have on their plight. One study (Joseph, Page-Shipp & Van Niekerk, 2018) discussed group singing and its impact on the well-being of the participants. Another study discussed the experiences of participants in an amateur musical production (Page-Shipp, Joseph & Van Niekerk, 2018).

Joseph et al. (2018) conducted a study showing evidence that an amateur choral group experienced significant improvement in their well-being by participating in music activities. Members of the choral group expressed that musical activities gave their lives focus and meaning, opened avenues for new relationships to form, and offered feelings of fulfilment. Many of the members felt that social interaction with people who are like-minded, created a deep sense of unity and commitment to the group. This study also made mention of the importance of the audience during performances. A receptive audience further enhanced the choir members' feelings of well-being.

A study by Page-Shipp et al. (2018) explored the elements of well-being experienced by an amateur theatre group performing annual Gilbert and Sullivan operas. The cast convene once a year for approximately seven weeks to rehearse and perform an opera. Participants mention the pure joy of singing in a group as an opportunity to be on stage, as well as working towards a common goal as important factors for their participation in the project. The social aspect of participating in the opera, meeting up with old friends, and making new acquaintances, were some of the benefits experienced by the cast. Both of these last

mentioned local studies show that amateur musicians experience an improvement in their well-being through participating in music activities.

## **2.5 The PERMA model, music and well-being**

The value of the PERMA model in determining well-being have been discussed. Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment are all elements crucial to overall well-being. Various authors showed that music activities address all these areas identified as essential to overall well-being.

### **2.5.1 Music and positive emotion**

Croom (2015) confirms that an important element of well-being rests on positive feelings of happiness and enjoyment. Engaging in music can contribute to these feelings, therefore it stands to reason that music can have a direct and positive impact on emotion. Positive emotion is not only an element of the PERMA model, but forms an integral constituent part of SWB.

Burns (2001) found that listening to music had a significant effect on the stress levels of older adults. During the course of the 10-week study, there was an improvement in the mood of participants, and this improvement continued for a short time period after the study was concluded. Similarly, Waldon (2001) found that participants who were actively involved in creating and responding to music reported an overall improvement in their mood. This study was also conducted over a period of 10 weeks. These two studies show that even short term involvement in music activities can have a considerable impact on positive emotion and mood.

Lamont (2012) also mentions this hedonic impact of music, where it lowers stress levels, increases general feelings of happiness and enjoyment, and increases the perceived quality of life. This impact is significant in instances of both listening to music, as well as performing music. Increased feelings of happiness and lower stress levels are a common result when engaging in music activities.

A study by Dingle et al. (2013) investigated the effect of choral singing on disadvantaged adults, and found that positive emotion and reduced stress and tension was a major theme.

This study also showed that participants had an improved perception of self which correlates with the notion of an increase in the perceived quality of life mentioned by Lamont (2012). Judd and Pooley (2014) confirm the impact of music on the emotions of participants. A choral group consisting of members of the general public reported that they experienced great joy when singing and that being in a choir helped them manage work and home related stress. Both of these studies relate to singing in a choir. Choral singing is by nature a group activity and Hallam and Creech (2016) found that participants engaged in group music activities, such as active music making, derived pleasure, and enjoyment. The improved sense of self is also mentioned in a study by Lee et al. (2017). Children reported feeling happy, strong, and excited. These positive emotions, when experienced for an extended period of time, resulted in improved self-esteem, self-confidence and feelings of empowerment (Lee et al., 2017). Feelings of pleasure and enjoyment are in line with the hedonic approach to well-being, and it is only natural that being an active participant in recreational music, such as the *Whoop Up*, may have a positive impact on an individual's perception of overall well-being.

### **2.5.2 Music and engagement**

The element of engagement implies a vested interest, involvement and effort in a task (Ascenso et al., 2017). According to Croom (2015), engagement can relate to many aspects of an activity. A strong association has been found with 'flow' or being completely absorbed in a specific moment or activity. Immersion in music practice or music participation can support the experience of engagement, and therefore, music can contribute to an improved state of psychological well-being (Croom, 2015).

Many musicians have reported a loss of self-awareness when engaged in musical performances (Lamont, 2012). Comments such as "...the fingers move by themselves" (Lamont, 2012, p.577) are indicative of a high level of engagement and absorption. Pitts (2005) found that participants in a choral ensemble considered their involvement as a means to escape their daily lives and circumstances.

The element of engagement does not, however, refer exclusively to a flow experience. Engagement in group music activities may rely on other factors, as found in the study by Lee et al. (2017). The engagement of school pupils in music activities was achieved through fostering an interest in music, as well as involving enthusiastic teachers and facilitators in the

programmes. This study shows that leadership plays a pivotal role in ensuring engagement in activities. Engagement was further improved by creating activities, which satisfied the interests of the participants.

Lamont et al. (2018) state that engagement in music activities was shown in the commitment of the participants. Members of a community choir attended regular weekly rehearsals, which show that there were a deep commitment and engagement in the activity. Choir members also reported that they put in a great deal of effort during the rehearsal. These themes of commitment and hard work point to high levels of engagement in the music activity.

According to Seligman (2011) optimal engagement in activities results in high intrinsic rewards which motivate individuals to return to them. Engagement and experiences of flow can only be measured in retrospect, however, they have the effect of heightened positive emotions, which lead to improved overall well-being.

### **2.5.3 Music and relationships**

Numerous studies have found that music has an important impact on social interactions and the formation of meaningful relationships (Coffman, 2002; Dabback, 2008; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Lamont et al., 2018). Coffman's review (2002) shows that many researchers found the social aspect of music activities to be a main motivating factor for participation. Bartolome (2013) reports that social benefits were an important theme among the participants singing in a choral ensemble. The choir was a place of belonging, where a shared love of music could be explored. It was considered to be a safe space where acceptance was experienced. All the participants in a study by Judd and Pooley (2014) referred to the social aspect of belonging to a choir, and Lee et al. (2017) state that the element of relationships and its impact on well-being was most frequently identified during their analysis. Strong family, social, as well as work relationships, are important for effective functioning and improved well-being (Ascenso et al., 2017).

The impact of music participation on relationships is far-reaching. In a school environment, relationships between students, teachers, and peers are positively affected through meaningful engagement in music activities (Lee et al., 2017). Relationships within communities have also shown positive growth through participation in music activities

(Schipper & Bartleet, 2013). Choir members in a study by Lamont et al. (2018) reported a desire to connect with the community around them and research by Dingle et al. (2013) showed that group music participation assisted with the reintegration of disadvantaged adults into the community. Togetherness, the formation of new friendships, bonding and a sense of team spirit are important effects that music participation has on relationships (Williamson & Bonshor, 2019). Participating in music activities can help avoid feelings of loneliness and isolation (Hays & Minichiello, 2005), as it provides an environment where participants can socialise and network with like-minded individuals (Joseph & Southcott, 2014, Waddington-Jones et al., 2019). Long-standing choral groups have been studied and the members felt so strongly about the social benefits of choral singing that they likened it to being “part of an extended family” (Joseph & Southcott, 2014, p.133). However, even short-term involvement in music has important benefits, such as the ability to form rapid bonds between individuals (Pearce et al., 2015).

#### **2.5.4 Music and meaning**

Meaning or purpose in life is crucial to experiencing high levels of well-being. There are several needs that human beings need to fulfil in order to see their lives as having meaning, one of which is working towards attaining a specific goal (Croom, 2015). Participation in music can satisfy the search for meaning in life.

Dabback (2008) found that active engagement in music has an important role to play in identity formation. He found that music can be the catalyst to form new identities, but also to reclaim lost identities. Individuals can self-identify as musicians for the first time, revisit the musical selves of their youth, or explore new musical identities previously overlooked. All of these avenues can provide an individual with a sense of purpose through music (Dabback, 2008). Creech, Hallam, Varvarigou, Gaunt, McQueen and Pincas (2014) identified that engaging in music activities can provide individuals, especially later in life, with a sense of purpose, autonomy and social affirmation – the elements of SWB. Purpose is derived from the structure required to practice and acquire new skills (Hallam & Creech, 2016), as well as the formation of new identities through active music-making. The participants in the study by Hallam and Creech (2016) felt motivated to improve their new skill sets and indicated that they felt a sense of control over their lives.

Joseph and Southcott (2014) found that not only did group singing have social benefits for the participants as discussed above, but also that it gave them a sense of purpose. Through their singing, they could bring enjoyment to their audiences and the participants themselves were fulfilled, empowered and validated. Similarly, Lamont et al. (2018) connected meaning, as described in the PERMA model, with several themes of their study. Connecting with others, working towards a common goal, as well as the consistent nature of participating in a choral ensemble all provided meaning to the lives of the participants. The findings of Waddington-Jones et al. (2019) further substantiate the correlation of meaning to purpose. Participants in a workshop for collaborative composition state that the sessions gave structure to their weeks. They looked forward to each session and aspired to continue working together as a group at the conclusion of the study. This aspiration indicates the formation of a group identity through meaningful participation in music activities (Waddington-Jones et al., 2019).

Within the school community, researchers observed meaningful engagement in music activities as three themes (Lee et al., 2017). The introduction of music programmes in schools resulted in a positive school culture, performances outside the schools offered students real world experiences and music participation created an opportunity for students to connect to the broader community. Students were able to make meaningful contributions at nursing homes, nursery schools and areas in need (Lee et al., 2017).

### **2.5.5 Music and accomplishment**

Feelings of accomplishment are so crucial to well-being that human beings will strive for this element even at the expense of positive emotions, engagement, relationships, and meaning (Croom, 2015). Lamont et al. (2018) found that the active involvement of older adults in creating music as a group, and working towards a common goal, resulted in feelings of achievement and accomplishment. Engaging in music over time also afforded these participants an opportunity to look back on their achievements and growth, which further fostered a sense of accomplishment. Feelings of accomplishment are the result of being challenged and then overcoming these challenges. Challenges may include learning repertoire or developing breath control (Lee et al., 2016). Individuals who overcome musical challenges may feel better equipped and confident to address other challenges in life (Lee et al., 2016, Lee et al., 2017).

Self-confidence is a by-product of accomplishment brought on by musical performances, and the mastering of new skills (Joseph & Southcott, 2014). Bartolome (2013) identified accomplishment as an important theme in her study, which consisted of young girls. Participants indicated that singing in a choir not only gave them a sense of accomplishment, but they also experienced higher levels of self-confidence. Improved self-confidence in one's musical ability, such as singing and composing, may lead to higher levels of self-confidence in other areas of life (Waddington-Jones et al., 2019).

Similarly, Hallam and Creech (2016) found that making music, practicing and ultimately, performing to an audience generated significant feelings of accomplishment. Individuals involved in music groups and music activities feel that they are successful in meeting the challenges of learning an instrument or singing in a choir. The ability to perform and give back to the community also provides participants with validation.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The literature review discussed hedonia (the pursuit of pleasure) and eudaimonia (the desire to live one's best life) in relation to music and well-being. Hedonia and eudaimonia have various elements that overlap and the PERMA model has been identified as a useful tool to investigate eudaimonic well-being as it contains elements, which address both hedonia and eudaimonia. The literature review showed that music can have a profound impact on the well-being of participants involved in professional music groups, community music groups and amateur music groups. Various studies have successfully used the PERMA model to investigate well-being as this relates to music participation.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 addresses the methodology used for this study. A brief description will be given for the choice and suitability of approach and design with specific reference to a qualitative instrumental case study. Participant sampling, methods of data collection and data analyses procedures will be discussed in detail. Ethical procedures are explained and the considerations for validity and reliability of this study will be discussed.

#### 3.2 Research approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach. A qualitative approach is unstructured in the sense that it allows the researcher to be flexible in all aspects of the study (Kumar, 2005). This unstructured approach is suitable for exploring the nature of a human problem, issue, or phenomenon. The qualitative researcher's focus is on describing and understanding human behaviour instead of explaining and predicting (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Creswell (2018) lists characteristics of qualitative research in line with the characteristics of this study. Qualitative research is informed by a theoretical framework which the researcher uses to understand the social or human problem described by the study, and data is collected through personal conversations and face to face interactions. Researchers collect their own data using interviews and observations. Patterns, categories and themes are developed through inductive and deductive reasoning. Throughout the research process, the researcher must remain focused on meaning. The qualitative approach can change and evolve throughout the research process, in line with the unstructured nature of qualitative research mentioned by Kumar (2005).

A qualitative approach is suitable for the characteristics of this study, because the aim is to explore the elements of well-being experienced by participants in a community musical project. The PERMA well-being model is the theoretical framework informing this study. The aspects of well-being experienced by the participants will be understood through the lens of the PERMA model.

### 3.3 Research design

Qualitative researchers are interested in and focus on the meaning participants give to their experiences. This study followed an instrumental case study design. In a case study the researcher is immersed in the activities of one person, or a small sample of people, looking for patterns which may emerge (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011). An instrumental case study focuses on a specific issue and the researcher uses a bounded case to explore or illustrate the issue (Creswell, 2018). Instrumental case studies can be used to test a theory or to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon (De Vos et al., 2011). The researcher explores a bounded case, uses in-depth data collection methods from multiple sources and reports on themes emerging from the study. A bounded case can be defined by constraints such as time or place (Creswell, 2018).

There are elements of phenomenology present in this study, given that participants are describing their lived experiences. In phenomenological research, a specific phenomenon is the focus of the study (Creswell, 2018). In this study, focus is placed on the phenomenon of well-being. This phenomenon is then explored by interacting with a group of people all experiencing the same phenomenon and the researcher is able to understand the essence of the experience for all participants (Moustakas, 1994).

An instrumental case study design is appropriate for this study as the case is bounded by time and place. The *Whoop Up* takes place only once every four years for a period of eight weeks. The issue, well-being, is explored through the first-hand accounts of the participants in in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The researcher will gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, well-being, as experienced through engagement in community music.

### 3.4 Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was used. In purposive sampling the researcher chooses a specific sample due to the particular features which will be of use for the study (De Vos et al., 2011). Creswell (2018) further states that purposive sampling is the main sampling strategy used in qualitative research. The sample chosen will give the researcher the best opportunity to explore the research question and gain a deeper understanding of the research problem.

A sample of 30 adults involved in the March 2018 *Whoop Up* took part in the study. The criteria for the selection of the participants were:

First, the participants had to be over the age of eighteen. This would ensure that the participant was able to sign their own informed consent which made the ethical clearance procedure easier.

Second, they had to be involved in the *Whoop Up* for the duration of the eight-week process. They had to be involved in the rehearsals as well as the performances. This would enable the participant to accurately describe emotions and experiences from both the rehearsal process and performance point of view. Being involved in the entire process would give the participant an overall experience of the *Whoop Up*.

Third, the participants had to include representatives of all facets of the school community. Staff members (past and present), parents (past and present), as well as members of the Old Boys' Association (OBA) were chosen to participate in the study. These different representatives all had a unique point of view depending on their relationship to the school at the time. In some cases, spouses participated together and they also provided an interesting perspective on performing with a loved one.

The sample was quite varied. The ages of participants range from early twenties to mid-seventies. The age gap is substantial which allowed for rich data from varying perspectives. The sample consisted of twenty-one women and nine men. The sample consisted of seventeen present parents, six past parents, one acquaintance of a present parent, three present staff members, one past staff member and two members of the OBA. This is representative of the ratio of parents to staff members who participate in the *Whoop Up*. The ratio of OBA participants are much higher in the production, but only two members of the OBA responded to my invitation to participate in the study.

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, those who completed questionnaires were assigned numbers for data purposes, and participants who took part in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews were given pseudonyms. Four of the participants who completed the questionnaires agreed to a follow-up interview. A total of 17 participants took part in the in-depth interviews.

Table 3.1 includes information about the participants, their allotted pseudonym, affiliation to the school, performance experience, and number of times they participated in the *Whoop Up*.

**Table 3.1: Participant pseudonym names, affiliation to the school, performance experience and number of times they participated in the Whoop Up**

Name	Affiliation	Performing experience and rationale for participating in the <i>Whoop Up</i>	<i>Whoop Up</i> involvement
Anne	Parent	Anne has previous experience as a performer and had dreams of becoming a professional dancer. Life circumstances did not allow for her dream to become a reality. Participating in the <i>Whoop Up</i> was an opportunity to express her creative side.	Second
Carol	Staff member and parent	Carol has a history of performance both as a child and as an adult. Carol has had a love for the stage since childhood.	First
Renata	Parent	Renata is a self-proclaimed introvert and decided to challenge herself by participating in the <i>Whoop Up</i> . She also wanted to be more involved in the community. Renata convinced her husband to take part in the <i>Whoop Up</i> with her.	First
Stacey	Parent	Stacey has experience as a classical singer and wanted to be a professional singer. She did not follow this path and the <i>Whoop Up</i> was an opportunity for her to perform again.	First

Joy	Parent	This was Joy's third <i>Whoop Up</i> . Her enjoyable previous experiences provided the motivation to join again.	Third
Mike	Parent	Mike, Joy's husband, was envious of how much fun Joy was having and decided to join her in participating in the <i>Whoop Up</i> . Joy and Mike were interviewed a couple.	Second
Amanda	Parent	Amanda enjoyed participating in the arts at school and university. Participating in the <i>Whoop Up</i> was an opportunity to be on stage again. Amanda also wanted to spend time with friends.	First
Claire	Parent	Claire had been an audience member at previous performances of the <i>Whoop Up</i> . Claire enjoyed watching the show and this motivated her to participate in 2018.	First
Denise	Past parent	Denise has been part of four previous productions. Her love for the stage, dancing, prior experience and an opportunity to remain connected to the school, provided the motivation to join the <i>Whoop Up</i> again.	Fifth
Erica	Parent	Erica has no history of performance aside from previous <i>Whoop Ups</i> , but she enjoys the challenge of trying new things.	Third
Gary	Member of OBA and past parent	Gary is part of the production team and the Old Boys' Association. He feels that participating in the <i>Whoop Up</i> is a way to give back to the school in a practical manner.	Eighth
Helen	Staff member	Helen has no history of performance and wanted to spend time with friends. Her enjoyable previous	Second

		experiences motivated her to join again. Helen convinced her fiancé to participate with her.	
Lisa	Past parent	Lisa enjoys participating in cultural activities. Her enjoyable previous experiences motivated her to join again. Lisa also enjoyed spending time with her friends at the <i>Whoop Up</i> .	Second
Mary	Past parent	Mary had a dream of being a professional singer, but felt that she did not have the talent required. She still loves singing and will make full use any opportunity to perform. Her previous experiences motivated her to join again.	Second
Ryan	Parent	Ryan was involved in drama at school and has a passion for dancing and acting. The <i>Whoop Up</i> was an opportunity to be on stage and live out his passion.	Third
Sandra	Staff member and parent	Sandra had very limited experience with performance as a child. She thought the <i>Whoop Up</i> would be fun and she likes being involved with the community. Sandra convinced her husband to participate with her.	First
Simon	Past parent	Simon has a love for the stage which was fostered from a young age. He enjoys singing and acting and uses every opportunity to perform. Simon's previous experiences motivated him to join again.	Fifth
Sally	Parent	Sally enjoyed drama at school and used the <i>Whoop Up</i> as an opportunity to get in touch with her creative side again. Her enjoyable previous experience motivated her to join again.	Second
Travis	OBA	He was asked to do the "Old Boys' Ballet" and as a member of the Old Boys' Association he has been involved in the productions ever since.	Every <i>Whoop Up</i> since the

			80's – not sure how many
William	Past staff member	William enjoyed his first <i>Whoop Up</i> experience and was motivated to join again in 2018. He saw it as an opportunity to spend time with his former colleagues and friends.	Second
Diana	Parent	Diana played the recorder and piano at school, however, she had never participated in a musical such as the <i>Whoop Up</i> before her first experience. She enjoyed the experience and was motivated to join again in 2018.	Second
Clive	Past parent	Clive enjoys performing and spending time with people who share his passion. He enjoyed his first <i>Whoop Up</i> experience and was motivated join again in subsequent years.	Fifth
Daniel	Parent	Daniel, Claire's husband, had been an audience member at the previous performances of the <i>Whoop Up</i> and this motivated him to join in 2018.	First
Jane	Parent	Jane never had the opportunity to perform in school productions as a child and the <i>Whoop Up</i> provided the opportunity to try something new.	First
Jennifer	Past parent	Jennifer enjoyed performing at school and found that, as an adult, there are no such opportunities. She decided to join the <i>Whoop Up</i> in 2018.	First
Linda	Parent	Linda enjoys amateur theatre and the <i>Whoop Up</i> provided the opportunity for performance. She also wanted to engage with the school community.	First
Natalie	Parent	Natalie always enjoyed amateur singing, dancing and acting. The <i>Whoop Up</i> provided her with the opportunity to express her love of the arts.	Fourth

Norma	Parent	Norma never had the opportunity to perform in her youth. She had been an audience member at previous performances of the <i>Whoop Up</i> and was motivated to join in 2018.	First
Sara	Parent	Sara loved singing and dancing, but did not have the confidence to participate in school productions in her youth. The <i>Whoop Up</i> provided an opportunity to try something new.	First
Zane	Acquaintance of a parent	Zane loved singing and heard about the <i>Whoop Up</i> from an acquaintance at work (a parent at WHPS). He decided to join the 2018 production.	First

### 3.5. Data collection

The research data was collected in two phases. First, a pre-interview questionnaire was distributed directly after the performances of the *Whoop Up* in order to garner interest in the study and glean preliminary information. A few weeks later, participants who expressed interest were invited to a semi-structured interview.

#### Phase 1: The questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of nine predetermined open-ended questions designed to give a general overview of the participants' experiences during the *Whoop Up* (see appendix B). The questions were formulated using the PERMA well-being model in order to elicit responses relating to positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The purpose of the questionnaire was to provide the researcher with an overview of the participants' experiences as it relates to well-being. The answers were then used to identify additional questions needed for the in-depth semi-structured interviews.

#### Phase 2: The semi-structured interviews

Phase 2 included in-depth semi-structured interviews (see appendix C). The interview schedule consisted of fourteen predetermined, open-ended questions designed to capture

data relevant to the research topic during the interview. The interview questions, as with the questionnaire, were based on the PERMA well-being model.

The questions were designed to encourage the participants to reflect on their unique subjective experiences of well-being, rather than a general discussion. The main intention of the interview was to gain insight into participants' experiences of well-being in relation to positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment, while participating in a community musical project.

The interview schedule was necessary to appropriately guide the discussion. The semi-structured interview schedule is flexible, which allowed the researcher to delve deeper into certain aspects or topics which arose during the course of the interview.

### **3.6 Procedures and data collection strategy**

The following procedure was followed during data collection:

Phase 1: Contacting the participants, letter of consent

As a staff member at WHPS and a participant in the 2018 *Whoop Up*, I obtained permission from the Headmaster of WHPS and the producer of the *Whoop Up* to perform the study at the school. Permission was also granted to use the name of the school in the study, as well as divulge the identity of the producer, David Chamberlain.

After permission was obtained, the cast members were emailed individually. The email provided a brief outline of the study and invited cast members to participate. Once participants agreed to participate, they were further briefed on the particulars of the study, either face to face or via email. Once participants indicated their willingness to participate, a letter of informed consent was emailed to the willing participants (see appendix D).

Phase 2: Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews

A total of thirteen participants agreed to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was emailed to the participants, and once completed, returned via email. All the participants who completed the questionnaire agreed to a follow-up interview should it be necessary at a later stage. I identified four questionnaires, which contained aspects worthy of further exploration, then I contacted the four participants in question and they agreed to a follow-up interview.

The interviews were conducted telephonically and, with the participants' permission, were recorded using a laptop. The duration of each follow-up interview was 15 – 20 minutes.

A further 17 participants indicated their willingness to take part in in-depth semi-structured interviews. These participants were contacted via email or phone and a suitable time for the interview was arranged. A letter of informed consent was sent to each participant prior to the interview. For logistical reasons, the interviews were conducted telephonically and, with permission from the participants, were recorded using a laptop. The duration of the interviews lasted between 20-30 minutes each.

Each interview started with question one on the interview schedule. Thereafter, I did not necessarily follow the order of the predetermined questions, but rather used them as prompts and allowed the interview to take on its own shape. After hearing the responses to questions, it was often necessary to ask unplanned questions to further explore an idea or aspect brought up by the participant. This meant that some predetermined questions were modified during the interview. It often happened that a participant would share aspects of predetermined questions without being prompted to do so. I was struck by the honesty and transparency with which the participants shared their experiences, often divulging private thoughts in their responses.

There were no predetermined questions for the follow up interview, rather the interview was guided by the participants' questionnaire responses. Some of the questions did, however, come from the interview schedule for the in-depth semi-structured interviews. Participants were willing to explore the aspects of the questionnaire in greater detail, and as a result the data was rich and provided great insight into their experiences.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

The process for analysing the data was approached using Creswell's data analysis spiral (Creswell, 2018). When a researcher is analysing qualitative data, they often move in circles of analysis instead of using a linear approach. The data obtained from the questionnaires as well as the interviews, were analysed using the same method. The thematic data analysis took place in five steps.

### **3.7.1 Data analysis: Questionnaires (see appendix E)**

#### **Step 1: Managing and organising the data**

Managing and organising the questionnaires was simple due to the fact that the responses were emailed to me. The responses were, however, returned to me in various formats. I copied the questionnaires into word documents and applied the same format to all the documents. The aim of this step was to ensure that the text was uniform and I was unable to determine which response came from which participant. This allowed me to work with the data in a measure of objectivity.

#### **Step 2: Reading and memoing emergent ideas**

After managing and organising the completed questionnaires, I carefully read through each participant's responses to get an overall view of the data. The aim of this step was to familiarise myself with the data on a broad level before moving on to the next step of the analyses. I then re-read each questionnaire making initial notes about interesting aspects and particularly rich areas. A spreadsheet was created to input the initial notes for each questionnaire, according to each question. The spreadsheet enabled me to see the entire data set at a glance.

#### **Step 3: Describing and classifying codes into themes**

The notes from step two informed the codes for the data. The codes were colour-coded and grouped into categories based on the essence of each code. I created a list with all the categories and these categories were further collapsed into themes. This step was challenging, as the analyses was no longer led by the participants' voices, but by my own understanding of the categories and themes.

#### **Step 4: Developing and assessing interpretations**

The themes that emerged from the analyses were classified according to the PERMA model. No subthemes were assigned at this stage. In the final step of the questionnaire analyses, I noted the frequency of statements made by the participants relating to each main theme, in order to ascertain the prevalence of each theme across the sample.

### **3.7.2 Data analysis: In-depth semi-structured interviews (see appendix F)**

#### **Step 1: Managing and organising the data**

Each interview was transcribed verbatim. This was a time-consuming process, however, it allowed me to intimately engage with the data and relive the interviews by listening to, and transcribing the recordings. All the interviews were transcribed before starting the analyses, which allowed me to obtain a broad overall view of the data.

#### **Step 2: Reading and memoing emergent ideas**

The interviews were entered into a table with a column each for the interview (Column 1), notes (Column 2), codes (Column 3) and themes (Column 4). These columns were populated throughout the course of the analyses. During the reading stage, notes were made in Column 2, identifying interesting aspects of the interviews specific to each participant. Each interview was re-read and the notes led to codes which populated Column 3 of the table.

#### **Step 3: Describing and classifying codes into themes**

During this step the codes identified in Step 2 were colour coded, categorised and grouped together into themes. The themes were noted in Column 4 of the interview analyses table. As with the questionnaires, this step was challenging in the sense that I was moving away from being led by the participants and taking on a more independent role in the analyses. A comprehensive list of themes was made, which were then classified according to the PERMA model based on their commonality with each element of PERMA. The elements of PERMA became the main themes for this study and subthemes were identified.

After identifying the subthemes, I returned to the transcripts of the interviews and identified suitable quotes to substantiate each subtheme. True to the nature of the data analyses spiral, there was a continuous referral to the interview, notes and codes throughout the process of developing themes.

#### **Step 4: Developing and assessing interpretations**

During this final step of the process, I carefully re-read each interview transcript noting the frequency of statements relating to each element of the PERMA model. The aim of this process is to ascertain the prevalence of each theme across the sample.

The findings of the questionnaires and the findings of the interviews were compared at this stage of the analyses. Main themes and subthemes were compared across the sample of each data set. This was an exhilarating process as the aim of a qualitative researcher, to focus on the meaning participants give to their experiences, became clear through the comparison of themes and subthemes.

#### Step 5: Representing and visualising the data

After summarising and condensing the data into main themes and subthemes the first draft of the chapter was written. The first step of the analyses used inductive reasoning, moving from the specific experiences of the participants to the generalised themes developed. During the second part of the analysis, the themes were deductively categorised according to the PERMA model. Deductive reasoning allowed the researcher to move from general themes and apply them to the specific elements of the PERMA model. This method of reasoning does not provide any new information, however, it does provide the logical connection between emergent themes and the theoretical framework (De Vos et al., 2011).

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

This study strictly adhered to the ethical procedures set out by the University of Pretoria. Permission was received from the relevant authorities to conduct the research at the school. Once participants agreed to participate in the study, the purpose of the study was discussed with each participant. All participants were asked to sign a letter of informed consent which outlined the aim of the study and the research procedures. Participants were informed that their participation is voluntary and their anonymity guaranteed. They were reminded that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence.

### **3.9 Research quality**

It is important to assess the validity and reliability of qualitative research according to four main criteria (Smith et al., 2009). Through transcribing the semi-structured interviews, a rich

data-set is created, allowing the researcher to formulate opinions on the interpretation of the data. The findings will be enhanced through triangulation, a process that acknowledges the perspectives and contributions of other researchers (Yardley, 2008). The triangulation process in this study included discussions of the analysis and formulation of themes with an independent researcher. A guide, offered by Lucy Yardley, state the four criteria to be: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance of the study.

Regarding sensitivity to context, I am able to relate to the participants of the *Whoop Up* as I have been involved in one prior *Whoop Up* production. I, therefore, have first-hand knowledge of the experiences a participant has during the process of rehearsals and performances. The participants were aware of this and we could move from general conversation about what the *Whoop Up* entails to more meaningful aspects of participation.

The second criterion, commitment and rigour, was met in my frequent reassurance of the participants that there are no right or wrong answers, where only their unique experience and point of view. I had been a member of the school community for a considerable amount of time and had a great rapport with each of the participants as we were familiar with each other. As a result, the participants were comfortable during the interview process and gave insightful and relevant information during the interviews.

The third criterion, transparency and coherence, was met through strict adherence to the methodological processes of the qualitative case study design. The analysis process and subthemes were discussed with an independent researcher ensuring triangulation and transparency.

The fourth criterion, the impact and importance of the study is met because this study is conducted at a time where studies into well-being through community music is gaining traction, as mentioned in Chapter 2.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a detailed description of the methodology followed in this study. The qualitative approach and instrumental case study design were discussed and its suitability was applied to this study. Participant sampling, data collection and data analyses procedures

were presented. Finally, ethical considerations and the validity and reliability of this study were discussed.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis from the transcribed interviews, which are presented verbatim. The qualitative questionnaires with open-ended questions were distributed to some participants before the interviews took place, however, the results from the questionnaires did not yield novel data and were similar to the interviews, therefore only results from the interviews will be reported. The questionnaire nevertheless provided a good background of the study and informed the need for additional questions to ask in the semi-structured interviews. The main themes are the well-being indicators from the PERMA model. Data analysis led to the development of various subthemes for each main theme. The subthemes are discussed in five sections. Each section presents one main theme, the relevant subthemes and extracts from the interviews which support elements from each subtheme.

#### 4.2 Themes, subthemes and statements

Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment are the five elements of the PERMA well-being model and therefore the main themes of the analysis. Statements relating to each theme were tallied across the data set in order to ascertain the prevalence of certain themes. This process revealed which themes from the PERMA well-being model was experienced most frequently by the participants. Numerous subthemes were identified for each theme. Data analysis revealed three subthemes for the first theme, positive emotion. Engagement and relationships both have five relevant subthemes. The theme meaning was identified as having the highest number of statements which resulted in three subthemes. The final theme, accomplishment, has two relevant subthemes.

Table 4.1 presents the main themes, relevant subthemes and include the number of statements for each theme.

**Table 4.1 Themes, subthemes and number of statements per theme**

<b>Theme 1:</b> <b>Positive emotion (136)</b>	<b>Theme 2:</b> <b>Engagement (152)</b>	<b>Theme 3:</b> <b>Relationships (134)</b>	<b>Theme 4:</b> <b>Meaning (245)</b>	<b>Theme 5:</b> <b>Accomplishment (127)</b>
<b>Subthemes:</b>  1. History of performance 2. Fun and enjoyment 3. Positive emotions relating to performance	<b>Subthemes:</b>  1. Commitment 2. Freedom and ease in participation 3. Flow-like experiences 4. Sense of loss at conclusion 5. Fulfilling engagement leads to continued participation	<b>Subthemes:</b>  1. Community 2. Friendships 3. Camaraderie 4. Family 5. Facilitators	<b>Subthemes:</b>  1. Meaning and sense of self 2. Meaning to the community 3. Meaningful participation	<b>Subthemes:</b>  1. Accomplishment through personal investment 2. Accomplishment through performance

### 4.3 Theme 1: Positive Emotion

Results relating to the positive emotions element of the PERMA model reveal that participants experienced positive emotions across all spheres of the *Whoop Up*. One hundred and thirty-six statements regarding positive emotion were identified across the data set. Positive emotion emerged as an important motivator for participating in the *Whoop Up*. Experiences during rehearsals, performance, and socialisation, as well as motivations for future participation all showed elements of positive emotion. Three subthemes were identified, namely: history of performance, fun and enjoyment, and positive emotions relating to performance.

#### 4.3.1 Subtheme 1: History of performance

Most of the participants reported positive memories of performance as children. In fact, only four participants had no previous personal experiences with the theatre. These positive experiences led participants to approach the *Whoop Up* with a positive frame of mind and a desire to relive the positive emotions from their childhood.

Anne, Stacey, and Mary had dreams of becoming professional performers. Life circumstances did not allow for this to become a reality, however, the positive emotions they experienced as young adults were revived during the *Whoop Up*.

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 the *Whoop Up*, that I ended up there. – Stacey

Four participants spoke specifically about their involvement during preparatory school and high school years. Sally, Amanda, Denise, and Ryan were passionate about performing from a young age and used every opportunity to perform. Participating in the *Whoop Up* reminded them of the joy they experienced in their youth.

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. – Amanda

At school and whenever, I was really interested in drama and I did all the drama and all that sort of stuff, and obviously your career and what have you takes you to other places, but it's always something I've just enjoyed. So there is just a real passion for singing and dancing and acting. These sort of opportunities don't come around that often, you know, later on. – Ryan

Another group of participants had a minimal history of performance at school level, however, these experiences were positive and created long-lasting positive memories for them. Gary recalled being involved in plays at preparatory school level and expressed regret that he did not continue this involvement in later years.

I, as a child at WHPS, enjoyed going on stage and I never did it at high school. And I think going back on stage as an adult, you kind of then regret that you didn't do it at high school because you get so much fun out of it. But one is often under peer pressure at school so it's not the thing to do, to go on stage to sing and dance and what have you. It brings out a little bit of regret that you didn't do that at high school but then you have the satisfaction that you at least have done it as an adult. And even the thought of going on stage in an amateur production on a more serious note is something that crosses your mind. – Gary

Gary's involvement in the *Whoop Up* as an adult satisfied his longing to perform and reminded him of the fun of performing. He could relive that sense of fun through his participation in the *Whoop Up*.

For some participants, a family history of performance fostered a love for the theatre. Joy was exposed to the theatre through her parents' involvement. This created a desire to be involved in order to experience the fun she witnessed in her family. Carol's family was involved in various theatre productions and it became part of her life. She remembers being happy as a child and connected that happiness to the theatre.

My parents used to do, um, my parents used to belong to Round Table and they used to do a show every two years to raise money for whatever. And I remember them doing it and having so much fun and so when this came along I decided well, let's do it and it was amazing. – Joy

It's part of who I am. That's who I am. I'm a happy kind of a person. I like to laugh, 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

Participants with no previous performance experience seemed to understand the impact that being involved in the performing arts can have on personal well-being after the *Whoop Up*. This is also reflected in Gary's sentiment of regret for not continuing with performance after preparatory school. Mike's realisation came after his fleeting involvement in the arts.

And in my matric year I did our Interhouse Play festival and I did backstage. I didn't do any acting but I did do the backstage for our Interhouse Play. And I joined the choir at school in my Matric year. And it's one of those things I think, well you're an idiot. You should have done that a lot sooner. Because I don't think I'm a great singer, but I like singing. You know it's enjoyable, it's fun. And you know it's something that if you enjoy doing it you should do it. That's kind of what I think. – Mike

A positive history of performance, whether it is experienced through family or personal experience, had a lasting impact on the participants. The fun and enjoyment experienced by the participants was reflected in the data and led to the development of the next theme.

#### **4.3.2 Subtheme 2: Fun and enjoyment**

The second subtheme, fun and enjoyment, was reflected at some point in each participant's experience of the *Whoop Up*. The prospect of having fun was a strong motivator for participation. First time participants either watched previous productions which motivated them to join or they heard about the experience from previous cast members.

I wasn't really keen on jumping up and down in front of people and stuff like that. So I wasn't that keen and then Joy went, and I went and watched. And she had lots of fun. So when the second one came along I thought ok, that's fine I'll go. – Mike

So word of mouth, I would say word of mouth what was, you know how people talk about it. You know they really reminisce and they say how wonderful the last two or three... And you very rarely find people who have only done one and said I'm not doing it again. – Claire

Participants went into the experience with the goal of having fun. The performances at the end of the process were important and everyone worked hard towards those events, however, the main goal of participating in the *Whoop Up* is having fun.

Ja, it's a nice sociable thing and you get up and you make a fool of yourself on the stage and people have a laugh and you get mocked about it and it's just great fun. It's what it's all about. – Travis

All the first-time participants of the *Whoop Up* indicated that they felt nervous before the first rehearsal. Most of the other, more experienced, participants recalled their uncertainty when they were new to the production. Every participant, however, mentioned that they felt comfortable quickly, due to the relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere. Amanda's experience echoes the responses of the other participants:

I was very nervous. I think I asked my friends twenty times if they're sure they were going to show up because I wasn't doing it alone. So ja, I think that, um, doing something like this, which isn't your normal everyday thing, it's very daunting. It's just very nerve wracking. – Amanda

Her response to how it changed during the course of the rehearsals:

It changed almost immediately. I think literally after that first night where we all sat and we're kind of listening to Dawie and I think fifteen minutes in, everyone kind of sussed out everyone and you're oh no, everyone was here to have fun and it was going to be cool. And after that it was easy. – Amanda

Mike had a different approach to the first rehearsal, which was unique among the data set. He did not feel any anxiety.

I don't think I was particularly worried. I mean the nice thing is, the things that I didn't want to do, or didn't like doing, were those big group things where we did dancing and stuff on the stage – it's fine, I just went and stood in the back row. So actually it was fine. And I think both times, the fact that we were doing it with people that we liked and got on with, and could sit and have a chat with in a very relaxed atmosphere meant that there wasn't a lot of... no I wasn't particularly nervous. – Mike

Amanda and Mike had very different experiences before the first rehearsal, however, both indicate that being with other, like-minded people created a relaxing atmosphere.

In addition to a relaxing atmosphere, an atmosphere of fun was described in relation to the overall experience and 14 participants spoke specifically of laughter. Being able to laugh at yourself and to laugh with others was meaningful to the participants.

And if you just think the amount of laughter, and what have you that went with the whole process of putting the show together. You know I'm sure that, besides the late nights taking a toll, and the drinking, all the laughter and happiness probably extends our lives. You need to do these things. – Ryan

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

Laughing together was an important aspect of the fun and enjoyment experienced by the participants. Amanda alluded to this fact with "...laugh at each other and that makes it easier."

Having fun with friends and spending time with each other in a positive environment enhanced the experience of fun and enjoyment.

I'm one of those... I like to sit at the back and make trouble when I have a chance. So I really enjoyed sitting at the back with a couple of my mates that I made during the night, always having a little bit of fun. – William

The impact of sharing positive emotions with others were evident in couples who participated in the *Whoop Up* together. Participants who performed with their partners expressed that it was fun to have them around, to share the experience and to laugh together.

Normally on a Sunday we're getting ready for school, sorting out... you know not relaxing anymore. But with *Whoop Up* we were still having fun on a Sunday as part of our weekend and we did it together every single Sunday for what was it, 8 weeks? – Sandra

Joy was derived not only from spending time with the rest of the cast, but also in engaging in the activities. Singing and dancing together added to the fun and enjoyment of the *Whoop Up*. Participants felt that using your talents was fun.

I mean, what's not to like. Getting together on a Sunday evening, having a few glasses of wine and singing together. – Stacey

You know you arrive on a Sunday and you sing some songs and you practice and you... and I find singing extremely... I find it very... um... it almost puts you on a high. It's like exercise almost. You get a bit of a high. – Lisa

For Carol, the enjoyment lay mostly in participating in the activities and less in the interaction with others. She had an intrinsic motivation to use her talents and engage with singing and dancing.

I think it was more like just doing something I enjoy. The people were there, but it wasn't because of the people. I didn't go to the thing because of the people. I went because I was going to do the dancing, and I love dancing and I like singing, and I find it fun, and it makes me happy to sing and to dance. – Carol

The fun and enjoyment experienced during rehearsals flowed through to the participants' experiences of the performances. There was a strong response to positive emotion during performance, which leads to the next theme.

### 4.3.3 Subtheme 3: Positive emotion relating to performance

Positive emotions were experienced during every stage of performance. The build up to the performance, the time spent on stage, the interaction with the audience and positive emotions lingered after the conclusion of the performances.

The build-up to the performances was meaningful to the participants. Denise described the week before the performances as “special” and the cast members looked forward to performing on stage. The performances were seen as the highlight of the production, the pinnacle that everyone had been working towards. Participants enjoyed preparing for the performance with their peers. The nerves and anticipation were positive experiences.

The evening before the first show I had three friends at my house. We went together to have our hair done and our makeup done, all with a bottle of champagne. I told them it almost feels like a matric farewell! – Erica

When you arrive at the show and everyone is putting on makeup and someone helps you with your hair and someone else helps you with your eyelashes, I enjoy that. Before the show when everyone is a little nervous... -- Denise

Once on stage, participants described the emotions they experienced during the performances as exhilarating, exciting, thrilling and awesome. They felt free of restrictions and were able to lose their inhibitions and perform with abandon.

See, I loved that because then you’ve got the excitement of being backstage. And everybody’s on a high, everybody’s having fun and it’s just a culmination of people who’ve put the work in and it’s now time to show off a bit. It’s quite fun and it’s exciting and everybody’s kind of quite euphoric you know. – Sally

Ja, it’s excitement, it’s the thrill of actually being under the lights. I think in most people, we... it’s nice to perform. Everybody would like to be a professional actor sort of thing and it’s your turn in the limelight. It’s a thrilling experience. – Gary

Thirteen participants mentioned the performance high that is felt during and after the performance. The audience had a direct impact on this feeling and participants mostly felt this “high” when the audience responded positively to their performance on stage.

Like super endorphin rush. You are nervous and you know that you've done well afterwards, I mean all that happens then is you're completely on a high. - Helen

Putting on a good show and knowing you put on a good show and getting feedback from the audience is fabulous. It's really, really nice. And seeing people appreciating what you've done. That is... you know, and it going off well, I think that really does put you on a high. – Lisa

The interaction between the cast on stage and the audience created an increased sense of happiness and joy in the participants. When the audience responded favourably to the performances, the participants felt an increased motivation to give their best. According to Erica, the cast members had so much fun on stage that the audience could not help but enjoy themselves as well. Nineteen participants commented on the effect that the audience has on the performance and mood of the cast.

I can understand why people like to do the theatre. Because it puts you on a high and the more they respond to you the more you want to put out I think. It flicks a switch. – Claire

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

The adrenaline high and euphoria of performing in front of a crowd did not disappear immediately after the performance. Participants indicated that the feeling continued, especially when the cast interacted with the audience after the show. The adulation received from the audience made some feel like stars. Participants commented that they felt special after the performances and satisfied that they were able to convey their fun and enjoyment to the audience successfully.

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

#### **4.4 Theme 2: Engagement**

Results indicated that the theme of engagement was reflected in the level of involvement of each participant. Although the main focus was on fun and enjoyment, as expressed in Theme 1, participants were entirely committed to the process. The participants experienced freedom and ease in their participation and there were statements which reflected flow-like

experiences. Finally, there was a distinct feeling of sadness and loss expressed at the conclusion of the *Whoop Up*. These experiences formed the basis of five subthemes: commitment, freedom and ease in participation, flow-like experiences, sense of loss at conclusion and fulfilling engagement leads to continued participation.

#### 4.4.1 Subtheme 1: Commitment

Results indicated that participants were fully committed to the process. They made an effort to attend rehearsals and saw this as a weekly priority for the duration of the *Whoop Up*.

No, that Sunday... I know that that's *Whoop Up* day. My whole week is geared to making sure I'm available for that next Sunday rehearsal. – Gary

The commitment showed by the participants were experienced by their fellow cast members. Not only were they committed themselves, but they could see the commitment of everyone around them.

Everyone there... this is one of the things I can say about the *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

Cast members viewed themselves as part of a team and participants were aware of the role each one played in the team. They felt a responsibility to do their best and attend rehearsals. There was a sense that participants respected the commitment of their fellow cast members.

And 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

Well, I suppose the rehearsals one is trying to concentrate to remember the steps and to do your thing. When it gets to the performance, um... you really start concentrating super hard because you don't want to let the rest of the team down. You put in the hours, you now want to show those hours were worth. – Travis

Two participants found the rehearsals to be challenging due to their introverted nature. Anne and Renata both expressed that it was difficult, however, the commitment they made to participate in the *Whoop Up* was more important than their discomfort. Both Anne and Renata expressed that the result was worth the effort and they ultimately enjoyed the process.

I am an introvert and certainly not one for the stage! It was difficult. Max and I both just said we've got to challenge ourselves. Yes, we just did it. We went and we told ourselves we're gonna do it, we're gonna enjoy it. I still sort of stayed to the back and sort of shadowed. We didn't try and step out and take on lead roles. Ja, I don't know exactly how we did it, but we did. We just committed to it. – Renata

Sixteen statements were made across the data set regarding the importance of making an effort during rehearsals. Participants were focused on the fun aspect of the *Whoop Up*, but also had the realisation that in order to perform well, the necessary effort must be put into the rehearsals and performances. Eight participants indicated that they found the choreography challenging, however, they made an effort to improve their skills and learn the dance moves.

There were a couple of dances that a couple of us would get together and practice on our own. Just to kind of get it together. Ja, look it does put a bit more burden on you, time wise, but it was... it wasn't a problem. You form a smaller group actually and you become sort of, you get to know those people a little better in that group as well. – Lisa

Small groups would get together earlier on a Sunday to be prepared for the upcoming rehearsal.

Just before the rehearsal I would take a group of ladies and tell them, listen, I'm struggling with this part of the dance, come help me. Then some other people would join. Then we're outside on the lawn practising together to get it right. And eventually we're a whole group of people practising before the rehearsal – Denise

Twelve participants indicated that they would rehearse at home during the course of the week. They would create playlists of the music and listen to the tracks in the car. Some participants created video recordings of the choreography during the rehearsal and practiced on their own at home. Erica even enlisted the help of a professional dancer.

I literally have two left feet and I don't like to dance. Well, I thought I didn't like dancing. We went to the rehearsal and learned the steps. I have a friend who is a dancer and I asked her to come to my home. So my dancer friend would give me tips. – Erica

As the performances drew nearer, participants' commitment was tested, and they felt that the rehearsals became more intense and that some sacrifices needed to be made. More time

was spent rehearsing and family time was sacrificed. However, the commitment and sacrifice were worth the reward.

The *Whoop Up* becomes much more intense towards the end. You just have to keep going to rehearsals and more rehearsals, and then the show. But at the same time we got really, really positive feedback from people in the audience afterwards. They were so encouraging. It's really nice. – Anne

Participants understood the need to be serious when necessary. They had a desire to do well and to improve their performances. Participants experienced a heightened sense of focus during performances. It is clear from the data that everyone was giving of their best.

You get to the point where you say this is now real, let's go out there and give it our best shot. And you try and take it seriously and remember the steps and talk to the other guys and encourage them. Particularly the younger guys who might be doing it for the first or second time. – Travis

Data revealed that participants were serious about their involvement in the *Whoop Up* and they were committed to the process. There was a mutual respect between participants and a sense that everyone was giving their best to the production. Greater levels of commitment were required closer to the performances.

#### **4.4.2 Subtheme 2: Freedom and ease in participation**

Participants appreciated the freedom of choosing their own level of involvement. There were numerous acting skits, group numbers and smaller groups for singing and dancing. Participants could be involved in all of these, or choose a select few they wished to participate in. They experienced no pressure to be involved in any particular aspect.

And then what's also nice about it is you can choose your... because there are so many facets of the *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 and 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

The *Whoop Up* is designed as a variety show, which means that the acts on offer were diverse. This resulted in participants feeling that there was an option for everyone, no matter the level of skill or interest.

I definitely feel there is something for everyone. Even Carl [her husband], who has no music or stage experience, will fit in easily. The drama-orientated people do more drama. You know, I asked if I can sing something because that is my strength. People with specific talents were showcased appropriately but at the same time, if you wanted to stand at the back in the chorus without the focus being on you, you could do that. And you were still 100% part of the production, just like the guy standing in front. – Stacey

Participants could be as busy or as relaxed in their involvement as they pleased. Here, the data revealed a difference in opinion. Helen felt that a higher level of involvement resulted in increased enjoyment. She did not participate in many acts and felt that she would have experienced greater enjoyment if she were fully involved.

I think what happened with me is that I didn't get as involved as I was in the first *Whoop Up* that I did. And I think that that was really stupid, because you then end up having to wait quite a long time. And the singing part gets kind of smaller and smaller as the rehearsals go on. Then I think that you kind of sit there and you're twiddling your thumbs while the other people are getting on with it. I didn't put my hand up enough actually. – Helen

Ryan preferred a more balanced approach which, according to him, caused less pressure.

It must be balanced, you know what I mean. Because for me it's, the motivation is 90% the enjoyment and the fun part about it. Just having this break from normal life and just having sort of fun, you know what I mean. So and to overload myself and put pressure wouldn't be, wouldn't serve the purpose. – Ryan

William expressed that he may volunteer for fewer acts in future, in order to experience the social aspects to a greater degree. However, he stated that he enjoyed being as involved as he was.

I might volunteer for less, but I know myself, probably not. You know I really, really like to get involved as much as possible. But if I ever get a chance to do any sort of social play or anything like that again I would love to almost be just in the background. Just to really, really enjoy the social aspects more. You know if I could be a dancing tree I would. But I know myself as well, that's not going to happen. I want to be part of it and I want to make people happy. – William

Other participants did not specify which approach they preferred, but it was clear from the data that they appreciated the ability to choose their level of involvement.

Participants felt a sense of ease in their participation. No focus was placed on the skill level of any individual participant. The important factor was getting involved and enjoying your involvement. Mistakes were unimportant and there was no pressure to attain perfection. Eleven of the participants made specific mention of the fact that you could participate without fear of judgment from the rest of the cast.

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

So it's quite nice to have an opportunity like that just to... and it is voluntary and you know you're not being judged for it and you don't have to perform on a certain level. – Sally

Another element which assisted the ease of participation is that participants felt they would always be successful. The choreography was challenging, but if needs be, it would be adjusted to ensure success. Singing was enjoyable, especially the well-known tunes. The pace set at the rehearsals was manageable for beginners and improvements were noticed week by week.

I think everyone at the *Whoop Up* will achieve what they are expected to achieve. Even if they have to change the choreography, at the end of the day everyone will achieve success. What they do is they start slow. You start with three steps and you add and you add. And the next week you learn a song. And then before you know it you're on the stage. – Erica

Data revealed that participants experienced ease and freedom in their participation. There was freedom in the level of involvement of each participant, and ease as there was no fear of judgment. Skill was not the main focus of the *Whoop Up*, rather involvement and enjoyment.

#### **4.4.3 Subtheme 3: Flow-like experiences**

An important aspect of engagement is when a participant experiences flow or feels in the zone. A few participants reported experiences with elements relating to the dimensions of the flow experience.

Anne reported experiencing a feeling when she danced, which reminded her of her youth when she still had ideals of becoming a professional dancer. She was almost unable to stop

herself from expressing the feeling through her movements. She was concerned that if she expressed this feeling, she would stand out too much during the performance.

And I remember when I was a student, dancing to that song in the student union club thing. And for some reason that song really hits a spot deep inside me and I don't know why. And I found this inner something inside me that I hadn't experienced for a really long time, as in, what I used to feel when I danced. And I thought Anne, just suppress that thing. You might burst out into something a bit crazy. But then I thought well, that's me performing, I can just feel this performer coming out. I'm on stage, I shouldn't really suppress it, but I want to suppress it because everyone around me are just doing the dance and not everyone... This sounds weird, but not everyone is a performer... but if you've performed before it's almost like something else comes out. – Anne

After Anne described this incident, I asked her if she could describe the feeling it gave her. According to the dimensions of flow her description describes loss of self-consciousness, autotelic experience, and action-awareness merging.

Um... let me think. It... I don't know. It's almost like it bubbles up from the pit of my stomach. And it's this feeling, I don't know, I really can't describe it. I just know when it happens. It's almost like you can't [stop it]. And if you do you will be so disappointed. I don't know, it's like you haven't really performed. It's almost like you don't want anyone to see, you just... it's like you're in your room by yourself and you just, um... it's like you're not even yourself anymore. Just this thing, and it's so freeing. It's a very freeing feeling. It's a release. – Anne

I asked Mary to describe her emotions during the performances. She reported that she was so completely engrossed in the act of singing that she could think of nothing else and found it difficult to describe her emotions at the time. This too relates to the concentration on the task at hand part of flow.

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

Erica mentioned the passage of time. This indicated that she was so engrossed in the performance she did not really notice how quickly time passed. Erica's description describes transformation of time as a dimension of flow.

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. Anne's near inability to control her inner feelings, Mary being unaware of her own emotions during performances, and Erica experiencing the quick passage of time.

#### 4.4.4 Subtheme 4: Sense of loss at conclusion

Once the production had concluded, the majority of participants experienced a sense of loss. Thirteen participants expressed that they were sad when the *Whoop Up* ended. They immediately missed the weekly rehearsals and wished for additional performances.

I think the last night was awesome. But it's also sad that, you know what, it's kind of come to an end. It's like a big drop. Because you've worked so hard and I don't think that it's the hard work that's sad, I think it's that element of that company that you know now that Sundays are different. Sunday was very weird for a very long time after that. – Claire

Participants described the feeling as the *Whoop Up* blues, some said it was like withdrawal and another participant described it as an anti-climax.

It was a massive, massive comedown. You almost go into withdrawal. You get so used to it. Especially towards the end where you really know the music and everyone sings together and we all know each other by then. You know, that element of slight discomfort is gone. It becomes part of your being. – Stacey

An interesting observation came from Gary. He noted that one only realises the impact of the *Whoop Up* once it is over.

And I think the fun actually comes after the show when you don't have a Sunday rehearsal to go to and you look back on the last weekend when the production finished and you think 'geez! I'd love to go to rehearsals again today'. That's when you realise you had fun. At the time you don't realise that it is a hell of a lot of fun. It's when it's finished that it's fun. – Gary

Three participants indicated that it was the connections between the cast members that was missed. Claire mentioned in her comment, that it is the company that you miss, not the hard work during rehearsals.

I always wonder, shouldn't we phone each other? Organise a get-together? There is a function after the *Whoop Up* and I get upset when people don't come. You feel like you want everyone together again, you need some more of that connection you had. It leaves a void. – Mary

Two participants said that they enjoyed having their regular routine back. Ryan initially enjoyed having Sundays to himself again, however, once he bumped into fellow cast members, he started missing the interaction.

So initially, that first Sunday you go, hang on... oh no, I don't have to go anywhere. I don't have to rush off anywhere, which is fantastic. It's great. I can just chill now and spend time at home. So initially there is that, so I'm relieved it's over. And then ja, within 3 or 4 weeks you'll bump into someone and say 'geez! I miss that Sunday'. And you definitely, definitely miss that time together and the show. And it will always be like we should have done it for longer or we should have put on more shows. But then you also feel like, 'ok, I can have a break'. It's good. – Ryan

Renata's emotions at the conclusion of the *Whoop Up* is the same as Ryan's feelings. There is an initial feeling of relief, but later she started missing the rehearsals.

It was... no there was a relief to it. And then you kind of just, then the next Sunday when there were no more rehearsals we were like, 'damn, are we going to do with ourselves?' So ja, but there was also a bit of a relief. – Renata

Data analysis showed that the majority of participants missed the *Whoop Up* experience. Even those who felt initial relief ended up missing the rehearsals on a Sunday. Participants yearned for continued interaction with their fellow cast members and would have liked to perform just one more time.

#### **4.4.5 Subtheme 5: Fulfilling engagement leads to continued participation**

Results revealed that all the participants indicated they would participate in the *Whoop Up* again. Sally was the only participant who said she would participate in another *Whoop Up*, provided that she has friends to accompany her. The engagement of the participants was meaningful enough for them to repeat the experience. Simon expressed this very eloquently:

Once in the *Whoop Up* always in the *Whoop Up*. I guess I'll keep on doing it until they ask me not to do it. It's like a bucket list that you can repeat. – Simon

For some participants, their engagement in the performing arts during the *Whoop Up* inspired them to seek other, similar activities. They understood the value of the arts and wished to continue their involvement. Mike started singing in his church choir and he joined a small choral ensemble.

And it's, you know, it's kind of the same feeling as doing the *Whoop Up* for me. It's just that it's something that is so nice and different and relaxing to do, that I kind of sit there and go, well, that's lekker. I'll do that. I'll do it because it's something that... my mind switches off and I actually just do something that's fun. – Mike

Lisa and Mary are regular members of community choirs. They met at the *Whoop Up* and they sing in one of the community choirs together.

And you're part of a thousand people and you're just part of this mass choir. This enormously uplifting feeling of being part of something so big and you're such a small cog in the wheel. So ja, that was the other experience of being involved recently in something like that. And church choir... I think I really do get a kick out of singing. Actually, I really, it uplifts me. I can't think of another way of putting it. – Lisa

Any engagement which is fulfilling to the participant will create in them the desire to experience more of that emotion. Data showed that if participants are involved in the *Whoop Up* once, not only are they likely to be involved again, but their involvement will increase.

And I think actually every time you do it, you are more willing to do... put yourself out more. Definitely there is that sense of oh I should have done more, because I'm missing out on a lot of stuff that they... and it's just fun. – Claire

Gary initially joined the *Whoop Up* to participate in the "Old Boys' Ballet". His involvement in the *Whoop Up* has drastically increased over the years. He has been involved in eight productions and he has since become part of the production team.

And every time you get involved in the production, then you start doing some of the other stuff. You start singing and dancing and maybe doing a bit of acting and stuff. But the very first thing that brought you in was this Old Boys' ballet. And then obviously over the years you just take a bigger role, and as it is now I'm sort of half involved in the production side of it. – Gary

It is clear from the analysis that fulfilling engagement in the performing arts will lead to future participation. Individuals' involvement in the production is likely to increase. Participants are also motivated to find other avenues to pursue their love for the performing arts.

## 4.5 Theme 3: Relationships

The results show that relationships were impacted in a positive way during the course of the *Whoop Up*. Across the data set, 134 statements were made regarding relationships. Analysis revealed that the main motivator for participation in the *Whoop Up* was to be more involved in the community. Participants forged new friendships and solidified existing friendships through their participation in the production. The camaraderie experienced between cast members was meaningful to the participants. There was a sense of unity and teamwork. Family life was impacted throughout the duration of the *Whoop Up* and finally, the relationships between cast members and facilitators resulted in an enjoyable performance experience. The theme of relationships has five relevant subthemes: community, friendships, camaraderie, family, and facilitators.

### 4.5.1 Subtheme 1: Community

Building relationships with the community around you was seen as an important motivation for participants to join the cast of the *Whoop Up*. The WHPS community, where the *Whoop Up* was produced and performed, is seen as a family. If one is not involved in the community, especially a tight-knit school community, it may be difficult to have an enjoyable experience within the community without meaningful connections and friends.

Again, it's WHPS. Their whole, sort of set up there, I just felt that if I didn't do something to get involved I wouldn't, we wouldn't... not fit it, but I think we would have found our journey there considerably harder. – Renata

Three participants found it challenging to connect to members of the community when participating in the *Whoop Up*. This was mainly due to the pre-existing friendships of people who are already established members of the community. Another factor was the introverted nature of the participants in question.

The WHPS community is very tight. I thought it would be more of an opportunity to forge those kinds of friendships, but it wasn't. – Sally

Obviously being a new parent you took a while to warm up. Look, my personality aside some of us were on the outside looking in to people who have done it before. That's always the first step is breaking the ice with people that had done it before. You know what I mean. That's an effort. Then the people who

had done it before had already made friendships so they had their sort of groups and cliques and their knowledge. – Simon

Staff members of WHPS, who participated in the *Whoop Up*, also had a desire to connect with the wider community. Building relationships with parents in the community created an opportunity to be connected on a personal level. A total of three current staff members participated in the *Whoop Up* and one former staff member commented on his experience when he was still employed at the school.

And I think getting to know the broader community. I think that you make friends with the parents and that's really important because otherwise I don't really have much contact with them unless their kid has done something wrong. – Helen

I always found that we were very isolated as a staff. So it was purely for me to get to know a little bit of the parents, and not to come across as a young staff member that is unapproachable. – William (motivation to participate in his first *Whoop Up*)

Participating in the *Whoop Up* was seen as a great way for newcomers to get involved in the community. Dawie, the producer, described this as his vision for the impact the *Whoop Up* can have on the school community.

Well I think it brings it 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 the *Whoop Up* and you're an insider. Immediately. You become a WHPS person. – Dawie

Um, I think the first time I joined was when Harry started Gr.0, it was his first year at the school. And 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

Once part of the school community, the *Whoop Up* becomes an opportunity to stay connected to the community. Denise and Simon have been part of the WHPS community years after their children left the school. This is due to their continued participation in the *Whoop Up*.

I enjoy it, you know, it's every now and then. It's not like it happens every year and becomes boring. There are always new people to meet and the old crowd. So you see all your old friends and you meet new people. – Denise

Strong connections and bonds were formed between members of the community through participation in the *Whoop Up*. This was evident in the responses of participants who participated in the *Whoop Up* multiple times.

If you were as involved in the school as I was, you know, it's nice to have time with the friends you made. I believe you have chapters in your life and everyone you meet is part of a chapter. And just like when you read a book, eventually that character will reappear in another chapter. It's nice to reconnect with people, to hear how they're doing. We were in this thing together, it bonds you. – Denise

Data revealed that a desire to form relationships within the community was an important motivator for participation in the *Whoop Up*. The *Whoop Up* was also seen as an ideal way for newcomers to become part of the community, however, this proved to be challenging for some. Established members of the community used the *Whoop Up* as an opportunity to keep in touch and reconnect with the community. Strong connections and bonds were formed between members of the community.

#### **4.5.2 Subtheme 2: Friendships**

Forming new friendships, widening social circles and solidifying existing friendships were the most important social aspects of the *Whoop Up*. Participants saw the *Whoop Up* as an opportunity to meet members of the community they would not ordinarily socialise with. In a school community it often happens that socialisation occurs within school grades or sports teams. The *Whoop Up* involves people from all spheres of the school community and therefore provides a unique opportunity to meet certain individuals outside your immediate social circle.

We kind of have a friendship in our grade and we've kind of never really ventured outside of it so 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 the *Whoop Up* for me was just making friends with people I otherwise probably never would have been in contact with. – Amanda

The *Whoop Up* cast also varied in age and gave participants an opportunity to socialise across generations. Some cast members had only recently finished school, some were current parents and others were past parents. Another group of participants were the Old Boys of

which one was an 80-year-old gentleman. There are few other opportunities where such a varied group of people will spend time together.

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

It was nice to see the younger moms there. There were quite a few who I used to teach back in the day, that was a little daunting. But we had nice conversations and we laughed a lot about the things I used to do as their teacher. But I think, you know, it was nice that I could do this with my old students. It means a lot to me. – Denise

The *Whoop Up* is open for participants outside the school community. For example, parents may involve colleagues or friends who themselves are not immediately connected to the school. This is another opportunity to interact with people who may not otherwise have been in a social circle.

It's very unique. It's a very unique group of people. And maybe part of it is that they are people who are from outside. I think that's maybe also a big part of it. You know it's not just school stuff. – Claire

Participants expressed that they were able to see a different side of people during the *Whoop Up*. This enabled them to create bonds and form friendships with members of the community they may have previously encountered outside the *Whoop Up*. Meeting these members of the community in the setting of the *Whoop Up* provided a fresh opportunity to get to know them.

Um, people are different on a Sunday to what they are on a Monday. But that's natural that you are different in an environment where you can just let your hair down, which is the way you do it, kind of thing. I met people who had, you know, you know at school but you actually don't know them at all. You meet them on a different level. – Claire

You know you get to see, you often see the parents there and we're all quite stressed and we're shouting and jumping around after our kids and all of these things and it's one of those things where you meet the parents in a setting where the kids are not involved. It's not about your kid's fantastic and my kid's fantastic and your kid's doing this and my kid's doing that and all those things. It's kind of just adult time to a certain extent. Which is 'lekker', so you also get to see the people in a different light. – Mike

A factor which eased the formation of meaningful bonds between participants was that the cast of the *Whoop Up* were seen as like-minded individuals. By virtue of their interest in the production there was a common point of connection among the participants. Participants felt comfortable that the people they would encounter at the *Whoop Up* would have similar interests.

You know some people you don't know before, or maybe just seen and waved at... the people that are there are any case people that have, must be like-minded in some way because they've all agreed to take time out of their Sunday, which is not an easy day and to get together. – Ryan

This like-minded connection between cast members have resulted in the forging of meaningful friendships. Many of these friendships lasted long after the conclusion of the *Whoop Up*. Some participants joined the *Whoop Up* with a close group of established friendships. They report that participation in the *Whoop Up* resulted in these bonds growing stronger.

The main thing, all the friends that I made in the first year, at the first *Whoop Up*, in Gr. R, I'm still friends with some of them now, 15 years later. - Simon

It was a whole group of our friends we all did it together. And that was so much fun and that was really, really... um... it was very... it just brought us so close together and it just made our friendship. – Joy

A few participants indicated that they were unable to forge new friendships in such a short space of time, however, they were able to widen their social circle, connect with people in the community and make new acquaintances. Again, this may be due to the introverted nature of these participants.

It was nice because you know you see a few people now and they smile at you whenever they walk past. But I wouldn't say that it brought new friendships out for me. There wasn't enough time for that really. – Carol

I won't say friendships, but you got to know the people's faces and not necessarily their names and stuff. But definitely when you see them at school you know, ok, I know you from *Whoop Up*. I can say hi to you. – Renata

Data revealed that the *Whoop Up* was a successful means to form new connections with members inside and outside the community. Participants were able to see a different side to

people they had already encountered in the community. Cast members viewed each other as like-minded individuals with whom lasting friendships can be forged. Existing friendships were strengthened, and new acquaintances made.

#### 4.5.3 Subtheme 3: Camaraderie

Participants had a strong sense of camaraderie throughout their experience of the *Whoop Up*. Responses regarding the social aspect of the *Whoop Up* included words such as phenomenal and fantastic. However, for some participants the social aspect of the *Whoop Up* was challenging. Respondents, who identify as introverts, commented on how important it was for them to be involved in activities like the *Whoop Up* in order to socialise with others.

But I had to really think about my life, because life is actually about relationships with other people and I had become, sort of withdrawn from people. So I had to really rethink about these things. And I found the *Whoop Up* very hard for that reason. I'd often come on a Sunday and I didn't know even how to sit with people. I didn't know what to say to people any more. So I had to think about, just rethink my lifestyle. Just to be normal again. I felt like I wasn't being a normal human being. – Anne

I am not an extrovert, so it's important for me to do these things. As soon as I get comfortable with the people around me, then I can be more of an extrovert. So it's important for people like me to do these kinds of things. – Mary

Both Mary and Anne later commented that participation in the *Whoop Up* resulted in an improvement of their social skills. They connected with the rest of the cast members and this socialisation led to improved social confidence.

The socialisation and camaraderie experienced between participants was one of the reasons participants returned to the *Whoop Up*.

I think certainly at least one more time I will definitely go back. 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

The socialisation and camaraderie between cast members was at its height during rehearsals. Participants felt that special bonds were formed during rehearsals, especially when things were challenging.

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

Feelings of camaraderie resulted in participants feeling supported. There was a sense that you were not alone and felt supported by those around you. Fellow cast members supported and encouraged each other.

I guess I did things I thought I would never ever do. You know there was that one sexy dance with the chair. That I thought what the hell am I doing up here with these women that are next to me that are so beautiful. You know and it was just, you know I never ever could have seen... and they all convinced me to do it. I mean I never would have done it and they said we're doing it, you are doing it with us and you know. You know I never ever thought I would see myself doing those things, but ja. It's just, you just go with the flow. It was wonderful. – Joy

Participants were also quick to support newcomers to the *Whoop Up*. They wanted to ensure newcomers feel welcome and part of the group.

And funny enough they kind of leaned on us because we were experience *Whoop Up*'ers. So they kind of like what happens here, what do you do... you know? And that kind of thing, so you know we were kind of seen like the senior experienced oldies. – Joy

Yes. I mean it was so jovial and enjoyable and, you know, I found everyone, the staff and production team, so entertaining and professional at the same time. And there were so many people who've done the *Whoop Up* before and they made the newcomers feel so at home. So yes, it was a great experience. – Stacey

The feelings of support were therefore two-fold. Participants felt support from each other, and they had a mutual desire to be supportive of others.

Camaraderie was also experienced during the performances. The togetherness of cast members resulted in performers feeling less nervous. Being with others created confidence in participants. There was safety in numbers.

I think it's really nice, um, of course it makes it easier. I think it would be difficult to go on stage on your own. So I think it makes it easier in a way. Especially for us, how can I explain it, us regular people, it's easier to have someone next to you. And the way it works with the *Whoop Up*, you are next to certain

people in certain acts. You become friends with the people next to you. You rehearse together and then when you have to perform, you know, there's a bond. – Erica

One factor that enhanced this feeling of camaraderie is teamwork. There was a distinct feeling among participants of being part of a team working toward a common goal.

I really think that it's that group... it's being part of a group which is just the best thing in life actually. Being part of a group and being part of something bigger than the, you know the silly things during the day. I think like... I think at the core I just really enjoy being part of a team. So if there is any team aspect to it, I'm all over it, all over it. Because there's a real camaraderie that happens which I absolutely love.  
– Helen

Another factor which enhanced the feeling of camaraderie was the formation of shared experiences and memories between cast members. Travis, who has been part of the *Whoop Up* for decades, spoke of reminiscing about past *Whoop Up* productions, years after the fact. These memories created a special bond between participants.

Um, you know the sort of bonds you create after an event like that are, just fantastic, you know what I mean. It's always that memory of a shared experience which was so special that it takes the relationships to sort of a different level of understanding. You've got that history and you've got a shared something which... you know if you share something good then the memories are always going to be good and the friends that were involved there will never be forgotten. – Ryan

Data revealed that a sense of camaraderie existed between participants. Social connection between cast members were seen as a meaningful result of participation in the *Whoop Up*. Camaraderie was established during rehearsals through the support and encouragement of fellow cast members. Participants felt that performances were easier due to the camaraderie between participants. The two factors which were instrumental in building a strong sense of camaraderie were identified as teamwork and shared experiences.

#### **4.5.4 Subtheme 4: Family**

Relationships in families were impacted by participation in the *Whoop Up*. This impact can be seen as a direct or an indirect impact. Family relationships were impacted directly where couples participated in the *Whoop Up* together. Couples commented that being involved in the *Whoop Up* together was special, as it was such a unique experience to share. It was also a designated time, each week, for couples to spend together.

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

So what I loved about it is that every Sunday we had a date night. We came, we did this together, the boys were in my office watching TV, they had a take-away and they loved it because it was exciting and different from our normal Sunday. – Sandra

Sandra's comment leads to the indirect impact of the *Whoop Up* on family relationships. Data revealed that couples who participated together inevitably involved their children in the *Whoop Up* experience. Partners would rehearse together at home, and children would sing along and through this interaction, enjoy the experience with their parents. This created a pleasant atmosphere for the family.

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, was 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

Sally shared her *Whoop Up* experience with her children by practising the songs in her car during the morning commute. Interestingly, she expressed a desire to be able to perform for her children. Sally was the only participant who felt that this was lacking from her *Whoop Up* experience. Denise was able to perform for her adult children and she stated that she enjoyed being able to share that side of herself with her children. Unfortunately, there is an age restriction for audience members.

I thought it would be great if the kids could come and watch it, I know there's some stuff that's not really children friendly, but it would have been really cool. I think that's the one thing that is lacking big time is that you can't perform for your kids. Because that's part of the fun. – Sally

Denise saw her participation in the *Whoop Up* as an opportunity to be an example to her children. She hoped to inspire them to pursue activities to enrich their lives when they are adults.

My children couldn't believe that I'm doing another *Whoop Up*. They asked me: "why are you doing it?" I told them because it is fun and I want to see all my friends. And I like dancing, and I like being part of

something like that. I think my children see this and hopefully one day they will also do it when they are parents. Because you add so much value to your life. – Denise

Ryan expressed that his involvement in the *Whoop Up* taught him basic skills he could possibly share with his children. Both his children love music and he saw this as an opportunity to share his new skills with his children.

If you've got young children. So, like Seth loves the drums so you can pick up hang on, what about that and that and that. Also singing, just keeping a tune you know. So you can definitely impart that knowledge to a certain degree, to my limited ability onto children, and my children specifically. So ja, so it doesn't go to waste. No, nothing that you learn ever goes to waste. – Ryan

Data showed that family relationships were impacted by participation in the *Whoop Up*. Couples who participated together were able to spend meaningful time together. The activities of the *Whoop Up* extended to the rest of the family when children became involved with rehearsals at home. Singing together as a family formed connections and bonds. *Whoop Up* experiences served as a motivation for parents to inspire and educate their children.

#### **4.5.5 Subtheme 5: Facilitators**

The relationship between facilitators and cast members were found to be instrumental in the success of the production. Participants expressed that good leadership lay at the heart of the success of the *Whoop Up*. Facilitators must lead by example and the cast will follow a good leader.

I really do have a lot of respect and time for Dawie, as our sort of ultimate leader. You know the fun that he brings with to the show and when you consider his age and his energy and everything. He's just such an admirable person, an amazing sort of person. So firstly your leadership is giving an example which you can't ignore, because it's coming from someone who should probably not even have the energy to be doing so much, you know. So it's inspiring. – Ryan

When facilitators start off rehearsals with the correct frame of mind and focus the cast will emulate that behaviour. Cast members have a good time at the *Whoop Up* because the leaders have the element of fun and enjoyment as their main focus.

I think it was just, it's something really different. I think Dawie makes it fun. I think Dawie is an important component of what makes *Whoop Up* work. I don't know, I'm not saying it wouldn't work without

Dawie, but I think Dawie makes it work quite well. Because his whole attitude towards it every year, to have a good time. – Mike

Even though the goal is to have a good time, facilitators still want to produce a professional and entertaining show. This requires careful navigation of their relationship with the cast. There needs to be enough focus and hard work to produce a fantastic event, however, the cast must always have fun and not feel like they are being treated like children.

I think the people must know that they feel welcome. That it is a social thing, it is a family, a WHPS family thing to do and if you didn't have that, if they felt that they were getting crapped on, because they weren't singing properly or loud enough, or too loud, or whatever the case may be; it would detract from it. And that's what I think has always made the producer's role that much more difficult is that they do actually want to put on a professional show, but they've actually got to work with the people so that they enjoy it all the time. – Gary

Participants appreciated the professionalism of the facilitators. The management team were all seen as knowledgeable in their field and they made participants feel confident in their various roles.

What I appreciated about the *Whoop Up*, especially as it is a school production, was that the people involved had a high level of musical ability. It wasn't just one little music teacher trying to put the whole thing together. It was an entire team of choreography and music. It was quality and fun. Otherwise I would have been frustrated. – Stacey

I think we were quite spoiled, because I thought we had a lot of talent and leadership. The lady who did the choreography, she was amazing. You know, she knew what she was doing so it was quite easy to follow her especially if you, if this is not something that you do on a daily basis. – Sally

Another important role identified for facilitators was to make participants feel comfortable and at ease. Data revealed that most of the participants felt very nervous at the first rehearsal and the facilitators had to ensure that everyone is comfortable.

But I can imagine parents coming to their first rehearsal will feel nervous. They don't quite know what to expect. And it's possible that they may have seen a *Whoop Up* and want to get involved. But I think the majority of people who do a *Whoop Up* are brand new to the school. And that takes a bit of guts to come along. And I think Dawie goes a long way to make everybody feel at ease. – Gary

Participants understood the importance of the facilitators in the success of the overall production. The relationship between the cast and facilitators are integral to the success of the production. This relationship must be balanced in order to ensure hard work and focus, while maintaining a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. Data revealed that if leadership gets the balance right, participants will feel at ease, they will be able to follow the directions of trained facilitators and the result will be a successful show. Ryan puts it really well:

So when you put like-minded people together in a happy environment with good leadership it can only be fun. It's gotta be fun. - Ryan

#### **4.6 Theme 4: Meaning**

Meaning was revealed as the most important element of well-being for the participants with a total of 245 statements across the data set. Participants placed great emphasis on personal meaning, which can be discussed in three sections. Firstly, identities were rediscovered, new aspect of identity was examined, and these actions facilitated change in the lives of participants. Secondly, participants saw the *Whoop Up* as an opportunity to take time for themselves, and finally, participants had a sense of ownership in the process. The *Whoop Up* provided meaning to the community as a whole, and there was a sense of nostalgia and tradition associated with the *Whoop Up*. Participants' experiences with performing arts and their emotions while being involved in the *Whoop Up* was meaningful. Three subthemes emerged from the data: Meaning and sense of self, meaning and the community, and, meaningful participation.

##### **4.6.1 Subtheme 1: Meaning and sense of self**

The data revealed that meaning and sense of self was a substantial subtheme and encompassed three areas: firstly, participants used the *Whoop Up* experience to rediscover and explore identity and to facilitate change in their lives. Secondly, the *Whoop Up* was seen as an opportunity to have me-time, to take a break from everyday life. Finally, participants felt a sense of ownership in the production.

*Rediscover identity, explore facets of identity and facilitate change*

Firstly, participation in the *Whoop Up* gave respondents an opportunity to rediscover their true identity. Ten participants commented on the opportunity to be their true self and

importantly, they felt they had the *freedom* to be their true self. The *Whoop Up* was a safe space to rediscover the authentic self. This freedom was also experienced during the performances. Participants felt free to expose their true identity to the audience because they felt no judgment.

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

Participants experienced that their fellow cast members also revealed their true identity. These were people often encountered in other areas of the school community, however, at the *Whoop Up* their true identity comes to the fore and they were seen in a different, new light.

Ja, because everyone is sort of relaxed and having fun. So you kind of get to see someone's real personality. Whereas at a WHPS function, or a drop off at the circle or whatever, you kind of get people in either parenting mode or in a rush. You know not really revealing their real personalities. Whereas at *Whoop Up* everyone was relaxed and you could really get to know someone for who they were and I think that's how you really become friends with someone. – Amanda

The *Whoop Up* also provided an opportunity for participants to be seen as individuals. This goes hand-in-hand with being able to reveal your true identity. While revealing your authentic self, it is equally important for others to *see* your true identity. Participants experienced that the *Whoop Up* was a place where they were not seen as someone's mother, a team leader at work, or a staff member at the school. Participants were afforded the opportunity to be who they truly are and to be seen in that light.

We were joking the other day about how everyone calls me Charlie's mom. I think if I had to ask 20 people there if they knew what my name was they would probably say, 'What? it's not Charlie's mom?' But at *Whoop Up* I was Amanda, which is nice. – Amanda

Data revealed that participants reconnected with the identity of their youth through the *Whoop Up*. Many participants had previous experiences with performance. Their participation in the *Whoop Up* allowed them to be reminded of who they were before the pressures of family life and professional life intervened. Participants were reminded of their

younger selves. The *Whoop Up* provided a platform for participants to be reminded of who they are at their core.

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

The feeling of being young again helped participants realise that they are more capable to engage in the performing arts than they may have thought. It is as if there was an element of surprise that came with this realisation. Participating in the *Whoop Up* not only reminded participants of their younger selves, but also gave them the confidence to realise that they are still able to make a meaningful contribution to a production like the *Whoop Up*.

It makes you realise that you are actually still young. Remember, I'm a little older now but I don't feel my age. I still feel 30. I kind of feel like I can keep up with a 30 year old. So that is a boost for me. A boost of confidence that I can still do this, get dressed up and do a show. You know, do a show. That is the nicest part for me. That I can still do it and enjoy it. I feel young. Younger than I actually am. – Denise

Secondly, the *Whoop Up* gave participants the opportunity to explore different aspects of their identity. For seven participants, this was their first *Whoop Up* experience. The experience allowed them to explore aspects of themselves that they may not have had an opportunity to explore before. Similarly, the *Whoop Up* provided an opportunity for participants to pursue elements of themselves they may not have had the confidence to explore as adolescents. Three participants made mention of the fact that they were able to confidently engage in the performing arts as adults. In so doing, they were able to explore their talents in a way that they were not able to in their youth.

Ja, so you just get to... it's almost like exploring another side of your personality that doesn't actually get explored. So you get to open up those other parts of yourself. A more care free, you know it's fun, care free and exhilarating. – Sally

I loved the singing, purely because I didn't even know that I could sing and just to get that appreciation, besides for the obvious ego boost, I just loved the fact that I always knew in my heart that I might have a little bit of it. I'm not saying I'm the best, I'm not saying I'm amazing at it, but if I actually did it at school I would have been also recognised for that. – William

Another aspect of exploring one's identity was the opportunity to be challenged and to try new things. Participants seemed to enjoy facing the challenge.

So it's completely out of your comfort zone, which is sometimes nice. You know you get bored if you're not challenged, as an adult to do something new and to do something that frightens you. – Sally

Carol used the opportunity to challenge herself and try acting for the first time. She had always wanted to, and saw the *Whoop Up* as the ideal opportunity. Her experience brings together all three these elements of exploration of self: satisfying a need from adolescence, challenging oneself, and trying something new.

When I was at High School I wanted to be involved in our musical, at High School. And I went to the auditions and everything and actually I copped out at the last minute. I just felt like, 'I can't do this'. And I didn't. And I think that's one of the things why I just decided I'm going to prove to myself that I can do it...

...I felt very nervous and I felt very intimidated. I pushed myself to do the acting which I'd never actually done before. But I also thought you know what, if I can do all these things that terrify me every single day, maybe I can do something that terrifies me that I want to do. – Carol

For first time participants it was quite a challenge to be involved in the *Whoop Up* especially if they had no previous performance experience. Sandra had very limited exposure to performance as a child and the *Whoop Up* was not only a challenge, but also an event which allowed her to explore new aspects of her personality.

And I feel like I've been cheated, because it has taken so long for me to be exposed to that world. It sort of opened up another part of me. I mean I've always like being creative in my own way, but I've never really known how to appreciate music, or how to appreciate art, or how to appreciate drama. But I feel that I have more of an interest in it now. - Sandra

The *Whoop Up* was an opportunity for self-expression and creativity. Participants used the platform of the *Whoop Up* to present multiple facets of themselves. Participants appreciated this platform as there are fewer opportunities for self-expression as an adult.

You step out of one world and into another. It's not that you're trying to be someone that you're not, it's just giving you the opportunity to do stuff that you wouldn't ordinarily do. You get that when you're a child. When you're a child you're allowed to be whatever you want. But as you get older, society cares

more and more and that freedom disappears. You know and you only get that freedom if you're good at it. So that's what's nice about Whoop Up is you don't have to be good at it. – Claire

Finally, the *Whoop Up* served as an inspiration for renewal. Participants' experiences in the *Whoop Up* motivated many to make changes to their lives. Nine participants responded that they made changes to their lives in some way due to their participation in the *Whoop Up*. The theme of engagement revealed that fulfilling participation leads to continued participation in the performing arts. This continued participation was seen in the changes made by Lisa, Mary and Mike. The *Whoop Up* also facilitated change in other areas. Amanda loved the way her involvement in the *Whoop Up* made her feel and she felt that her creativity was awakened.

Ja, I think it definitely sparked my creative side again. I had since published a book since the *Whoop Up*, because I started writing again. It definitely sparked some of my desire to do stuff that I loved before I had kids. And it kind of reminded me, and Niles [her husband] and I had long conversations about that afterward, about how you have to remind yourself who you were before you were a mom. And I think that sparked that for me. That was the beginning of that for me. I kind of really liked the way it made me feel and I kind of made a decision to hold on to that. To keep finding things that made me feel like Amanda again, and not Charlie's mom. – Amanda

Through her participation in the *Whoop Up*, Claire found herself willing to become involved in other areas of the school community. She commented that she was always hesitant to be involved in committees, but after her participation in the *Whoop Up* she felt comfortable to be involved to a greater extent as she knew people within the community better.

It made me want to join a lot of little bits and pieces. I've helped here and there, but I've never really, you know, I've never really got, like really stuck in and involved. And you know, I got to know Helen on a different level and I got to know this one, and that one. It makes a difference. You know when I went to join [a committee] a lot of the people who were there are people who do *Whoop Up*. It's kind of the same little group and it brings in the same kind of camaraderie, which I enjoy. I really enjoyed that side of it. – Claire

Anne used the *Whoop Up* as inspiration to change her lifestyle. She realised that she had lost her ability to socialise with others and used the *Whoop Up* as a platform for social 'practice'. She found the rehearsal process very challenging due to her introverted nature and her inability to connect with people.

It made me think about it and why can't I just mix with people. So it forced me to become more social in that it made me aware of what was happening. Really, I would say I've had to change my lifestyle to become a more sociable person. – Anne

Data revealed that the *Whoop Up* was a meaningful tool to rediscover identities and to allow the authentic self to come to the fore. Participants explored elements of their personality and discovered new talents. The *Whoop Up* was used as a tool to relive a creative youth and satisfy dreams from adolescence. Participation in the *Whoop Up* led to a change in the lives of some participants.

### *Me time*

A meaningful aspect of participation in the *Whoop Up* was the escape from everyday life. Seventeen participants experienced the rehearsals and performances as an opportunity to break from routine, escape responsibility and as an opportunity to take time for themselves.

It was a complete escape. Normally Sunday evenings are you know, packing lunch boxes and packing sports kits and you know making sure all homework is done and books are in. I didn't do any of that. I was like, cheers dudes, and husband had to figure all that out and I just left. And I went to play. Basically went on a playdate every Sunday evening. And that was fun. – Amanda

It made me feel really, really good because I was doing something that was essentially... the reason that I decided to do the *Whoop Up* was for me. I didn't choose to do it for anybody else. It was my own thing that I wanted to do. It gave me a dedicated space every week where I didn't have to worry about anything. – Sandra

It seems that participants were hungry for this break in routine and social interaction with adults. The rehearsals on a Sunday were an opportunity for participants to have a break from their regular routine, they could spend time with adults and interact in a new, refreshing setting. Participants enjoyed having adult time. This socialisation with adults was meaningful in the sense that conversations and interactions were seen as neutral and did not have any relation to school, children or professional life.

But at our school it's very small. It's very tight. You know everybody and it's kind of everything revolves around school and the one nice thing about *Whoop Up* was that you would go on a Sunday, and no one would talk about school. You know, it was weird. It's as if you are different people. I don't know how to

explain it. You step out of a world, and you step into another world. Or you're a different character in your same world. Let's put it that way. – Claire

Sandra, a staff member at the school, expressed that she felt the *Whoop Up* was not linked to school at all. Even though the nature of the production was school-related, it is interesting that participants did not view it as such. At the *Whoop Up* they were able to distance themselves from their everyday existence.

Sunday is our only real day of the weekend, I want to do my own stuff, I don't want to be back at school for the 7th day in the week. I mean even parents said that, not even just staff. No, we want to be away from school. But for me Whoop Up wasn't school. Whoop Up was a little bubble that was not home, it was not school, it was not work, it was not anything other than its own very special little place. So it was like a holiday. It made Sunday something other than the last day of the weekend. - Sandra

The feeling of escape from everyday life extended to escaping who you are. Participants enjoyed pretending to be someone else, living a different life. This resulted in a sense of fun and relaxation during the rehearsals and performances.

I think it's wonderful, because not everyone can be you know, a Hollywood star. But everyone enjoys pretending that they are, every now and then you know. So this way you can do it without you know, changing your life. You can just for a few minutes kind of pretend that, you know your life was different and you're a Hollywood star or whatever. But I think it's important to have that kind of escape every now and then from your everyday life. It doesn't matter how wonderful your everyday life is you know. I have a very blessed life, but that doesn't mean I don't every now and then want to, for a little bit, pretend it's different. – Amanda

For Simon, the *Whoop Up* was the opportunity to pretend that he did follow a career in the performing arts. His whole family are performers and he used to perform with them as a child. He did not, however, follow the performing arts route as a career. The *Whoop Up* allowed him to have the “moment” he never pursued.

It's like I'm back on stage where I belong, but I never ever followed that path. My brother played bands from teenager till, now still he does busking and sessions and the whole thing. The old man was in showbiz, my mom was in showbiz, my sisters played piano so everybody performed. But for Whoop Up, for 6 events, for 6 rehearsals and 2 shows I get to have that moment. – Simon

The ability to escape routine and the mundane day-to-day life was a very relaxing experience for participants. They were able to “switch off” from their responsibilities and enjoy the moment.

But I mean there’s a kind of routine to what I do. And this is so out of that routine. It’s so completely different that I actually can switch off. I’m not making a living out of it, I’m not losing anything out of it. I’m doing something that is so completely different for me that it really is relaxing in many ways. In fact, it’s something that is really, um relaxing and different and there is no pressure on you. If I do it well or I do it badly nobody is gonna care in essence. – Mike

You know as a working parent you don’t get the chance to let your hair down. It’s not like when you’re in your teens and twenties. You go out to a nightclub, you know, jolling with your buddies. You don’t get a chance to do that when you’re at our stage of life. So it’s also that opportunity as well. – Diana

Data revealed that the *Whoop Up* provided an opportunity for participants to take time for themselves. They could break their everyday routine and escape their responsibilities. They were also able to escape their lives for a while and pretend that they are someone else, living a different life. Participants enjoyed spending time with other adults in a social environment. The *Whoop Up* provided an opportunity for socialisation in a new and unique setting.

### *Sense of Ownership*

Meaning was associated with having a sense of ownership. There was more to their involvement than just arriving for rehearsals once a week. Participants commented on the meaning their involvement had on the production as a whole. They felt everyone had a place and provided an important contribution towards the overall success of the production.

It creates that opportunity for you to belong to something and enjoy something. And it doesn’t matter, whether you’re good at it or not. But just being part of an event, or part of a movement, or part of a bunch of like-minded people makes you feel that you belong and that you’re important and that you are doing something to contribute. – Sandra

Everyone is part of it and everyone has a role to play. At the end of the day everyone is equally important, the guy who opens and closes the curtains, the backstage crew. Everyone has a part and that makes it enjoyable. That’s what makes it successful. Everyone fits in somewhere. – Erica

Participants felt that they had a unique role to play to make the performance successful. This led to an overwhelming sense of belonging. Twenty statements revealed that cast members

felt they belonged and that there was a place for everyone. Furthermore, cast members felt that everyone was equally important. Every participants' role carried the same weight and importance to the success of the show. This strengthened each individuals' feeling of purpose toward the success of the production as a whole.

There is no star of the show, no lead. You know, someone is the star and everyone else just extra's. Here and there a smaller group does something and you guys were so kind to give me a solo, but that was few and far between. Everyone was equal. And I think that's important. – Stacey

There was a general feeling of being part of something bigger. This feeling of being part of something bigger leads to the feeling that everyone needs to work together to reach this bigger goal. Individuals cannot reach it alone, it requires teamwork and unity.

Being involved, being part of the whole thing, being part of a... ja, having people around me. Being part of a bigger... um... part. And working towards a goal as well, putting on a show. - Lisa

The sense of belonging and unity experienced by participants were meaningful, as it provided freedom to participate in the production without fear of judgment. Participants felt accepted by their peers. The lack of judgment and expectation to perform at a specific level was previously discussed as a subtheme of engagement, freedom and ease in participation. It is important to note that these elements also provided meaning to the experience.

Everyone is in the same situation. Whether you're good at performing or not. You go there, you're accepted and there is no further judgment. You don't have to feel self-conscious. Everyone is there because they want to be and people feel accepted. In turn, you accept the people around you without judgment. It is a safe place to be. - Mary

#### **4.6.2 Subtheme 2: Meaning and the community**

The *Whoop Up* has been a fixture in the school community for many years. This in itself creates meaning as its reputation is well known. Participants commented on their initial motivation to join the production and the reputation of the *Whoop Up* is clear. Helen said she "knew it would be fun from the beginning" and Ryan "knew that there are a lot of good people that do it". At the time, these participants had no previous personal experience of participating in the production, but the reputation of the *Whoop Up* is clearly alive in the community and serves to unite it.

Participants also felt motivated to participate in the *Whoop Up* in order to do something for the school. Being actively involved in the community is important to the parent body, staff members and the Old Boys' Association (OBA).

And you know, you kind of, everybody talks about, there's this camaraderie; and you kind of feel like you have to do your little bit for school and everybody who's done it enjoyed it so that's why I felt you know well, what's worse case scenario – it's terrible and you pull out. – Claire

Closer to the end of the production my family complained a lot. And I told them, I'm doing this for you too. I feel it is very important for parents to be involved in the school community. To help make the school successful. – Erica

Giving back to the school is the main objective of the OBA. Gary is a member of the OBA and his involvement in the *Whoop Up* was motivated by his need to give back to the school as part of the association.

That ballet thing was the very first thing that I got involved in as a young Old Boy, in my twenties. And then it becomes like a culture that is about a *Whoop Up* coming, so of course there is going to be an Old Boy ballet. Then it actually no longer became just a thing you're doing for the Old Boys, you're doing it for the WHPS community, you're doing it because you care about the school. – Gary

Interestingly, Gary does not enjoy dancing at all. It is his least favourite aspect of the *Whoop Up*, yet he is involved in the Old Boys' ballet year after year. He said: "I wouldn't do it if it wasn't for the Old Boys". This is a real testament of his love for the community and his desire to continue his involvement in the community.

And I think it's the same thing for the Old Boys, it keeps our connection to the school because we're doing something sort of tangible at the school as opposed to trying to raise money or something like that. This is a fun activity that we are doing as an adult community within WHPS. – Gary

The *Whoop Up* plays an important role in making participants feel part of the community, especially new members of the community. This aspect was discussed briefly in the theme of relationships. It is important to build relationships within the community and participation in the *Whoop Up* served a dual purpose in this sense. Connecting with the wider community and building relationships within the community served to make individuals feel like a part of the community.

It's a sense of belonging to the school. In fact, if their children are at the school they have the sense of belonging, but the fact that they have taken part in a *Whoop Up* I think they feel even more so that they actually belong to the school. And that you're gonna get more enthusiasm out of that parent as well. – Gary

It kind of galvanises and creates a sense of community in the WHPS school. They go, oh ok I get the flavour of this school. It's not all serious, it's not all academics, it's not all sports. There's also a family, there's also a friendship, there's also a bit of harmony, there's also other things that I can connect with that give me a flavour, or a taste, or an experience that I enjoy. – Simon

In the community, a sense of nostalgia is associated with the *Whoop Up*. Participants are aware that the *Whoop Up* carries a legacy. It is held in high esteem due to the fact that it only happens once every four years. It is not an annual event which becomes routine, it is a special event.

I think that the legacy of the *Whoop Up*, whoever came up with the first one, I'm sure was completely different what it looked like then to what it looks like now. But I do think that it takes special people, like Dawie and, you know, those Old Boys who are keeping it going. I think that that makes it special. There's a lot to it that makes it really quite cool. – Helen

Helen makes mention of the Old Boys who keep it going. Gary also feels that the *Whoop Up* is meaningful to the community due to the fact that the facilitators keep it going. It is a feature of the community and the *Whoop Up* endures.

The meaningful thing is that it's the continuity of it. The *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

Data revealed that the *Whoop Up* had meaning for the community as a whole. The reputation, legacy and continuity of the *Whoop Up* was meaningful to the participants, and served as extra motivation to participate. *Whoop Up* provided a means for newcomers to feel part of the community.

#### **4.6.3 Subtheme 3: Meaningful participation**

Participants enjoyed the opportunity to do something out of the ordinary. Participating in a variety show is not something that is readily available for adults. It is an activity that is far

removed from regular routine. The break in routine and involvement in a novel activity was enjoyable and meaningful to participants.

I think we were also just at a point where we were like, same old, same old. Over and over again. And this is an opportunity to just do something totally, totally different that we never in our lives even thought we would attempt. – Renata

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, the *Whoop Up* provided an opportunity to live their dreams. These dreams ranged from hopes of becoming professional performers to dreams of performing on a stage for the first time. Three participants, Anne, Stacey and Mary, had hopes of making the performing arts a career. Due to life circumstances this did not happen and the *Whoop Up* stage was meaningful in the sense that they were given the opportunity to perform as adults.

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

Four participants, William, Carol, Sandra and Helen, felt that they had missed out on experiences relating to performing arts at school level and saw the *Whoop Up* as an opportunity to satisfy this longing. William and Carol's experiences were discussed under the theme of challenging oneself and exploring new talents. However, it is important to note that the opportunity to finally perform on stage also held great meaning for them.

Sandra's experiences at school created the perception that the performing arts was only for a chosen few. Her participation in the *Whoop Up* changed this perception and fulfilled her creative needs.

I've been exposed to more music, drama and art than I have ever been exposed to before. And I feel like I've been cheated because it has taken so long for me to be exposed to that world. It sort of opened up another part of me. - Sandra

She felt that it opened up a new side of her and that she had what it took to also be part of the performances. It made such an impact on her that she desired inclusion in the performing arts as much as possible, either as a participant or an audience member.

So, if you think about it, it kind of like makes you think that the art world or the cultural world is elite. And you can't be part of it. You are a jock, you play sports and that's it. You can't do this other stuff. I always felt like it was an unattainable area of life. Now, with all of this exposure that I've had, it's like I can't get enough of it. I want to be around and involved in it all the time. I think that's why I was drawn to it and why I enjoyed it so much. Because, at the end of the day, it didn't matter that I didn't know anything about anything. – Sandra

Four participants, Amanda, Sally, Ryan and Lisa, have a passion for performance due to their exposure as children and young adults. Their participation in the *Whoop Up* was a means to live out this passion and continue performing for enjoyment. This opportunity created meaningful participation for them.

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

The performances were a meaningful aspect of participation. Participants experienced a connection with the audience during performances. The give and take of energy between cast and audience created positive emotion, however, it is important to note that it also provided meaning.

The audience enjoys it probably nearly as much as the cast. And the fact that you've got that interaction happening, that is meaningful, that you've got this event that's happening where people from both sides, from the stage and from the audience, feel as motivated by the whole experience. – Gary

Participants experienced a meaningful impact on family relationships through the performances. These performances created shared experiences and memories for family members.

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

Data revealed that participants derived great meaning through participation in the *Whoop Up*. It was an opportunity to do something out of the ordinary, to live out dreams and passions and to find a place in the world of performing arts. Participation created meaningful connections between friends and family in the audience.

Claire combines all these elements of meaningful participation by saying: “And it’s good. It’s food for the soul.”

#### **4.7 Theme 5: Accomplishment**

Participants experienced feelings of accomplishment through two main opportunities. Firstly, personal investment, which related to cast members pushing their own boundaries and limits. Participants stretched their abilities, learned new skills and moved out of their comfort zone. These actions mainly happened during the rehearsal process. Secondly, participants experienced feelings of accomplishment through performances. Data revealed 14 statements relating to positive audience response, which leads to the conclusion that this played a major role in feelings of accomplishment. Two subthemes emerged from the data: accomplishment through personal investment, and accomplishment through performance.

##### **4.7.1 Subtheme 1: Accomplishment through personal investment**

Eleven participants commented that they had to push their boundaries or overcome personal challenges during their participation in the *Whoop Up*. Stepping out of one’s comfort zone requires bravery, however, participants had overwhelming feelings of accomplishment once they were able to do so.

Even if I didn’t get any acclaim from anybody else, it was for me. I managed to do something that I was always scared to do. – Carol

Some participants revealed that performing is completely out of their character. Renata initially wanted to be part of the backstage crew, but at the first rehearsal she realised there was no such option. She did not, however, shy away from the challenge and eventually performed in the *Whoop Up*.

And I actually wanted to do the support stuff. I didn't really want to be on stage. Well there was no opportunity for backstage. I didn't know where that group... you know it just didn't happen. Ag, you know, then we just did it. I tried to make sure that I was strategically placed at the back always. But, no we loved it. It was such a good laugh. I think that's what we took away from it. It was just such a good laugh. – Renata

Renata experienced increased levels of confidence and felt great pride in her accomplishment. Her bravery and willingness to step out of her comfort zone resulted in her being open to similar experiences in the future. She said she will definitely participate in another *Whoop Up*.

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

Similarly, Mike mentioned that he is not fond of performing in front of people at all. Yet, he has participated in the *Whoop Up* twice. This is another example of participants stepping out of character and challenging their boundaries.

Participants experienced feelings of accomplishment when they attempted something new. This was evident in the respondents who participated in their first *Whoop Up*. All the first time participants indicated that they will participate in the *Whoop Up* again, which indicates that it was a meaningful experience.

Some participants attempted singing and acting for the first time. Other participants did not have much confidence with dancing, however, they made a concerted effort and learned that they are capable of much more than they think.

That's when I felt nervous because that was the first time that a sound was going to come out of my mouth next to other people. Like, that was nerve wracking for me, but then it was better thereafter. It didn't really matter because there were other people who also perhaps couldn't sing that well. – Sandra

Trying new things and being successful at it, opened participants up to new experiences. Previously, they may have been too hesitant to try something new. Seven participants indicated that they are willing to try something new and different at the next *Whoop Up*.

I never really had any great desire to act. It's not something that I looked at and went, oh, I want to do that. And I said to you... would I consider it? Yes, I would if I did it again, because again it's something different that's maybe worth trying. – Mike

Personal growth was another way in which participants experienced accomplishment. Trying new things, pushing boundaries and overcoming challenges were valuable to the participants and aided in building confidence. It was striking that participants felt they had performed better than expected, have more courage than expected and that they came to the realisation that they are brave individuals. This realisation is further evidence that the *Whoop Up* increased confidence in individuals.

So I did find confidence, I think, after doing the *Whoop Up*. It gives you confidence to face people. Without being... I didn't want to be... I'm not a showy person. I'm not someone that wants to be the lead role, I want to stand out – I'm not like that at all. But it's nice to perform. So I did find my voice in that sense. I found that I could speak and it wasn't bad. – Anne

The end result of individuals stretching their abilities was that participants felt they had achieved their goal and that all their hard work had paid off. Through perseverance they achieved what they set out to do, and they achieved it successfully.

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

#### **4.7.2 Subtheme 2: Accomplishment through performance**

Participants felt proud of the fact that they were able to produce a high-quality production even though they were all amateurs. In spite of this, they felt that they were able to perform at a high level. Mention was made of the vast improvement between rehearsals and performances and participants felt a sense of pride and accomplishment in their achievements.

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

Literally, sort of the week before, you're thinking, 'this is an absolute disaster' and in the last week, it all comes together, and you think, wow we're amazing. And you feel quite sad you didn't invite more people, you know, because you are actually quite impressed with your performance. – Lisa

Furthermore, accomplishment was achieved when participants felt satisfied with their performance at the end of the evening. They had put in the hard work and achieved a positive result. Participants felt proud of their achievement when they were able to persevere and perform well.

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

I mean, I certainly wasn't the frontline act, but you still feel like, 'wow', you were on the stage. – Diana

Data showed that confidence improved through personal investment. It was revealed that performance also led to increased levels of confidence. Participants experienced that a favourable reaction from the audience resulted in higher levels of confidence for the performers. Immediately, cast members felt like they were doing well and the audience appreciated the effort.

And I remember, the most vivid memory I have of *Whoop Up* is standing up there and the blue spotlight is shining onto me and I'm singing a solo. And I'm singing the solo, and I know I'm messing up the notes, but I just got this amazing confidence over me as I hit the right note, and I heard the crowd agree with it. And I've never experienced that in my life before. I've never experience a whole crowd going, 'yes'.  
– William

Participants often felt a connection with the audience through performance. In a school community it is likely that audience members know the cast on a personal level. This familiarity and connection with the audience inspired participants to give more of themselves during performance.

You immediately catch whether you're engaging with them. The moment you engage with the audience. And in this case it's very much a case of people who know you and understand that what you are doing out there is very different to what you would normally do. And I think that makes the crowd engage a lot. And it makes it a lot easier for you to sing more and, I don't know, make a much bigger effort. – Claire

Participants who felt this connection with the audience viewed the audience response itself as the fulfilment and accomplishment. It felt good to have the audience respond positively to the performance on stage.

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

A positive audience response provided instant gratification and feelings of accomplishment. Participants also experienced prolonged feelings of accomplishment when audience members commented immediately after, or even days after the performance.

I mean, people say 'wow, you were an amazing witch'. And for a long time people, you know, stopped and said 'weren't you the witch?' You definitely feel a sense of accomplishment, and it's nice to be able to do something and to be part of something that was really quite successful. – Sally

The feeling of accomplishment through performance had such an impact on the participants that many desired to have more than two performances. The general experience was that on the first night, everyone needs to conquer their nerves, and on the second night, everything goes well. However, the second night is the final night. According to some participants, the performances are over too soon.

The performance experience is amazing. Actually, we should have it over three or four nights. You work so hard and you finally get everything right and then you only perform for two evenings. It feels too short. You want another performance. – Erica

On the contrary, Ryan feels that the number of performances are just right. The participants and the audience should be left wanting more.

Leave a bit of hunger there... I think that's the point. So, as much as we probably could do another performance and it could be fun and it could be better, I think the formula is just right. Keep it short, sharp and explosive, and one week out of your life and you want more. – Ryan

Data revealed that participants experienced accomplishment in the *Whoop Up* through intrinsic motivations to push their boundaries and move out of comfort zones. They also experienced accomplishment through the adulation given to them by the audience. Feelings of accomplishment resulted increased confidence and a willingness to try new things.

## 4.8 Conclusion

Data analysis revealed that participants experienced all five elements of well-being from the PERMA model through their participation in the *Whoop Up*. The relevant subthemes to each theme served to further illustrate how participants' well-being was affected.

Meaning surfaced as the main element of well-being and participants experienced great personal meaning through their participation. A sense of identity, 'me-time' and ownership were identified as elements which impacted personal meaning in a positive manner. Participants experienced meaning as a result of their involvement in the performing arts and the *Whoop Up* was identified as a tradition which holds great meaning for the community.

Engagement, the second most cited element, was mostly experienced through the rehearsal process. This theme relates to how participants experience their involvement in the process and the rehearsal period is the time when there is the highest level of engagement among cast members. Participants were found to be fully committed to the process. There was an ease and freedom in the way participants experienced their engagement which led to flow-like experiences. Furthermore, there was a sense of loss at the conclusion of the production which emphasises the impact the production had on the participants.

Positive emotion was experienced throughout the entire process of the *Whoop Up*. Some participants had a history of positive experiences with performance which led them to approach the *Whoop Up* with a positive frame of mind. The fun and enjoyment experienced during the rehearsal process was due to the relaxed atmosphere of the *Whoop Up*, sharing the experience with others and engaging in enjoyable activities. Furthermore, the fun and enjoyment experienced during the rehearsals were also experienced during performances.

Various relationships were impacted through the *Whoop Up*. Friendships were forged and solidified, community relationships were established, family relationships were positively affected and relationships with facilitators had an impact on the success of the production. Furthermore, a strong sense of camaraderie existed between cast members.

Accomplishment was revealed as the theme with the least statements. The reason for this might be that feelings of accomplishment was mostly experienced during the final

performances of the *Whoop Up*. The performances consisted of two evenings, whereas eight weeks of rehearsals preceded the performances.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore cast members' experiences of well-being when participating in a *Whoop Up*, and to gain a deeper understanding of the links between participation and well-being. The experiences of well-being were explored using the PERMA model to identify elements of well-being. A discussion of the findings is presented in this chapter with reference to related literature. The discussion focuses on three areas. First, each main theme in the PERMA model, secondly, the findings in relation to recent research on hedonia and eudaimonia, finally, a few emergent themes unrelated to PERMA are presented.

#### 5.2 Music and well-being

Overall, the findings of this study seem to be consistent with other research, which found that there is a direct link between music and well-being (Creech et al., 2013; Clements-Cortes, 2013; Hallam & Creech, 2016; Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). An objective of the project was to explore the link between participation in the community musical, the *Whoop Up*, and the effects on well-being of the participants. The results show that experiences of well-being were reported relating to all five elements of the PERMA model. These results will now be discussed and compared to existing literature on well-being.

##### 5.2.1 Positive emotion

The results show that participants experienced strong positive emotions, particularly when associated with their history with the performing arts. They consistently used words such as fun, enjoyment, excitement, exhilaration and thrill relating to the performance experience. In ranking the number of statements related to each element of the PERMA model, positive emotion was the third most mentioned aspect of well-being in this study. This concurs with the findings of Lee et al. (2017), where positive emotion was also the third most prevalent component of the PERMA model. Lee et al. (2017) investigated the impact of music programmes in schools and participants reported similar feelings of happiness, excitement and fun, however, their study focused on children, not adults. Nevertheless, it is interesting that their study showed similar emphasis on positive emotions (Lee et al., 2017).

Participants associated the *Whoop Up* with positive memories of performing experiences in their childhood. These results support the findings of other studies, in which adults fondly remember positive musical experiences (Clements-Cortes, 2013; Dabback, 2008). The *Whoop Up* therefore provided participants with the opportunity to relive the positive memories of childhood and family life. According to Creech et al. (2014) and Judd and Pooley (2014), positive childhood experiences and parental influence can result in a desire for life-long participation in music activities. A few participants had aspirations of becoming professional performers, however, family and work-life prevented their dreams from becoming reality. There seems to be a paucity of research evidence relating to the fulfilment of hopes and dreams through community singing. No literature was found addressing this phenomenon. One could argue that perhaps previous research implied this in the description of childhood memories (Clements-Cortes, 2013; Creech et al., 2014; Dabback, 2008), however, a sense of fulfilment of hopes and dreams deserves further exploration.

Each participant used the words 'fun' and 'enjoyment' when talking about their participation in the *Whoop Up*. For some, this was their motivation and impetus to participate in it. These results are consistent with those of other studies that suggest that pleasure is a major motivating factor and effect of group performance (Ascenso et al. 2017; Dingle et al., 2013; Judd & Pooley, 2014; Lee et al., 2016; Page-Shipp et al., 2018). Participants could laugh with each other, which indicates that sharing the experience increases the fun and enjoyment. This is in line with a finding by Ascenso et al. (2017) that positive emotion is heightened when shared with others. The act of singing and dancing also provided experiences of fun and enjoyment. Participants' reiteration of the pure joy and fun they had singing or dancing with others resonates with other studies that have shown that the opportunity to sing provides great joy to participants (Lamont et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2016; Page-Shipp et al., 2018). Regarding the emotions of joy and happiness, they are usually related to the element of hedonia (Lamont, 2012), however, in contrast, Ascenso et al. (2017) suggest that the definition of hedonia is too simple to encompass all the effects of the positive emotions of joy and happiness. They strongly suggest that these positive emotions overlap with many elements related to eudaimonia. The findings of this study concur with Ascenso et al. (2017), given that many statements regarding positive emotion describe several aspects of eudaimonia.

The live performances were a source of strong positive emotions. Preparing for the performance with peers, performing in front of an audience, and interacting with the audience after the performance resulted in feelings of euphoria. This finding relates to Dingle et al. (2013), who similarly found that the performance was rated the favourite aspect of participating in a choir. Participants in the *Whoop Up* found the build-up to the performances special and exciting. There is a paucity of research regarding the pre-performance experiences of amateur productions. The current literature is mostly focused on professional musicians, who reported feelings of anxiety and stress pre-performance, instead of excitement and anticipation (Lamont, 2012). The level of expectation from amateur performers may be lower and therefore, participants experience anticipation and excitement instead of anxiety and stress. Once on stage, participants in the present study described a rush of adrenaline and endorphins during performances which led to feelings of excitement and thrill. These feelings lingered after the performances, when participants interacted with audience members, which served to prolong the positive emotions they were feeling. The experience of performing to a receptive audience is widely reported to have a positive impact on performers (Dingle et al., 2013; Lamont, 2012). Furthermore, the positive interaction with the audience after the performance accords with earlier observations showing that sharing positive emotion with others increases the level of enjoyment experienced (Ascenso et al., 2017).

### **5.2.2 Engagement**

The theme engagement was the second most prominent component of PERMA in the current study. Participants related engagement to commitment, freedom and ease in participation, flow-like experiences, a sense of loss at the conclusion of the production, and their fulfilling engagement, led to continued participation in the performing arts.

Engagement was evident where participants in the *Whoop Up* showed complete commitment to the process, which resulted in a committed effort to improve skills and abilities. This commitment was also apparent in the effort participants made to attend weekly rehearsals. Often, groups of participants would organise extra rehearsals in their spare time in order to ensure mastery of the repertoire and choreography. This finding resonates with Page-Shipp (2018), who reported deep commitment and effort from participants in a study involving an amateur production in South Africa. These results also concur with findings of other studies

in which commitment is identified as an element of engagement (Ascenso et al., 2017; Lamont et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2016). These findings provide evidence that hard work and effort flows naturally once participants are collectively committed to a project.

This study showed that a sense of freedom and ease in participation was an element strongly related to engagement. The fact that participants could choose their level of involvement resulted in freedom and a sense of autonomy, which led to increased levels of commitment. A sense of autonomy relates to Ryan and Deci's (2001) self-determination Theory, which states that three basic psychological needs must be met for eudaimonic well-being: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy has been identified as an element in many theories relating to eudaimonia, and can therefore be seen as critical to eudaimonic well-being (Martela & Sheldon, 2019). Being autonomous means being true to oneself, integrating different aspect of one's personality, and having intrinsic motivations for activities instead of relying on external factors (David et al., 2013). The intrinsic motivation for an activity has been connected to greater commitment and improved well-being (Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016). Participants in the present study were free to choose which acts in the *Whoop Up* they would like to participate in and were therefore intrinsically motivated in their choices. A further important factor supporting a sense the freedom in participation was the lack of external pressure for perfection. There was no emphasis placed on skill and ability, but rather, on participation with enjoyment. These findings corroborate the ideas of Lee et al. (2016), who suggest that the lack of external pressure creates a non-demanding environment, where participation can be fully enjoyed. Similarly, Bailey and Davidson (2005) found that positive rewards for participation do not hinge on skill and ability, but rather, lie in the participation itself.

Many participants described flow-like experiences, which correlates with previous research (Lamont, 2012; Waddington-Jones et al., 2019). Participants reported loss of self-consciousness, distortion of time, autotelic experience, and action-awareness merging. Custodero (2002) states that the nature of engaging in music requires a combination of doing and perceiving, and when truly engaged, one does not focus on the self during the moment of performance. Another dimension of flow reported in this study was complete focused concentration. This finding corresponds with Williamson and Bonshor (2019), where participants reported feelings of focused attention. Croom (2015) further substantiates the

experiences of participants in the current study, as he states that participation in music activities have great potential to induce a state of flow. While the flow experience also correlates with other elements of the PERMA model, such as positive emotions, participants' descriptions of flow was mentioned together with statements related to engagement. Measures for engagement have been mainly focused on flow (Ascenso et al., 2018), however, engagement does not exclusively refer to flow as shown by Lee et al. (2017). The finding of the present study, namely that engagement is the second most prominent component of PERMA, is in contrast with other studies, which found that engagement is not as frequently identified or mentioned (Ascenso et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2017). It may be that experiences relating to engagement are not necessarily identified as such due to the fact that researchers seem to focus on the connection between engagement and flow (Ascenso et al., 2018).

A keen sense of loss was experienced at the conclusion of the *Whoop Up*. The loss felt by participants was in reference to the production as a whole, as well as the social interaction between cast members. There are similarities between attitudes expressed by participants in this study and those described by Page-Shipp et al. (2018) who also found participants indicated that they long for connection to the cast in the months between amateur productions. Participants in this study described a yearning for more engagement in the form of more interaction with one another, more singing and dancing, and more performances. This sense of loss corroborates Seligman (2011), who asserts that the true impact of engagement can only be measured in retrospect. In the current study, only two participants expressed a sense of relief at the conclusion of the *Whoop Up*. This opinion may be low in relation to the *Whoop Up*, but Pitts (2004) studied the experiences of performers at an amateur Gilbert and Sullivan festival, finding that participants were also relieved and pleased to return to 'normal life'. A unique aspect of the current study and Pitts' (2004) research is that these projects take place within a limited timeframe as opposed to other activities such as choirs, which is ongoing. The duration of the *Whoop Up* is eight weeks, and the Gilbert and Sullivan festival studied by Pitts (2004) is three weeks. Other researchers using the PERMA model as a theoretical framework studied community choirs, professional musicians, and school music projects (Ascenso et al., 2017; Lamont et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2017). Participants have regular, continuous involvement, and may therefore not experience the sense of loss as described by participants in the *Whoop Up*. It will be interesting to see whether studies with

similar limitations to the *Whoop Up* will yield results which indicate a sense of loss at conclusion, or relief.

An unexpected finding was that the experience of fulfilled engagement resulted in all the participants mentioning they will participate in the next production of the *Whoop Up*. This result might be explained by the fact that engaging experiences together with flow can predict motivation for long term commitment to a project (Lamont, 2012). It is telling that many participants actively sought out similar activities at the conclusion of the *Whoop Up*. Some participants joined community choirs and choral groups. This finding supports the ideas of Judd and Pooley (2014) and Page-Shipp et al. (2018) which show that fulfilling engagement in music activities motivates continued participation in the performing arts. Importantly, most studies using the PERMA model focus on long-term groups activities (Ascenso et al., 2017; Ascenso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2017), which indicate a sense of continued participation, as amateur participants are involved in voluntary long term commitments. However, the short-term commitment required by the *Whoop Up* was so fulfilling that it awakened a desire in participants to commit to joining community choirs and choral groups.

### **5.2.3 Relationships**

The results of this study show that the *Whoop Up* had a positive impact on relationships on many levels. New relationships were forged and existing relationships were positively impacted. Relationships were formed with the school community, cast members bonded with one another and relationships between family members were indirectly positively impacted. An important finding was that the relationship between facilitators and cast members were integral to the success of the overall production. Research shows that social interaction may well be one of the most important factors which improve overall well-being. Bartolome (2013) found that participants valued the social interaction in a choir more than performance experiences, and Judd and Pooley (2014) found that all the members of a community choir valued socialisation and the family-like atmosphere of the choir. The results of this study therefore concur with existing research, which found that meaningful engagement in music activities fosters improved relationships between all participants involved in the activity (Dingle et al., 2013; Lamont et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2017).

Curiously, the number of statements relating to the element of relationships were lower when compared to other elements of PERMA. However, careful perusal of all themes and subthemes in the study revealed that statements related to social interaction spans many themes across the data set. Based on the prevalence of social interaction across various themes, it stands to reason that relationships can be seen as an important element of well-being in the current study. In other words, the number statements for the theme relationships may not accurately reflect the value and importance of social interaction in the overall experiences of participants in this study. It was clear that building relationships and connections with the community was an important motivation to participate in the *Whoop Up*. New members of the school community felt a need to connect, and involvement in the *Whoop Up* provided this opportunity. This finding is supported by studies which show that music making is an effective way to become enmeshed within a community (Dingle et al., 2013; Judd & Pooley, 2014; Schippers & Bartleet, 2013). Considering that the cast members are only actively involved in the *Whoop Up* for eight weeks it is remarkable that individuals feel such a deep connection to the community within a short space of time. This result may be explained by the fact that involvement in group music making has the ability to form rapid bonds between individuals (Pearce et al., 2015).

Importantly, the study shows that this potential to form rapid bonds resulted in long lasting friendships. Some of the friendships forged during a production of the *Whoop Up* have lasted for more than 15 years. It is encouraging to compare Dabback's (2008) assertion with the findings of the present study with regards to existing friendships, as well as new acquaintances. In line with Pearce et al. (2015), Dabback (2008) states that group music making is an environment that promotes new friendships and solidifies existing friendships. Participants in the *Whoop Up* experienced the production as a place where they are able to socialise outside their immediate circle and meet people they would not ordinarily have an opportunity to meet. This sentiment is reflected in the findings by other researchers (Judd & Pooley, 2014; Lamont et al., 2018).

Another interesting finding was that participants expressed that they enjoyed the diversity of the group involved in the *Whoop Up*. Participants' age ranged from early twenties to mid-seventies. This finding concurs with Williamson and Bonshor (2019) who advocate for inter-generational socialisation as it provides an opportunity for peer role models to emerge, and

it promotes an understanding between groups regarding their individualised experiences. This finding is furthermore supported by research by Dabback (2008) and Page-Shipp et al. (2018), who found that in spite of differences, participants were immediately bonded due to their shared interest in performance and like-minded nature.

Camaraderie and support emerged as an important subtheme for relationships. A deep sense of camaraderie developed between cast members. Individuals felt supported and in turn, they were motivated to support others. This result is mirrored in the findings of other studies, which found that a sense of camaraderie is often experienced in group music making, especially when singing is involved (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Judd & Pooley, 2014; Lamont et al., 2018). As mentioned before, many participants used the *Whoop Up* as a means to become involved in the community. The camaraderie between cast members resulted in the group becoming a community itself, as corroborated by Lamont et al. (2018). Researchers have found that strong relationships and bonds are formed in a community choir (Judd & Pooley, 2014), which result in feelings of support and caring between members (Bailey & Davidson, 2005; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Lee et al., 2017). The finding that newcomers particularly were welcomed and supported by more experienced cast members in a spirit of inclusiveness was also evident in research by Lamont et al. (2018).

An important finding of this study is the vital role of facilitators. Participants in the study appreciated the quality of leadership experienced during the *Whoop Up*. The facilitators made participants feel at ease and constantly emphasised the importance of having fun. This is mirrored in the findings of Clements-Cortes (2013) and Lee et al. (2016), who found that facilitators were helpful in ensuring that participants can succeed and enjoy the experience by maintaining a joyful, stress-free environment. Maintaining a stress-free environment while producing a production of a high standard meant that the facilitators of the *Whoop Up* had to have a balanced relationship with the participants. This need for balance was understood by participants and leadership alike. Waddington-Jones et al. (2019) found that this balance lies between having authority when guidance is required and being equal to participants when encouragement is needed. Participants of the *Whoop Up* appreciated the skill and professionalism of facilitators. The importance of skilled facilitators was echoed by Page-Shipp et al. (2018), where participants acknowledged the importance of the skill and effort required of the facilitator to ensure a quality production. The role of facilitators emerged in

this study under the theme of relationships, which stands in contrast to the findings of Lee et al. (2017), where facilitator impact was placed under the theme of engagement. According to Lee et al. (2017), facilitators are effective mediators to ensure meaningful engagement. In my opinion, the *relationship* between leaders and participants is at the core of participant experience. Facilitators must make an effort to build a positive relationship with participants. They must lead by example with positivity, encouragement, and vision. If the relationship between facilitators and cast members do not reflect these elements, then meaningful engagement would not be possible. The functioning relationship between facilitators and cast members resulted in focused engagement and a deep sense of commitment. There is an interesting link between the style of facilitators' leadership and the experience of participants (Lee et al., 2016). Considering the significance of the facilitator/participant relationship, future research may shed light on skills needed to facilitate optimal participation and enjoyment.

Family relationships were impacted through participation in the *Whoop Up*, albeit mostly indirectly. Parents would rehearse at home and involve their children. Participants spoke of singing at the dinner table and dancing in the lounge. These positive interactions between parents and their children resulted in improved family relationships. This finding is similar to those of a study by Lee et al. (2017,) who found that children involved in music projects at school would involve their parents, and by so doing, family relationships were improved. The direction of interaction in the *Whoop Up* was exactly the opposite. Parents involved their children in the musical activities related to the *Whoop Up* after school. It is highly probable that these positive interactions between children and parents encourage children's musical interests. Research shows that parental involvement plays an important role in the formation of children's musical interests (Bell, 2004). This finding suggests that this spontaneous family involvement of the *Whoop Up* may have long lasting positive effects on children's perceptions of the arts, and on the family as a whole.

#### **5.2.4 Meaning**

Meaning was identified as the most prevalent component of PERMA related to well-being experienced by the participants. This finding corresponds with prior studies using the PERMA model, where meaning was revealed to be the most prominent element of well-being

(Ascenso et al., 2017; Ascenso et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017). These studies indicate that meaning was an important motivating factor in participating in the music activities.

The results of the study found that the theme meaning revealed subthemes related to layers of personal inner experiences, as well as participants' experience of the community through participation. The subthemes encompassed meaning and a sense of self, rediscovering and exploring identity, and meaning as a facilitator of change.

In the present study, an improved sense of self was found to have great meaning to the participants. Participation in the *Whoop Up* provided valuable 'me-time', which resulted in a sense of ownership and agency. This finding is in agreement with Ascenso et al. (2017), who found that meaning was experienced through developing a strong sense of self. Ruud (1997) emphasises that there is an important link between participation in music and sense of identity. Through active engagement in music, individuals are able to rediscover lost identity and become their authentic self. Ruud (1997) confirms that music has the potential to allow individuals to reclaim their identity and become "aligned" with their true self. This reflects the experience of the participants in the current study. These results are consistent with those of other studies, and suggest that music can be effectively used in the formation of identity and experiencing a more grounded sense of self (Ascenso et al., 2017; Dabback 2008). Through engagement in the *Whoop Up*, participants were able to explore new facets of their identity, because this provided an opportunity, for some, to have their first meaningful performance experiences in a safe, supportive space. These findings concur with Creech et al. (2014), who found that music is a valuable medium for exploring facets of identity. As a result of participation in the *Whoop Up*, participants reported heightened creativity, a desire to become more connected to the community, and an understanding of the need for changes to lifestyle. At the conclusion of the production, participants facilitated these changes in their lives. These findings support the idea that music has the power to bring change (Dingle et al., 2013).

Participants found it meaningful to have time to themselves. This provided some welcome 'me-time' where they were able to spend time on something exclusively for their own enjoyment. Furthermore, participants found a break from everyday routine enjoyable and

meaningful. Pitts (2004) found that being part of a performing arts group allows for participants to experience a 'break from' reality or a 'break towards' a new reality. The opportunity for participants in the current study to have a change in routine resulted in a welcome 'break from' reality. 'Me-time' allowed participants to explore alternative identities. Some participants mentioned that they would like to be stars or celebrities and participation in the *Whoop Up* provided an opportunity to "pretend you have a different identity and a different life". This is a means of escape from daily routine and responsibilities. This finding supports Pitts' (2004) idea of a 'break towards' a different reality. Bailey and Davidson (2005) further support this finding by stating that involvement in music can allow for a temporary escape from daily life.

The result of this study is that participants felt that they were part of something bigger than themselves, and experienced a sense of belonging and value, which correlates perfectly with previous research. Purpose in participation is an element that provides meaning to individuals (Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Lee et al., 2016; Waddington-Jones et al., 2019). Similarly, the findings are in line with the view expressed by Ascenso et al. (2018) regarding, which states that meaning provides a sense that one's life makes a difference. The present study revealed that participants felt valued in the sense that each member had a unique part to play in the success of the production. Each member mattered. Meaning was therefore derived from a sense of belonging and feeling part of a team, where everyone works together for the greater good. These results match those observed in previous studies. Stewart and Lonsdale (2016) state that being part of a group has more meaning for the members of the group than the activity they engage in, and Bailey and Davidson (2005) found that a sense of belonging creates a social support system for members of a choral group.

The *Whoop Up*, due to its history, is meaningful to the school community. The production over time created a unifying element among the staff and parents. The tradition itself is unifying and it is a reciprocal opportunity to 'give back' to the community. All proceeds of the *Whoop Up* are donated to charity, and this provides additional meaning to the participants in feeling that a contribution is made to the community. These findings support previous research, which shows that community music has the potential to unify communities (Lamont et al., 2018; Schippers & Bartleet, 2013) and that giving back to the wider community provides meaning to participants (Bailey & Davidson, 2005). Meaningful connections with the

community were made through performances. Working towards performances and entertaining members of the community provided meaning to participation in *Whoop Up*. This element of meaning is widely supported by previous research (Creech et al., 2014; Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Lamont et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017).

Participants derived meaning through the live performance experience, in the sense that they were able to live out their passion for performance. Opportunities for amateur performance are not readily available, and the *Whoop Up* provided the opportunity to perform. This finding is supported by a previous study, which mentions the need for individuals to find a platform for amateur performance (Page-Shipp, 2018). It is striking to note that the performances provided meaning to participants with completely opposite sets of ideals. One group of participants had a musical background, and harboured unfulfilled aspirations of becoming professional performers. The *Whoop Up* afforded them the opportunity to live out their dreams of performance. The other group of participants had no musical background, and very limited previous exposure to the performing arts. The *Whoop Up* provided an opportunity to satisfy the needs of both of these groups. The finding that there is meaning in performance concurs with Ascenso et al. (2017), who state that meaning is derived from performance in the validation of the perception of confidence in self. Individuals with an unfulfilled dream of performance may have achieved this validation by performing in the *Whoop Up*. For the latter, participation in the *Whoop Up* provided the opportunity to feel that performing arts is accessible to anyone to participate. These findings are consistent with those of other studies which show that participants experienced acceptance and restored confidence through participation in community music (Joseph et al., 2018; Lamont et al., 2018).

### **5.2.5 Accomplishment**

The results of the study show that participants experienced accomplishment through personal investment and through performance. The participants described accomplishment in terms of personal investment, overcoming challenges, and pushing personal boundaries. Lee et al. (2017) similarly found that accomplishment related to personal feelings of success and recognised public performances. Participants in the *Whoop Up* were obliged to overcome perceived lack of skill, personal insecurities, and fear of the unknown. Overcoming these challenges resulted in an improved sense of confidence and personal growth. In accordance

with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that increased confidence come from overcoming challenges and stepping out of one's comfort zone (Joseph & Southcott, 2014; Waddington-Jones et al., 2019). Furthermore, participants realised that they were braver and more courageous than imagined, and they were more skilled than they initially thought. When comparing these findings to Ascenso et al. (2017) one can see the correlation in results in that feelings of accomplishment often relate more to the achievement of inner goals rather than external validation, which mirror the experiences of the *Whoop Up* cast.

Successful performances provided participants with a sense of accomplishment. Participants experienced a vivid connection with the audience through performance. This connection provided great meaning, as the cast felt that they were able to translate their energy and emotions to the audience through performance. This finding is in agreement with what has been noted by Dingle et al. (2013), who showed that these experiences with the audience are often the most cherished by the participants. It becomes clear to the cast that the audience is appreciative of the efforts on stage, and that the audience response in itself becomes the vehicle for accomplishment (Lamont, 2012). Participants felt a sense of pride and achievement at a positive audience response. It indicated to them that the performance was successful, and that the audience enjoyed their efforts. This finding corroborates the findings of Bailey and Davidson (2005), who found that the audience response has an effect on the feelings of accomplishment experienced by individuals.

According to Croom (2015) feelings of accomplishment are vital in the pursuit of well-being. Curiously, accomplishment was the least mentioned element of PERMA across the data set. This finding is consistent with that of Lee et al. (2017), who also found that accomplishment had the fewest number of statements. They propose that this is an indication that accomplishment does not have major benefits to overall well-being, but this is incongruent with Croom's (2015) findings. I propose that the low number of statements relate to the symbiotic nature of the elements of well-being. The onus to code statements according to any specific theme rests on the researcher's opinion, and the context of the data. Researchers have reported findings of accomplishment which correlate closely to meaning (Ascenso et al., 2017; Lamont, 2018). It may well be that experiences of accomplishment are present in combination with other elements of well-being, and that only statements that blatantly reflect accomplishment are considered under this theme.

### 5.3 Rethinking paradigms: the role of hedonia and eudaimonia

According to the PERMA model, of the five components, only one, positive emotion, falls into the paradigm of hedonia. Engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment are elements which relate to eudaimonia. However, recently research into wellbeing acknowledges that the two paradigms are far more integrated than was first understood, and that approaching wellbeing with two separate paradigms is problematic. Heintzelman (2018) suggests further research regarding the independence of hedonia and eudaimonia, as there are considerable common characteristics between elements of each. Martela and Sheldon (2019) intimates that future research into well-being must measure psychological well-being (eudaimonia) alongside subjective well-being (hedonia), as this will offer a more holistic view of well-being. While the elements of the PERMA model were clearly evident throughout the analysis, it became increasingly clear that participants' experiences of hedonia (P) and eudaimonia (ERMA) were closely enmeshed, and often difficult to separate, validating suggestions by Heintzelman (2018) and Martela and Sheldon (2019). This section aims to illustrate the overlaps between the elements of PERMA, suggesting well-being is a complex multi-layered phenomenon.

#### 5.3.1 Positive emotion

Participants' recollection of performance in their youth evoked *positive emotions*, but these experiences also had *meaning* in the sense 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. Reclaiming lost identity had *meaning* for participants in the *Whoop Up*. Furthermore, the fun and enjoyment experienced by participants were enhanced by the interaction and *relationships* with other cast members and the audience. 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' *engagement* during the performance resulted in a thrilling performance experience, and created feelings of *accomplishment* due to praise from audience members. The combination of a thrilling performance experience and praise from the audience led to

feelings of euphoria and pride. Similarly, Lamont et al. (2018) found that *positive emotion* was linked to *engagement* and *accomplishment*. These findings show that the themes of engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment resulted in the expression of positive emotion (Lamont et al., 2018). In other words  $P = E+R+M+A$ .

Ascenso et al. (2018) found that as positive emotion increases, so do the experiences of all the other components of PERMA. Similarly, positive emotion is an observable result of the PERMA components (Lee et al., 2016). The results of this study are therefore consistent with those of other studies that suggest it to be increasingly difficult to discuss positive emotion as an element of hedonia without including elements of eudaimonia (Heintzelman, 2018; Martela & Sheldon, 2019; Sheldon, Corcoran & Prentice, 2019). These findings support the fact that positive emotion ought not to be viewed as a completely separate hedonic element of well-being, but rather, the result of experiences relating to engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

### 5.3.2 Engagement

Results in this study show that *engagement* can be linked to feelings of *accomplishment*. Participants experienced *engagement* through commitment and flow-like experiences, among others. Committed participation, hard work, and effort will, when combined, lead to subsequent success and feelings of *accomplishment* (Lamont, et al., 2018). Feelings of *accomplishment*, in turn, lead to *positive emotion*.

Participants reported dimensions of flow relating to distortion of time, concentration on the task at hand, action-awareness merging, loss of self-consciousness, and deep concentration. The outcome of flow as an optimal performance experience is elation and joy (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). In order for flow to occur, there needs to be a balance between challenge and skilful engagement (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990; Custodero, 2005). For flow to be maintained, challenges need to match the improvement of skill. Participants in the *Whoop Up* reported that they enjoyed being challenged and they pushed themselves to achieve higher levels of skill. There was an awareness of an improvement in ability from week to week. This awareness reflects the need for balance between challenge and skill. Being challenged and overcoming these challenges resulted in feelings of *accomplishment*. These findings

corroborate the ideas by Lee et al. (2016), where participants had to overcome physical and intellectual challenges that ultimately resulted in feelings of accomplishment. Simultaneously, participants experienced *positive emotions* relating to the challenges they faced. These findings suggest that the element of engagement is closely linked to accomplishment. Feelings of accomplishment result in positive emotions, where  $E+A=P$ . The results are somewhat consistent with those of Waddington-Jones et al. (2019), who found that the elements of engagement and accomplishment were closely linked, however, these researchers did not highlight the association with positive emotions. Close perusal of their findings do show that participants experienced positive emotions as a result of engagement and accomplishment.

### 5.3.3 Relationships

Participation in *Whoop Up* resulted in community cohesion, relationship formation, and social bonding. The formation of new friendships, solidifying existing friendships, and deepening connections between family members resulted in *positive emotion* in the individual. These results agree with the findings of other studies, in which social interaction is linked to positive emotions (Page-Shipp et al., 2018). Participants enjoyed spending time with like-minded individuals and being involved in the community, which created a sense of belonging. Involvement and belonging was seen as a necessity for effective functioning within the school. In this instance, the theme *relationships* is closely linked to *meaning*. The importance of belonging to a community also falls within the theme of *meaning*. These feelings of belonging and unification will ultimately result in *positive emotions*. Community music making therefore is an effective tool for inclusivity, unifying people and satisfying the desire for connectedness (Lamont et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2016; Schippers & Bartleet, 2013). To sum up, in this section, I argue that  $R+M=P$ .

### 5.3.4 Meaning

Identity and sense of self was revealed to be an important aspect of meaning. Dabback, (2008) asserts that sense of self is subjective, and explored by the individual, but equally important is that this identity must be validated by those around you. Individuals must feel like they are *seen* by their peers. The findings of the present study concur with those of Dabback (2008), where it shows that participants found meaning in the fact that they were seen as individuals,

and that the social circle in which they found themselves at the time validated their identity, which further strengthened a sense of self. These findings also match those of Dingle et al., (2013), which showed improved self-perception and connectedness to the group as whole. The positive interaction between participants resulted in feelings of belonging, teamwork and unity, which in turn felt good to the individuals concerned. Here, the elements *relationships*, *meaning* and *positive emotion* seem to work together in order to provide fulfilment and purpose in life and can thus be summed up as  $R+M=P$ .

Participants used their renewed and reclaimed sense of self to facilitate changes in their lives. Some individuals understood the *meaning* that performing arts added to their lives and actively worked at behaviours to maintain the positive emotion they experienced through participation. In the present study, this behaviour is also found under the theme of *engagement*. Results revealed that fulfilling engagement will lead to continued participation. This combination of findings provides some support for the conceptual premise that meaningful participation and engagement leads to the eudaimonic behaviour of pursuing endeavours to provide meaning to life. Participation in these endeavours lead to the experience of *positive emotion*. These results agree with the findings of other studies, which found that as a result of meaningful participation, there is a desire to engage in other performing arts activities (Judd & Pooley, 2014; Page-Shipp et al., 2018).

Eudaimonia is focused on the processes involved in attaining excellence in life and the focus of hedonia lies with pleasure (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In other words, eudaimonia concerns 'doing', whereas hedonia concerns 'feeling'. Participants derived meaning from 'doing' something to attain excellence in life, which results in them 'feeling' good. In this instance, we can see the link between positive emotion to meaning and engagement. Therefore  $M+E=P$ .

### **5.3.5 Accomplishment**

As a result of participation in the *Whoop Up*, respondents developed qualities such as bravery, perseverance, and confidence. The process of developing these internal qualities had *meaning* for the participants as they experienced personal growth through their engagement in the *Whoop Up*. David et al. (2013) describe the pursuit to develop internal qualities as one of the defining characteristics of eudaimonia. Processes that enable purpose and fulfilment

are central to acquiring eudaimonic well-being. Furthermore, individuals felt a sense of *accomplishment* that they were able to persevere, and complete the performances successfully and feelings of accomplishment are undeniably positive. This finding is in agreement with Lamont et al. (2018), showing a link between *accomplishment, meaning, and positive emotion*. Therefore  $A+M=P$ .

Continued commitment and hard work (elements of *engagement*) must ultimately lead to success in order to feel a sense of achievement. When individuals work together as a team, with a common goal in mind, the resulting accomplishment is meaningful. The present finding seems to be consistent other research, which found that *engaging* in music activities with others (*relationships*) and experiencing *accomplishment* lead to *positive emotions* (Stewart & Lonsdale, 2016; Lamont et al., 2018). Therefore  $R+E+A=P$ .

To summarise, it is clear that participation in the *Whoop Up* had an immense impact on the well-being of participants. The results of this study show that the element of positive emotion (hedonic) has a bidirectional effect on the other four eudaimonic components of PERMA ( $P=E+R+M+A$ ). Disabato, Goodman, Kashdan, Short and Jarden (2016) suggest that even though eudaimonia and hedonia can be viewed separately from a philosophical point of view, the experiences of each are virtually indistinguishable. Heintzelman (2018) provides evidence that eudaimonia and hedonia are closely linked and experienced simultaneously. Findings in this study support the literature in the sense that positive emotion (hedonia) cannot be separated from the eudaimonic experiences of engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

#### **5.4 Elements unrelated to PERMA**

Regardless of an overwhelming correlation of well-being elements relating to PERMA in this study, there were several interesting emergent themes that extend beyond the chosen theoretical framework. Notably, two unexpected themes emerged that warrant discussion here. These themes relate to negative emotions in terms of difficulties with socialisation and negative experiences. It would be unwise to assume that every participant would have only positive experiences to report, however, the number of participants who reported negative emotions or experiences were very small in relation to the overall sample. This finding concurs

with findings of Ascenso et al. (2016), who also noted the negative affect in their research, where similar to this study, the prevalence was very low.

#### **5.4.1 Difficulties with socialisation**

Four participants experienced difficulty with socialisation. Three of these participants were self-proclaimed introverts and they stated that they found it challenging to connect to individuals in the cast. Many of the cast members of the *Whoop Up* have participated in multiple productions, and findings showed that meaningful, long-lasting friendships are formed through participation in *Whoop Up*. It is understandable that, for an introvert, it may be challenging to form their individual connections and to break into existing long-lasting friendships. Sally, a participant who experienced difficulty with socialisation, is reticent about future participation due to her challenges with social interaction. Judd and Pooley (2014) found that members in a group, such as the *Whoop Up*, will often remove themselves due to an inability to connect. It can thus be assumed that Sally will dissociate from future productions based on her negative experience. On the other hand, it is remarkable that given her experience of social anxiety, she persevered with this production.

Another participant experienced some anxiety regarding socialisation because of her perceived role as a staff member at the school. She felt that there is a need for the parent/teacher relationships to have a certain degree of distance and to remain professional. The sociable nature of the *Whoop Up* made this challenging and as a result, she opted to socialise mainly with other staff members. Related research on music and well-being revealed one study, which investigated the impact of music programmes in school communities (Lee et al., 2017), who found that collaboration between students and staff, as well as parents and community members, were instrumental in the success of school music programmes. Lee et al. (2017) did not mention teacher/parent relationships, however, many other relationships in the school setting were positively impacted through music involvement. It stands to reason that, if correctly managed, the teacher/parent relationship can similarly benefit from musical interaction. In the present study, other staff members who participated reported that they had experienced positive improvements in their relationships with the parents. Similarly, parents stated that they enjoyed getting to know staff members in an informal setting. There

is abundant room for further progress in determining the effect of community music on the relationship between staff members and parents within a school community.

#### **5.4.2 Negative experiences**

The prevalence of negative emotions was low, and the participants who reported negative experiences did state that their overall experience of *Whoop Up* was positive. This finding resonates with a results presented by Lamont (2012), in which participants also reported negative emotions, but these eventually gave way to positive emotions. The negative emotions in Lamont's (2012) research were related to performance anxiety, but it may explain the findings of the present study. This study shows that negative experiences were reported initially, however, through the course of the rehearsals participants experienced less negative experiences and more positive experiences. Negative experiences reported by participants included a difficulty to switch off from work pressures, and the pressure to perform. This hindered participants' ability to become fully engaged, and to enjoy rehearsals. It is most likely that these pressures were internal, and based on personal insecurity. A similar finding was reported by Dingle et al. (2013), where one participant experienced a lack of confidence in his ability.

Results from the current study may be explained by the fact that these negative experiences were mostly reported by newcomers, with no previous experience to draw from. Later comments revealed that these participants realised their fears were unfounded within the first few rehearsals. Further work is required to establish the ways in which newcomers integrate into a production, and how they can be set at ease much quicker.

A large number of participants found the dancing and singing activities challenging, which resulted in feelings of considerable frustration. Most often, learning choreography caused considerable aggravation, as cast members were unable to remember the sequence of steps. Learning the lyrics to songs was less challenging, however, this difficulty was also mentioned as all lyrics were meant to be memorised by the time of the performance. Even though larger numbers of participants experienced negative emotion such as frustration, it did not impede enthusiasm or commitment, but rather served as motivation to overcome challenging aspects of participation. This in turn, led to feelings of accomplishment. Interestingly, participants took the challenges to heart to such an extent that additional rehearsals were organised to

master choreography, and playlists were made to learn lyrics at home and whilst commuting. In order to further ease the challenge, facilitators projected the lyrics for the cast and the choreographer mirrored the steps at the back of the gallery. Interestingly, there were conflicting views regarding the additional assistance at performances. Some cast members were relieved that extra help was available, however, other cast members felt slightly cheated. They felt that the expectation should be that greater effort must be made to learn the lyrics and choreography. It may be valuable to determine whether the majority of participants prefer one or the other in order to ensure that the maximum potential exists for feelings of accomplishment.

## 5.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented a discussion about the findings of the analysis. Firstly, the findings were discussed in relation to each element of the PERMA model. These elements formed the main themes under discussion: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. The discussion showed that elements related to each theme were experienced by the participants.

Secondly, it is presented that hedonia and eudaimonia are not two completely separate paradigms of well-being. Each element of PERMA was discussed in relation to the other elements of PERMA. The findings showed that elements of PERMA cannot be discussed in complete isolation, which further support the notion that hedonia and eudaimonia are closely linked and various elements overlap.

Themes unrelated to PERMA were presented as the analysis showed that these emergent negative themes cannot be ignored. Some participants with more self-proclaimed introvert personality characteristics experienced difficulty with socialisation. Negative emotions relating to work stress, pressure to perform, and challenging activities were reported. Finally the duration and frequency of *Whoop Up* was discussed.

Overall, the data revealed that the PERMA model is a useful lens through which to explore elements of well-being, where *Whoop Up* proved to be a meaningful experience for participants. It solidifies a sense of identity, community, and belonging. However, it was clear that the findings support recent research regarding the presence of hedonic elements within

the eudaimonic nature of the production. The fact that a few negative elements were mentioned by participants point to factors which were not explored, such as the role of personality in eudaimonic and hedonic experiences.

## Chapter 6

### Summary and conclusion

#### 6.1 Introduction

The research set out to explore the experiences of cast members involved in a production of the *Whoop Up* and to gain a deeper understanding of the links between participation and the well-being of the cast. Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the study. Background to the research was introduced, the aims were identified, and the research questions were stated. Chapter 2 provided an overview of related literature. The concept of well-being, the PERMA model, and its relation to music was discussed. Chapter 3 explained the methodological procedures relevant to the study in order to explore the research questions. Chapter 4 presented a detailed analysis of the research findings. Chapter 5 presented a discussion regarding the research findings and its relation to relevant literature. Chapter 6 provides a summary and conclusion of the research. The primary research question and secondary research questions are addressed in this chapter.

#### 6.2 Addressing the research questions

The primary research question forwarded in this study asks in what ways participating in the amateur musical production *Whoop Up* impacts well-being among participants. The five secondary research questions will be addressed before the primary research question is discussed.

##### **6.2.1 According to the PERMA model which positive emotions did the participants experience through their involvement in the *Whoop Up*?**

This research shows that participants experienced a wide range of positive emotions throughout the process of *Whoop Up*. Fun is synonymously associated with the *Whoop Up* and serves as a main motivation for participation. The experience of the *Whoop Up* conjured fond memories in relation to their history of performance as children or as adults. Nostalgic recollections of prior performances were described as ‘amazing’ and ‘fun’. Individuals expressed a deep love for the performing arts, which was fostered in childhood. Some participants had aspirations of professional careers as singers and participation in the *Whoop Up* resulted in feeling that certain hopes and dreams were finally fulfilled. All the participants

specifically mentioned that they experienced fun and enjoyment through their participation in the *Whoop Up*. These were the most prominent emotions expressed in the study. According to many participants, the main goal of their involvement was to enjoy themselves. Rehearsals were described as a relaxing environment, filled with laughter. The fun and enjoyment experienced by participants were heightened when shared with others. The build-up to performances was ‘special’, and individuals enjoyed the anticipation and excitement before the performances. During the live performances, participants experienced feelings of euphoria and a ‘buzz’, as a result of the rush of adrenaline. The positive emotions experienced during the performance lingered, as interaction with audience members after the performances resulted in additional feelings of exhilaration.

### **6.2.2 According to the PERMA model how did the participants experience increased engagement through their involvement in the *Whoop Up*?**

Engagement was reflected in the deep sense of commitment participants showed to the process of the *Whoop Up*. This commitment resulted in an effort to improve skills and hard work during weekly rehearsals. Participants experienced freedom and autonomy in their participation. The intrinsic motivation to participate in the *Whoop Up* further deepened commitment and resulted in improved well-being. Individuals experienced ease in their participation, due to the lack of pressure to perform to any specific standard. The focus of participation lay in enjoyment and meaningful engagement. A few participants experienced dimensions of flow, and a sense of loss was reported at the conclusion of the production. The presence of these findings indicate that participants had a deep connection and engagement with *Whoop Up*. Finally, the meaningful engagement of participants in the *Whoop Up* led to a desire for continued engagement in performing arts.

### **6.2.3 According to the PERMA model how were relationships forged between the participants through their involvement in the *Whoop Up*?**

The impact of the *Whoop Up* on relationships was far-reaching. Relationships were forged with the community as a whole. Participants had a desire to connect with the community and *Whoop Up* afforded individuals this opportunity. New friendships were formed, acquaintances made, and long lasting friendships were rekindled and strengthened during participants’ involvement in *Whoop Up*. They formed rapid bonds during their participation

in *Whoop Up* and made meaningful connections with one another. No doubt the challenges and difficult moments contributed to a sense of cohesion, as the relationships between cast members evolved into a sense of camaraderie, which made them feel supported by those around them. An important finding was the profound impact of the relationship between facilitators and cast members. Facilitators played a vital role in the overall experience, contributing to strengthened relationships at all levels. Family relationships were indirectly impacted through participation in the *Whoop Up*. Parents shared positive rehearsal experiences with their children, and these experiences may result in fostering lasting respect for the arts.

#### **6.2.4 According to the PERMA model what sense of meaning did the participants experience through their involvement in the Whoop Up?**

Meaning was the most prominent element of the PERMA model in this study. Participants attributed meaning to a variety of experiences, related to internal processes as well as to others in the wider community. *Whoop Up* provided participants an opportunity for introspection and exploration regarding personal identity. They were able to explore their authentic self and feel acceptance in doing so. Participation in *Whoop Up* was also a catalyst for change in some individuals. Participants derived meaning from the 'me time' and the valuable opportunity to escape from everyday life, responsibilities, and routine. A sense of belonging to the community was fostered through participation, which resulted in feelings of ownership, and purpose in participation. The fact that 100% of proceeds of the production is donated to charity provided motivation, and belief that *Whoop Up* makes a difference to the wider community. Participants found meaning in the altruistic motivation. The impact of the *Whoop Up* on the wider community is that it serves to unify those within the community, as well as reach out to others outside the community. The experience of the performance itself was experienced as meaningful in that it provided participants an opportunity to live out passions and dreams, through performance.

#### **6.2.5 According to the PERMA model how did the participants experience accomplishment through their involvement in the Whoop Up**

Accomplishment was experienced through personal investment and performance. By pushing personal boundaries and stepping out of comfort zones, participants stretched their abilities,

and were able to overcome personal challenges. Individuals expressed that they were surprised at their own competence, and they felt brave and courageous for trying something new and out of the ordinary. Overcoming challenges led to personal growth and an increased sense of confidence. This, in turn, led to feelings of accomplishment. The live performances were another source of accomplishment. Individuals felt proud of what they had achieved, especially considering everyone involved were amateurs. The performances were the result of hard work and effort, which finally led to success and feelings of accomplishment. Furthermore, the reaction of the audience during and after the performances led to feelings of instant gratification and accomplishment amongst the participants.

### **6.3 Answering the main research question: In what ways does participating in the amateur musical production *Whoop Up* impact well-being among participants?**

The results of this investigation show that there is a strong correlation between well-being and participation in *Whoop Up*. Participants experienced well-being related to each of the elements of the PERMA model and these findings have strong correlations to existing literature. Well-being is multi-faceted, and many components work together to have a positive impact on overall well-being. The results of this study show that participation in the *Whoop Up* is an effective means of experiencing improved well-being on a social, emotional, and psychological level.

### **6.4 Limitations of the study**

Certain limitations arose during the research. The study was conducted within the context of one school in Pretoria and therefore cannot generalise to other contexts. It was apparent during the study that personality traits such as introversion played a role in participants' perception and self-report of elements of wellbeing. The PERMA model does not consider the impact of personality in describing experiences. This was particularly evident when participants mentioned negative experiences during their interview.

The OBA plays a significant role in the production of the *Whoop Up*. The small sample of Old Boys who agreed to participate in the study could not accurately reflect the impact they may have had on the other participants.

## 6.5 Recommendations for future research

The PERMA model is a useful tool to explore elements of wellbeing in amateur musical productions. More research is however needed investigating the well-being of amateurs involved in community music related to schools in the South African context. The dynamic role between parents and teachers could be investigated in more depth, as well as the impact of the production on relationships between teachers, pupils and parents. Further research into parents' perception of a school when involved in amateur musical productions within the school community can be investigated.

Participants in the present study revealed their personal and inner-most thoughts regarding their participation in the *Whoop Up*. It may be interesting to conduct the same research with fewer participants using interpretive phenomenological analysis, in order to fully understand the lived experiences of participants. More research is needed exploring the possibility that community musical projects can result in a sense of fulfilment of hopes and dreams in amateur performers. The impact of skilled facilitators in the experience of participants came to light during this study. Further research is recommended to investigate the role of facilitators in community music, and to identify which skills can best facilitate enjoyment and participation in community music.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The main finding of this research reveals that individuals experience an increased sense of overall well-being when involved in a community musical project. In particular, participation imparted a deep sense of meaning. An unexpected finding to emerge from this study is that the elements of the PERMA model are closely linked. The results showed that each component of PERMA had an effect on the other and that one cannot discuss the components of well-being in isolation. Positive emotion may be at the centre of overall well-being and the findings of this study showed that positive emotion was a catalyst for the other components of PERMA. This finding correlates with recent research in the field of well-being, which states that hedonia and eudaimonia are more interlinked than previously thought. The findings from the *Whoop Up* illustrated the complex nature of wellbeing, where, as stated by Grossi, Tayano, Sacco, and Buscema (2011:131) "well-being is a complex multi-factorial phenomenon which is the effect of the interaction of many, mutually influencing variables." In a broader

sense, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence that confirm the positive link between well-being and involvement in a community musical project.

In conclusion, a musical project such as the *Whoop Up* provides participants of a school community the opportunity for fulfilling engagement. This in turn leads to an increased sense of self, belonging, and an opportunity to live out dreams and passions, as well as foster a love of arts – the rewards of a sense of wellbeing. This study makes a valuable contribution to research on wellbeing and a musical project in the community. It is the first of its kind in South Africa to explore elements of well-being through the PERMA model in an amateur school musical production.

**“I always start off by saying we’re here to have fun. That’s why you’re here. The only reason you’re here is to have fun. And that pervades and that dominates any other thing. We don’t have to be good at anything, we just have to make sure we have fun.” (Dawie Chamberlain, interview 2020).**

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## Appendix A: Letter of Consent



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30 July, 2018

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to grant permission to Melani Fouché, Student Number 12366472, to use the name of Waterkloof House Preparatory School (WHPS) and of the "Whoop - Up" Production in her MMus (Musicology) dissertation.

Regards,

**Mark Whitelaw**  
Headmaster

**David Chamberlain**  
Whoop - Up Producer



Member of the International Schools  
Association of Southern Africa

WHPS has been awarded a Gold  
Status as part of the ISASA Blue Schools  
programme

## Appendix B: Questionnaire

1. What motivated you to take part in the *Whoop Up*? Be as detailed as you need to be.
2. Can you tell me about your experience as part of the rehearsal process? How did you experience learning the music, words and choreography?
3. In what way were you involved in the *Whoop Up* (cast, dancing, solo, musician, actor, etc.)? Please list every aspect of your involvement.
4. If you participated in acting skits as well as musical numbers, which of the two did you prefer and why?
5. If you were to take part again, what would you like to be involved in next time?
6. Can you describe which aspects of being involved in the *Whoop Up* was meaningful to you and why? For example, you could refer to aspects of well-being, socialisation, emotions etc.
7. Did you learn something about yourself during the process of preparing and performing in the *Whoop Up*?
8. What, in your opinion, do you think amateur musical drama productions such as this affords those who participate?
9. How many productions of the *Whoop Up* have you been involved with? If it is more than one, what is your motivation for joining repeatedly?

## Appendix C: Interview Schedule

1. What motivated you to take part in *Whoop Up*? Be as detailed as you need to be.

### Positive Emotion

2. Do you have any previous experience with performance? Perhaps at school or university?
3. Why do you think *Whoop Up* is so much fun? What about *Whoop Up* creates that 'fun' experience?

### Engagement

4. Can you tell me about your experience as part of the rehearsal process? How did you experience learning the music, words and choreography?
5. In what way were you involved in *Whoop Up*? (Cast, dancing, solo, musician, actor etc.) Please list every aspect of your involvement.
6. If you participated in acting skits as well as musical numbers, which of the two did you prefer and why?
7. How did participating in *Whoop Up* affect your daily life?
8. If you would take part again what would you like to be involved in next time?

### Meaning

9. Can you describe which aspects of being involved in *Whoop Up* was meaningful to you and why? For example, you could refer to aspects of well-being, socialisation, emotions etc.
10. What, in your opinion, do you think amateur musical drama productions such as this affords those who participate?
11. How many productions of *Whoop Up* have you been involved with? If it is more than one, what is your motivation for joining repeatedly?
12. How did you feel when *Whoop Up* was over?

### Accomplishment

13. How did you experience the performances? Describe your emotions during and after the performances.
14. Did you learn something about yourself during the process of preparing and performing in *Whoop Up*?

## Appendix D: Letter of information and informed consent



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**Faculty of Humanities**

Department of Music

Music Department

Faculty of Humanities

University of Pretoria

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participant

I am currently enrolled for a MMus (Musicology) at the University of Pretoria for which I am conducting a research project. I would greatly appreciate your involvement since your personal experience of being involved in the *Whoop Up* production of 2018.

### **Title of the study**

Exploring elements of well-being among members taking part in a community musical project

### **Aim of the study**

The proposed study aims to explore your experiences of being involved in the *Whoop Up* as well as the impact on your wellbeing in terms of the factors outlined in the PERMA model.

### **Research procedures**

I would like to invite you to take part in either a semi structured interview or an email open-ended questionnaire. Should you agree, the semi-structured interview will be arranged at a convenient place and time. The interview will be audio-recorded for ease and accuracy of

data collection, and should take between thirty to forty-five minutes. Should you so wish, the transcribed interview will be sent to you for verification.

### **Confidentiality**

You are assured that the information will remain confidential. Your personal details will not be used and you will be assigned a pseudonym. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the participants' identities. The University of Pretoria will hold the raw data confidentially for a period of fifteen years after the study is completed.

### **Potential risks**

There are no potential risks associated with this particular study.

### **Participants' rights**

Your involvement in this particular study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any given time without any negative consequences. You are welcome to view the full project upon completion.

#### **Contact details of researcher**

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#### **Contact details of supervisor**

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## Informed consent form

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Music



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

If you agree to participate in this research, please sign the following letter of consent.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of participant) hereby acknowledge that I am aware of the abovementioned formalities associated with the participation in this particular study. I agree with the process that will be carried out in order to collect data relevant to this specific topic.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix E: Example of questionnaire analysis

A	B	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
		Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9	Participant 10	Participant 11	Participant 12	Participant 13	
Q.1	Motivation	Enjoyed arts school WU gave opportunity Fun Stress-relief Break of routine Choreographer = creativity	Opportunity to perform No previous opportunity Was in audience -aware of lack of pressure. Fun. Participate with loved ones.	Opportunity to perform No previous opportunity Fun. Meet new people No expectation to excel Break from routine	To perform again Meet new people Community involvement	Heard through colleague	Always involved theatre. Part of life	Challenging Out of comfort zone Community involvement	Opportunity to perform 6 Love of theatre and performance 5 Looker like fun 5 Meet new people and socialise 4 Break from routine/stress relief 4 Perform with no pressure 3 Engage with community 3 Challenge self/Out of comfort zone 1 Opportunity for self-expression 1 Being creative 1 Encouraged by past cast members 1 Participate with loved ones 1
Q.2	Experience Rehearsal	Learned dances and song quickly Always gave 100% As choreographer - work hard but keep it fun Be creative, decision maker	Very positive experience. Learning dances and songs challenging. Sufficient time to feel confident	Memory for songs and dances deteriorate with age. Motivated to learn, understands time constraint Dancing good exercise	Very positive experience. Mostly productive Practiced at home	Facilitators dedicated and prepared. Patient with all cast members	Very positive experience. Fun. Good exercise - mind, soul, body. At times negative comments in cast	Dancing and singing simultaneously challenging	Positive and fun experience 6 Motivated to learn and work hard 6 Learning process easy 4 Frustrations during rehearsal 4 Learning challenging 3 Choose level of involvement 3 Facilitators made process easier 2 Initially nervous and shy 2
Q.3	List involvement	Acting, dancing, singing, choreographer	Group dancing/ singing, small group singing, acting	Group singing/dancing, small dance group	Group singing/dancing, solo singing	Group singing/ dancing. Small group singing	Group singing/dancing, acting	Djembe group, set, group singing/dancing	Group singing and dancing 13 Acting 5 Smaller group numbers 4 Djembe group 3 Set design 2 Solo singing 1
Q.4	Preference	Acting and singing Now choreographer	Singing	Group singing/dancing	Singing fulfilling	Singing. New techniques. Improved	Loved both	Singing. Safe in group	Group singing and dancing 10 Acting 7 Smaller group numbers 2 Djembe 1

## Appendix F: Example of interview coding and analysis

<p>suppose your involvement is so much less when you're not, when you don't have children at the school. But it's definitely something that I would do again and I would definitely do it with my partner. (MF: Ja) I think that's a big thing.</p>	<p>involvement in community depends on you being in community</p> <p>Will do next WU with partner</p>	<p>Participate with partner</p>	<p>R: Strong and lasting bonds with community</p> <p>R: Family</p>
<p>MF: What did you find made the experience better doing it with him? CE: So, like it's difficult to, it's difficult to explain why you have so much fun. It, I, I don't know, you know what people say aah, you have to go on a Sunday, how terrible. And actually, you know what it makes Monday that much easier... and that actually was, it was lots of fun and people go and they laugh. You know what you laugh a lot. And you don't, you don't laugh at people. You laugh sort of like together (MF: Ja) because everybody is being silly. (MF: Ja) You know everybody is putting themselves out there. So it's not like there are some that are putting themselves out there and there are other standing back and watching. It's actually a great way to meet people. You meet people on a completely different level.</p>	<p>Difficult to explain why it's fun</p> <p>People say it's awful to go on a Sunday – makes Monday easier!</p> <p>Lots of fun</p> <p>People laugh a lot</p> <p>Laugh together with others, not at others</p> <p>Everybody being silly and putting themselves out there</p> <p>Not some giving their all and others standing back</p> <p>Great way to meet people</p> <p>Get to know people on a different level</p>	<p>Have a great time</p> <p>Lots of laughs</p> <p>Good start to the week</p> <p>Laugh together – no judgement</p> <p>Everyone equal and in same situation</p> <p>Everyone giving their best</p> <p>Meet and get to know different side of people</p>	<p>P: Enjoyable experience</p> <p>P: Creates positive outlook</p> <p>M: Camaraderie</p> <p>M: Unity and togetherness</p> <p>E: Committed</p> <p>R: New perspective on people</p>

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
	Sally	Joy and Mike	Amanda	Claire	Denise	Erica	Gary	Helen	Lisa	Ma
Motivation	(First WU) Involved in community, Reminded of who you are, reconnect with self, Be creative, explore elements of self, unique opportunity to perform, Socialise with friends, Widen social circle, Control over involvement, No judgment, no expectation to perform Fun experience, (2018 WU) Childhood memories, Explore aspects of personality, Use talents, Opportunity to perform	(J) Widen social circle, positive childhood memories, connect with theme of show (M) Pushing personal boundaries (out of character), Witness fun of others - join in the fun	Socialise with friends, Adult time together, Escape responsibility, Fun	Positive feedback from previous participants, Getting involved in community, can control your involvement,	(First WU) Meet new people, Get involved in community, could participate with partner, choose level of involvement, (2018 WU) Always loved performing, opportunity to perform, rekindle old friendships, make new friends	Initially nervous - don't know what to expect, Fun, Doing something out of comfort zone, completely new experience - no previous experience, important to be involved in community	OB association pulls you in, part of wider school community, as OB you give back to school community, Fun experience	(First WU) Get to know wider community as newcomer, New friendships, take time for self, connected with theme, (2018 WU) Be involved in the community, Connected with theme, socialise with friends, widen social circle, uplifting fun and creative, can use talents creatively, encouraged by peers in community to participate, everyone equal, safe place,	(First WU) Meet new people, get involved in community, Have fun, (2018 WU) Fun, New friendships, maintain old friendships, build traditions, control involvement	Alw dre sing
How many WU	2 (maybe won't do again)	(J) 3 (M) 2 (will again)	1 (will again)	1 (will again)	5 (will again)	3 (will do more)	8 (will do more)	2 (will do more)	3 (will do more)	3 (w
Why is it fun		(M) Facilitators setting right tone, sharing with family, spending time with friends, participate without fear of judgment, break in routine, escape daily responsibilities (J) Trying new things, part of team, in control of involvement,	Amazing fun experience, reminder of previous experience as a child, Escape, Teamwork and togetherness, Safe space, Camaraderie, Out of comfort zone,	Enjoyable experience, creates positive outlook on week, camaraderie, unity and togetherness, everyone committed, meet people on different level	Uplifting experience, social event, create bonds and connections with community	Pushing limits is satisfying, trying something new, eventually everyone succeeds - facilitators ensure	Participate with your family, social environment, relaxing, part of a team	trying something new, chance to be creative makes you feel young again, Socialise with your friends, spend time with people in community, relax and switch off	Not too serious - do your best, no judgment for mistakes, singing together feels good, take time for yourself, relaxing, being part of something bigger than you, team working towards goal,	Con thin sing forg res;
Socialisation	Tight knit community makes new relationships difficult, not expected experience, Connections and bonds already formed, Deepen existing relationships, make connections, widen social circle with acquaintances, Everyone committed and make effort for successful show	(J) Connecting with like-minded people, feel supported by cast members, unity with cast (M) Overcome obstacles to persevere, new perspectives on people, form deeper connections, Seen as an individual, reconnect with self (J) Made lasting friendships, bring community together, discuss	People are relaxed and having fun, see someone's real personality, authentic self. Socialisation made tough rehearsals easier, everyone in it together - camaraderie, feel supported by cast	Socialisation main reason for participation, build relationship with community, WU break from reality, be someone else, camaraderie, everyone equal, learn new side to others' personality, no judgment, widen social circle	Form lasting friendships and bonds, meet new members of community, feel young again, get to know a different side of people,	Form new friendships, opportunity to socialise outside immediate circle, meet people you wouldn't normally meet, group dynamic feels safe, feel supported by fellow cast,	Most important aspect, school community like a family, everyone is welcome, facilitators must work well with participants	Social interaction with community is important,	Socialisation important for most participants, meet new people and rekindle old friendships, form bonds and connections that last for years,	Imp intr in o frier spa peo the com peo