

**DANCE AS A TOOL FOR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY**

of

**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

by

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August 2016

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to my supervisor, Dr Trudy Meehan.

Thank you to all of my friends, family and colleagues for their continuous support.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who have enabled me to pursue every goal and dream I have ever had, and for that I am eternally grateful.

## ABSTRACT

Dance has numerous benefits for emotional well-being. For young people specifically it can serve as a prosocial activity where they can engage in a purposeful activity, in a safe space with consistent boundaries and discipline, while surrounded by peers, teachers and positive role models. Recreational spaces that allow young people to feel safe and express themselves is especially important in low socioeconomic areas where there are limited resources and exposure to heightened levels of crime as young people may be less likely to engage in negative behaviours when they have access to alternative, positive activities. This research aimed to explore the lived experiences of a group of young people who participate in dance classes at a community dance project in the Western Cape. The sample group consisted of four young people between the ages of 16 and 20. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants and the interviews were analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Three major themes emerged from the data, namely 1) My exposure to dance - The impact of context, 2) What motivates me to continue attending classes - The fulfilment of the three basic psychological needs, and 3) How does dance make me feel - The experience of emotional well-being through dance. The discussion of the findings yielded many similarities between the experiences of the participants and the relevant literature. Further, it appears that all four participants experience the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs (competence, autonomy and relatedness) at the centre. This may serve as a motivator to continue attending classes as well as contribute to sustained eudaimonic wellbeing. Recommendations include further studies being conducted with groups of young people engaging in dance projects in different socioeconomic contexts and in different parts of South Africa. This could give us a more rounded understanding of how people young people experience dance class and how it contributes to emotional well-being. Further research could also be conducted with recreational projects that offer other activities in under-resourced areas in order to better inform the development of such recreational activities.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	ii
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	iii

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Aims of the Study	3
1.3 Overview of Chapters	3

### **CHAPTER TWO**

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 The Context of Post-Apartheid South Africa	4
2.2.1 Risk factors for gang involvement	7
2.2.2 Protective factors from gang involvement	9
2.3 Youth and Young People	9
2.4 Health and Well-being	10
2.4.1 Hedonia	11
2.4.2 Eudaimonia	11
2.4.3 Self-determination Theory (SDT)	12
2.4.3.1 Motivation	12
2.4.3.2 Competence	13
2.4.3.3 Autonomy	14
2.4.3.4 Relatedness	14
2.5 The Arts and Well-Being	15
2.5.1 Dance and well-being	17
2.5.2 Masculinity and dance	21
2.6 The Dance World	22

2.6.1 The history of the black ballet dancer	22
2.6.2 Dance in South Africa	25
2.7 Conclusion	26

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

3.1 Introduction	28
3.2 Research Design	28
3.2.1 Qualitative research	28
3.2.2 Interpretative phenomenological analysis	29
3.2.2.1 Phenomenology	29
3.2.2.1.1 Hermeneutic phenomenology	30
3.2.2.2 Idiography	30
3.3 Research Question	31
3.4 Sample	31
3.4.1 The centre	31
3.4.2 Inclusion criteria	32
3.5 Procedure	33
3.5.1 Location and dates of study	34
3.5.2 Data collection and transcription	34
3.6 Data Analysis	34
3.7 Reflexivity	35
3.8 Validity	36
3.9 Ethical Considerations	36
3.10 Conclusion	36

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

4.1 Introduction	37
4.2 Theme One: My Exposure to Dance - The Impact of Context	37
4.2.1 Exposure to crime, gangsterism and drugs	37

4.2.2 Exposure to formal dance classes	41
4.2.3 Negotiating masculinity and femininity in dance	44
4.2.4 My future in the dance world	48
4.2.5 Support from family	51
4.3 Theme Two: What Motivates Me to Continue Attending Classes - The Fulfilment of the Three Basic Psychological Needs	53
4.3.1 Relatedness	54
4.3.1.1 Teachers	55
4.3.1.2 Friends	57
4.3.2 Autonomy	60
4.3.3 Competence	62
4.4 Theme Three: How Does Dance Make Me Feel - The Experience of Emotional Well-Being Through Dance	66
4.4.1 A sense of purpose	67
4.4.2 The feeling of happiness	69
4.4.3 The experience of freedom and self-expression	70

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

5.1 Conclusion	73
5.2 Limitations	73
5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies	73

<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>75</b>
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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Demographics of Participants

33

## **LIST OF APPEDINCES**

Appendix A: Interview Schedule	90
Appendix B: Sample Transcript – Aviwe	91

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This study aims to look at dance as a tool for emotional well-being within a group of young people who live in an impoverished area in the Western Cape.

For the purposes of this research, the eudaimonic understanding of well-being has been chosen. Eudaimonia considers well-being to be a process of living well and striving to reach one's full potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001). This includes living a life of purpose and developing the best in oneself (Huta & Ryan, 2010). While the theory of eudaimonia does not consider well-being as an end state of happiness, the process of living well and to the best of one's ability may inevitably lead to feelings of happiness.

The theoretical framework chosen for this research, namely self-determination theory, posits that in order to experience eudaimonic well-being, an individual needs to have three basic psychological needs fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). These three needs are competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). When an individual experiences the fulfilment of these three needs in an environment that is supportive, he may experience eudaimonic well-being. Further, a person will be motivated to continue participating in an activity that satisfies these three basic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Outcomes associated with living eudaimonically include feelings of mastery, belongingness, self-acceptance and sustained well-being (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008).

Consistent with this approach to well-being, research in the arts has emphasised the relationship between eudaimonic living and positive well-being outcomes (Bidwell, 2014; Swindells et al., 2013). The arts promote positive feelings and also provide an opportunity for negative feelings to be expressed through engagement in a meaningful activity (Bidwell, 2014; Swindells et al., 2013). Dance, specifically, provides a unique opportunity for physical activity and creative expression that can contribute to well-being. It offers opportunities for mastery with attainable tasks that increase gradually in difficulty (Vicario & Chambliss, 2001; Vicario, Henninger & Chambliss, 2001). Dance class can also be a space where individuals develop social skills and can interact with peers and positive role models, which could contribute to feelings of relatedness and belongingness (Arts Council England, 2007;

Chielotam, 2015; Clark, 2014). Further, dance encourages the use of imagination and self-expression and this can lead to feelings of autonomy (Chielotam, 2015). Positive outcomes of continued participation in dance classes include feelings of happiness, confidence, freedom, self-expression, improved self-confidence and self-esteem (Arts Council England, 2007; Bremer, 2007; Chielotam, 2015; Vicario & Chambliss, 2001). Dance class also seems to create a space where individuals can release their emotions in a creative way, thus relieving feelings of anxiety and stress (Clark, 2014; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Vicario & Chambliss, 2001). In communities where there are limited resources, recreational spaces that are safe and provide access to activities that are prosocial can contribute positively to the well-being of young people.

In South Africa, many communities are still struggling to recover from the socioeconomic inequalities created by the apartheid system. The segregation of race groups into specific areas with limited access to resources has led to continued poverty, unemployment and overcrowding (Standing, 2003; Trail, 2006). This has led to high levels of crime in many impoverished areas. The Cape Flats in the Western Cape has become notorious for its gang-related criminal activity (Daniels & Adams, 2010; Kinnes, 2000; Samara, 2005; Standing, 2003; Ward, 2006; Ward, 2007). Young people living on the Cape Flats are often exposed to high levels of crime and violence which can contribute negatively to their well-being. Where resources are limited and risk factors outweigh protective factors, young people may be drawn into occupying their time with criminal activity and seeking out their belongingness needs by joining gangs (Burton, 2007; Ward, 2007).

However, if alternative, prosocial activities are available to young people, engaging in gang-related activity may seem less appealing (Legget, 2005; Samara, 2005). Participation in extramural activities that are deemed enjoyable can create opportunities for young people to be exposed to positive role models and peers (Cooper & Ward, 2008). Developing positive social and personal skills such as confidence, a sense of belongingness, coping skills and self-regulation is pivotal for a young person's well-being (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Young people may be able to develop these skills in spaces where they feel physically safe and emotionally supported (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Whitlock, 2004). This coupled with consistent structure and boundaries, supportive adult relationships, and opportunities for mastery can contribute to their enhanced well-being (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Whitlock, 2004).

## **1.2 Aims of the Study**

This study thus seeks to explore:

- 1) The lived experiences of a group of young people who attend dance classes at a dance project on the Cape Flats
- 2) The reasons for their continued motivation to attend dance classes at the dance project
- 3) Whether participation in dance classes at the dance project contribute to their eudaimonic well-being

## **1.3 Overview of Chapters**

This dissertation has been divided into five chapters. The following chapter, Chapter Two, defines the key concepts, presents the theoretical framework, and attempts to position the research within the context of the relevant literature. Chapter Three outlines the research design and methodology and discusses why and how the sample group, procedure and type of data analysis were chosen and carried out. The findings and discussion are presented in Chapter Four and are divided into three superordinate themes, namely 1) My exposure to dance - The impact of context, 2) What motivates me to continue attending classes - The fulfilment of the three basic psychological needs, and 3) How does dance make me feel - The experience of emotional well-being through dance. Finally, the limitations, recommendations and conclusive remarks are presented in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an overview of the relevant contexts and literature is discussed and key constructs are defined. This research project, which explores how dance can contribute to the well-being of young people, is positioned within two contexts namely: post-apartheid South Africa and the dance world within South Africa. As the participants in this study live in an impoverished area with limited resources, it is important to understand how the ramifications of South Africa's political history are perpetuated within such socioeconomic contexts and the impact this has on the lives of young people living in these areas. Thus, this literature review begins with a discussion on the context of post-apartheid South Africa. This is followed by a discussion on the culture of violence and gangsterism which permeates the Cape Flats specifically. Hereafter, a definition of young people is presented and what is essential in the attainment of well-being for young people is discussed. This is followed by a discussion on health and well-being, and a definition of well-being for the purposes of this study is given. Thereafter, an in-depth discussion of the theoretical framework utilised in this study, namely self-determination theory, is provided. A review of the current literature on the arts and dance as a tool for the attainment of well-being is then presented. Issues relating to masculinity and dance, and the African body and dance are also discussed. Finally, the second context in which the participants find themselves, namely the world of dance, is discussed focusing on the American and South African contexts. This chapter is concluded by illustrating a gap in the qualitative research on this topic, specifically in South Africa, and makes an argument for the value of conducting such work

#### 2.2 The Context of Post-Apartheid South Africa

South Africa has the second highest GINI coefficient in the world at 63.38 as recorded in 2011 (The World Bank Group, 2016). The GINI index measures the distribution of wealth in a country and the level of inequality that exists (The World Bank Group, 2016). While legislatively South Africa promises equal opportunity to all, the gap between rich and poor shows that this is not happening in reality. The greater the inequality in a society, the lower the social mobility, and the more difficult it is to break through intergenerational cycles of poverty (Bray, Gooskens, Kahn, Moses & Seekings, 2010; Kerry, Pickett & Wilkinson,

2010). Most of South Africa's economic disparities and difficulties stem from the legacy of apartheid where discrimination was legislatively enforced based on racial classification.

During Apartheid, the South African government categorised people into four racial categories: 'White', 'African', 'Coloured', and 'Indian' (Posel, 2001). This discourse was prevalent for almost 50 years and referring to others based on racial categories has become habit for many South Africans (Posel, 2001). Whilst these four categories carry with them a history of discrimination, they may also be the site of redress (Posel, 2001). This is because it is useful to acknowledge the impact these classifications have had on the socioeconomic position South Africans find themselves in today. Some researchers use these four distinct categories whilst others group all people of colour who were oppressed during apartheid ('African', 'Coloured', 'Indian' and later, 'Chinese') into the collective classification of 'black' (Posel, 2001). For the purposes of this research, I will refer to all people of colour as 'black' to include all race groups segregated by and discriminated against during apartheid. I have chosen to use this term because the classifications used during apartheid forced people into one category and I am aware that some people may identify as more than one classification. The terms 'coloured' and 'african' will be used only in reference to geographical segregation during the apartheid years, as these classifications determined where people were relocated to. By using the terms 'black' and 'white', I am not aiming to perpetuate apartheid discrimination but rather to acknowledge the ramifications of our political history.

During apartheid the cities became exclusively for white people and black people were relocated and forced to settle on the peripheries of the urban areas and in townships (Lemanski, 2004; Lemanski, Durrington & Landman, 2008). These areas were seldom equipped with sufficient housing, open space, municipal infrastructure and health resources (Lemanski et al., 2008). Due to being heavily disadvantaged by an oppressive government, marginalised groups in South Africa did not have access to good educations nor equal job opportunities and thus lived in a state of relative poverty.

In addition to this, Apartheid created a culture of violence and brutalised a generation of young people in South Africa (Burton, 2007). Many young people were exposed to violence through the National Party's attempt to destabilise township life as well as through the resistance movement which aimed to overthrow the apartheid government (Jefthas & Artz, 2007). With the fall of the apartheid regime, young people were no longer required to be freedom fighters and had to renegotiate their role within the new democratic society

(Jefthas & Artz, 2007). Political controls also become more relaxed during times of transformation and this coupled with social disorganisation may have led to an increase in crime rates (Kinnes, 2000). In conjunction with the remaining poverty and segregation following the end of Apartheid, criminal behaviour amongst young people appears to have increased (Burton, 2007; Jefthas & Artz, 2007). While political violence in South Africa may have ended, it has been replaced by increasing levels of interpersonal violence (Dinan, McCall & Gibson, 2004; Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2008).

The new government inherited the problems related to the socioeconomic inequalities of the past, including a housing backlog of more than 1.5 million homes located in informal settlements (Newton & Schuermans, 2013; Trail, 2006). Although numerous spatial-economic strategies have been put in place to rectify this, much of the available land to build adequate low-income housing is only available on the outskirts of urban areas, thus continuing the geographical segregation of apartheid (Donaldson, du Plessis, Spocter & Massey, 2013; Lemanski et al., 2008). Further, this formal housing is minimal in comparison to the need as the number of people moving towards the cities in search of work continues to grow. Many migrant workers build shelter in whatever form they can, leading to the growth of informal housing in areas that are already under-resourced (Matheson, 2011).

The Western Cape has seen the largest population growth rate in the country in the last fifteen years which has resulted in a huge housing shortage problem (Matheson, 2011; Trail, 2006). Statistics show that Africans living in this province are more likely to live in informal homes than in any other province (Matheson, 2011).

Cape Town has remained largely segregated with the majority of black people still living in the Cape Flats (Standing, 2003). The Cape Flats, so named for its geographical features of being a large expanse of open land, was where black people were placed to live during Apartheid's forced removals (Standing, 2003). The Cape Flats is in itself racially split with predominantly coloured people living in communities such as Mitchells Plain, Manenberg and Athlone, and the African community living in townships on the outskirts such as Khayelitsha and Nyanga (Standing, 2003; Williams, 2014).

The standard of living within the Cape Flats differs from area to area, but it is generally a very impoverished area with high unemployment rates (Standing, 2003). This has led to people becoming excluded from the wider society and formal economy (Standing,

2003). The inadequate living conditions due to overcrowding in the informal settlements is worsening and even where people have access to formal housing, many poor households are still in areas that are badly located (Newton & Schuermans, 2013; Trail, 2006).

Poverty, unemployment, limited resources, and overcrowding have led to high levels of crime and violence on the Cape Flats (Standing, 2003). The criminal economy is embedded within other social and economic activities and is a central component of this community (Standing, 2003). On the Cape Flats, this criminal economy is governed by gangs (Daniels & Adams, 2010; Kinnes, 2000; Samara, 2005; Standing, 2003; Ward, 2006; Ward, 2007). Children sometimes join gangs at ages as young as 11 or 12, and joining a gang is a gradual process, so exposure to violence and a gang context at an even earlier age is quite likely (Ward, 2007). Young people make up a substantial number of both perpetrators and victims of crime in South Africa (Burton, 2007). Where resources are limited and risk factors outweigh protective factors, young people may be drawn into a life of criminal and gang-related activity (Burton, 2007; Ward, 2007). These factors operate at numerous systemic levels and may influence whether or not children and young people become involved in gangs and engage in criminal behaviour (Burton, 2007; Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Ward, 2006).

**2.2.1 Risk factors for gang involvement.** At an individual level, drug use and addiction appear to be significant risk factors for becoming involved in a gang (Legget, 2005; Ward, 2006). While many gang members do not describe themselves as addicts, drug use appears to be a way of drawing members in and keeping them there, and drug dealing is a common means of accumulating money for gangs (Legget, 2005). In addition to this, individuals may become disinterested in their schoolwork and drop out of school which may further increase their risk of joining a gang (Ward, 2006). Finally, fulfilling identity formation tasks and the need to belong to a larger group during adolescence may lead an individual to join a gang (Legget, 2005; Ward, 2006). This may become even more acute when parents work long hours or are absent all together (Standing, 2003). Individuals whose needs for belongingness, love and support are not met within the home environment may seek out these needs elsewhere (Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Legget, 2005). Other risk factors stemming from the family and home may include exposure to violence and conflict within the domestic environment (Jefthas & Artz, 2007). Further, living in a home with family members who are gangsters and or use drugs may increase an individual's risk of joining a gang and

some individuals may join a gang in pursuit of revenge for a family member who has been killed due to gang violence (Ward, 2006).

Gangs often play the role of a surrogate family for children who face economic struggle and lack positive role models and stability in their homes (Daniels & Adams, 2010). However, even children who come from homes which enforce positive values and norms can be at risk of joining gangs as they encounter different standards of behaviour in their friends' homes or other community settings (Daniels & Adams, 2010). While parents are the main socialising agents of children when they are young, as they grow older their peers become increasingly influential (Leoschut & Bonora, 2007).

Young people tend to spend most of their free time with their peers and may feel pressured to act in certain ways in order to gain acceptance into a group (Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Leoschut & Bonora, 2007). Thus, if one's peers are engaging in gang-related activity or drug use, an individual's risk of emulating these behaviours may increase in order to belong (Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Leoschut & Bonora, 2007; Ward, 2006). When young people spend more time on the street than in the home, or in prosocial leisure activities, the values emulated on the street may become more important than the values of the home (Legget, 2005).

These risk factors are all exacerbated by the poverty that permeates the Cape Flats. There is a strong correlation between income equality and health outcomes (Kerry et al., 2010). It appears that the experience of *feeling* poor in comparison to others may catalyse the already poor health effects of living in deprived conditions (Fine, Stoudt, Fox & Santos, 2010). The desire to own luxury items may lead young people to turn to violence and crime to obtain them (Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Ward, 2007). Gangsterism is attractive to many young people as it provides access to money, guns, brand name clothing and fancy cars (Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Ward, 2007). Young men have also mentioned that gangs are attractive due to the access to women (Ward, 2006). These material gains appear to be attractive to young people because of their context of deprivation and poverty (Ward, 2006). Young people, who experience relative poverty in comparison to others, may be drawn to join gangs as it provides them with access to material needs as well as more luxurious wants (Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Ward, 2006). This heightened exposure to criminal activities combined with leisure boredom, limited access to positive role models, and a lack of accessible prosocial activities

may increase young people's risk of engaging in negative behaviours to occupy their time (Burton, 2007; Ward, 2006; Ward, 2007).

**2.2.2 Protective factors from gang involvement.** There are numerous factors that may protect young people from engaging in negative behaviours and help them build resiliency in the face of adverse circumstances (Burton, 2007; Daniels & Adams, 2010). Receiving emotional support from and having trusting relationships with their families, peers and other role models may contribute to positive development and resilience (Daniels & Adams, 2010). Young people may be less likely to become involved in gangsterism if they have good relationships with their parents and family members and are able to openly discuss their problems with them (Shields et al., 2008; Ward, 2006). Further, as friends play a critical role at this stage of development, spending time with a prosocial peer group may also protect against joining a gang (Ward, 2006).

In neighbourhoods where gang activity is rife, public recreational spaces such as parks are often taken over by gangs, crime and drug-related activity (Ward, 2006). This means that there may be few safe spaces for young people to interact with one another. Participation in gang-related activities and drug use may seem less appealing if there were alternative activities such as sport and cultural activities available (Legget, 2005). Young people living on the Cape Flats have emphasised the desire to engage in extramural activities that they enjoy (Legget, 2005; Ward, 2006). Participation in enjoyable extramural activities could provide numerous opportunities for young people to interact with role models and peers who may have a positive effect on their development (Cooper & Ward, 2008). If alternative, prosocial spaces are available for young people, and support services are accessible within the community, gang-related activity may decrease (Samara, 2005).

### **2.3 Youth and Young People**

Youth is a developmental stage characterised by the transition from childhood to adulthood (UNDESA, n.d.). Due to demographic and sociocultural changes, the ages delineating what constitutes youth have become more fluid as the pathways to adulthood have become less clear (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; UNDESA, n.d.). For statistical purposes, the United Nations has defined youth as people between the ages of 15 and 24 years (UNDESA, n.d.). This definition will be used in this research and the terms youth and young people will be used interchangeably.

Young people from all socioeconomic backgrounds need support and a variety of experiences in order to reach their full potential, and influences come from a multitude of places including the home environment, peers, the community and afterschool activities (Damon, 2004; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Young people are at risk of developing negative behaviours when there is an absence of safe activities and positive influences; thus, parents, schools and communities need to work together to support positive youth development. Developing positive personal and social assets such as good health habits, life skills, self-regulation and coping skills, confidence, and a sense of belongingness are crucial for young people to thrive (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). These assets are attained in settings where their psychological and physical safety is ensured, where appropriate structure and boundaries are in place, where they can experience supportive adult relationships, where they feel emotionally supported, where they feel a sense of belonging, and where they are provided with opportunities for mastery of skills and self-efficacy (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Whitlock, 2004). Young people need consistent exposure to these types of settings in order to develop the necessary skills for adulthood. In areas where youth are exposed to high levels of violence and poverty in the settings where they should be developing these skills, after school community programs can play a vital role in providing a safe space for them to have an alternative experience and attain sustained levels of well-being. Creating a space for youth to build skills, feel supported and build resilience is one way in which the emotional well-being of a community can be promoted (Fine et al., 2010; WHO, 2016).

## **2.4 Health and Well-being**

There are numerous definitions of well-being. For the purposes of this research, I have decided to focus on the hedonic and eudaimonic constructs of well-being as they are aligned with the theoretical framework that will be used. Hedonia and eudaimonia are philosophical concepts that attempt to answer the question of what constitutes a life well-lived (Huta & Waterman, 2014). Historically they have been considered as opposing constructs in the pursuit of well-being as they appear to have different targets (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008). A life well-lived according to hedonic philosophy is one where pleasure and happiness are attained and discomfort avoided (Huta & Waterman, 2014). In contrast, eudaimonic living is not focused on the outcome of happiness but rather on living in line with one's fullest potential (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Steger,

Kashdan & Oishi, 2008). A detailed discussion of these two concepts will now be presented, followed by the implications on contemporary understandings of well-being in psychology.

**2.4.1 Hedonia.** The concept of hedonia is grounded in the philosophical belief that people essentially desire to maximise pleasure and minimise pain in their lives (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Huta & Ryan, 2010; Huta & Waterman, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Steger et al., 2008). Pleasure and pain were considered indicators of good and bad in one's life; thus the more pleasure one had in one's life, the better one's life would be (Henderson & Knight, 2012). Hedonic well-being is therefore often equated with happiness and views this as the ultimate measure of a life well-lived (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Further, hedonic philosophy considers each individual to be the best judge of his or her own happiness and is thus often used interchangeably with the term subjective well-being (SWB) (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2001). According to Ryan and Deci (2001), SWB consists of three components, namely, the presence of positive affect, the absence of negative affect and overall life satisfaction. There are many pathways to achieve pleasure, not all of which necessarily contribute towards sustained well-being. For example, a person who is greedy and exploits others may live a life of subjective pleasure, however, it may not yield sustained well-being. Further, activities such as substance use may be pleasure-producing in the short term, but they are not healthy and may not contribute to one's long term wellness (Ryan et al., 2008). Thus, an opposing construct to hedonia emerged – one that is not focused on the outcome of happiness, but rather on the process of living well.

**2.4.2 Eudaimonia.** The eudaimonic approach to well-being stems from the writings of Aristotle where he speaks of living in a manner consistent with one's true self (daimon) (Ryan et al., 2008). The Aristotelian view of eudaimonia does not consider well-being as an end state of happiness, but rather as a process of living well and striving to reach one's full potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Steger et al., 2008). Further, the eudaimonic approach focuses on developing the best in oneself, exercising virtues such as kindness, and aiming to live a life of meaning, purpose, and self-actualisation (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008). Outcomes associated with eudaimonic living include self-acceptance, a sense of mastery, a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose and sustained well-being (Ryan et al., 2008). Ryan & Deci (2001) argue that a life well lived according to eudaimonic principles should inevitably lead to feelings of pleasure and positive affect. Thus, while the

aim of eudaimonic living is the process of living well as opposed to the outcome of attaining pleasure, living one's life to the best of one's ability often yields happiness.

Due to this, contemporary understandings of well-being have begun to recognise that eudaimonia and hedonia contribute to our well-being in different ways (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Huta & Ryan, 2010). While there are many pathways to hedonia, not all of which entail living eudaimonically, when a person experiences hedonia as a result of living eudaimonically they may experience the greatest well-being: a state of flourishing (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Huta & Ryan, 2010).

Ryan and Deci (2001) equate hedonia with subjective well-being (SWB) and these terms will be used interchangeably in the discussion going forward. Additionally, psychological well-being (PWB) is considered an indication that one has been living well (living eudaimonically) and it will be used when discussing the outcomes of eudaimonic living (Ryan et al., 2008). Finally, the term well-being will be used to describe the combination of the above concepts i.e. when a person lives eudaimonically and experiences PWB and often SWB as a result of this, he or she should experience the highest levels of sustained well-being. The theoretical framework employed in this dissertation, namely self-determination theory (SDT), embraces eudaimonia as a central definition of well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). However, as mentioned earlier, the theorists also anticipate that a life lived eudaimonically will ultimately provide pleasure even though it is not its primary goal (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

**2.4.3 Self-determination Theory (SDT).** SDT is “a macro-theory of human motivation, personality development, and well-being” (Ryan, 2009, p. 1). SDT is focused on people's motivation to engage in certain activities and aims to explain how external forces and social environments contribute to or forestall sustained participation (Ryan & Deci, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

**2.4.3.1 Motivation.** Motivation is concerned with the persistence of intentional action (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). It plays an important role in the field of psychology because it helps us to understand why people make specific decisions in their social and personal worlds (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Understanding the different types of motivation and what motivates people to act is helpful for people who are in positions that require the mobilisation of others. People can be motivated for a number of reasons, ranging from personal interest and

determination to external coercion (Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). SDT proposes that motivation lies on a continuum ranging from amotivation to intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). In between these two extremes, lie four different types of extrinsic motivation, namely, external regulation, introjection, identification and integration (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Extrinsic motivation refers to the execution of an activity based on external incentives or rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). This contrasts with intrinsic motivation, which is the performance of an activity purely for the personal satisfaction that this participation brings (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Intrinsically motivated behaviour stems from within the self (self-determined) whilst extrinsically motivated behaviour stems from forces outside of the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Extrinsic motivation can, however, become self-determined when an individual internalises and integrates the value of the behavior (introjection) (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Thus, the person takes in the regulation of the behaviour and transforms it into his or her own so that it becomes part of the self (identification) (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). The person is no longer acting simply for external reward but has integrated the values of performing the behaviour into the self, such that the behaviour can now be considered authentic and self-determined (integration) (Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Ryan & Deci, 2002).

People tend to be self-determined to engage in activities that appear novel, challenging and exciting, however, the motivation to participate will only be sustained if these activities are presented in supportive environments (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). SDT is not focused on what causes this self-determined behaviour, but rather on the conditions that need to be present in order for people to remain motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Ryan and Deci (2000b) have identified three basic psychological needs that, when met, will lead to enhanced intrinsic motivation, self-determined extrinsic motivation and ultimately sustained well-being. A basic need can be defined as "an energising state that, if satisfied, conduces towards health and well-being" (Ryan & Deci, 2000b, p. 74). They propose that the three basic psychological needs necessary for enhanced self-determination and sustained PWB are competence, autonomy and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000a; Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Ryan & Deci, 2002).

**2.4.3.2 Competence.** People tend to act on their need for competence by seeking out challenges that are best suited to their abilities. Activities that require persistence and provide opportunities to maintain and enhance one's skills can lead to feelings of competence and

mastery. Competence is thus not the attainment of a specific goal, but rather the feeling of self-confidence and efficacy when engaging in an activity (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

**2.4.3.3 *Autonomy.*** The need for autonomy stems from the desire to act from a position of self-determination and to feel in control of one's own behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Autonomy and independence are often considered synonymous, but SDT posits that a person can still be autonomous even when dependent on others for instruction or guidance. As long as the values of the action are integrated into the self and the individual acts from a position of self-expression, they will experience autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

**2.4.3.4 *Relatedness.*** People need to feel connected with others, to care for others and to feel cared for by others (Ryan & Deci, 2002). This differs from the attainment of a certain status, such as entering into a romantic relationship (Ryan & Deci, 2002). It is rather concerned with the need to feel that you belong to and are valued by others within a social community (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

Social environments that support the attainment of these needs will not only lead to enhanced self-motivation, but will also contribute to positive psychological well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Ryan 2009).

The Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT) is a mini-theory of SDT which is specifically focused on the link between the satisfaction of these three basic psychological needs and eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Basic needs are considered to be universal and can be found across cultures and developmental stages (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). However, the means through which these needs are satisfied or thwarted can differ depending on age, gender and culture (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Whilst the way in which these needs are fulfilled may differ, a context which provides opportunities for competence, autonomy and relatedness will lead to enhanced eudaimonic well-being and sustained motivation. SDT further argues that the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs usually produces hedonia, as when one feels satisfied with one's life, he or she will typically experience more positive feelings and fewer negative feelings (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Essentially, when one satisfies one's needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness, he or she will be living eudaimonically which can lead to positive PWB and SWB. This theory also argues that because the fulfilment of these needs is necessary for optimal well-being, the thwarting of

any of these needs will impact negatively on a person's well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Ryan, 2009).

Numerous studies have been conducted across cultures and developmental stages and findings have been consistent that environments that provide supports for these three needs lead to enhanced self-motivation and sustained eudaimonia (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Consistent with SDT's approach to well-being, research in the arts has emphasised a relationship between eudaimonic approaches and well-being (Bidwell, 2014; Swindells et al., 2013). This is because participating in the arts appears to promote not only feelings of happiness (related to hedonic well-being) but also a sustained engagement in a meaningful activity where negative feelings can be expressed (Bidwell, 2014; Swindells et al., 2013). The following review of arts and dance literature and its role in promoting psychological well-being will support this argument. The discussion begins with a broad review and culminates with a specific focus on the well-being benefits for young people living in poor socioeconomic areas.

## **2.5 The Arts and Well-Being**

The arts provide a way for people to engage with their environment and are used across cultures to communicate emotions, spiritual beliefs and values, to celebrate significant occasions, to impress others, to earn money, and for entertainment purposes (Camic, 2008; Deans, 2011; Dissanayake, 2008). The arts provide a unique opportunity for people to communicate across language barriers and express their emotions in a way that is not as direct and confrontational as talking.

The connection between the arts and well-being was established in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when interpretations about the unconscious mind were drawn from artistic expressions (Stickley, 2007). Many different forms of creative arts therapies, including music therapy, art therapy and dance/movement therapy have subsequently developed. In the creative arts therapies, practitioners use the arts to engage with clients in a therapeutic process in a clinical setting (Clift, 2011). Creative arts therapies allow clients to engage with difficult feelings without directly confronting them and are focused on a health outcome (Bidwell, 2014; van der Merwe, 2010). Arts therapies have a focus on the therapeutic relationship with the practitioner often being placed in a position of power (Stickley, 2007). Although the arts therapies have started moving towards a participatory community agenda,

there is still an emphasis on this relationship and the healing of a health deficit (Clift, 2011; Stickley, 2007). In contrast, art for health shifts the focus from a therapy process with an arts therapist to the participation in creative and arts-based activities as therapeutic within itself (Clift, 2011; Stickley, 2007). In places that are impoverished, access to psychotherapeutic resources (including art therapists) may not be available, and thus alternative health promotion strategies may need to be employed. Whilst there is certainly a place for art therapy, art can be therapeutic without it needing to be facilitated by an arts therapist (Leseho & Maxwell, 2010). While there may not be an emphasis on a health outcome, it is believed that through engagement in creative activities; skills are developed that improve the overall well-being of participants (Angus, 2002).

Participating in arts-based activities provides people with the opportunity to develop and master new skills which can lead to improvements in one's confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Angus, 2002; Arts Council England, 2007; Bidwell, 2014). Further, it provides a platform for creative expression and the release of emotions. It can also create a space for social interaction, networking and connection, and a chance to develop positive relationships with others (Arts Council England, 2007; Bidwell, 2014). Participating in the arts can also help young people engage with peers from different backgrounds, challenge existing thoughts and ideas and make new friends (Arts Council England, 2007). Being involved in an arts program based in one's community allows for the working towards of a common goal through a creative endeavour (Clift, 2011). This can lead to a sense of purpose and belongingness. Arts programmes can provide a safe space for young people to participate in a constructive activity with their peers whilst being supervised by positive role models (Arts Council England, 2007). The arts appear to be particularly beneficial for people who are difficult to reach with usual health promotion methods and for those who lack opportunities to contribute meaningfully to society due to a lack of social or economic support, as they provide an alternative way to engage in a healthier lifestyle (Arts Council England, 2007; Bidwell, 2014). Young people living in impoverished areas may be the ideal recipients of such programmes as they are at a critical developmental stage and may not have access to resources that can effectively promote their well-being.

Research conducted at a variety of performing arts programmes yielded similar findings with regard to the benefits of creative arts participation. Adolescent girls participating in a performing arts programme in New Zealand reported high levels of positive

emotions, enthusiasm, pride and being able to “be themselves” (Trayes, Harre & Overall, 2012). A narrative inquiry conducted with participants involved in a community arts programme in the UK includes findings of a sense of purposefulness and belongingness, a safe place to go to, increased social contact, and a non-threatening and non-judgemental environment (Stickley, 2007). Gardner, Komesaroff & Fensham (2008) researched community-based dance classes specifically and interviewed 10 people aged 14 – 25 years. They found that the participants gained respect for themselves, others, physical activity and the mastery of skills, and that both their personal and social self-confidence grew (Gardner et al., 2008). Community dance practitioners believe that everyone should be provided with the opportunity to dance – whether you are highly trained, have the potential to become a great dancer or even if you feel you cannot dance at all (Green, 2000; Houston, 2005).

**2.5.1 Dance and well-being.** Dance is a type of nonverbal, purposeful movement in which the body moves rhythmically and with intention, usually to a beat or music of some form (Hanna, 2008; Kourkouta, Rarra, Mavroeidi, & Prodromidis, 2014; Murcia, Kreutz, Clift & Bongard, 2010; van der Merwe, 2010). Archaeological evidence shows that dance has been used in cultural celebrations since early civilization and was often used for educational purposes in ancient Greece (Kourkota et al., 2014).

Dance is a unique art form in that it incorporates elements of creative expression and physical activity, both of which are considered to be beneficial to one’s well-being. Physical activity is necessary for the promotion of health and prevention of illness and enjoyment of activity is often a mediating factor of participation (Hagberg, Lindahl, Nyberg & Hellenius, 2009).

Participation in physical activity tends to drop during adolescence for girls as they may view sport as a masculine activity (Clark, 2014; Wellard, Pickard & Bailey, 2007). A desire to maintain a healthy body but at the same time appear feminine can be difficult task to navigate for some adolescent girls. Dance appears to be a popular choice of physical activity as it promotes grace and poise while at the same time demanding highly physical praxis and technique (Clark, 2014; Vicario et al., 2001; Wellard et al., 2007). Further, dance seems to be an attractive way of presenting physical activity as it combines creativity, music, exercise and emotional expression (Murcia et al., 2010). This is supported by a study conducted by Clark, Spence and Holt (2011) where all eight young adolescent girls they interviewed cited dance

as one of their favourite activities. Gender-related constructions of dance in terms of masculinity will be explored later in this chapter.

Dance is an excellent form of physical exercise which has numerous physiological and psychological benefits. Strength, fitness, flexibility, coordination, balance, and spatial awareness are developed during dance training (Bremer, 2007; Chielotam, 2015; Wellard et al., 2007). A keen awareness of the body and its possibilities and limitations are also acquired (Wellard et al., 2007). During adolescence, young people are acutely aware of their bodies and the changes it is going through and by engaging with their bodies in an aesthetic way they may be able to develop an understanding and appreciation of their bodies in a physical and expressive way (Vicario & Chambliss, 2001; Fensham & Gardner, 2005).

Moving to music and developing a healthy relationship with one's body can lead to improved self-confidence and self-esteem (Bremer, 2007). Mastery experiences are thought to improve confidence and serve as a motivator for continual engagement in an activity (Bartholomew & Miller, 2002; Bond & Stinson, 2007; Vicario et al., 2001). Dance provides gradually increasing levels of difficulty and challenging tasks that can be mastered which seems to provide the greatest satisfaction for those who engage in physical activity (Vicario & Chambliss, 2001; Vicario et al., 2001). Dance also provides an opportunity to release emotions which can relieve stress, anxiety and depression (Clark, 2014). Dance has been described as a cathartic release where the dancer is able to express feelings that transcend language through bodily movement (Clark, 2014; Monteiro & Wall, 2011). Dance encourages the use of imagination and creativity to express one's feelings and ideas (Chielotam, 2015). Participating in dance can also improve one's social skills which can buffer feelings of loneliness and contribute to a sense of belongingness (Clark, 2014). Interacting with others can help people build new friendships, and develop cooperation and trust skills (Chielotam, 2015).

In a study conducted by Vicario and Chambliss (2001), most adolescent girls felt that dance class assisted them in releasing their feelings and that it improved their confidence and concentration. Consistent with this, a study carried out in Hong Kong with learners and teachers, found that happiness, confidence, communication and social skills improved after engagement in dance activities (Yeung, 2002). In another study, 475 non-professional dancers who completed a survey reported that their self-esteem and coping strategies improved, and that their physical and emotional well-being improved overall (Murcia et al.,

2010). In addition, dancing appears to facilitate feelings of togetherness and inclusion in groups, as well as enhances feelings of sympathy and understanding towards others (Murcia et al., 2010).

Bond and Stinson (2001) collected material from 600 young people from a number of countries and all of the participants described feelings of emotional awareness and transformation. Some of them also spoke of the sense of freedom they feel when they dance and that a loss of awareness of what is going on in the outside world sometimes occurs (Bond & Stinson, 2001). Stinson, Blumenfield-Jones & Van Dyk (1990) found that dance allows a person to block the rest of the world out and adolescent girls feel able to express themselves through dance in a way that they cannot do through spoken or written word. The dancers also feel a sense of community and understanding amongst their peers at the dance studio (Stinson et al., 1990). The dance studio seems to be a place of respite for many dancers where the complexities of their external world disappear (Clark, 2014). Dance class also provides structure and discipline where a certain code of conduct is expected of the participants (Chielotam, 2015). It is also a place of safety where boundaries remain predictable through consistency in time and structure of the class and the presence of a supportive adult (Clark, 2014; Fensham & Gardner, 2005). Creating a safe space where participants experience stability allows them to be unrestricted in experiencing their creativity and expressing their emotions as they know it is safe to do so.

During adolescence, the need for self-expression seems to intensify and if young people can find a constructive way of expressing themselves (such as through dance), the desire to engage in destructive behaviours or repress their emotions may decrease (Vicario & Chambliss, 2001). In a study conducted with at risk youth, such destructive behaviour seemed to decrease following participation in dance activities at school (DeMesa-Simpson, 2014). As students gained personal development and social competence skills, they were better able to regulate their responses to stressful situations (DeMesa-Simpson, 2014). Further, gaining confidence in dance class helped them to realise their potential to be successful in the future (DeMesa-Simpson, 2014). Finally, the supportive and nurturing environment assisted the learners in developing independence, trust and responsibility which can translate to the rest of their lives (DeMesa-Simpson, 2014).

Young people often do not have much control over their surroundings but concurrently desire autonomy. Participants in dance class appear to value gaining control

over their bodies through challenging but attainable goals and the feeling of autonomy that this brings (Aujila, Nordin-Bates & Redding, 2014; Bond & Stinson, 2007; Murcia et al., 2010). Feeling in control of one's body can produce a sense of power when one is able to perform what is expected and perform it well (Stinson et al., 1990). A sense of ownership over one's creative process can create a feeling of empowerment for young people as they embark on a journey of personal, social and artistic development (Houston, 2005).

There are, however, times where the dancer may feel that their ability and body are never good enough (Stinson et al., 1990). Fear of how others may respond to one's capabilities may prevent a dancer from engaging or attending class (Bond & Stinson, 2007). Mastering skills in dance class requires a lot of hard work and this may also create an obstacle to achieving goals in class (Bond & Stinson, 2007). In order to combat these barriers to participation, it is important that the dance class is both challenging and supportive and that dancers are able to continually improve and thus experience a sense of mastery. For many dancers, the challenges presented in dance, seeing improvements within their work and then mastering these new skills are a strong motivator (Bond & Stinson, 2007; Murcia et al., 2010). This intrinsic motivation may be even further enhanced by the personal satisfaction experienced when praised by others for their achievements (Aujila et al., 2014; Bond & Stinson, 2007).

Being told you are talented and receiving affirmation from dance teachers may motivate you to continue working hard as well as boost your self-confidence (Aujila et al., 2014). Students who experience their teachers as supportive and inspiring and who feel as though they are treated as adults appear to have higher levels of commitment and confidence (Aujila et al., 2014). Many dancers begin training for fun and enjoyment, but as they grow older their priorities change and they may begin to see dance as a potential career option (Aujila et al., 2014). Being exposed to opportunities to gain exposure and to perform also contributes to participation and commitment (Aujila et al., 2014)

Social relationships and interacting with like-minded peers also seem to enhance positive identity development and facilitates continued attendance (Aujila et al., 2014). Enjoyment which seems to stem from self-expression also appears to be an important motivator. This suggests that people are more willing to commit to an activity that they feel a personal connection to (Aujila et al., 2014). As the above research demonstrates, dance appears to provide an opportunity for the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs

thus leading to a state of eudaimonic well-being as well as subjective well-being. Most of the research, however, has focused on young women's appreciation of and engagement in dance.

This is because dance, and in particular ballet, has always been seen as a traditionally feminine sport and the body ideal of a ballerina has been presented as a slim, white woman throughout most of history. Thus, men who pursue ballet are often teased for not being masculine.

**2.5.2 Masculinity and dance.** Normative masculinity is often defined by strength, authority, independence, and the suppression of emotions (Holdsworth, 2013). Although the understanding of what it means to be masculine has expanded, there are still some instances where traditional ideologies remain prevalent. Engaging in dance, and ballet specifically, is still considered a feminine activity and boys or men who choose to pursue it may still face some discrimination and be classified as 'girly' or 'not real men' (Holdsworth, 2013; Risner, 2009). These socially constructed gender-normative beliefs can influence whether or not young men choose to participate in dance classes (Holdsworth, 2013).

Risner (2009) conducted a study that looked at the experiences of 75 pre-professional, male dancers in the United States and the findings suggested that these young men experienced stigma and social isolation due to their participation in a female-dominated sport. Support from parents, family and peers appeared to be very important and played a role in whether the participants continued their dance education (Risner, 2009). Ballet is one of the most gender-codified sports and it appears that men continually have to negotiate their identities, defend their masculinity whilst also expanding on the traditional ideal of what it means to be a "man" (Haltom & Worthen, 2014; Holdsworth, 2013; Risner, 2009). Opportunities that support and contest hegemonic heteromascularity seem to present themselves to the male ballet dancer. Playing the role of a typical, damsel-rescuing, prince in a pas de deux and having access to many women may lend itself to more traditional masculinity, whereas practising more feminine techniques may help them in expanding the idea of "masculinity" (Haltom & Worthen, 2014). Projects such as "Boys Dancing" in Coventry, United Kingdom, aim to develop and support the full spectrum of masculinity as boys use the artistic and athletic art form to express their emotion and creativity in a way that is not aggressive (Holdsworth, 2013). For many young men (and women) the motivation to pursue dance includes the desire for self-expression, creativity and physical challenge (Risner, 2009). Ballet and dance provides an opportunity for young men to develop and

challenge the stereotypical notion of what it is to be masculine and may assist them in developing their identity. Support from parents, teachers, peers and the mass media appears to be pivotal in this endeavour (Malkogeorgos, Zaggelidou, Manolopoulos & Zaggelidis, 2011; Risner, 2009). Whilst men may feel stigmatised by outsiders when pursuing a career in dance (particularly ballet), it appears to be even more difficult for African dancers to break *into* the exclusive world of ballet.

## **2.6 The Dance World**

The dance project where this research took place aims to provide recreational dance classes in impoverished and rural areas in the Western Cape. In addition to this, talented dancers are identified and offered specialised training in ballet and African dance. The participants in this study are four dancers who began their training within the outreach programmes and were selected to continue training more seriously. The focus of this outreach programme is on excellence in ballet training as the basis for other dance forms. This dance project also aims to change the traditional “white-face” of ballet and diversify the audiences and ballet dancers in South Africa.

Classical ballet often features mostly white dancers with roles constructed for them in the form of pale princesses and white swans; leaving darker skinned dancers feeling less than welcome (Goldhill & Marsh, 2012; Rolling Out, 2012). If one looks at the history of ballet and prominent ballet companies in the world, one can see that black ballet dancers have had to struggle to pursue a career in this art form, often facing a lot of discrimination in the process. I have chosen to focus on the history of black ballet dancers in America as the legacy of discrimination is similar to that in South Africa. In addition, America boasts some of the most prestigious ballet companies in the world and many South African dancers aspire to someday dance in these famed companies. It should be noted that the following research was mostly collated from magazine and newspaper articles and webpages as there is minimal academic research on the topic. Although grey literature is sometimes overlooked in traditional literature reviews, it can provide valuable insight into issues and perspectives that are not covered in academic publications (Moffat, Sass, McKenzie, & Bhui, 2009; Schopfel, 2011).

**2.6.1 The history of the black ballet dancer.** In 1932, 15-year-old Janet Collins, a talented African American ballerina successfully auditioned for a spot in the esteemed

company Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo (King, 2015). Collins turned down her position as she was required to paint her face and body white when performing (King, 2015). Raven Wilkinson faced the same discrimination in 1955 when she joined Ballet Russes de Monte Carlo and had to dance with white powder on her face, especially when the company performed in the Southern regions of the United States (King, 2015; Rolling Out, 2012). Whilst on tour, a hotel owner questioned her race and she chose to be honest; thus leading her to limited dance opportunities and cruelty within the company (Rolling Out, 2012). Wilkinson subsequently left to join the Dutch National Ballet where she danced as a soloist (King, 2015; Rolling Out, 2012).

Arthur Mitchell broke through colour barriers by becoming the first African American principal dancer at the New York City Ballet in 1962 (Cooper, 2015a). This was the first time a dancer had been promoted to this position in a professional ballet company in America. Principal is the highest ranking position a dancer can receive within a company and they have the opportunity to dance bigger roles, are paid more money, and receive more publicity in performance programmes (Cooper, 2015a; Galchen, 2014). George Balanchine, who co-founded New York City Ballet, dreamt of a company that was racially diverse, however, this wasn't always fully realised (Galchen, 2014). He was able to create a critically acclaimed pas de deux featuring a white woman, Diana Adams, and a black man, Mitchell (Galchen, 2014). It was performed live in 1957 but was only allowed to be televised in 1968 (Galchen, 2014). Mitchell left the New York City Ballet to pursue goals internationally and returned to Harlem in 1968 following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. In 1969, he founded the Dance Theatre of Harlem – a space created for young black dancers to learn the art form and to thrive in the racially segregated industry (King, 2015). The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater which was launched in 1958, is another predominantly black and highly successful dance company in the United States (King, 2015). Thus, to counter discrimination experienced by black dancers, dancers who had managed to break through the racial barrier turned to creating companies for other aspiring dancers in the United States. Other dancers choose to leave the United States and join ballet companies in Europe and other parts of the world where they may feel more accepted.

Aesha Ash left New York City Ballet as there were no black dancers and Michaela DePrince, a Sierra Leonean refugee who was raised in America left to dance for the Dutch National Ballet (Rolling Out, 2012). Raven Wilkinson feels that this is testament to the fact

that not many things have changed in American Ballet since she was a professional dancer (Galchen, 2014). Upon being asked about racism in the ballet world, DePrince commented that “As a black ballerina racism is less about what happens to you and more about what doesn’t happen to you.” (Brown, 2014, para.2). Similar narratives have been expressed by other black ballet dancers, such as Virginia Johnson, the current artistic director of Dance Theatre of Harlem, who was told that she couldn’t be a ballerina because there are no black ballerinas (Galchen, 2014). Further, when black and brown girls don’t see themselves represented in the ballet and dance world, this career option seems like a far-off possibility (Brown, 2014). Classical ballet companies exist all over the world, yet the universality of the dance form and a diversity of dancers is often not seen (Mazurok, 2013).

In 2014, *Pointe* magazine featured for the first time in its history, three black ballet dancers on its front cover. It shows three professional ballet dancers, with different body types, all achieving success in different professional dance companies in the United States (Brown, 2014). One of these dancers is Misty Copeland, who made world history in July 2015 by becoming the first African-American dancer to be named a principal ballerina at the prestigious American Ballet Theatre in its 75-year history (Cooper, 2015a; Cooper, 2015b). American Ballet Theatre is considered one of the best dance companies in the world due to its size and scope (Ballet Theatre Foundation, Inc., 2016). Since its founding in 1940, American Ballet Theatre has performed to hundreds of thousands of people in 43 countries and in 2006, by an act of congress, was named America’s National Ballet Company (Ballet Theatre Foundation, Inc., 2016). Copeland notes that she felt an intense amount of pressure to achieve this position as she was doing it for everyone who came before her and every young dancer who is still to come (Cooper, 2015b).

An African American dance education student training to become a dance teacher reports feeling “displaced” in class as teachers ignored her as she felt they didn’t want to address the race issue (Green, 2001). Further, she felt that she needed to prescribe to the western white ideals of what a dancer should look like and often felt ridiculed for having a large backside (Green, 2001). In addition, she felt that others assumed she would fail and thus did not will her to succeed because of the colour of her skin (Green, 2001). Other training teachers who witnessed this, felt it was important to be aware of cultural issues in their classes one day and to not discriminate based on body types (Green, 2001).

Due to the expenses involved in training, ballet is often seen as an elitist art form and Copeland comments that many people around her say that the lack of diversity present may have more to do with class rather than race (Galchen, 2014). Copeland says that she finds herself getting a long better with dancers from other countries such as Russia and Cuba as ballet and dance is a popular recreational activity across classes (Galchen, 2014). Copeland's ballet fees were waived and she received support from her community to pay for shoes and outfits (Galchen, 2014). It seems that this is often the way talented dancers from "lower" class groups are supported in their dance training. In addition, Copeland has become the ambassador for American Ballet Theatre's Project Plie which provides ballet training and scholarships to children living in areas where their exposure would otherwise be limited (Galchen, 2014).

The lack of ballet dancers of colour dancing in professional companies appears to be a combination of a history of discrimination and stereotypes of what a ballet dancer should look like, the lack of role models in the ballet world, the preference to have a corps de ballet that all look similar, as well as the barriers to participation often due to a lack of resources and exposure to training in many communities (Cooper, 2015b; Galchen, 2014). Excellence in dance training is a very expensive endeavour which many parents are unable to afford. Thus, ballet and other forms of dance are often seen as an elitist sport available only to those with the resources to afford such training whilst those without money, no matter how talented, are often not able to gain experience and unleash their potential.

**2.6.2 Dance in South Africa.** In South Africa, many young black professional dancers have expressed the same sentiments. Kitty Phetla, who was chosen from a group of 60 eager ballet hopefuls in her township by Martin Schonberg, has broken barriers by becoming the first black ballerina to perform the Dying Swan in Russia (John, 2012; City Press, 2014). Phetla is now involved in providing similar opportunities to young dancers in Johannesburg. Phetla says: "Ballet has always been seen as a Western art but we're slowly breaking that stigma. Ballet, all the arts, are for our people, there's a hunger for them in our communities" (City press, 2014 para.19). Andile Ndlovu, an established young ballet dancer, was also identified for his talent in a township in Soweto and through financial support and ballet outreach programmes was able to pursue his dream (Dance Directory, 2016). He also feels that he wants to expose young people in South Africa to the art form and to change their minds about ballet being a white, elitist activity (Curnow & Macguire, 2011).

There are many other stories of young black ballet dancers being identified as having potential in community outreach dance projects and being afforded the opportunity to receive specialised training. Ballet companies such as Johannesburg Ballet run outreach programs in communities to provide children with opportunities to 1) be exposed to ballet and other dance forms for recreational purposes in a community dance setting and 2) identify dancers who show promise and offer them training opportunities to pursue ballet and dance as a career. Community dance projects seek to create a space of social inclusion for people who may otherwise be marginalised; such as at-risk children, persons living in poverty or those who are differently-abled (Soot & Viskus, 2013). In addition, they can serve as a pool for young talent recruitment by the companies who run them. Thus, two aims are achieved – the benefits of involvement in an afterschool program, as well as an opportunity for talent to be sourced and nurtured. This may lead to changing the face of the ballet world as we know it. Many community dance projects offer recreational classes, but often do not have the facilities to provide specialised training for dancers who show potential. Whilst there are many benefits to participating in recreational dance classes, there is also value in recruiting the learners with potential and commitment into a more specialised training programme where they too can have exposure to excellent training and opportunity to pursue a career in dance without the concern of finances. Dance and ballet have become increasingly popular in the media with television shows such as *So you think you can dance*, *Strictly come dancing*, and *Dance Moms*, as well as movie franchises such as *Step Up* having widespread audience appeal and viewership (Clark, 2014). South Africa had its own versions of *So you think you can dance*, *Strictly come dancing*, and *Dans, dans, dans*. Evidence has shown that participation in the arts benefits well-being, thus it is important to grow this body of knowledge (Swindells et al., 2013).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Due to its popularity as an art form, and its numerous benefits physically, psychologically and emotionally, dance should be seriously considered as a tool for well-being and skills development. Further, the rapidly expanding job market calls for the need for individuals to display skills of creativity, innovation and flexibility in their thinking – exposure to an education in the arts can contribute to these skills (Deans, 2011).

Young people living in South Africa are exposed to high levels of distress as a result of poverty, violence and low social support, thus it is important to research programmes that

aim towards positive youth development. Findings from interviews conducted with 185 youth from township schools in Cape Town indicated incredibly high rates of exposure to violence (Shields et al., 2008). Whether children witnessed the violence themselves or heard about it through others, their levels of distress appeared to be the same (Shields et al., 2008). The older children who had experienced more violence appeared to have higher levels of emotional distress which the researchers termed “exposure accumulation effect” (Shields et al., 2008). Many young people cannot escape from the violence that occurs in their neighbourhoods and while they may not always meet the full criteria for mental health disorders, young people often still suffer from symptoms relating to poor mental health due to their circumstances (Patel, Flisher, Nikapota & Malhotra, 2008; Shields et al., 2008).

Due to the high levels of poverty on the Cape Flats, there is limited access to health-promoting resources and safe spaces to engage in health-promoting activities. Extramural activities can provide a safe space for young people to fulfil their basic psychological needs and achieve sustained well-being. Programmes utilising dance in areas that may not otherwise have access to such resources should be researched so that we can understand the impact they are having on their participants. Further, because dance has such numerous benefits, has the opportunity to develop important skills and is trying to increase its exposure to be inclusive of all, it may be valuable to understand why a group of dancers involved in a project continue to participate and what skills they gain as dancers and citizens of the world.

This research aims to look at one such project based in the Cape Flats and explore how engagement in dance has contributed to the well-being of four dancers.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This study aimed to describe and analyse the lived experiences of a group of young people participating in dance classes at a community dance project in a low socioeconomic area. This study was specifically interested in the motivation behind their sustained engagement in dance classes and how dance has contributed to their emotional well-being. This chapter outlines the methodology used to achieve these aims. Next, an in-depth discussion of the research design is presented followed by the research question. A detailed description of the sample is then given. This is succeeded by an explanation of the procedure of the study including a description of the location and dates of the study, as well as of the data collection and transcription process. The data analysis procedure is then described, followed by a discussion on researcher reflexivity and the validity of the study. Finally, the ethical considerations and conclusive chapter remarks are presented.

#### 3.2 Research Design

This qualitative study made use of an interpretative phenomenology design. Data was collected in the form of semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The interview schedule is attached as an appendix. The data was approached from a phenomenological perspective and was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

**3.2.1 Qualitative research.** Qualitative research is interested in how people make sense of their world and aims to describe these experiences (Ashworth, 2008; Willig, 2001). Qualitative research does not work with previously identified variables, nor does it predict possible outcomes or cause-effect relationships (Willig, 2001). Rather, it is focused on collecting rich descriptions of people's experiences, usually within naturalistic settings, and aims to understand how people make meaning of these experiences (Coyle, 2007; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Willig, 2001). Qualitative research methods take into account the complexity of an individual's context and aim to understand subjective, idiographic experiences of phenomena (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Research

questions are open-ended, but specific, and are best suited to research that wishes to explore and understand the lived experiences of participants (Harper, 2011).

**3.2.2 Interpretative phenomenological analysis.** Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an in-depth qualitative research method that is interested in exploring how people make sense of their individual experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2008). An IPA study aims to ‘give voice’ to participants and ‘make sense’ of these accounts by providing an interpretative analysis of the data (Chapman & Smith, 2002; Larkin & Thompson, 2011; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). IPA recognises that it is not possible to have objective access into a participant’s experience as the researcher’s subjectivity and own experiences will play a part during the interpretation (Clarke, 2009). Thus, the researcher moves away from merely describing the participant’s experience, by additionally interpreting this experience and making sense of it (Clarke, 2009). In order for researchers to engage with the participants’ experiences, they need to reflect on their own experiences and through remaining reflexive and transparent throughout the analysis, ensure that the interpretations are grounded in the participants’ opinions and not their own (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). IPA is fundamentally grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology and idiography.

**3.2.2.1 Phenomenology.** Phenomenology emerged shortly before World War I and challenged the leading viewpoints on the nature of reality and truth at the time (Dowling, 2007). Husserl was a leading developer of this theory and argued that experience is the fundamental basis of understanding someone’s truth (Ashworth, 2008). He rejected the notion that there is an abstract reality that is separate from human experience and believed that we should be concerned with the phenomenon as it appears and as it is described by each unique individual (Ashworth 2008; Larkin et al., 2006). Essentially, phenomenology is the study of existence and phenomenological studies aim to understand the unique experiences of individuals and how they make meaning of their lifeworld (Ashworth, 2008; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Thus, phenomenological studies focus on people’s descriptions of events and experiences and not on previously determined variables or criteria to describe the phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The phenomenologist should aim to bracket any preconceived ideas on the subject matter and meet the phenomenon as unbiasedly as possible so that the lifeworld of the participant can be as accurately described and understood as possible (Dowling, 2007; Finlay, 2009; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

*3.2.2.1.1 Hermeneutic phenomenology.* Husserl's theory was further developed by Heidegger, who extended the school of phenomenology to include hermeneutics (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The term hermeneutics stems from the Greek word for 'interpreter' (Stickley, 2007). Just as the mythological Hermes translated messages from the gods to humans, so the process of hermeneutics aims to interpret and understand texts (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Sandage, Cook, Hill, Strawn & Reimer, 2008). Hermeneutics moves beyond the description of concepts and searches for hidden meanings within the narrative (Lopez & Willis, 2004). An individual's reality is influenced by their external environment or their *lifeworld* as Heidegger labels it (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The meaning they make of their lifeworld is directly influenced by the world around them and cannot be abstracted from it. The foundation, then, of hermeneutic (interpretative) phenomenology is that the individual creates (albeit unconsciously at times) an interpretation of their experiences based within the context in which they find themselves. Thus, what may be implied about how an individual makes meaning of their experiences through the content that they provide is the focus of the hermeneutic inquiry (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Heidegger's work played an important role in the development of IPA as it has a phenomenological element and a focus on interpretation (Clarke, 2009).

Essentially, the IPA researcher aims to see the 'person-in-context' and explore how they experience specific phenomena (Larkin et al., 2006; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The researcher can never be fully objective as he exists within his own lifeworld, but he can try to be as sensitive and responsive as possible in his understanding and description of how the participant makes sense of and relates to the world (Ashworth, 2008; Larkin et al., 2006). By acknowledging this, a valuable role can be created for the researcher in the research process. A double hermeneutic occurs in that two interpretations are happening: "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith & Osborn, 2008 p. 53).

*3.2.2.2 Idiography.* IPA also employs an idiographic level of analysis which is closely linked to hermeneutic phenomenology (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). Idiography uses an inductive approach to analysis, where each case is closely analysed separately before general themes, if at all, are drawn (Larkin et al., 2006; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Eatough, 2007). Comparatively, where nomothetic studies aim to generalise findings for groups or populations, idiographic studies look at the specific rather than the universal (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Eatough, 2007). Thus, IPA aims to provide a detailed

reading, description and interpretation of each individual case and find both the unique and the generic across cases. The research question, then, must be aligned with the philosophical tenets of IPA. IPA researchers aim to understand an experience from a participant's point of view (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA is particularly useful when the researcher is interested in how individuals perceive a certain part of their personal world (Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The topic should therefore be something that is significant to the participants.

### **3.3 Research Question**

Research questions in IPA are usually framed broadly without a predetermined hypothesis that the researcher is trying to test (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Rather, the researcher wants to explore, in detail, an area of interest or concern (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

This research aims to explore the lived experiences of young people involved in a community dance project. An IPA approach was chosen as dance is an expressive art form that cannot be quantified, as each individual may experience their engagement in dance in a different and personal way. Further, the “expert” performing this inquiry has her own valuable theoretical background which may contribute to the interpretation (Lopez & Willis, 2004). While presenting yourself objectively to another's description of their reality is a critical starting point, the researcher's own experiences and lifeworld will always have an influence on how they interpret this phenomenon.

### **3.4 Sample**

Due to the specificity and experiential nature of research questions in IPA studies, samples tend to be homogenous and purposive (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Larkin & Thompson, 2011). Sample sizes are also relatively small because of the focus on in-depth, idiographic analyses, and are often determined based on the richness of the data and the purpose of the study (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Larkin & Thompson, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The participants for this study were purposively recruited from a community dance project based in the Western Cape. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, the project shall be referred to as “the centre”.

**3.4.1 The centre.** The centre was established more than 20 years ago with the aim of providing ballet training for children and young people living in historically disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape. Dance training can be very expensive and ballet was

traditionally considered an elitist activity for white people. The founder and CEO\* of the centre wanted to create a safe space for children and young people who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to be exposed to excellent dance training. The purpose was to provide children and young people with the opportunity to experience the joy of dance and to express themselves creatively whilst developing skills such as self-confidence and discipline. The centre runs recreational dance programmes throughout townships and rural areas in the Western Cape and offers specialised dance training for dancers who show talent and dedication. The primary form of dance training at the centre is ballet, but the participants are also exposed to and trained in African, contemporary and Spanish dance. The centre operates in low socioeconomic areas and the demographic of the pupils who dance there are predominantly black and relatively poor. The centre provides financial subsidies for its dancers and offers most of their training free of charge. The centre provides a valuable resource to the community as it gives children and young people a place to engage in a healthy activity in a secure environment where they are supported and encouraged.

*\*The founder and CEO of the centre will be referred to as “John” for the remainder of the dissertation in order to maintain anonymity and to facilitate concise syntax.*

Initial contact was made with John who identified suitable participants for the study. All four of the recruited participants met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate in the study.

### **3.4.2 Inclusion criteria.**

- 1) Participants had to have been attending dance classes for three years or more
- 2) Participants had to have been currently dancing at the centre
- 3) Participants had to be aged between 15 and 24 years (UN definition of youth)

The demographics of the participants follow in Table 3.1 below. Pseudonyms were created for each participant to uphold anonymity but also to maintain a sense of individuality in their accounts.

Table 3.1

*Demographics of Participants*

Name	Age (in years)	Gender	Number of years dancing
Aviwe	20	Male	10
Bonny	20	Female	17 (2 at the centre)
Dintle	16	Female	7
Sinazo	19	Male	7

The participants consisted of two males and two females. Dintle and Sinazo are both currently still in high school and are aged 16 and 19 respectively. Aviwe and Bonny are both currently dancing full-time and are 20 years old. Three of the participants have done all of their dance training at the centre. One of the participants joined the centre two years ago. All four participants are black and come from similar, low socioeconomic backgrounds.

### 3.5 Procedure

John was contacted via email by the researcher on 22 April 2015. After he expressed interest in assisting with the research project, a meeting was set-up for 30 April 2015. During this meeting the researcher explained the purposes of the research in greater detail and John provided the researcher with the names of dancers he felt matched the inclusion criteria of the research project. John agreed to approach these potential participants and provided the researcher with possible dates to meet with them. All four participants agreed to meet with the researcher and suitable dates were set-up to conduct the interviews.

The researcher met with each participant individually and the purpose of the study was explained and time was given for any questions to be answered before the commencement of the one-on-one interview. Issues relating to confidentiality, anonymity and the freedom to stop the interview at any time were discussed. It was explained that the interview would be audio recorded (if he/she was comfortable with this) so that the researcher could be sure of what he/she said when analysing the data and that his/her voice would come through. The participant could then decide if he/she would like to participate and if in agreement, was asked to sign the consent form. All four participants agreed to be individually interviewed and audio recorded.

**3.5.1 Location and dates of study.** An interview with John was conducted on 8 May 2015, followed by individual interviews with two of the participants. Individual interviews with the other two participants were conducted on 23 May 2015. All of the interviews took place at the centre during hours where the participants had a break from dance classes. A secure, private space at the centre was provided for these interviews. The researcher was also given the opportunity to observe dance classes on all three dates (including the initial meeting) and watched a theatre performance that the centre staged in the month of June. This allowed the researcher to experience the participants expressing themselves through dance and capture extensive field notes.

**3.5.2 Data collection and transcription.** Data was collected in the form of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a suitable method of data collection for an IPA study as they encourage a dialogue between the participant and the researcher (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2008). While the researcher will have an interview schedule with relevant questions, she will also be guided by each participant's responses and may explore novel ideas and important areas that may arise in each individual interview (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The interviews were recorded using an mp3 recording device with a total of five interviews being recorded. Of these five interviews, four were interviews conducted with dancers at the centre and one was an interview conducted with John. The four interviews with the dancers were transcribed entirely for analytical purposes. Parts of the interview with John were transcribed to provide context and aims of the centre. All of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. This provided the researcher with an opportunity to immerse herself within the data from the outset.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

IPA does not prescribe a specific method for analysing data, but rather provides a set of principles and processes that should be followed (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The guidelines laid out by Smith and Osborn (2008) were used to steer the analysis of the transcripts. Before the interviews were transcribed, each individual account was listened to and initial thoughts were jotted down by the researcher to re-orientate herself with the data. Following the transcription of the interviews, the first transcript was read numerous times and notes, comments and initial interpretations were made in the left-hand margin (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The first transcript was then reread and emerging themes were noted in the

right-hand margin (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This allowed for the clustering of ideas within a single transcript and to get a sense of what themes were prominent. Close attention was paid to the participant's words to ensure that preliminary themes and interpretations remained aligned with what had been said (Smith & Osborn, 2008). These emerging themes were not used to guide the analysis of the subsequent transcripts, although the ideas that had come through were kept in mind. Smith and Osborn (2008) suggest that when one is working with a very small sample, each transcript should be analysed as if it were the first. Thus, a detailed, line-by-line analysis was repeated with each of the four transcripts without a thematic guideline from the previous cases.

All of the emerging themes were then written down and similarities and differences across these themes were looked at. The subordinate themes were then clustered into three superordinate themes which encompass the experiences of all four participants. Illustrative quotes were used to identify each superordinate theme and subordinate theme. Each theme was then worked through and interpretations were expanded upon to produce a meaningful and expansive analysis of the quotes. A large portion of the results section is comprised of extracts from transcripts in order to give voice to the participants (Smith et al., 2009). This also creates a transparent base from which the interpretations were drawn (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher aimed to show what matters to the participants by giving examples of their responses, presenting interpretations of their stories and examining data that does not correspond with the dominant patterns (Larkin & Thompson, 2011). Further, links to the literature were drawn in conjunction with the presentation of results. IPA offers two presentation approaches of research results: presenting the analytical results in one chapter and its links to the literature in a separate chapter, or discussing the links to the literature while presenting each superordinate theme (Smith & Osborn, 2008). In order to avoid repetition, the results and discussion section have been presented in a single chapter.

### **3.7 Reflexivity**

I (the researcher) have been involved in dance classes for most of my life, both as a participant and as a teacher. I have always recognised the value of dance in my life and in the lives of my peers and students. As I consider dance to contribute to my own emotional well-being, I had to be mindful in my interview questions not to assume that the participants had the same sentiments. Thus, I attempted to suspend my assumptions by asking open-ended questions and allowing the participants to speak about their experiences. During the writing

up of my dissertation, I kept a reflective journal and was constantly aware of my own feelings and experiences. Whilst IPA requires the researcher to *interpret* the participants' experiences, it should always be rooted in their responses and not one's own. I do, however, feel that being a dancer myself contributed to my approachability to the participants and gave me a deeper understanding of the dance world within which the participants find themselves. Finally, as I am deeply passionate about alternative, accessible approaches to the enhancement of emotional well-being, I was committed to understanding the value of the centre in the lives of the participants.

### **3.8 Validity**

The validity of this data was monitored through supervision. Further, I aimed to engage with the relevant literature, be sensitive towards the context of the participants, to remain committed to the data by providing in-depth analyses and to be as transparent as possible in my presentation of the results (Yardley, 2000).

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Higher Degrees Commission at Rhodes University. Confidentiality was upheld throughout the data collection, data analysis and in the final reporting of the results. No identifying information was provided to anyone except for the researcher (me) and pseudonyms were created for the participants in order to ensure anonymity. Precautionary measures were taken to ensure that all interviews were stored safely and securely. Electronic copies of the transcriptions were password protected and hard copies were locked in a cabinet that only the researcher had access to. The study was explained to each participant and they were told they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Participation was voluntary and no participant withdrew from the study.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to outline the research design, methodology and procedures involved in data collection and analysis. The following chapter is a presentation of the findings yielded through this data analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The findings of this research have been divided into three superordinate themes, namely 1) My exposure to dance - The impact of context, 2) What motivates me to continue attending classes - The fulfilment of the three basic psychological needs, and 3) How does dance make me feel - The experience of emotional well-being through dance. All three major themes have been divided further into subsequent subthemes.

#### 4.2 Theme One: My Exposure to Dance - The Impact of Context

Two primary contexts within which these participants exist have been focused on in this study. They are: the socioeconomic context and the dance world. The participants' exposure to the centre is inextricably linked to the socioeconomic context within which they find themselves. This is because the centre is specifically aimed at young, black people living in areas of a lower socioeconomic status. Further, the centre has provided these participants with a prosocial activity to engage in that serves as an alternative to some of the negative influences present in their environment. The participants speak about the value of having such a space in their community, the safety of this space being indoors, issues revolving around masculinity and femininity in dance, as well as their hopes for their futures as dancers.

The socioeconomic context within which these participants live is one of relative poverty. Limited access to resources, unemployment and overcrowding has led to high levels of crime and violence (Standing, 2003). Gangsterism dominates the criminal economy and can be appealing to young people as it provides access to material goods and provides a sense of belongingness (Daniels & Adams, 2010; Kinnes, 2000; Samara, 2005; Standing, 2003; Ward, 2006; Ward, 2007). According to the participants, the centre provides a positive alternative to some of the negative influences they are confronted with and offers a place of safety.

##### 4.2.1 Exposure to crime, gangsterism and drugs.

Aviwe speaks about negative influences in the township.

*A: Ja. There's negative influences in the township.*

According to Aviwe, these include gangsterism and drugs.

*A: Ja man, I should be a gangster now, or smoking drugs. You know township life.*

Aviwe seems to present gangsterism and drug use as the norm in the township. He seems to be implying that people who live in townships are exposed to and tend to engage in these behaviours. Further, Aviwe's use of the words "should" and "you know" suggests that this behaviour is what is expected from people living in townships. This may imply that access to alternative activities and/or choosing to participate in alternative activities is out of the ordinary.

Sinazo reiterates Aviwe's sentiments by saying that there is "no life" in the township.

*S: Coz where I am staying in the townships. In township there is no life.*

He adds that the township is rife with crime and that when he is at the centre he is "free".

*S: Ja. There are a lot of crimes there. And when I am here I am free.*

Sinazo choice of the word "there" instead of "my home", or a similar possessive pronoun, may indicate that he does not want to be associated with the type of life that the township presents. This may be because he seems to equate criminal activity with an absence of life. This may imply that a life of crime is not a life that Sinazo wants to live and that he is free from that potential life when he is at the centre.

*R: And what is, what are you free from when you're here?*

*S: Stuff like smoking drugs, ja and other things.*

*R: So it keeps you away from that.*

*S: Ja. Away from it.*

Sinazo specifically mentions being "free" from drugs. Drug use (and "other things") seem to lead to criminal behaviour according to Sinazo and it is not a lifestyle that he seems to value. Similar to Aviwe, Sinazo seems to be implying that it is normal for young people living in the township to be taking drugs and engaging in such a lifestyle. Young people seem to be exposed to the gang context at a young age, with some children joining gangs at ages as

young as 11 (Ward, 2007). It seems that for both Aviwe and Sinazo, being involved at the centre keeps them away from negative activities they may otherwise have engaged in.

Aviwe speaks of friends who have changed because of such behaviour.

*A: Ja. They have changed a lot. With drugs.*

*A: In open spaces you get a lot of influences which are negative. There are a lot of gangsters. Some of them were my friends there in primary. Now you cannot even tell she was my friend now ja.*

Drug use seems to have changed the people that Aviwe knows with some of them becoming virtually unrecognisable. Aviwe seems to equate the presence of drugs with the large number of gangsters in the community. While not all gang members identify as drug users, drug use and addiction appear to be significant risk factors for becoming involved in a gang and drug dealing is a common source of income for gangs (Legget, 2005). Gangs seem to be most present in areas that are openly accessible.

These “friends” appear to remind Aviwe of the type of lifestyle he may be leading had he not left these “open spaces”. This implies that open spaces are unsafe as they are accessible to gangsters who may lure young people into drug use and criminal behaviour. Aviwe also seems to be implying that spaces that are not open i.e. indoors or closed off may be safer as they create a barrier for the entry of gangsters. In areas where there is a high-rate of gangsterism, public recreational spaces are often flush with gangsters and drug-related activity (Ward, 2006). Young people who spend more time in these spaces than in prosocial spaces, may emulate the behaviour they are presented with (Legget, 2005).

Sinazo and Aviwe further emphasise the feelings of safety they experience when they are at the centre.

*S: I feel safe when I am here, yes.*

The addition of the word “yes” to the end of Sinazo’s statement, appears to affirm the feeling of safety he experiences at the centre.

*A: Ja. It’s safer for me.*

Aviwe specifically personalises the statement which could imply that he may be in danger of falling into negative behaviours if he weren’t in a safe environment such as the

centre. He once again emphasises this notion with the comment that inside spaces are safer than outside spaces.

*R: And so being inside is better than being outside.*

*A: Than being outside.*

*A: That's why my mom didn't let me go and play soccer because I would have much more time to do much more nonsense. It's better for me to be in a building not in an open space. I think so.*

The physical structure of a building that has boundaries and security seems to make Aviwe feel safe. This can be contrasted with the vast, open spaces found outside where external influences may flourish. The building itself seems to create a barrier between the “nonsense” and its access to Aviwe. He is protected when he is inside. Aviwe’s mother seems to promote this as Aviwe was encouraged to dance rather than play soccer. Aviwe seems to have internalised his mother’s opinion about the dangers of “outside”, and through experience may have further integrated it. Aviwe’s safety is supported by his mother and having a trusting relationship with family can contribute to resilience and positive development (Daniels & Adams, 2010).

Dintle speaks of some of her friends who don’t have anything to occupy their time.

*D: So when I come here it's like “ok, I have something to do in my life” that can keep me busy.*

*R: Ok. Do you have other friends that don't have things to keep them busy?*

*D: Yes.*

*R: And then what do they usually do with their time?*

*D: They just stay and like do nothing.*

*R: And you wouldn't want to do that.*

*D: No I don't wanna do that.*

Dintle seems to be implying that her friends that “just stay” are staying in the township and not doing anything with their time, which lends itself to thoughts of apathy and disinterest. While Dintle does not mention drug use, heightened exposure to criminal

activities coupled with leisure boredom and limited access to prosocial activities increases young people's risk of engaging in negative behaviours (Burton, 2007; Ward, 2006; Ward, 2007).

Bonny believes that providing children with activities that they enjoy may decrease their risk of becoming involved in such negative behaviours.

*B: It doesn't necessarily have to be dance really, like you know some kids are also into sports or they're into I don't know, chess or whatever, but as long as you have something to keep kids active coz that's what they want. It would be helpful yes definitely coz then they're out of trouble, they stay away from drugs and everything.*

Bonny believes that providing children with access to any prosocial activity that keeps them active and occupied can contribute to keeping them away from using drugs. Drug use and gang-related activity may seem less appealing to young people if they are provided with alternative, prosocial activities and accessible support services in the community (Legget, 2005; Samara, 2005; Ward 2006). Children living on the Cape Flats have expressed a desire to engage in extramural activities that they enjoy and exposure to these activities may provide young people with the opportunity to engage with positive role models and peers which could contribute positively to their development (Cooper & Ward, 2008; Legget, 2005; Ward, 2006).

#### **4.2.2 Exposure to formal dance classes.**

Aviwe and Bonny were both inspired to start dancing after watching their older siblings dance.

*A: I was inspired by my brothers. Coz my other brother he's in a company. Cape Town City Ballet.*

*A: He was the one that inspired me.*

Aviwe may have already looked up to his brothers and may have wanted to participate in the same activities that they did. Seeing his brother achieve in ballet may have also encouraged Aviwe to persist at the craft. Traditionally, ballet has always been considered a westernised art form, but there appears to be a growing interest in the art (City Press, 2014). Further, although there appears to be a lack of black role models in the ballet world, Aviwe's

brother being in the Cape Town City Ballet shows that this norm is slowly changing (Curnow & Macguire, 2011). Aviwe's motivation to succeed in ballet seems to be greatly influenced by having a role model that appears accessible and relatable, and goals that seem attainable.

Bonny also pursued dance as an activity because she saw her sisters dance.

*B: Um, I was dancing with a group. They're also like a little company thing and my whole family started up there so I was like "hey let me just go dance there too, I want to be noticed" and that is how I started to love dance.*

*R: Ok so you said your family started going there and then you*

*B: Ja all my sisters, all my sisters went.*

Bonny realised that her sisters were garnering attention because of their participation in dance and she decided that it may be a good way for her to be noticed too. It is important for people to feel as though they belong and that they are valued within a community (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Bonny may have felt that in order for her to belong to a group with her sisters, especially in an activity that they were receiving positive reinforcement from, she should also start dance classes.

Dintle, Aviwe and Sinazo all started dance because teachers came to their respective primary schools to offer classes. Sinazo, specifically, was inspired to start dance classes at his primary school after watching another boy he knew dance. This boy (his friend's brother) may be someone he admires and looks up to.

*D: Ja. It was part of the centre but my teacher came to my school and gave us classes.*

*A: Started at my primary school ... that's where I started.*

*S: I was watching (my friend's) brother there at (primary school), so I like it.*

Many dance companies are branching out into communities that would not otherwise have access to formal dance training. Traditionally, ballet has been seen as a Westernised art form, but the more exposure young people in township communities are receiving, the more demand there is for training facilities in these areas (City Press, 2014). However, there still seems to be a semblance of ballet being seen as a white dance form as Aviwe relays his experiences of performing for the white men and women when they came to the township to teach ballet classes.

*A: Coming here man, was like, for me to see a white guy or to see some more tourist in a township that made me excited each and every day so that I can keep on going and to showcase on those tourists. And to see a white guy and a white woman.*

Aviwe refers to them as “tourists”, as they are foreign to the township. Due to the history of racial segregation in South Africa, populations in townships are predominantly black (Lemanski, 2004; Lemanski et al., 2008). Townships are also often under-resourced and white people coming from the outside may be viewed as bringing potential resources (Trail, 2006). Aviwe felt excited to be able to perform for these tourists and show them what he was capable of.

*A: Our moves. That was very exciting. All the time I wanted to showcase, to have something to show them.*

Aviwe found it exhilarating to show off his moves to these foreigners. Aviwe (and his friends) may have found an interested audience for the first time in these foreigners. Further, due to the length of time the centre has been operating, there may be an understanding in the community that these “white people” bring with them certain opportunities in the dance world.

Aviwe speaks about being provided with one such opportunity – receiving a scholarship from the centre to continue training with them.

*A: Even some of us, we are not even paying some fees. Just getting scholarship. They pay for everything. Our transport, our dancing clothes, our costumes. Everything.*

*R: Yoh so it is a great opportunity for all of you.*

*A: Great opportunity.*

*A: To be given something like this. Yoh. At another companies you have to pay. So it's nice.*

Aviwe appears to be very grateful for this opportunity, especially considering that at many other companies one has to pay not only for training, but for extraneous costs such as clothing, costumes and transport. Due to these expenses involved in training, ballet is often seen as an elitist dance form (Galchen, 2014). He seems to be overwhelmed by the fact that

he has been given something like this. The aim of community centres is to create a space of inclusion for people who may not have otherwise been given an opportunity to participate in dance classes, as well as to source potential talent for specialised training (Risner, 2009).

However, being a male ballet dancer also brings with it its own challenges as ballet is often considered to be a feminine dance form.

#### **4.2.3 Negotiating masculinity and femininity in dance.**

The discourse around masculinity and femininity dictates that ballet is traditionally a feminine activity. There is a stereotype of male ballet dancers as being effeminate and homosexual.

Both Sinazo and Aviwe have experienced discrimination from their peers due to their participation in ballet classes.

*A: Oh my friends, we used to support each other whether you played soccer or played whatever. There are some jokes like, 'oh ja jou moffie, you wearing leotards' ja. But it was not a big deal so that I can quit my thing.*

It appears that Aviwe's friends are conditionally supportive of activities they deem appropriate such as soccer, whereas ballet seems less acceptable as it makes you a "moffie". Aviwe appears to experience this ridicule in a light-hearted way from friends. He could be viewing it in this way in order to protect himself from the hurt he may otherwise feel. Although his friends tease him, Aviwe has not allowed this to stop him from pursuing his goals as a ballet dancer. This could be because Aviwe places more value on his participation in ballet than on his friends' opinions. When behaviour is extrinsically motivated, one acts based on forces outside oneself and participation in an activity may be heavily influenced by reward or critique from others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When one has integrated the value of performing the activity and acts from a place of intrinsic motivation, one is less likely to be affected by these outside sources as behaviour is more self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Because Aviwe seems to be intrinsically motivated to participate in ballet, external criticism from others does not appear to deter him from pursuing his goals.

Sinazo seems to receive similar external criticism from his peers.

*S: Yoh ja at school they say I'm gay because I do ballet, ja they say I'm gay.*

*R: And what does that feel like when they say that?*

*S: Yoh, I don't like that. Ja.*

*R: And what do you do to deal with that?*

*S: Um, I do my own thing, do my own thing.*

*R: And you still do, you still keep doing ballet even though they say that.*

*S: Ja.*

*R: What makes you keep doing it?*

*S: Hmm. Coz I like it. Coz I like it.*

*R: Ok. Good. And does it upset you when they say those things.*

*S: Ja sometimes, ja.*

*R: So you it sounds like you like it more than what their words.*

*S: More ja.*

*R: Like their words can't stop you.*

*S: Ja...*

*R: It sounds like you know something they don't.*

*S: Jaaa (laughs).*

*R: (laughs) And you keep, you keep doing your stuff. Do you say anything back to them or do you ignore them?*

*S: No. I don't talk to them.*

Sinazo seems to experience this teasing more regularly, perhaps because he is still in school. While Aviwe seemingly brushes it off as a joke, Sinazo seems to be more affected by the derogatory comments as he mentions how much he dislikes it when his school peers call him “gay”. However, similarly to Aviwe, Sinazo has never allowed this to stop him from doing ballet. His love of ballet is stronger than the ridicule he endures. Both Aviwe and Sinazo act out of their own volition and are autonomous in their pursuit of ballet training. Their motivation appears to be self-determined and they do not allow external influences to detract from their desire to pursue careers in ballet. This may be because they value their ability in and love for the art form more highly than the opinions of their peers. Further, their

ability to act autonomously may be facilitated by the relatedness they feel to their dancing friends and dance teachers (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Having their belongingness needs met at the centre means that they do not necessarily need to seek out the fulfilment of these needs in other, non-supportive environments. Thus, they seem to be able to ignore the comments of people who are unsupportive as they receive enough support at the centre.

This support also seems to have helped Aviwe develop into what he terms a “man”. Interestingly, that while ballet is considered effeminate, Aviwe attributes his transformation into becoming a man to the skills he has learnt and the experiences he has had at the centre.

*A: I was having a confidence at that time. It was just flipping thing of mine. I couldn't stand it. The person that would say do this and do that. I couldn't stand it.*

*R: So like the discipline?*

*A: Ja the discipline.*

*R: Ok. And now are you more used to discipline?*

*A: Yes I'm, I want to say, I'm more man. I go back now again and collect myself where a situation is right or what.*

When students gain personal development skills and social competence skills they are often more equipped to regulate their responses to stressful situations (DeMesa-Simpson, 2014). Where Aviwe used to become easily frustrated, he is now able to regain composure and behave “like a man” in a situation. He seems to be implying that he has gained more self-control by collecting himself when faced with frustration and is able to act in a respectful way. Ballet seems to present male dancers with an opportunity to contest ideas of heteronormative masculinity and to expand on the idea of what it means to be a “man” (Haltom & Worthen, 2014; Holdsworth, 2013; Risner, 2009). Where normative masculinity suggests that men suppress their emotions and or behave aggressively, ballet class appears to create a space for men like Aviwe to express their frustrations creatively (Holdsworth, 2013). Further, doing partner work seems to have assisted Aviwe with dealing with frustration and learning to communicate effectively with others, especially females.

*A: Ja. If you had come that time that I was starting, I would not even want to do an interview with you.*

*R: Ok wow.*

*A: I was just saying no. I won't do that. Now I am getting there, slowly but surely.*

*R: And how has dance helped you to do that?*

*A: By working with doing a partner work. You have to connect a lot with you partner. You have to say something even if you say "pull up". Working with ladies you have to be gentlemen with ladies that's how I get the manner.*

While males negotiate certain stereotypes in the dance world, females are also faced with certain ideas about how their bodies should be displayed when dancing.

Bonny seems to feel that the dancing female body has been sexualised by the media. This is particularly prevalent in hip hop dance and popular culture.

*B: Especially with media, dance is interpreted very differently like you have the twerking, it's all about sex, which isn't really what dance was brought up as ...so my goal is to make a difference in the world and say "dance isn't all about showing skin, doing this". It's going back to the roots of how it started, and that's what I wanna do.*

Bonny appears to have a desire to show people that popular dance can involve more than "twerking" and "showing skin". Bonny wishes to show that there are a multitude of ways one can express oneself through dance and that objectifying your body is not always necessary. It appears that in the dance world, ballet is associated with classic femininity and hip hop is associated with sex.

Ballet seems to make Dintle feel feminine and allows her the opportunity to feel like a princess.

*R: I saw you all looked beautiful in your costumes. How does it feel to dress up like that?*

*D: Well it feels nice, like a princess. (laughs)*

Donning beautiful costumes and make-up when performing on stage seems to make Dintle feel special and important. It provides an opportunity to become larger than life and to transcend one's mundane daily life and feel like royalty. As the interviewer I may have

guided this answer somewhat by commenting that Dintle looks beautiful in her costume, however, it seems that she enjoys being able to dress up and feeling like a princess. Dance appears to be a popular choice of extramural activity for girls as it promotes feelings of grace, poise and femininity whilst still making them feel physically strong (Clark, 2014; Vicario et al., 2001; Wellard et al., 2007). Further, being exposed to opportunities to perform can also increase participation and commitment (Aujila et al., 2014).

While many dancers begin their training for fun and enjoyment, as they grow older they may begin to view dance as a potential career option (Aujila et al., 2014). All four participants wish to pursue dance as a career.

#### **4.2.4 My future in the dance world.**

Aviwe hopes to get into a company in Johannesburg at first and then eventually into an international dance company such as the Cuban Ballet.

*A: Hoping to get in a company man. Planning on getting in a company in Joburg. Joburg Ballet.*

*A: It's just that dance have taught me that, as a person, you have to, you have to dream man. Ja. I'm not seeing myself getting there in the Joburg, getting the job and stay there. I have to go overseas and try and get another knowledge that I will take back, here in my country. In order for me to, to keep me going.*

*A: Join the Cuban, the Cuban Ballet.*

*A: There by Cuba. Ah man I wish I could go there. It would make me happy.*

The allure of the big city of Johannesburg seems to bring with it potential career opportunities, however, Aviwe seems to have bigger dreams than to stay in South Africa. Aviwe may believe that there are limited opportunities in the dance world in South Africa and he wishes to gain new knowledge. Participating in dance gives people an opportunity to develop and master new skills which can lead to feelings of confidence and self-efficacy (Angus, 2002; Arts Council England, 2007; Bidwell, 2014; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). These feelings of confidence and self-efficacy may contribute to Aviwe's belief in his dreams to pursue an international career. Aviwe also seems to emphasise that gaining new knowledge is an integral part of his continued commitment to dance. For many dancers, being continuously

challenged and then mastering these new skills is a strong motivator to continue participating in dance (Bond & Stinson, 2007; Murcia et al., 2010; Sobash, 2012).

It is unclear why Aviwe wants to go to Cuba specifically, but perhaps he has heard of others' experiences of dancing for the Cuban Ballet or has seen footage of the Cuban Ballet in the media. The ballet industry in Cuba does not seem to be considered an elitist art form and is an activity enjoyed by most of its citizens, across socioeconomic class lines. The stigma of ballet being an elitist, westernised art form in South Africa is also slowly being broken as more black dancers are reaching professional level and sharing their experiences with wider communities (City Press, 2014). Like many other dancers, Aviwe wishes to return to South Africa eventually to share his experiences and help grow the local industry (Curnow & Macguire, 2011; City Press, 2014).

Bonny, Dintle and Sinazo express similar sentiments about wanting to pursue international careers and all three of them wish to dance in the United States of America.

*B: Well, the plan for me for next year is to go to New York and study there and just to be on stage and make a difference in the world with dance coz like you see, especially with media, dance is interpreted very differently like you have the twerking.*

Bonny wishes to further her dance training and studies in New York and perform on stage. Her main goal appears to be to change the way people perceive the dancing female body. She wishes to “make a difference in the world with dance” which seems to imply that she wants to change the way dance is portrayed in the media. She repeats that “twerking” (which is a hip hop dance move where one gyrates one’s hips and buttocks) is not the only form of dance that can be popular. As Bonny comes from a hip hop background, she may have been exposed primarily to this dance world. It appears that she wishes to expand her dance knowledge and training in order to combat some of the misconceptions about the female dancing body.

Dintle seems to have been exposed to the American dance world through watching videos and looking at pictures. She wants to show people in America how South African dancers perform.

*R: So that’s the dream, to go and dance. And where in the world would go?*

*D: First place. America*

*R: Ok. And why America?*

*D: Coz, like, I see most of the videos and like pictures of people from America. Like how they do things and I want to show them how we here in South Africa like do it.*

*R: Ok, wow, so like you wanna show them what South Africa has got. That's amazing. And what would you tell them about South Africa and dancing if you went there?*

*D: Like how dance in South Africa. Most of the people don't take it seriously. So they if people from here see the pictures or videos from there they start to be serious. So I want to tell, I want to like show them it's not just how we see them from what they do ja so that we can be serious. We can also be serious.*

Dintle speaks about the exposure to videos and pictures of American students dancing and how it has encouraged her to take it seriously. She speaks about how many people in South Africa don't take dance seriously but that this exposure also helps others to take it seriously. Further, it seems that Dintle wants to be surrounded by dancers who are serious about pursuing dance as a career and she seems to associate this attribute primarily with American dancers. Finally, she seems to want to show American dancers that they are not the only performers who take their craft seriously – there are people in South Africa who are equally as dedicated and passionate.

Sinazo also appears to want to pursue his professional dance career in America because of the number of dancers there.

*S: Um, I want to carry on dancing. I want to be a professional dancer.*

*R: Ok. That's awesome. Do you know where you want to go dance?*

*S: I want to go to America.*

*R: And be a ballet dancer. And why do you want to go to America?*

*S: Sho, coz there are a lot of dancers there.*

Both Dintle and Aviwe's accounts imply that there are more dancers (or more dancers who dance at a professional level) in America than what there are here. This may be because the dance industry in South Africa is comparatively small and there are more opportunities in

America. It could also be because America is revered in terms of its dance companies and boasts some of the best training facilities in the world (Ballet Theatre Foundation, Inc., 2016). Misty Copeland, the first African-American dancer to be named principal ballerina at the American Ballet Theatre has received a lot of media exposure and has broken down many barriers for what is possible as a black ballerina in America. Due to her high esteem in the dance world, she may also contribute to the appeal and serve as an inspiration for these dancers.

Similar to America, the traditional ballet industry in South Africa is slowly expanding as more and more young professional ballet dancers are changing the face of ballet from a white, elitist dance form to a more inclusive art form (Curnow & Macguire, 2011). Further, dance companies and projects are continually expanding into areas where resources were previously not available and exposing young people to an activity that may have been previously inaccessible. It is important for communities to create spaces where young people can experience a sense of safety, belonging and boundaries (Shields et al., 2008). This combined with a constructive and expressive activity such as ballet can contribute significantly to their well-being and can offer a potential career path. While exposure to these activities is important, feeling supported by parents and family can act as a motivator for sustained participation.

#### **4.2.5 Support from family.**

Aviwe and Bonny both speak about the impact their parents have had on their participation in dance classes. Aviwe was encouraged by his parents to dance because they believed it was a good thing to do. Further, Aviwe's mother discouraged him from participating in soccer, and even though he did not initially understand her reasons, he did as she said.

*A: It was my parents, always tell me that it's a good thing. My mama didn't want me to play soccer. She didn't want me to play soccer. I don't know why. I didn't even ask her a reason. That's why I hated soccer. So it was better for me to do dancing. Studying ballet and doing African dancing.*

Aviwe appears to trust his mother and internalised her values against soccer and towards dance without much question. Aviwe integrated these values as his love for dance grew and he now seems to participate out of his own volition.

Bonny's mother encourages her to keep pursuing her dreams and never give up. This is apparent in both her dancing and her personal life.

*B: My family. Ja. Like they, my mom inspires me a lot. She's not a dancer at all, or a singer, but she, she never gives up. And that's what I love about her. Like, she says, if you wanna go to New York, you know what you have to do, you know what you want your goals to be. You have to set it up. If you need to raise this much you have to go for it and like, even with being adopted she says like, sometimes I'll tell her: "mom, where's my dad? I just wanna find my dad?" And she's like, "yoh yoh, it will take time, things take time. But you will find him. You will do this, you will do that" and she's just the person that keeps me going. Even though we have our fallouts. She's just the reason I keep going.*

Bonny's mom inspires her because of her determination and Bonny appears to have integrated this work ethic into her own value system. Bonny's mom encourages her to be realistic about her goals and what she needs to do in order to achieve them. Bonny seems to recognise that although things take time, they will happen when they should. Even though Bonny is adopted and has a desire to meet her father, she still values her adoptive mother's opinion very highly and sees her as a source of inspiration. Bonny attributes her ability to be so determined to her mother's belief in her even if they do not always see eye to eye.

Dintle's biggest support appears to come from her older sister, whom she views as a mother figure.

*R: Ok. And do you have support? Do people encourage you to dance?*

*D: Yes, my family. Ja. Especially my sister.*

*R: It sounds like you get along well with your sister.*

*D: Ja.*

*R: And she's your big supporter.*

*D: Ja, coz she's she's like my mother.*

Dintle appears to be very excited to show her sister the skills she has learnt at dance class. Receiving support from a primary caregiver and family member can be invaluable

motivation to continue pursuing an activity. The belief that Dintle's sister has in her also seems to drive her to feel capable of achieving her dreams.

*D: What do you hope to achieve with your dancing? Or with your life?*

*R: To just, to, to just, if I work like now I have my sister then she always tells me like "you have to go to dance coz it's what's you're good at". Ja and to trust myself that I can go forward.*

Dintle appears to value her sister's opinion very highly and listens to what she has to say. Dintle's sister has told her to keep dancing because she is talented at it. There seems to be an absence of a sense of enjoyment in this statement and perhaps part of why Dintle has pursued dancing is because it is something that can take her forward. For Dintle and her sister, being offered an opportunity that may provide a tenable future seems to be something that should not be dismissed.

Aviwe, Bonny and Dintle all have different versions of who they view as "mother", but it is clear that this nurturing, supportive figure appears to have one of the biggest influences on their decision to engage in and pursue dance. In the absence of this encouragement they may not have been as determined nor motivated to continue. Fostering good relationships with and receiving support from family members and role models can contribute to positive development, motivation and resilience (Daniels & Adams, 2010).

In addition to family acting as motivation for sustained participation, the environment wherein the activity takes place needs to fulfil certain needs in order for participants to continue attending classes.

#### **4.3 Theme Two: What Motivates Me to Continue Attending Classes - The Fulfilment of the Three Basic Psychological Needs**

According to the theory of self-determination, three basic psychological needs need to be fulfilled for a person to experience sustained motivation and enhanced eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These three needs are relatedness, competence and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). All four participants appear to experience the fulfilment of these three basic needs through their participation at the centre.

### 4.3.1 Relatedness.

Dance class can provide a safe space for young people to engage in a creative, prosocial activity with their friends while being supervised and taught by positive role models (Arts Council England, 2007).

While people tend to be self-determined to engage in behaviours that contribute to feelings of competence, this motivation will only be sustained if the activity is presented in an environment where they feel supported (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Dance class can create a sense of support and safety when discipline, consistent structure and boundaries are in place, and a certain code of conduct is expected of the dancers and teachers alike (Clark, 2014; Chielotam, 2015; Fensham & Gardner, 2005).

Dintle speaks specifically about the centre as being a place of safety and respite.

*D: It's like here, like there's no-one to stress you out or things that are happening like if you have family problems and all of that. So here you feel safe and loved like everyone loves you. And you have that that comfort. Ja, that you don't have outside.*

*D: I feel safe here and relaxed, ja. And like open.*

Dintle appears to feel a sense of peace when she is at the centre. The feeling of safety and unconditional love that Dintle experiences when at the centre appears to allow her to relax and express herself. It could be implied that Dintle does not feel this way in other areas of her life and that the centre provides a space for her to let her guard down. This consistency could be what allows her to feel “open” - perhaps open to being herself and not having to feel guarded in order to protect herself.

The centre seems to provide boundaries, consistency and certainty that the participants may not experience elsewhere. In addition to this structured, consistent environment, having supportive teachers and friends that you interact with everyday can contribute to feelings of relatedness and belongingness. People need to feel connected to others, and to feel like they not only belong but are also valued by others within a social community (Ryan & Deci, 2002). All four participants speak about feeling supported by their teachers and peers at the centre and within the greater dance community. It appears that their need for belongingness is fulfilled within these relationships.

#### 4.3.1.1 Teachers

Bonny speaks quite excitedly and emphatically when retelling a story of how her dance teacher encourages her. This could be indicative of her passion for dance and her close relationship with her teacher.

*B: My dance teacher. Um, well, my other dance teacher, um, she's like my mother at dancing. She um, like 2 years ago, 3 years ago, she said I should start teaching and I was like "no dude, I'm not good enough to like teach, no" and then she said "ok, come with me and then you can be like an assistant teacher and whatever" and I was like "ok fine" and then I came and she was like "you see you can do the things. But you don't. Why is that?" And I was like "I don't know, like I don't know actually" and then she was like "ok, next class, you're gonna do now". It was like aaah ok and then I did it! Obviously I wasn't prepared for it but I did it and I actually felt "hey, this is nice, shouting at children". (laughs) You know and that's where my love of teaching also came in. And like, she just says "you can do it man". Like if I say "I can't" she'll just be like "what? No. Tell me again?" "Ok I caaan". "Ja, that's right". She's also like pushing me and pushing me and pushing me. And she's the person that says I should be getting into different genres so I can be, you know, versatile, coz that's what people are looking for now, being versatile.*

Bonny heeded her teacher's advice when she encouraged her to teach and to expand her training to other dance styles. Bonny appears to trust her teacher as if she were a mother and particularly respects her opinion when it comes to dancing. Bonny seems to separate her mother at home whom she respects for her determination and is inspired by her "never give up" attitude, from her 'mother' at dancing whom she trusts with regard to her dance career. When speaking about her, she refers to her as her "other" dance teacher, presumably to delineate her from her teachers at the centre. This teacher taught her from an early age and clearly had an impact on her formative years. While the teachers at the centre have had an influence on her technical skills and she is very fond of the centre and what she gains from it, she does not seem to have the same emotional connection to the teachers as she has to her first teacher. Perhaps Bonny has integrated these feelings of competence and whilst encouragement is always valued, she no longer relies on it to make her feel capable as her behaviour has become much more self-determined.

Aviwe and Dintle also speak about how the encouragement they have received from their teachers over the years has helped them to persist at mastering the art of ballet.

*A: The teachers, man. They always told me “you can make it”.*

*R: So your teachers encouraged you a lot?*

*A: Ja they encouraged me a lot. Especially my ballet teacher.*

*A: They keep encouraging me, no matter what. Even when you not getting those pirouettes or not getting those twirls, you will get them. Maybe by tomorrow or the next day or what not, but you will get them if you work hard. That’s what they always taught me.*

Aviwe emphasises that their support is unconditional and that they never give up on him or his ability. This consistency may provide a welcome change from the unpredictability of the community within which he lives. Aviwe also experiences emotional support from his teachers who despite his anger when he was younger, never stopped believing in him.

*A: She always deal with my temper, no matter what. Sjoe, find that soft spot of me that I will keep on doing it.*

*R: Ok. Ok. And she managed to get through to you.*

*A: Ja man.*

*R: And is she one of the people in your life that helps you?*

*A: Even John.*

*R: Ok.*

*A: Never give up on me.*

Having people who believe in his potential and who provide him with ongoing support may have led Aviwe to believe in himself and his ability. Further, their consistent support seems to have enabled him to deal with his anger issues. He seems to have internalised their external affirmation and believes that he can achieve his goals.

Dintle attributes her decision to become serious about her dancing to her teacher who believes in her talent.

*D: It's just, at first I just thought it was just for fun. And then I came to realise I have talent and um my teacher always said to me "you have talent in dancing" and then I started to be serious about it.*

*R: How did that feel that she said that?*

*D: It feels nice coz I like if I hear her say that I also like I also develop everyday every time she said that and I think, "ok I've got talent of this so I can do (it)".*

The repetition of being told she was talented seems to have led to Dintle believing it herself. She appears to have responded to the positive affirmation she experienced from her teacher which may lead to her increased feelings of competence.

*R: And what are you most excited about?*

*D: Coz my African and contemporary teacher is coming to watch me and my sister.*

Further, Dintle is excited to show what she can do to her teacher and sister – she is able to perform the skills she has mastered which may lead to even further feelings of competence.

When students feel affirmed, inspired and supported by their teachers, their levels of self-confidence and commitment seem to improve (Aujila et al., 2014; Sobash, 2012). Further, being told that you are talented and having your abilities acknowledged can lead to increased levels of motivation (Aujila et al., 2014).

This interaction with positive role models can also lead to feelings of relatedness and belongingness. Having peers that you can relate to within a positive social atmosphere, can further increase these feelings.

#### **4.3.1.2 Friends**

Some friendships appear to be conditional as was discussed in the section on masculinity and femininity. However, the friendships the participants form at dance class and in the greater dancing world seem to be very supportive. Bonny expresses that it was through encouragement and belief in her ability from a friend that made her decide to take dancing seriously.

*B: Um, I wanted to stop dancing for a moment and then my friend, she came back from New York one time and she was like “oh my word, I was watching this music video that we filmed and did and stuff and I was like I just saw you doing stuff like this and I saw you there” and I was like “really?” and she was like “ja. So this means you must work for it”. So I was like “okaaay, let me just try” so I started taking extra classes and I think that was the moment for me where I was like “I can do this”. I can so, just stop telling yourself you can’t coz then you never gonna get there. And that was the moment for me where I was like, I need to try harder. Coz I know I’m not gonna get anywhere if I just keep doubting myself.*

It seems that Bonny feels more capable by knowing that somebody who has achieved the dreams that are similar to her own, recognises the same potential in her. This encouragement enables Bonny to quash some of her doubts and believe in herself. The value of people believing in you, particularly people who are role models to you within your industry can have great influence on your belief in your own ability. Bonny seems trust this friend because they belong to the same context of the dancing world and it seems she is able to internalise some of the of the self-confidence this friend has bestowed upon her.

Dintle appears to feel motivated to come to dance class in order to meet new people as well as to express her feelings.

*D: It’s to meet new people. Ja, and express my feelings and my things.*

Dintle seems to feel safe enough at the centre to express herself even in the presence of new people. This could be because she has internalised the feeling of belongingness within this community.

Sinazo speaks about having good friends at the centre.

*S: Ja, I do have friends here.*

*S: They are good friends.*

*R: So it’s almost like a family?*

*S: Ja. It’s like a family.*

Sinazo responded to my prompt about it being like a family affirmatively which implies that the friendships he has formed at the centre are valuable and contribute to his sense of belongingness.

Aviwe has also established long-term friendships through dance.

*R: And what about friendships and stuff? Through dance. Did you make a lot of friends at dance classes when you were growing up?*

*A: Ja, I did. I did. A lot.*

*R: That's good. And those friends that you met at dance, are you still friends with them?*

*A: Ja, still friends with them. The guys at ... You know ...? They are my friends. (\*Name of dance company removed to maintain confidentiality and anonymity).*

Aviwe has maintained friendships with people he met early on in his dance career. This could imply that friendships formed within a mutual passion can extend beyond daily interaction. Belonging to a larger community of dancers seems to contribute to feelings of relatedness. Bonny speaks about the value of feeling united within this larger community of dancers.

*B: Yes, yes especially with hip hop competitions like in the hip hop world everybody knows everybody so you'll be like "oh there's Terri, hi Terri! Oh you know ...? Ja dude". So everybody knows everybody and also when you're like in a little company or something like this you build a friendship with the students that you see even if it is just for a year. You know. You still build that friendship and you're always meeting somebody new, whether you go to a casting you meet someone new, whether you go to a showcase you meet somebody new, you know. And it's actually really cool like that because then at the end you just know that all dancers are gonna be as one, united.*

Bonny seems to appreciate the bond she shares with her fellow dancers. Regardless of whether she meets them at a competition, a casting or dances with them every day she considers all of her dancing peers as part of the same community. She extends this thought even further by acknowledging that all dancers are united through a collective feeling.

*B: We're all different but we all have the same feeling.*

Bonny seems to recognise that even though all the friends she has made through dance are different; they all belong to a greater dance community. This could contribute to feelings of belongingness.

Even though they may have their “off days”, everyone at the centre is treated with mutual respect. Bonny also reiterates Sinazo’s sentiments about being a family.

*B: Everybody is like a family, but we have our days, but it doesn't matter, everybody is treated with respect and truth and equally and that's all anybody really wants. You know, to be a part of something where you're welcome so ja.*

Being a part of a family means that sometimes people will do things that bother you, but ultimately you all support each other. Bonny seems to feel accepted and welcome at the centre unconditionally and feels that this is something that all individuals intrinsically desire and value.

Participation in enjoyable extramural activities provide opportunities for young people to make new friends, interact with positive role models and develop cooperation and trust skills (Arts Council England, 2007; Chielotam, 2015; Cooper & Ward, 2008). Young people tend to spend most of their free time with their peers and want to feel accepted and supported by these peers (Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Leoschut & Bonora, 2007). Interacting with like-minded peers, such as the interactions with the participants and their peers at dance, seems to enhance positive identity development (Aujila et al., 2014). All four participants seem to feel valued and supported within the centre and greater dance community. They also appear to feel connected to their dance teachers and peers and experience a sense of belongingness because of these relationships. The experience of a supportive and nurturing environment can also assist in the development of independence, autonomy and responsibility (DeMesa-Simpson, 2014).

#### **4.3.2 Autonomy**

Autonomy stems from the desire to feel in control of one’s behavior and to act from a place of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Autonomy differs slightly from independence, in that a person can still be autonomous even when dependent on a someone else (e.g. a dance teacher) for instruction. Although dance class has certain rules and a level of discipline is expected, when the dancer performs a movement, he is acting from a place of

individual interpretation and self-expression, and is in command of the instrument of his body.

Dintle reports that ballet is her favourite dance form. Dintle seems to enjoy ballet because she feels she can be herself and block out all stressors from the outside world.

*R: Ok. And what's your favourite?*

*D: It's ballet.*

*R: Ballet.*

*D: Ja.*

*R: And why is ballet your favourite?*

*D: Coz it's like when you do it you feel yourself and you just like you forget about all the things that are outside and then you concentrate.*

Being able to “feel herself” could relate to feelings of being in control of her body and guiding it through its movements. She may also feel like she is free to be herself when she dances. Feeling in control of her body and as if she can express herself may lead to feelings of autonomy. Although she may be dependent on the teacher's instructions, she chooses how to execute them. Dintle is also able to block out stressors from the outside and focus only on the task at hand. It seems that external stressors may be unpredictable and she may not have control over circumstances nor always be able to be completely herself. Ballet classes provide Dintle with an opportunity to feel in control, and the fulfilment of this need for autonomy appears to be contributing to Dintle's enjoyment of the activity which in turn motivates her to continue and has a positive influence on her well-being.

Aviwe appears to feel quite strongly about being in control of his own behaviour and persists in his attendance no matter what.

*A: Ja man. You can put me there and you can tell the difference; that there is a difference.*

*A: Ja. For me to do something, like in a township, to do to being in a gang or smoking drugs. Those persons, they don't have the dreams, that's why they are acting like that. For me to act like I have dreams about my life. That's why I keep on going no matter what happens.*

Aviwe talks about the difference between himself and others in the township he comes from. This difference appears to be primarily based around dreams for the future,

where Aviwe feels that other young people in the township do not have dreams as a result of their involvement in gangs and drugs. Part of Aviwe feeling so strongly about his commitment to dance may be because he feels a sense of control and ownership over his creative process, which can ultimately lead to feelings of personal empowerment (Houston, 2005). This sense of power may contribute to his feelings of being greater than the type of lifestyle he has been exposed to in the township.

Bonny expresses similar sentiments about setting goals for her future.

*B: Like you set up goals for yourself and you make it like a reality. And you're more focused and everything. Like it's true what they say, when you dance, you actually are focused. And when you just say 'nah, I'm not gonna go, I'm just gonna go out with friends you just lose everything. And when you wanna get back into it, it's really really hard.*

Bonny finds that dance helps her with her focus and perhaps helps her stay focused in terms of her long-term goals. She is steadfast in the pursuit of these goals even when she has to sacrifice spending time with friends. It seems that it takes a lot of hard work and dedication to master the art of ballet and Bonny does not want to lose anything that she has gained up to now. Bonny seems to have internalised and integrated the values of the action of ballet and is acting from a position of self-determination in terms of her decision to attend class and pursue her goals (Ryan & Deci, 2002). This, coupled with a sense of mastery can contribute to feelings of autonomy (Aujila et al., 2014; Bond & Stinson, 2007; Murcia et al., 2010).

#### **4.3.3 Competence.**

Achieving a goal through persistence can lead to feelings of competence and mastery. People tend to be motivated to continue their participation in an activity when they feel capable of meeting the challenges with which they are presented. Dance presents many opportunities to master tasks that gradually increase in difficulty (Vicario 2001; Vicario et al., 2001). Competence in dance can be attained through commitment and hard work and when improvements can be seen within one's craft, great satisfaction is often felt (Vicario 2001; Vicario et al., 2001).

For all four participants, feeling competent in class seems to contribute to their enjoyment of ballet. Further, seeing their improvements in ballet because of persistence has encouraged them to persevere at newer, more challenging dance forms. Finally, each class

brings with it novel tasks which appears to contribute to their sustained motivation to attend dance every day.

Sinazo speaks about ballet as being both easy and hard.

*R: Ok. And do you enjoy ballet?*

*S: Ja I like ballet.*

*R: And why do you like ballet particularly?*

*S: Yoh. Because ballet, it's easy. Sometimes it's hard, ja. But it's easy to catch-up.*

Sinazo appears to enjoy ballet because he feels competent at it. He seems to feel he will be able to succeed even when it gets difficult. This belief in his ability to master the art may lead him to feel motivated to continue.

Comparatively, he does not feel as confident about hip hop and contemporary.

*R: And compared to like contemporary and hip hop? Why is ballet your favourite?*

*S: Contemporary, it's hard. Yoh.*

*S: Coz I started this year.*

He may find contemporary difficult as he is new to the dance style. Further, his relative dislike of contemporary may be due to the fact that he does not feel competent at it.

Because he feels capable in ballet, Sinazo may feel that it is a worthwhile endeavor to pursue contemporary dance too, as he may eventually master the art form. Further, he appears to be willing to work at something that will contribute to his end-goal of becoming a professional dancer – he has internalized the values of discipline and hard work to achieve this long-term goal.

Aviwe believes that ballet provides a good base for all other dance training. He reiterates that if you are able to master ballet, other dance styles may be easier to pick up too. Similar to Sinazo, Aviwe appears to feel competent at ballet, and this may contribute to his enjoyment of it.

*A: I'm doing ballet, contemporary, jazz and Spanish*

*R: Ok. And what's your favourite one?*

*A: Ballet (in a happy whisper).*

*R: Ballet? Wow. And why do you love ballet so much?*

*A: Because ballet is the basic of everything. If you have that ballet training it's easy for you to even do contemporary because it's my first time doing contemporary this year, even jazz and Spanish. I was doing ballet the whole time since I started. I started with ballet and African.*

Aviwe and Sianzo both started their dance training with ballet. Because it is the dance style they have trained the most extensively in, they feel competent at it, which seems to be why they enjoy it so much. Comparatively, Bonny's primary dance style is hip hop and does not enjoy ballet as much as Aviwe and Sinazo do.

Bonny began taking ballet classes as she feels that it provides the necessary technical foundations for other dance styles. Much like the other three participants, Bonny would like to pursue a career in dance.

*B: Um, well after school I wanted to continue my training and unfortunately the company that I was with and still am with, they don't have ballet and for what I want to do to further my career in life, dance, I needed that and I needed like the technique also.*

Bonny seems to be willing to participate in ballet classes for the pure reason that she knows it will improve her skills for her future career. Although she may not feel as competent, she is motivated to continue because of her competence in and love for hip hop and her understanding that she needs to work on her ballet technique to pursue the type of dance career that she wishes to.

*B: Hip hop was my strong major and I love hip hop with a passion and it's very different coz I have to hold my back up and push my shoulders down and sometimes I forget it so I get shouted at a lot for that. But otherwise it's nice, it's different. I don't see myself doing ballet at all but if it's for the training then yes. And it's helping me with my technique.*

Bonny is very passionate about hip hop and seems to be far more comfortable with it as a style than ballet. This could be because she feels more proficient in hip hop as she has been doing it for far longer. This is similar to Sinazo's feelings about contemporary dance. Bonny uses the emphatic word "passion" when talking about hip hop and the less enthusiastic adjectives "nice" and "different" when describing her feelings about ballet. However, she is

willing to pursue ballet classes for the benefits she will receive in pursuing her long-term goals.

Aviwe, Sinazo and Dintle also appear to value and prioritise their technique highly.

Sinazo is motivated to attend dance classes because he does not want to lose his technique that he has worked so hard to achieve.

*R: Why do you come to dancing every day, why don't you just stay at home?*

*S: Yoh. Because I don't wanna lose my technique.*

Sinazo's emphatic use of the word "yoh" seems to imply that this is a pivotal reason for his committed attendance.

Dintle appreciates learning new things every day and continuing to improve on her technique.

*R: What makes you come to dancing everyday instead of doing other things?*

*D: Coz I want to like have more and learn more coz we learn more everyday here. So I don't want to miss that knowledge. You see. Ja.*

Dintle seems to equate learning more with "having more" which could imply that she values the knowledge that she gains at dancing. Every day seems to present novel, challenging tasks that she wishes to master. Further, she may recognise that missing classes could impede the rate at which she learns new skills, which could in turn make her fall behind her peers.

Aviwe seems to have noticed improvements within his own technique and considers these to be "gains".

*A: Ja it's very disciplined and it's where I gain a lot man. I've gained.*

*R: And when you say you've gained a lot, mostly technique or...*

*A: Ja. Mostly the technique is where I have gained.*

The discipline that ballet class brings with it seems to have contributed to Aviwe's ability to achieve these gains.

All four participants value their technique highly and work hard to maintain it. However, where Aviwe and Bonny speak about their gains as their reason for coming to class, Sinazo and Dintle speak about their fear of loss if they don't come. This could be

because Aviwe and Bonny are both at a pre-professional level in their training i.e. they are pursuing dance as a full-time career, whereas Sinazo and Dintle are still in high school. Being accepted into a full-time dance training programme post-school will depend on their skill level, thus they have to work very hard now in order to maintain a high standard of technique.

The participants appear to be motivated to attend class every day because they believe there is something valuable to learn in each lesson. Novel and challenging activities tend to motivate people's participation in an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, these challenges need to be attainable so that a person feels competent and not despondent about their abilities. Each participant recognises their own development as a dancer and this seems to contribute greatly to their sustained motivation. Even though Aviwe and Sinazo refer to ballet as "easy" they are both aware that it is something that needs to be practised every day in order not to lose their competence at it. Mastering the challenges presented in dance and seeing improvements within one's own technique serves as a strong motivator for many dancers to continue (Bond & Stinson, 2007; Murcia et al., 2010; Sobash, 2012). The feeling of competence and the desire to continue mastering challenges seems to be a crucial factor in the participants' sustained motivation as well as their enjoyment of dance.

According to self-determination theory, satisfying the needs for relatedness, autonomy and competence will not only lead to sustained motivation but also the enhanced eudaimonic well-being (Huta & Ryan, 2010). Outcomes that are associated with eudaimonic living include self-acceptance, a sense of purpose and sustained well-being (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008).

#### **4.4 Theme Three: How Does Dance Make Me Feel - The Experience of Emotional Well-Being Through Dance**

All four participants speak about the positive feelings they experience during and after dance classes.

Bonny seems to experience a myriad of emotions when dancing. These include feelings of respite, self-expression, affirmation and purpose.

*B: I was adopted when I was a baby and so like there's a whole lot of struggle for me but when I dance I feel like nothing, I'm nobody, I'm just a different person and I'm just going. I don't think, I just go. And also just to, if I have one person who watches me and says "oh my word, you were amazing, you*

*actually touched me in some way". That is the best feeling in the world. So like dance has always been there and will always be there for me no matter what style I do. Coz ja, it's just it's like a part of me. If I don't dance, then I don't know what I would do.*

When Bonny dances she seems to feel more herself than at any other time. Dance does not require her to think, but rather she is able to just be. It seems to allow her to express herself and achieve a sense of relief from the struggles she faces. This authentic expression seems to translate to those who watch her and evokes a positive response. Feeling that she has made an impression on someone seems to make her feel very happy. Dance seems to provide a consistent space of purpose for Bonny and forms a large part of her identity.

#### **4.4.1 A sense of purpose.**

This sense of identity and purpose seems to motivate Bonny to continue dancing.

*B: I guess, what keeps me coming back is when I don't dance, I don't know to do. I feel like I'm supposed to do something but I don't know what and for just why I keep coming back is because I always want that feeling, I always want that feeling of "ah a release, ah this is something I'm doing, ah it's nice, it's magical". Ja. It's the best feeling in the world, to dance and to not dance is just like I'm just wasting my talent. I'd rather dance than go out with my friends. Coz I know one day, I'm gonna be up there.*

Bonny seems to continue coming back to dance classes because she wants to experience this feeling of fulfilment and purpose. She equates it with being a type of "release" and something that is "magical". Bonny seems to feel deeply passionate about dance and equates it with being the "best feeling in the world". Further, Bonny seems to recognise that she is talented at dance and would not want to waste her potential. She realises that through hard work and determination she may achieve her goals of "being up there" even if that means sacrificing time with friends in the short-term.

Sinazo also seems to have found a sense of purpose in dance.

*S: Um, dance helps me to know what I want to do.*

Dintle speaks about dance as keeping her occupied and giving her something "to do in (her) life".

*D: It's just that I have something to do with myself, ja. Then like sometimes I forget that I dance here. So when I come here it's like "ok, I have something to do in my life" that can keep me busy.*

Dintle mentions that she sometimes forgets that she has dancing classes to attend. This could be because she still attends school and dance classes are quite a distance from where she lives. Further, the atmosphere at the centre and in dance class may contrast the environment that she usually finds herself in, thus she may sometimes have to remind herself that it is part of her life too. Although Sinazo and Dintle seem to find purpose in dance, they speak about it less emphatically than Bonny and Aviwe. This could be because Sinazo and Dintle are still in school and only attend dance class in the afternoons, whereas Bonny and Aviwe are studying dance at the centre and thus train full-time.

Aviwe's sense of purpose appears to contribute to feelings of joy.

*A: I feel that joy. Especially in the mornings when you wake up, that first class of the ballet. Yoh, brighten up your day. And then afternoon we get rehearsals and you get home and you tired. Just eat and do your chores and then go to sleep. It's a nice feeling. When you sleep it's that "I have done something good in my day".*

Aviwe seems to wake up every morning feeling excited and positive as he looks forward to the day's dance classes. This joy appears to stem from a place of having found a purpose in his life and doing "something good in (his) day". The exhaustion he feels at the end of the day is positive and appears to leave him feeling fulfilled and purposeful. Aviwe seems to find happiness in the knowledge that he has done something constructive with his day.

Participants in other studies who have been involved in community arts programmes also report experiencing feelings of purpose and belonging (Clift, 2011; Stickley, 2007). All four participants in this study appear to be living in line with her true self (daimon) and pursuing goals that are aligned with her highest potential (Ryan et al., 2008). The eudaimonic approach focuses on developing the best within oneself and aiming to live a life of purpose (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008).

A life lived well according to eudaimonic principles should inevitably lead to feelings of happiness, pleasure and positive affect (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

#### 4.4.2 The feeling of happiness.

Aviwe repeated this feeling of joy three times during his interview and it seems that this is his primary emotion in his engagement with dance.

*A: It's where I found my joy.*

*A: It's where I found my 100% joy. Ja.*

The emphatic response of it being where he has found his “100% joy” may imply that this is the one space where he feels euphoric and complete. This happiness may be as a result of living in line with his values and pursuing his potential.

Sinazo seems to feel happy when he is able to perform on stage.

*R: And when you're on the stage, how do you feel?*

*S: I feel happy.*

*R: Feel happy.*

*S: Ja. I feel happy.*

*R: Does it feel like that's where you are supposed to be?*

*S: Ja. Ja. Ja.*

These feelings of happiness may be connected to feeling competent as a dancer and being able to showcase his skills. Further, he responded emphatically to my question about whether he feels like that is he is “supposed to be” with the repetition of the word “ja”. This seems to imply that he greatly enjoys being on the stage and may feel like he belongs there even more than anywhere else.

Dintle also seems to express positive emotion when speaking about how dance makes her feel. She enjoys dancing and appreciates the fact that she can do it often.

*D: It feels nice coz it's what I like to do and I can do it often.*

Where Aviwe seems to attribute all dance classes to leaving him feeling joyous, Dintle appears to particularly enjoy working on pieces that she finds personally appealing.

*D: If you love what you're doing and you like the piece that you're doing then it's going to be, you're going to enjoy dancing.*

Dintle later mentioned that because of dance she feels happy every day.

*R: And you like what you're doing and you like the place where you do it. And what feeling do you feel most when you dance?*

*D: I feel happy every day.*

*R: Feel happy every day. Ok so dancing makes you feel happy.*

*D: Yes.*

Dintle's expression of happiness was in response to a question about how dance makes her feel and it seems that she is particularly happy on the days on which she is able to dance. This love could be attributed not only to the art form of dance but also to being at the centre.

Aviwe, Sinazo and Dintle all speak explicitly about their feelings of happiness while Bonny alludes to it when speaking about it being "the best feeling in the world". Consistent with this, studies carried out in numerous settings found that participants engaging in dance programmes experience increased levels of happiness (Aujila et al., 2014, Yeung, 2002). Dance appears to promote feelings of happiness and also creates a space to release emotions (Bidwell, 2014; Swindells et al., 2013).

#### **4.4.3 The experience of freedom and self-expression.**

Dintle feels happy every day when she gets to the centre, even if she has had a bad day.

*R: Feel happy every day. Ok so dancing makes you feel happy.*

*D: Yes.*

*R: Even if you're having a bad day.*

*D: Jaaa (laughs). If I come here, I feel free.*

Dintle attributes this to feeling of freedom she experiences when she comes to the centre.

*D: Forget about like my problems at home and my schoolwork sometimes if I stress too much then I can relax when I'm here.*

It appears that she feels at peace when she comes to the centre and free from external stressors. This could be because she feels safe at the centre as it is a consistent space where she feels loved. Further, because the act of dance is creative and expressive, this could lead to further feelings of freedom.

Sinazo also speaks about feelings of freedom.

*S: I like dance because dance make me feel free, I'm free when I'm here.*

Not only does Sinazo feel free while he is dancing, he also feels free in the space of the centre. Similar to Dintle, this could be because he feels safe at the centre. This once again implies that both participants may experience external environments where they do not feel as safe nor free.

Bonny also speaks about dance as a way to find solutions for problems.

*B: Ok. Um. I don't know hey. It's like, obviously we all go through troubles and problems with family or whatever the problem may be. Um, but with dance it's like, with that problem, you will have a solution and when you dance it I think that's really the solution, like the dancing is the solution and when you dance you're being free whatever it is and it's just like ja, it's like maybe it's the solution. So obviously you wanna get the solution and get the problem done with, so you dance.*

It seems like for Bonny the solution is to express herself and dance herself free from stress. Further, self-expression through dance may create an opportunity for cathartic release. Engaging in dance could help clear her mind and thus clear the path for finding a solution to a problem that she may be experiencing.

Aviwe also speaks about the value of self-expression and how dance has helped him to manage his temper.

*A: At that time when I was starting dancing I was too moody and I mean getting so easily to be frustrated and even short-tempered. Ja, it's what helped me man to keep on going because I was getting healed day by day so that's why.*

*R: And when you say you were getting healed, what do you mean by that?*

*A: To get off that being of the short temper man. I didn't even know. I didn't even notice that I was getting that temper if I didn't find a step. For me it was not a day. I would get arrogant and want to quit this thing because of that.*

Aviwe speaks about being “healed” from his frustrations every day. It seems that Aviwe has been able to channel his aggression into a more positive outlet i.e. dance.

The need for self-expression increases during adolescence and if young people find a constructive way to express themselves, such as through dance, the need to engage in destructive behaviours may decrease (Vicario & Chambliss, 2001). Dance has been described as a cathartic release where movement of body seems to transcend language and dance class often seems to be a place where dancers feel safe enough to experience this release (Clark, 2014; Monteiro & Wall, 2011). Dance and the centre appear to be a place of respite for all four dancers where they can experience a sense of freedom.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of four young people engaging in a dance community project. Engaging in dance appears to contribute to the overall emotional wellbeing of these participants. Having a safe space to engage in a prosocial activity offers an alternative to the negative behaviours, including drugs, violence and gangsterism, that they are confronted with in their community. All four participants appear to experience feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness at the centre. According to self-determination theory, the fulfilment of these three basic psychological needs leads to sustained motivation and enhanced eudaimonic wellbeing. Eudaimonic wellbeing involves living according to your true self and highest potential (Huta & Ryan, 2010). While eudaimonia is not exclusively concerned with the pursuit of pleasure, living your life according to eudaimonic principles may inevitably lead to happiness. In addition to being motivated to attend dance class because their three basic needs are being fulfilled, all four participants expressed feelings of purpose, happiness and freedom when at the centre and when dancing. It appears that the centre creates a supportive space for the attainment of the three basic psychological needs. While it could be argued that other recreational centres may support these three needs regardless of the activity pursued, it appears that for these four participants, dance contributes to their satisfaction of competence, relatedness and autonomy. Further, dance seems to create an opportunity for self-expression, purpose and feelings of joy. Dance programmes and other recreational facilities have a potentially important role to play in the promotion of wellbeing, particularly in places that have limited access to resources.

#### **5.2 Limitations**

The participants in this study are not first language English speakers, although they all have a good command of the English language. Being interviewed in their first language may have allowed for more in-depth descriptions of their experiences.

#### **5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies**

This study aimed to show the contribution of dance to emotional wellbeing. All four participants appear to benefit emotionally from being involved in a prosocial recreational activity and more specifically the activity of dance. Future studies could look at dance

projects in other socioeconomic areas to create a broader understanding of dance's potential contributions to emotional wellbeing. Further, future studies could be conducted at centres that offer other extramural activities in under-resourced areas to explore their contribution to the emotional wellbeing of young people.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Schedule**

- 1) What made you start dancing here?
- 2) How long have you been dancing here?
- 3) Can you tell me what it means to dance at the centre (classes, times, styles etc.)?
- 4) What has your experience been of participating in this community dance project?
- 5) What role does the centre play in your life?
- 6) What role does dance play in your life?
- 7) What do you enjoy most about coming here?
- 8) What do you enjoy most about dance?
- 9) What makes you come to dance class everyday instead of doing other things?
- 10) How do you feel when you dance?
- 11) How do you feel when you come to the centre?
- 12) How do you feel after dance class?
- 13) How do you feel when you leave the centre?
- 14) What do you think you have gained from dancing at the centre?
- 15) Are there any negatives to dancing?
- 16) What skills (if any) have you gained from being at the centre?
- 17) What skills (if any) have you gained from dance?
- 18) Have you experienced the value of any of these skills in other parts of your life?
- 19) Which people have played an important role in you continuing to dance?
- 20) If you had to tell someone why they should or shouldn't dance, what would you say to them?
- 21) What are your hopes for the future?
- 22) Is there anything you have learnt here that makes you feel like you are more able to achieve your goals?

## Appendix B

### Sample Transcript: Aviwe

R: So, Aviwe can you tell me how old you are at the moment?

A: I'm 20 now.

R: 20.

A: I will be turning 21 on 5 of July.

R: Ok. And how long have you been dancing at the centre?

A: I started at the centre when I was ten years.

R: Ten years old, ok. And what made you start dancing here.

A: I was inspired by my brothers. Coz my other brother he's he's in a company. Cape Town City Ballet.

R: Oh wow.

A: He was the one that inspired me.

R: Ok. And made you want to come dance here.

A; Yes.

R: And what was it like as a child dancing here. What do you remember the most about coming here?

A: Coming here man, was like, for me to see a white guy or to see some more tourist in a township that made me excited each and every day so that I can keep on going and to showcase on those tourists. And to see a white guy and a white woman.

R: So you enjoyed seeing different people.

A: Different people at that time ja.

R: Ok.

A: It was like that.

R: And then when you could show them what you could do, was that an exciting thing?

A: Our moves. That was very exciting. All the time I wanted to showcase, to have something to show them.

R: Mmmm. So where did you, did you use to come to this centre or were you

A: No. Started at Nyanga. I live in Nyanga. Started at my primary school ... that's where I started.

R: Ok. And then are you doing the bridging programme?

A: Ja I am doing the bridging programme now. Ja and this is my last year. And that's all. I feel sad now (laughs).

R: Ah you feel sad. And what do you, what do you hope to do after this year?

A: Hoping to get in a company man. Planning on getting in a company in Joburg. Joburg Ballet.

R: Oh wow.

A: Ja.

R: Ok. That's cool.

A: If God wants that.

R: That's awesome. And when you were a child, did you find it easy to go to dance every day? Or what made you come back to dancing for so many years?

A: It was my parents, always tell me that it's a good thing. My mama didn't want me to play soccer. She didn't want me to play soccer. I don't know why. I didn't even ask her a reason. That's why I hated soccer. So it was better for me to do dancing. Studying ballet and doing African dancing.

R: Ok.

A: Ja.

R: And the other kids around that were playing soccer, how did they react to that?

A: Oh my friends, we used to support each other whether you played soccer or played whatever. There are some jokes like, 'oh ja jou moffie, you wearing leotards' ja. But it was not a big deal so that I can quit my thing.

R: Ok. So you didn't take much notice.

A: No.

R: Of them doing things like that. Ok.

R: And what did you learn at dancing that made you just want to go back every day?

A: At that time when I was starting dancing I was too moody and I mean getting so easily to be frustrated and even short-tempered. Ja, it's what helped me man to keep on going because I was getting healed day by day so that's why.

R: And when you say you were getting healed, what do you mean by that?

A: To get off that being of the short temper man. I didn't even know. I didn't even notice that I was getting that temper if I didn't find a step. For me it was not a day. I would get arrogant and want to quit this thing because of that.

R: Ok so you would get frustrated with yourself if you couldn't get the dance steps right.

A: Ja

R: And then what made you keep pushing and keep working?

A: The teachers, man. They always told me "you can make it".

R: So your teachers encouraged you a lot?

A: Ja they encouraged me a lot. Especially my ballet teacher. It's Mike. Ja.

R: And always just saying "you got this", "you can do this"

A: She always deal with my temper, no matter what. Sjoe, find that soft spot of me that I will keep on doing it.

R: Ok. Ok. And she managed to get through to you.

A: Ja man.

R: And is she one of the people in your life that helps you?

A: Even John.

R: Ok.

A: Never give up on me.

R: And is that, has that been important in your life?

A: Ja. Definitely.

R: Having people to believe in you. No that is, that is very important. And what other things do you, have you kind of gained from being involved with dancing classes.

A: Besides my technique?

R: Ja like for yourself. So technique, has technique been important?

A: Ja it is important. It's almost saying a manner. A manner to communicate with other people. Now I have gained a manner. Ja.

R: Mmmhmm, a manner ok.

A: Ja. If you had come that time that I was starting, I would not even want to do an interview with you.

R: Ok wow.

A: I was just saying no. I won't do that. Now I am getting there, slowly but surely.

R: And how has dance helped you to do that?

A: By working with doing a partner work. You have to connect a lot with you partner. You have to say something even if you say "pull up". Working with ladies you have to be gentlemen with ladies that's how I get the manner.

R: Ok. So it's taught you communication.

A: Ja.

R: And you've found that that helps in the rest of your life?

A: Ja it does a lot.

R: So it helps you to communicate with other people

A: Ja

R: Ok, wow. That's cool. Is there anything else that you've learnt at dance that's helped you in the rest of your life, like other skills or

A: Nothing right now.

R: Ok that's fine. So mostly the communication thing.

A: Ja, the communication. That's a big deal for me. I've been working on that ability.

R: So has it helped you to gain some confidence then as well? Dancing.

A: I was having a confidence at that time. It was just flipping thing of mine. I couldn't stand it. The person that would say do this and do that. I couldn't stand it.

R: So like the discipline?

A: Ja the discipline.

R: Ok. And now are you more used to discipline?

A: Yes I'm, I want to say, I'm more man. I go back now again and collect myself where a situation is right or what.

R: Ok, so it sounds like there has been a lot of personal growth for yourself. Like communication and discipline.

A: Ja there is.

R: And dance has helped with all of that.

A: Ja.

R: Oh wow. And how much are you dancing now?

A: Like...?

R: Like how often do you dance? Everyday?

A: Every day. Monday to Saturday.

R: Sho. Wow.

A: Starting at 9, getting off at home at 6.

R: Wow. That's busy

A: It's busy.

R: And what dance styles are you doing?

A: I'm doing ballet, contemporary, jazz and Spanish.

R: Ok. And what's your favourite one?

A: Ballet (*in a happy whisper*)

R: Ballet? Wow. And why do you love ballet so much?

A: Because ballet is the basic of everything. If you have that ballet training it's easy for you to even do contemporary because it's my first time doing contemporary this year, even jazz and Spanish. I was doing ballet the whole time since I started. I started with ballet and African.

R: And you prefer ballet to African?

A: Ja.

R: And ballet is very disciplined and very

A: Ja it's very disciplined and it's where I gain a lot man. I've gained.

R: And when you say you've gained a lot, mostly technique or...

A: Ja. Mostly the technique is where I have gained.

R: Ok. And you just absolutely love it.

A: Love it.

R: And what about friendships and stuff? Through dance. Have you, did you make a lot of friends at dance classes when you were growing up?

A: Ja, I did. I did. A lot.

R: That's good. And those friends that you met at dance, are you still friends with them?

A: Ja, still friends with them. The guys at... You know ...? They are my friends.

R: Yes, ok. Oh wow. And did you find that going to dance class kept you out of um, things that you shouldn't have been doing?

A: Ja man, I should be a gangster now, or smoking drugs. You know township life.

R: Is that how it was, is it

A: Ja. There's negative influences in the township.

R: So there's people that

A: That's why my mom didn't go and play soccer because I would have much more time to do much more nonsense. It's better for me to be in a building not in an open space. I think so.

R: So what happens in open spaces?

A: In open spaces you get a lot of influences which are negative. There are a lot of gangsters. Some of them were my friends there in primary. Now you cannot even tell she was my friend now ja.

R: They've just changed

A: Ja. They have changed a lot. With drugs.

R: So being inside definitely is safer then?

A: Ja. It's safer for me.

R: Ok safer for you.

A: Ja.

R: Ok.

A: Because of people, as human beings we are not the same. It's easy for me, it's easy for me to get influenced. I can even adapt into every style. Even for me I can drink in the morning, taught me those kind of things, drinking in the morning always, then I will end up doing that then the rest of my life. Ja.

R: So

A: So in my house usually, my mom, she is a pastor so we always go to the church, that's how we live.

R: Ok

A: So for me now to turn up and do something wrong it's not...

R: Not a good thing

A: It's not a good thing

A: It will be hard for me to get influenced like that. It's better if I'm here with a good influence.

R: So you find that you are easily influenced that's why it was important for you.

A: To get a move...

R: So do you think that dancing has been a positive influence for you?

A: Yes.

R: And so being being inside is better than being outside.

A: Than being outside.

R: And do you think that having places like that like in Nyanga where you would go dance, do you think it's important that places like that are there for kids to go to?

A: *(confused)*

R: Like the dancing school that you were at in Nyanga, is that, do you think it's important for those places to be there?

A: It is. In order to change those that want to be changed. Like us.

R: Ok. So people that want to be changed. Ok. And do you see that difference of kids who went there compared to kids who didn't go there? Like some are on the wrong track and some are.

A: Ja man. You can put me there and you can tell the difference; that there is a difference.

R: And you see the difference in your own life.

A: Ja. I've seen a lot.

R: That's amazing. Sho. So if you had to talk to kids, you know, and then would you tell them they must go dance coz it's good for you or

A: It's very great. But for me it's like, I'm not good at talking. Ja. I'm good at doing action.

R: So do you try and show them through your dancing like

A: Ja. I always try to do that...like when I am going to in the performances I always tell them, I am going to the performance, you have to come and watch.

R: Sweet

A: In order for them to get inspired.

R: That's awesome. That's really awesome Has there been anything negative that you've experienced from dancing or say, any difficult times at dancing?

A: Nooo. It's not difficult at all man. It's just that, getting what the dancer should get. Always your body is sore and working overtime and not getting a rest. We only get a rest on a Sunday.

R: Sho. So just like, feeling tired.

A: Yes feeling tired, always. It's even nice to sit on this couch. *(laughs)*

R: *(laughs)* coz you can rest and relax

A: Ja

R: Ja. Ok so, do you feel like you have become a stronger or more empowered person because you had dancing in your life and

A: *(nods head)*

R: Ok. As a child, as a teenager, now.

A: Ja.

R: Ok. Wow.

A: Ja. I've gained.

R: Gained a lot.

A: A lot of things for me ja. Personality. I am stronger now.

R: Stronger now.

A: Ja. Ja.

R: And when you say you're stronger now, what do you mean?

A: Like I'm stronger now than when I was starting to dance. I was bitter shy at that time. I was having that personality, when everyone got to get there and smile and do what, but not much other, I heard more.

R: So you're stronger and more confident.

A: Yes. That's it. In a way.

R: And is there anything else that you wanna tell me about dance or how it's influenced your life or anything like that?

A: It's just that dance have taught me that, as a person, you have to, you have to dream man. Ja. I'm not seeing myself getting there in the Joburg, getting the job and stay there. I have to go overseas and try and get another knowledge that I will take back, here in my country. In order for me to, to keep me going.

R: So what would be the dream? Go to Joburg and then overseas?

A: Then overseas.

R: And then come back here?

A: Ja.

A: Join the Cuban, the Cuban Ballet.

R: The Cuban Ballet?

A: Ja.

R: Ok. Wow.

A: There by Cuba. Ah man I wish I could go there. It would make me happy.

R: And then do you want to come back to South Africa or

A: Ja. I'm gonna come back. I don't think I'll stay here maybe.

R: You don't think you'll stay here?

A: No.

R: In Cape Town.

A: I was born here.

R: So you wanna go spread your wings.

A: Ja. Better die overseas than here. *(laughs)*

R: And having that ability to have those dreams, do you think that that is something that you've gained from like

A: Ja

R: So you're able to dream.

A: Ja. For me to do something, like in a township, to do to being in a gangster or smoking drugs. Those persons, they don't have the dreams, that's why they are acting like that. For me to act like I have dreams about my life. That's why I keep on going no matter what happens.

R: That's awesome. And do you feel like having danced since you were 10 has helped you with that, to enable you to have those dreams.

A: It has helped me a lot. I'm glad.

R: You can see it, I can see it makes you happy. It's what you love to do.

A: I can talk the whole day about dancing.

R: What other things, if people ask you about dancing or why you dance, what do you say?

A: It's where I found my 100% joy. Ja.

R: That's awesome. So every time you dance you feel

A: I feel that joy. Especially in the mornings when you wake up, that first class of the ballet. Yoh, brighten up your day. And then afternoon we get rehearsals and you get home and you tired. Just eat and do your chores and then go to sleep. It's a nice feeling. When you sleep it's that "I have done something good in my day".

R: That's awesome. That's really cool. And that's why you do it.

A: Ja.

R: And that's why you come back.

A: I will keep on coming back.

R: Keep on coming back.

R: Was there ever a time that you didn't feel like coming back, where you were like "ugh, I don't wanna do this anymore". Did you ever feel like that?

A: No.

R: Never?

A: For me, for me it's easy to get rid of everything whether you're making me cross now, the moment I get away from you, I'll tell myself, "I am over it". You should live the life man.

R: So you're able to come dance even if you get frustrated.

A: To keep on coming back.

R: And you said that your teachers were

A: Ja that's what they taught me.

R: To not get so frustrated.

A: They keep encouraging me, no matter what. Even when you not getting those pirouettes or not getting those twirls, you will get them. Maybe by tomorrow or the next day or what not, but you will get them if you work hard. That's what they always taught me.

R: And did you get them?

A: Yes. I did. Some of them.

R: Awesome.

A: I think that is why I will never stop working.

R: So you've been able to see that if you work hard at something then you will get the results

A: Ja.

R: Ja. That's awesome. Ok. Is there anything else that you wanna add.

A: No.

R: Nope. Ok. Um, I think that pretty much covers it ja.

A: Are we finished now?

R: Ja, Unless you have anything more you wanna add about dance or

A: No

R: Or anything else you wanna say

A: I'll keep on saying the same thing (*laughs*).

R: (*laughs*)

A: It's where I found my joy.

R: It's where you found your joy, ok. And this project specifically

A: Bridging programme?

R: Ja, bridging programme, the centre, everything

A: It's giving us a nice opportunity man.

R: That's awesome. Ok.

A: Even some of us, we are not even paying some fees. Just getting scholarship. They pay for everything. Our transport, our dancing clothes, our costumes. Everything.

R: Yoh, so it is a great opportunity for all of you.

A: Great opportunity.

R: That's awesome. And it's one that's changing your guys' lives

A: To be given something like this. Yoh. At another companies you have to pay. So it's nice.

R: Awesome.

A: Thank you.

R: Thank you.