



**UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE**

# **The social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion**

**by**

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in the Department of Social Work,  
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences,  
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## DECLARATION

I, Henriette Winifred Weber, declare that this dissertation titled “**The social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion**” is my own work and all sources that were utilised have been acknowledged in-text and in the reference list.

This dissertation is being submitted for a Master of Social Work degree in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, Department of Social Work at the University of the Western Cape. This work has never been submitted to any other institution for examination.

Signed:

Date: 30 September 2024

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work could lead to practices that support social inclusion. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, the study also explored how the theoretical framework of the social dimensions of making music together could be facilitated in an online environment. A qualitative research approach was employed, supported by exploratory and descriptive research designs. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to identify undergraduate student social workers who voluntarily participated in an online video production project. Eighteen students from the University of the Western Cape (South Africa) and the Protestant University of Applied Sciences (Germany) participated in the project. The project was facilitated by the transdisciplinary work of the researcher, a social work educator, and a music educator. Data were collected prior to and after the completion of the project through written individual reflections and focus group discussions, which were then analysed thematically. The criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability assisted the researcher in ensuring the trustworthiness of this study's findings. Ethical considerations adhered to included voluntary participation through informed consent, as well as careful attention to privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity, along with the management of data. The findings suggest that the project successfully fostered social connection, cooperation, and participation, while enhancing awareness of others. It also cultivated a sense of belonging and social cohesion through a combination of group activities and individual contributions, resulting in a final product that celebrated each participant's unique talents, backgrounds, and experiences. The conclusion highlights that effective facilitation of such projects requires social workers to possess specific communication, musical, and digital skills.

**Keywords:** Arts, Digital Engagements, Social Dimensions of Making Music Together, Social Inclusion, Social Work, Transdisciplinary Approach

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To my family and friends, your love, care, and support have been immeasurable. I am especially grateful to my aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends for their regular check-ins after the passing of both my parents while I was working on this thesis. Your presence has been deeply appreciated.

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## DEDICATION

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

CHS	Community Health Sciences (Faculty at the University of the Western Cape)
DSD	Department of Social Development
DWYPD	Department for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities
EC	European Commission
EvH	Protestant University of Applied Sciences
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
IASWG	International Association for Social Work with Groups
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
MSW	Master of Social Work
PGDipCFS	Post Graduate Diploma in Child and Family Studies
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SACSSP	South African Council for Social Service Professions
UN	United Nations
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WHO	World Health Organisation

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The social dimensions of joint music-making were identified by Greuel (2019) as equality, contact, cooperation, hearing, synchronisation, affect attunement, and social cohesion. Previous transdisciplinary research by the social work and arts disciplines on music in intercultural social work highlighted a circular process that involves: 1) reflecting on oneself, 2) becoming aware of others, 3) identifying and engaging with similarities and differences, and 4) reflecting on how the intercultural experience affected perceptions of oneself and others (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). As such, the collaboration between social work and the arts has been described as a valuable approach for working with diverse individuals to foster intercultural awareness and tolerance (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018).

However, music as a form of social work is not included in the social work education curriculum in South Africa. Furthermore, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to incorporate digital practices to support social inclusion became more pronounced. Prior to the pandemic, Lázaro Cantabrana et al. (2015) posited that education plays a crucial role in promoting inclusion through the development of competencies to create digital material that contributes to inclusive practices. These authors argue that the digitalised world influences “how we live, how we relate to each other, and how we show ourselves to the world, producing equality and inequality, inclusion and exclusion simultaneously” (Lázaro Cantabrana et al., 2015, p. 44). For this reason, this study explored how transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work can lead to digital practices that support social inclusion through processes that incorporate the social dimensions of making music together.

This introductory chapter first presents the key concepts of the study, followed by a preliminary literature review of what is known about the research topic, as well as the theoretical framework that informed the study. Secondly, the research problem is described, and thirdly, the research question that provided a focus for this study is discussed. Fourthly, the aim and objectives of the study are presented. The chapter concludes with an outline of the forthcoming chapters.

## **1.2 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

The focus of this study was on a transdisciplinary approach between social work and the arts, emphasising the social dimensions of making music together for social inclusion, utilising digital engagements. This focus informed the selection of key concepts, which are discussed in relation to this study in this section.

### **1.2.1 Arts**

Nompula (2011) identify drama, photography, painting, storytelling, dance, creative writing, and music as forms of “art”. A link is drawn between the arts and culture, suggesting that such a combination can make a valuable contribution to raising awareness regarding issues such as social justice and inclusivity (Nompula, 2011). A further connection between the arts and social work is described by Weyers et al. (2011), who propose the inclusion of the arts when implementing community education practices. In this study, the focus was on music to be included in social work aimed at promoting social inclusion. In this regard, Tarr et al. (2014) emphasise the capacity of making music together to strengthen social bonds. These authors view making music together as more than just a musical activity, asserting that it is also a social activity.

### **1.2.2 Digital Engagements**

Digital platforms are used to bring individuals or groups together in an online space (Yu & Ramaprasad, 2019). By using such platforms, opportunities are created to include a variety of people with a shared interest while generating value for all participants (Parker et al., 2016). Yu and Ramaprasad (2019) explain that “digital engagements” create spaces where individuals can share personal, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural resources that enhance their lives. These authors describe digital engagements in terms of antecedents and consequences, including concepts of active and ongoing participation, community and social engagement, and voluntary contributions as aspects that contribute to shared benefits through such engagements. In this study, digital engagements were aimed at making music together through a joint music video production in an effort to support experiences of social inclusion.

### **1.2.3 Social Dimensions of Making Music Together**

Greuel (2019), Tarr et al. (2014), and Koelsch (2012) refer to “making music together” as a social activity. Making music together requires participants to come into contact with one another and listen to each other, communicate and coordinate their actions, and cooperate. This fosters social cognition that can enhance *co-pathy*, where inter-individual emotional states become homogeneous (Koelsch, 2012). Mekoa and Busari (2018) concur that during joint music-making, cooperation and a tolerance and respect for each individual's unique abilities and contributions can lead to an experience of being part of a specific group or context. This, in turn, results in a social experience of inclusivity (cf. Tarr et al., 2014). The aim of this study was to explore how joint music-making contributes to social dimensions that support inclusion.

### **1.2.4 Social Inclusion**

“Social inclusion” relates to processes and practices where “inequalities, exclusions and disparities based on ethnicity, gender, class, nationality, age, disability or any other distinctions which engender divisions, distrust and conflict are reduced and/or eliminated in a planned and sustained manner” (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Department of Arts and Culture, 2012, p. 25). Yanicki et al. (2015) emphasise that social inclusion is a key focus of social work practices and assert that such practices contribute to the holistic well-being of all members of society. This study focused on joint music-making as a potential social work intervention to promote social inclusion.

### **1.2.5 Social Work**

This study used the International Federation of Social Workers’ (IFSW) global definition of the “social work” profession:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. .... social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW, 2014).

The particular focus of this study was on social inclusion and empowerment in order to encourage the respect of diversity within communities and society through joint music-making activities and initiatives.

### **1.2.6 Transdisciplinary Approach**

The “transdisciplinary approach” integrates distinctly different and independent disciplines, allowing for the sharing of existing knowledge, understanding, and skills related to a shared topic of interest. This collaborative effort leads to the development of new or expanded knowledge, understanding, and skills (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018). In this study, social work and the arts exchanged their current knowledge, understanding, and skills regarding social inclusion, and worked together to explore how the social dimensions of making music collaboratively can be incorporated into social work practice through digital engagements.

The aforementioned key concepts guided the researcher in conducting a preliminary literature review to identify the theoretical framework of the study, define the research problem, and formulate the research question.

## **1.3 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section discusses the literature related to the transdisciplinary approach, the role of music in social work, music education in social work education and training, and music as a form of social work towards social inclusion.

### **1.3.1 The Transdisciplinary Approach**

Transdisciplinary work is an approach where distinctive components from two or more disciplines are integrated into a cohesive framework (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2017). This approach necessitates a concerted effort among disciplines united by a specific shared interest, such as social inclusion in the context of this study, to facilitate a collaborative movement across these disciplines, ultimately yielding a product that transcends the individual fields involved. In this regard, transdisciplinary research can foster the consolidation of resources and tangible cooperation to address societal challenges through an expanded knowledge base and skill set (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018; Leiner & Flämig, 2012).

Within the social sciences, the transdisciplinary approach seeks to acknowledge and integrate diverse knowledge, understanding, and skills pertinent to a range of social issues (Sarmiento, 2014). Consequently, transdisciplinary research in social work represents an innovative means of exchanging knowledge with other disciplines, facilitated by supportive and interdependent relationships that enhance service delivery for the collective benefit of society (Levy, 2018).

The European Commission (EC) (2014) acknowledges transdisciplinary discourses and work between social work and the arts, and emphasises that both highlight the need to build social cohesion towards social inclusion. The relevance of transdisciplinary work between these disciplines is further that the arts could be viewed as a form of social work within a socio-cultural education model in macro-level service delivery to encourage social inclusion, while also fostering awareness of one's own and others' needs, finding common ground, and building inclusive and sustainable relationships (Weyers et al., 2011).

The transdisciplinary approach does not only involve academics but also includes people at grassroots level (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2017; Stock & Burton, 2011). In this study, the Trans Dimensional Knowledge Management Theoretical Model, a result of research on African knowledge systems, served as a guide. According to this model, transdisciplinary work should involve an organised research process that includes active participation in research activities; in the case of this study, the online music video production project, where a collective middle ground is identified (Velthuisen, 2011).

### **1.3.2 The Role of Music in Social Work**

Music has played a role in social inquiry and societal change throughout history. For example, in the South African context, the Voëlvry Movement utilised music to raise social awareness of the injustices of the apartheid political system, which also influenced the construction of collective identities (cf. Van der Westhuizen et al., 2015; Pienaar, 2012). In support of this viewpoint, Dankoff (2011) explains that popular and cultural music has the potential to enhance social skills and transform the lives of individuals, groups, and society at large. With these descriptions in mind, music in social work is characterised by Blackburn and Bradshaw (2014) as goal-directed, knowledge-based, and aimed at promoting healthy relationships that develop from shared musical experiences. The authors' description highlights that the music-making activity must have a specific goal, such as promoting social inclusion, and must be

informed by knowledge of what is required to reach this goal, as well as of how to facilitate musical activities to promote positive engagements.

The literature further refers to examples of the relevance of music when working with vulnerable groups and a variety of social problems, such as persons with disabilities, the elderly, and intergenerational continuity (cf. Navarrete-Campos, 2016; Ter Bogt et al., 2011; Lubet, 2011). In terms of the focus of this study, joint music-making has been identified as valuable in social work for creating a space for contact and intercultural experiences (cf. Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018). Tarr et al. (2014) assert that it stimulates social bonding through the synchronising nature of joint musical activities, resulting in the sharing of similar emotions during the activity.

The full potential of music in social work is, however, often underutilised (Dankoff, 2011). Navarrete-Campos (2016) voices the concern that there is a continued lack of consideration of music within the developmental discourse. Music is therefore often viewed as an art, and it is underestimated as a form of social work (Greuel, 2019). Due to the fact that the use of music and other forms of arts are not included in social work curricula, a challenge for social workers is to develop knowledge, understanding, and skills to implement musical or artistic activities as a form of social work (Navarrete-Campos, 2016). Jensen and Marchetti (2010, p. 3) refer to making music together as a “social skilled practice”, asserting that creating a good musical product is the result of effective facilitation of a group effort.

### ***1.3.2.1 Music education in social work education and training***

Currently, music education does not form part of the social work curriculum in South Africa. With specific focus on including musical knowledge, understanding, and skills development in the social work curriculum, the following competencies could be obtained to assist social workers to use joint music-making to promote social inclusion and cohesion:

- Relevance for the participants (client systems),
- Expertise among social workers to successfully facilitate musical activities,
- Collaboration with and among participants (working in groups),
- Product development as a shared experience (collaboration between the social worker and client systems),
- Standardised work to promote meaningful experiences (following processes),
- Reflections by the participants, and

- Awareness of what is happening while making music together by the social worker and the participating service users (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021).

### **1.3.2.2 The use of technology**

Lázaro Cantabrana et al. (2015) discuss the importance of recognising how technology can be used to promote social inclusion while also highlighting that a digital divide can lead to social exclusion. These authors advocate for the inclusion of digital literacy in educational practices to ensure social inclusion. In this study, the aim of making music together on a digital platform was to create opportunities for developing knowledge and skills that promote social inclusion across cultural and geographical boundaries when direct contact is not possible. With this in mind, the study explored how the social dimensions of collaborative music-making can be experienced in a joint digital music production.

Additionally, the researcher was interested in identifying the types of knowledge and skills to be integrated into social work education, equipping student social workers with both musical and digital competencies to facilitate such interventions in support of social inclusion. For this reason, Ehlers's (2020) description of future skills to be included in higher education was considered in terms of:

- 1) Self-directed learning,
- 2) Self-efficacy,
- 3) Self-determination,
- 4) Self-competence,
- 5) Reflection,
- 6) Decision-making,
- 7) Initiative and performance,
- 8) Ambiguity,
- 9) Ethical practice,
- 10) Design thinking,
- 11) Innovation,
- 12) System competence,
- 13) Digital competence,
- 14) Sensemaking,
- 15) Future shaping competence,
- 16) Cooperation, and

17) Communication.

### **1.3.3 Music as a Form of Social Work for Social Inclusion**

Social exclusion is evident through acts of stigmatisation directed towards individuals or groups within society. This often stems from prejudices, which in turn lead to acts of discrimination. Prejudice and discrimination serve as barriers to social inclusion, resulting in a vicious cycle of exclusion from opportunities and participation in civic and cultural life, among other areas (United Nations [UN], 2016; Yanicki et al., 2015; Allman, 2013).

Social inclusion results from just social processes, conditions, and relations, and is characterised by the recognition and respect for differences, freedom, and equal opportunities to participate in social activities (Yanicki et al., 2015). Being part of society means functioning within the various systems and groups that comprise it, as an essential component of a community where the equitable well-being of all members is valued (Allman, 2013; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2008).

Social inclusion is necessary for social cohesion to occur (Mekoa & Busari, 2018). In social work, social cohesion is achievable when diversities are respected (IFSW, 2014). This includes concepts of empowerment and participation within developmental social work (cf. RSA, Department of Social Development [DSD], 2018). Yanicki et al. (2015) concur that participation in group and community activities centres on engagement and partnerships through contact and cooperation as equals. This can be fostered through the social dimensions of joint musical activities (Greuel, 2019). Empowerment involves celebrating diversity and adopting a bottom-up approach that considers the needs, experiences, and perceptions of all individuals and groups involved in the activity. It also entails creating platforms for transformation where inclusive practices become the norm, including the social dimensions of hearing, synchronisation, affect attunement, and social cohesion (cf. Greuel, 2019). Through socially inclusive practices, individuals in society become interconnected through specific attitudes, behaviours, and norms informed by shared experiences that reflect social justice within the community (Silver, 2015; Green & Janmaat, 2011). Joint musical activities provide diverse individuals with opportunities to express themselves in a non-threatening environment, aiming to break down barriers. Moreover, empowerment through the development of musical and digital knowledge and skills can support individuals to participate, leading to social inclusion (Levy, 2018; Vipond, 2012).

Leibowitz (2012) refers to the development of citizenship in higher education and training, which includes qualities of being and relating. This means that students need to reflect on their own development while participating in learning, teaching, and extracurricular activities. To further support critical citizenship, Levy and Byrd (2011) assert that musical activities can be employed to lead and facilitate reflections on social justice, which also encompasses social inclusion. For the purpose of this study, the social dimensions of making music together that could support experiences of social inclusion were utilised as a theoretical framework.

## 1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The social dimensions of making music together were used as the theoretical framework for this study. These dimensions aim to create experiences that support social inclusion. Emphasising the social nature of making music together, Koelsch (2012) identified contact, communication, coordination, cooperation, co-pathy, social cognition, and social cohesion as the social functions of joint musical activities. Expanding on these social functions, Greuel (2019) describes the social dimensions of making music together as follows:

- 1) Joint music-making leads to a space to *participate as equals* where each contribution is valued.
- 2) When individuals make music together, they come into *contact* with each other in a safe space (cf. Narsai, 2018).
- 3) People who make music together must both *be heard* by the other group members and hear the other group members, creating an awareness of each other within the group.
- 4) A convincing joint musical performance involves *cooperation* towards a shared goal (cf. Tarr et al., 2014).
- 5) *Synchronisation* refers to the movement with another person, where individuals join each other in a timeous manner, and a rapport between them is developed (cf. Tarr et al., 2014).
- 6) In addition to the synchronisation of the physical activities, the emotions experienced during the action of making music together are shared, leading to *affect attunement*.
- 7) As an effect, music leads to increased *social cohesion* of a group; a feeling of belonging (cf. Pearce et al., 2015).

The exploration of existing literature related to the key concepts, as well as the theoretical framework chosen for this study informed the formulation of the research problem.

## 1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A research problem is described as a topic or issue that requires further investigation and needs to correspond to and reflect the problem and context of the study (Stock & Burton, 2011). Furthermore, the research problem is formulated based on a gap identified in the existing literature, varying results from similar studies, or unresolved issues for further investigation (Bryman, 2016). The research problem that informed this study was based on the preliminary literature review and was formulated as follows:

The arts and social work are both disciplines that can contribute to social cohesion through socially inclusive activities. Music has been identified as an effective form of social work intervention aimed at fostering social inclusion through joint musical activities that encourage the social dimensions of making music together (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018). However, Greuel (2019), Navarrete-Campos (2016), and Dankoff (2011) found that there is a continued lack of consideration of music as a form of social work intervention that needs to be further explored within the developmental discourse. Therefore, the way in which the social dimensions of making music together can be incorporated into social work practice requires further exploration. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this need was expanded to include an examination of how the social dimensions of making music together can be integrated into a digital platform where participants create music and produce a musical product together. In addition, the integration of knowledge, understanding, and skills between the social work and arts disciplines has not been documented in terms of shared components and dimensions that stimulate positive social change (Navarrete-Campos, 2016). The problem underlying this study is that, although various studies demonstrate how music benefits social work service users, its full potential in social work has yet to be fully explored and described.

The research problem formed the focus of this study, which informed the identification of the research question, aim, and objectives of this study.

## 1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM & OBJECTIVES

### 1.6.1 Research Question

The knowledge gap identified in the research problem (Leavy, 2017) guided the development of the research question. In formulating this question, clarity to prevent misinterpretation, a strong focus on the research topic, and a practical outcome were key criteria (Leavy, 2017; Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014). The research question formulated to address the problem statement is:

How can transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work be integrated towards practices that support social inclusion?

A research question directs the formulation of the research aims and objectives, and thus the choice of research methodology as well (Bryman, 2016).

### 1.6.2 Research Aim

A research aim refers to the desired outcome of a study, stemming from the research question or hypothesis derived from the research problem (Leavy, 2017; Bryman, 2016). In response to the research question, this study aimed to gain a *deeper understanding of how transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work could lead to practices that support social inclusion*.

### 1.6.3 Research Objectives

Research objectives outline the steps necessary to achieve the research aim, including the methods employed (Kumar, 2014). In this study, the objectives were designed to define the key activities required to meet the research aim. Two main objectives were identified:

- To explore and describe the experiences of student social workers with reference to the social dimensions of making music together on a digital platform through reflective journals and focus group discussions (FGDs).
- To explore and describe the perceptions of student social workers regarding knowledge and skills that could contribute to facilitating joint musical activities on a digital platform, which could contribute to social inclusion through FGDs.

The research question, aim, and objectives were aimed at the envisaged significance of this study.

## **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to contribute to social work education and training, as well as social work practices that promote social inclusion. Through the findings, it was anticipated that a better understanding would be gained of how to implement the social dimensions of making music together as a form of social work practice aimed at social inclusion. It was also hoped that the active participation of students and the acquisition and development of digital knowledge and skills would contribute to their personal and professional development and empowerment, and consequently to the overall development of the student body.

## **1.8 LAYOUT OF THE DOCUMENT**

This thesis is organised into the following chapters:

**Chapter 1** introduced the study, outlining the research problem, question, aim, and objectives.

**Chapter 2** details the research methodology, focusing on the choices made and their implementation.

**Chapter 3** provides an in-depth literature review, used to compare and contrast the findings of this study.

**Chapter 4** presents the study's findings.

**Chapter 5** concludes the thesis with a summary, conclusions, and recommendations related to the research methodology and findings.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter introduced the study with a brief background discussion outlining its rationale and a description of key concepts related to the research topic. A preliminary literature review was presented, alongside a description of the theoretical framework that underpins this study. This first part of the chapter informed the formulation of the research problem, question, aim, and objectives. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the significance of the study and an overview of the chapters. A discussion of the methodology and its implementation follows next.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the background and rationale for this study. A preliminary literature review and the theoretical framework were presented, followed by a discussion of the research problem, question, aim, and objectives. The latter guided the researcher's choices regarding the research methodology discussed in this chapter.

The research approach and design are introduced in this chapter, followed by the research methods and techniques, as well as the criteria for data verification and ethics employed in this study. The limitations encountered during the implementation of this study are described prior to the conclusion of the chapter.

#### 2.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The quantitative research approach often involves collecting limited and specific information from large sample sizes, while the qualitative research approach aims to obtain rich data from smaller samples (Harding, 2019). Fouché and Delport (2011) acknowledge the subjective nature of a qualitative approach when answering research questions through the exploration of personal and lived experiences of individuals in a particular context. The research question, aim, and objectives of this study indicate an interest in the experiences and perceptions of student social workers. Therefore, this study was approached from a qualitative perspective.

The choice of the qualitative approach is further supported by Moriarty's (2011) description of qualitative research, which highlights the following characteristics:

- 1) **Aiming for deeper understanding:** Qualitative research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the topic by exploring participants' lived experiences and perceptions. This study aimed to examine how transdisciplinary collaboration between the arts and social work can lead to practices that promote social inclusion, based on the experiences and perceptions of student social worker participants.
- 2) **Close researcher-participant interaction:** Data collection in qualitative research involves close and interactive contact between the researchers and participants. In this study, the digital project on which participants reflected, along with the exploration of their

experiences and perceptions, involved regular and direct interaction between the researcher and participants.

- 3) **Comprehensive data collection:** Detailed data are collected to capture participants' experiences and perceptions, aligning with the study's objectives. In this case, data were gathered using multiple methods over several occasions, guided by an interview guide.

The choice of using the qualitative research approach informed the choice of research designs appropriate for this study.

## 2.3 RESEARCH DESIGNS

This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work may lead to practices that support social inclusion. To achieve this aim, the perceptions and experiences of student social work participants were explored, as they were viewed as “knowing subjects who bring their perspectives into the knowledge-production process” (Bergold & Thomas, 2012, p. 14). By applying a qualitative approach, the researcher employed exploratory and descriptive research designs to guide the choices and implementation of the research methods and techniques.

The exploratory research design focuses on discovering new and interesting information related to the research topic (Swedberg, 2018). Fitzpatrick (2018) notes that this design is flexible in nature and seeks to investigate topics where little information is available through a thorough examination of all aspects related to the topic. In this study, the exploratory research design was employed to identify relevant methods and techniques for sampling and data collection to fully explore the research question.

Fitzpatrick (2018) establishes a link between the exploratory and descriptive research designs. In this study, the descriptive research design was utilised to support the exploratory research design, as the findings aimed to provide a detailed description of how the social dimensions of making music together supported, or did not support, the experiences of social inclusion. Additionally, the descriptions aimed to explain what knowledge and skills are needed for social workers to effectively integrate the arts into social work practices aimed at social inclusion. This design informed the choice of method for data analysis, as the aim was to create meaningful descriptions through thematic analysis based on the themes that

emerged from the analysis (Fitzpatrick, 2018). Through this research design, the findings could be used to develop a new understanding of how a transdisciplinary approach between social work and the arts can contribute to practices of social inclusion (Nassaji, 2015).

The qualitative research approach, combined with exploratory and descriptive research designs, informed the selection and implementation of the research methodology. This approach aimed to address the research question of how transdisciplinary collaboration between the arts and social work can be integrated into practices that promote social inclusion. To achieve the study's aim and objectives, the following section outlines the methods and techniques to be employed.

## **2.4 RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES**

Haradhan (2017) describes the “research methodology” as the strategies and empirical methods employed to achieve the aims and objectives of a study. The choices are influenced by the research approach and design. In this section, based on the qualitative research approach and the exploratory and descriptive designs, the discussion focuses on population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, and data verification.

### **2.4.1 Population and Sampling**

This study included student social workers from the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and the Protestant University of Applied Sciences (EvH) in Bochum, Germany, as part of a cooperation agreement between the two universities. With a focus on social inclusivity, it was envisaged that a diverse group of students would engage in the music video production project.

In this study, the population represented the individuals relevant to the research aim (Bryman, 2016), who were student social workers from the two universities. A representative subset of the population was sampled using the non-probability sampling method and purposive sampling technique to ensure that the participants in this study were suitably equipped to actively participate in the research and to answer the research questions (Kumar, 2014). The non-probability sampling method is chosen when researchers cannot determine the probability of selection into the sample prior to the study. In this study, the entire population could not be included, as certain inclusion and exclusion criteria were necessary to select

those participants most capable of contributing to the project and answering the research question (Devlin, 2018). Therefore, *non-probability sampling* was employed, which also meant that the sample size could not be determined beforehand. The purposive sampling technique complemented the non-probability sampling method, allowing the researcher to identify specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, based on her judgement, for selecting participants who would best be able to engage and contribute to finding answers to the research question and achieving the research aim. The inclusion criteria in this study were:

- undergraduate student social workers
- at the UWC and the EvH,
- who were able and willing to make music together with others,
- who were able and willing to engage in English,
- who were interested in the research topic and willing to participate in the study, and
- who agreed that the final product may be used by the two universities for academic and research purposes.

Exclusion criteria were:

- student social workers who were not registered at the UWC and the EvH,
- who did not have an interest in music-making, and
- who did not want to participate in a joint production that could be used by the two universities for academic and research purposes.

After obtaining ethical clearance (see Annexure A), the researcher requested permission from the Head of the Department of Social Work and the UWC Registrar to recruit students to participate in this study (Annexure B). Following this permission, she requested permission to provide all registered student social workers with an information letter (Annexure C) via an invitation email. This information letter focused on the research topic, aim, and questions, what participation would entail, the ethical clearance and practices that would guide the study, and information regarding whom to contact should they require any further information. Students at the EvH were recruited and selected by their university. In this regard, the researcher worked closely with the music educator in the social work programme at the partner university.

Students who were interested in participating in the study were requested to contact the researcher via email. They were asked to sign informed consent forms (Annexure D), as well as focus group confidentiality binding forms (Annexure E). Once the participants were selected and the consent and confidentiality forms were signed, arrangements were made for their participation in the online activities, as well as for data collection.

Nine students from the UWC and nine students from the EvH contacted the researcher and indicated their willingness to participate voluntarily. While qualitative research often employs data saturation (Jensen, 2016), the sample size for this study was determined by the students who were willing to participate voluntarily.

#### **2.4.2 Data Collection**

The selected students participated in various musical and digital activities over a five-month period, facilitated by the researcher, a music educator who completed the Postgraduate Diploma in Child and Family Studies to qualify for the Master of Social Work (MSW), programme – along with a social work educator at the UWC and a music educator from EvH. Data collection occurred at both the beginning and end of the project.

The project required participants to have access to a smartphone, a laptop, and headphones. Two free software packages were used to provide training on digital video and sound recording. The participating students interacted with each other on the digital Zoom platform as well as in WhatsApp groups to engage in three main activities.

- 1) They firstly were guided on how to create individual music videos to share their musical contributions with each other. They were then encouraged to look at similarities and differences that could portray the diversity of the group as a whole.
- 2) Secondly, using a guide track, they engaged with the recording applications (i.e., Shotcut and Audacity) in order to develop their digital skills to enable them to record their own work.
- 3) Thirdly, they produced a music video together that portrayed their different skills – a shared presentation.

As this study aimed to explore and describe the participants' experiences and perceptions related to the research topic, individual reflections and FGDs were found to be the most appropriate methods of data collection. These methods assisted the researcher in obtaining

context-relevant information pertaining to perceptions related to the research topic while also exploring real-life experiences during their participation in the study (Creswell, 2014). An interview guide (Annexure F) was provided to the students to ensure that the reflections and FGDs remained focused on the research topic.

*Individual reflections* were conducted at the beginning and end of the project, where students were asked to write written reflections on their experiences and perceptions. The reflections took the form of journaling. Hayman et al. (2012) note that journaling requires the researcher to provide clear guidance on what is expected through direct questions and a time limit for the participants to submit their journals or written reflections. In this study, specific open-ended questions were posed to ensure that the participants received clear guidance while not being restricted in their answers (Kumar, 2014). They were asked to complete these reflections at specific times as part of their participation in the project. Wallin and Adawi (2017) refer to this method of qualitative data collection as an effective way to stimulate participants to reflect on their current experiences and to identify salient aspects such as people and activities that affected their experiences.

At the beginning of the project, the written reflections focused on the following questions:

- What are your expectations regarding making music together in this project?
- What are your expectations regarding contact with students from another context on a digital platform?
- How do you think this experience can contribute to your own development?

At the end of the project the written reflections focused on the questions:

- How did you experience making music together in the project?
- How did you experience contact with students from another contact on a digital platform?
- How did this experience contribute to your own development?

These reflections served as records of the verbatim contributions of the participants. At the end of the project, the students participated in two online FGDs. The use of FGDs encouraged the participants to share personal perceptions and experiences while stimulating thought processes through interactive discussions, which contributed to the collection of rich data as the participants responded to one another (Moriarty, 2011; Monette et al., 2010). The researcher employed semi-structured interview techniques, such as open-ended questions

and probing, to stimulate discussions (Bulpitt & Martin, 2010). The FGDs were audio-recorded, and the researcher made field notes to document the non-verbal data. The recordings were transcribed immediately after each FGD, and the field notes were added to the transcripts (Creswell, 2014).

The first FGD focused on the experiences of the social dimensions of making music together during the project and took place at the end of the project. The following guided questions were used to facilitate the FGD.

- How did you experience the contact between the participating students on the online platform?
- Describe the level of cooperation with one another.
  - What were the challenges relating to cooperation?
  - What prevented cooperation, if any?
- What are your perceptions regarding participants hearing each other's input, needs, and experiences?
- How did you experience a sense of synchronising activities during the project?
- What was your experience regarding a sharing of similar emotions while working on this project
- What are your perceptions regarding your own sense of belonging in this group?
- Explain your experiences of a sense of competition between the participants?

Another online FGD focussed on exploring the knowledge and skills social workers would need in order to facilitate digital musical productions aimed at social inclusion. The participants were invited to a final session where they watched the collaborative production together, after which the FGD took place. The following semi-structured questions guided the discussion:

- Reflecting on your participation and experiences, do you think that student social workers should be equipped with knowledge and skills to facilitate joint music-making experiences?
  - Why/Why not?
- What new knowledge did you gain during your participation?
- What knowledge do you think student social workers need to effectively facilitate the inclusion of the social aspects of music-making to foster social inclusion?
- What skills did you gain during your participation?

- What skills do you think student social workers need to facilitate the inclusion of the social aspects of joint music-making to foster social inclusion?
- Where and when do you think social workers can apply these knowledge and skills in practice?
- How do you think music education could be integrated into social work education and training?

The researcher and an independent coder analysed the data after each data collection session.

### **2.4.3 Data Analysis**

The written journals of individual reflections served as the transcripts for analysis. Data obtained from the FGDs were transcribed after each data collection activity. Capous-Desyllas and Bromfield (2018) propose a thematic data analysis framework for collecting data, particularly in research within the arts. The thematic analysis, aligned with the descriptive research design, further contributed to developing an understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences (Fitzpatrick, 2018).

The qualitative data analysis framework proposed by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) was used:

- Familiarising: The researcher read each transcript while noting main ideas that emerged during the reading.
- Initial coding: To systematically organise the data, the main ideas were grouped under similar headings. The headings were coded for easy reference. While progressing through this process, these codes were amended to ensure they related to the research questions, aim, and objectives.
- Identifying themes: The researcher grouped similar codes under main topics, which became the key themes.
- Reviewing themes: The researcher revisited each transcript and placed relevant verbatim quotations under the appropriate themes to ensure all participants' input was included. Quotations that could not be placed under a theme due to lack of relevance

were reflected upon, and a new theme was created when necessary. Additionally, the researcher discussed these quotations with the supervisor to determine their relation to the research questions, aim, and objectives.

- Defining themes: The researcher formulated descriptive terms that best articulated and described each theme. The information under each theme was carefully examined, resulting in sub-themes.
- Disseminating: The findings were compared with existing literature and documented in this research report.

To ensure the scientific value of the findings, the researcher included techniques for the verification of the qualitative data throughout the study.

#### **2.4.4 Data Verification**

Data verification refers to criteria that ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, with each criterion being supported by techniques to be implemented throughout the research process (Kumar, 2014). In this study, the criteria of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* were included to ensure the verification of the qualitative findings.

##### **2.4.4.1 Credibility**

*Credibility* refers to the confidence that the participants' contributions are truthfully communicated in the research findings (Anney, 2014). In this study, credibility was attained through prolonged engagements with the participants, which included individual reflections at the beginning and end of the project, as well as FGDs to ensure that the findings accurately reflect the content shared by the participants. The use of transcripts and verbatim quotations further ensured that the participants' input guided the findings, rather than the interpretation or perspectives of the researcher. The interview guides and techniques also supported the credibility of the data by detailing what the participants were asked and how they formulated their responses (Anney, 2014; Schurink et al., 2011). Additionally, triangulation of data sources and collection methods resulted in a reduction of bias and maintained the integrity of the responses (Anney, 2014).

#### **2.4.4.2 Transferability and dependability**

*Transferability* and *dependability* are closely related concepts. Transferability refers to the extent to which qualitative findings can be applied to other contexts or populations. Dependability relates to the stability of the findings over time (Anney, 2014). Both transferability and dependability were supported through a detailed description, or audit trail, of the research methodology employed in this study (Anney, 2014; Schurink et al., 2011). Transferability was further enhanced through purposive sampling, which involved obtaining responses from the participants where the inclusion and exclusion criteria were clearly articulated (Anney, 2014).

#### **2.4.4.3 Confirmability**

*Confirmability* refers to the acknowledgement from other researchers who have confirmed and corroborated the results and findings. It also focuses on ensuring that the findings are based on the data, rather than on the viewpoints, personal experiences, and interpretations of the researcher (Anney, 2014). In this study, the researcher utilised written journals and transcripts to analyse the data, employed an independent coder, and compared the findings with the existing literature.

In addition to verifying the data used during the research process, the researcher adhered to research ethics throughout the study.

## **2.5 ETHICS**

Ethical research practice is implemented before (i.e., during planning), during (i.e., during implementation), and after (i.e., during dissemination) the research (Webster et al., 2014). In this study, ethics focused on the limitation and/or avoidance of harm to the participants, ensuring voluntary participation and informed consent, protecting personal information through privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality, and management of the data.

### **2.5.1 Ethical Clearance**

The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences' (CHS) Research Committee and the UWC's Human Social Sciences Research and Ethics Committee (HSSREC) (Annexure A). The researcher also sought permission from the Registrar and the Head of the Department of Social Work to recruit students for the study

(Annexure B). The Head of the Department was asked to support the researcher in gaining access to the participants. The EvH followed the process of selecting students based on voluntary participation required by the university.

### **2.5.2 Minimising Harm to Participants**

Although participation in this study was voluntary, the sensitive nature of social inclusion was considered. To address this, the participants were informed of the nature of the study and what their participation would entail before deciding whether to take part. They were also informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time. One aspect that was arranged prior to the collection of data was the availability of debriefing opportunities in case the activities and/or discussions led to participants feeling emotionally vulnerable or upset (Halej, 2017). A fieldwork supervisor in the Department of Social Work at the UWC, who is a registered social worker, was asked to be available for this purpose. A student counsellor at the EvH was also available for the debriefing of the German students.

### **2.5.3 Voluntary Participation**

As mentioned, participation in this research was voluntary. This meant that participants were informed through information sheets (Annexure C) and during invitation interviews that they would not be penalised for not participating, that they would not receive incentives to encourage them to participate, and that they could withdraw from participation at any time (Devlin, 2018). Participating students were asked to be audio-recorded and video-recorded as part of voluntary participation and informed consent (Halej, 2017). In addition, they were asked for permission for the two universities to use the final product of the study for educational purposes.

### **2.5.4 Informed Consent**

Devlin (2018) explains that informed consent requires the legal capacity to make decisions, voluntary participation, and information on which to base consent. Informed consent was founded on detailed information provided in an invitation letter, as well as in an invitation discussion with potential participants. Students who were interested and willing to participate were then asked to sign a consent form (Annexure D), along with a focus group confidentiality agreement (Annexure E) related to the FGDs (Bless et al., 2013).

### **2.5.5 Anonymity, Confidentiality and Privacy**

*Anonymity* was ensured by using pseudonyms instead of real names in the transcripts of the individual reflections and FGDs. The pseudonyms were linked to the participants' personal information, which was collated on a separate page saved on a password-protected computer. Additionally, the findings were presented as a collective description of the participants' experiences and perceptions; therefore, individual responses were blended to ensure anonymity (Halej, 2017). However, the final production video could not maintain anonymity, and therefore the participants were made aware of this aspect from the outset and were requested to consider it prior to giving informed consent.

*Confidentiality* was managed through a separate list, which linked the identity of the participants to their pseudonyms in the journals and transcripts. This list, along with the recordings, journals, and transcripts, was only available to the researcher and her supervisor and was stored either in a locked space at UWC or on a password-protected computer. In addition, all the participants were asked to sign a focus group confidentiality agreement (Annexure E) to ensure that they did not expose fellow participants through public discussions related to individual contributions during the course of the project (Halej, 2017).

*Privacy* was closely linked to confidentiality and anonymity. It entailed an agreement, established through the informed consent form and the focus group confidentiality agreement, between the researcher and the participants, as well as among the participants (Halej, 2017). The secure storage of personal information also enhanced privacy in this study, as the personal information of the participants and the transcripts were stored in a safe, secure location for five years.

### **2.5.6 Management of Data**

The data were stored on the UWC data repository system, a password-protected computer, and/or in a locked space at UWC, as mentioned above. Hard copies of informed consent forms, confidentiality agreements, and all sensitive information will be kept in a locked, secure space (Kielmann et al., 2012). After five years, the hard copies will be shredded and the computer files deleted. Data will be disseminated through conference presentations and journal articles.

## **2.6 LIMITATIONS**

This study included student social workers and not social work service users. Therefore, transferability of the findings to service users could not be ensured.

The limitations encountered in this study included load shedding and student protests within the South African context. Load shedding necessitated adjustments to the original meeting times to accommodate the availability of South African participants for online connectivity. Additionally, the student protests occurring during the project presented further challenges for the participants, particularly those residing on campus, who were affected by the resultant disruptions. While these circumstances required modifications to the programme, they also facilitated discussions among the student participants regarding their diverse contexts, fostered sensitivity to the challenges experienced, and encouraged the exploration of creative solutions to maintain progress with the project. The researcher concludes that these challenges underscored the emphasis on social inclusion and that the flexibility inherent in an online project enabled students to devise innovative methods to complete the production video within the project's timeframe.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter presented the research methodology of the study. It began by discussing the research approach and design, followed by the research methods and techniques for sampling, data collection, data analysis, and data verification. The chapter concluded with the ethical processes to be employed in this study. The limitations encountered are presented for consideration when interpreting the findings.

The next chapter focuses on an in-depth literature review of the key concepts of the study, which was used to compare and contrast with the research findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The first chapter introduced the study by defining the key concepts that provided a focus for the preliminary literature review. The preliminary review of literature is regarded as an essential component for outlining the background of a study, where existing literature is synthesised, and where a theoretical framework and research problem are identified (Sylvester et al., 2013). In line with Paré et al.'s (2015) description of the purpose of a preliminary literature review, the review in Chapter 1 aimed at 1) identifying what has been written on the research topic, 2) recognising what still needs to be explored to contribute to the knowledge base and/or practice, and 3) identifying and formulating the research problem and research question. In addition, the theoretical framework was identified, which further informed the formulation of the research problem, the question, aim, and objectives for this study. Chapter 1 concluded with a description of the significance of this study.

The second chapter provided a detailed description of the selected research methodology and explained its implementation within the context of this study. The research approach and designs were introduced in this chapter, followed by the research methods and techniques for sampling, data collection, data analysis, and data verification. This chapter concluded with an explanation of the ethics employed and a discussion of the limitations encountered during this study.

Another form of literature review constitutes an original and valuable work of research in its own right (Paré et al., 2015). As such, this third chapter builds on the preliminary literature review through a comprehensive review of literature related to this study to compare and contrast the research findings with (Arshed & Danson, 2015). This chapter presents literature related to transdisciplinary work, social work, the role of music in social work, the social dimensions of making music together, and digital engagements.

## 3.2 TRANSDISCIPLINARY WORK

Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) describe transdisciplinary work as an approach where distinctive components of two or more disciplines are being integrated into 'a single mind'. This description is elaborated on by Pineo et al. (2021) who describe transdisciplinary work in terms of six phases, namely:

- 1) *Co-learning*: The distribution and sharing of knowledge on a shared topic of interest among the participating disciplines.
- 2) *Pre-development*: The planning and preparation of a joint project related to the shared topic of interest.
- 3) *Reflection and refinement*: An ongoing evaluation of the process followed in the project, troubleshooting where needed, and responding to new information as these emerge.
- 4) *Conceptualisation*: Finalising the approach to the project through the inclusion of the diverse inputs of knowledge, skills, and backgrounds of the participants.
- 5) *Investigation*: Conducting the final project and analysing the shared learning.
- 6) *Implementation*: The new knowledge is used in solving societal problems.

Through the phases above, the boundaries between the different disciplines working together are being influenced, connecting and impacting these disciplines (Loubser, 2015; Cilliers & Nicolescu, 2012). During the process of collaboration, the disciplines develop a unique and integrated approach to 1) sharing existing knowledge and skills, and 2) acquiring new knowledge, understanding, and skills that reflect multiple viewpoints (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). A characteristic of transdisciplinary work is that all involved disciplines operate as a group and learn from one another while engaging in joint research at grassroots level to develop services and products (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2017).

The study presented the arts and social work as two disciplines engaged in transdisciplinary work. The following sub-sections further expand on transdisciplinary research and the inclusion of the arts in this collaborative work and research.

### 3.2.1 Transdisciplinary Research

Pineo et al. (2021) postulate that transdisciplinary research challenges conventional approaches to research within academia where knowledge is usually organised within rather

than across disciplines. In line with the description of transdisciplinary work above, Loubser (2015) concurs that transdisciplinary research –

- 1) Relates to social issues relevant and/or of interest to the participating disciplines,
- 2) Transcends and integrates disciplinary paradigms,
- 3) Is participatory in nature, and
- 4) Searches for unity in knowledge.

On the one hand, transdisciplinary research acknowledges the conflict between perceptions and understandings among disciplines and supports the principles of participation, cooperation, and collaboration in the search for a new collective understanding of a particular research problem (Leiner & Flämig, 2012). On the other hand, close collaborations foster a sense of shared innovation and insight (Ramey et al., 2015). The participatory nature of transdisciplinary research emphasises that researchers from various disciplines, as well as participants from populations related to the focus of the research, collaborate to integrate a range of academic and non-academic perspectives. The aim is to generate issue-centred knowledge through a holistic understanding of the research topic. In this way, holistic and innovative solutions are found for societal problems (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021; Pennington et al., 2013; Stokols et al., 2013). Authors such as Rudhumbu et al. (2017) and Toomey et al. (2015) agree that transdisciplinary research bridges the boundaries between disciplines and between academia and practice by engaging with the production and use of knowledge outside academia. The practice-oriented nature of this approach values the perspectives of all stakeholders, facilitating connections between abstract knowledge (academics) and case-specific knowledge (social actors) to develop new knowledge and practices that promote the common good in society (Maynard, 2013).

In terms of the outcomes of transdisciplinary research, Rudhumbu et al. (2017) assert that transdisciplinary research aims to produce new knowledge by developing a stronger link between knowledge production and societal transformation and impact (cf. Toomey et al., 2015; Vilsmaier, 2014; Harris & Lyon, 2014). As such, transdisciplinary research is characterised by an acceptance of the diversity of perceptions and perspectives for the common good of stakeholders (Harris & Lyon, 2014). In summary, the participation of all role players and stakeholders related to the research problem enables these social actors to share and co-create rich knowledge and solutions across and beyond disciplines (Pennington et al., 2013).

The aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work could lead to practices that support social inclusion. The next sub-section explores the inclusion of the arts in transdisciplinary work.

### **3.2.2 The Inclusion of the Arts in Transdisciplinary Work and Research**

Loubser (2015) proposes the inclusion of the arts in transdisciplinary work based on its potential to reframe and reinterpret one's view of the world through self-awareness, which guides thoughts, actions, value judgements, and self-conceptions. Through transdisciplinary work that includes the arts, openness to diverse viewpoints is fostered by developing curiosity through various forms of art that contribute to the understanding of the self and others (Krznaric, 2014).

The use of the arts is particularly valuable when co-producing knowledge with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences (Loubser, 2015). Referring to transdisciplinary work in diverse contexts aimed at developing intercultural awareness, Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) advise that the inclusion of the arts supports efforts to create non-threatening spaces that encourage transdisciplinary discourse.

This study focused on transdisciplinary work between the arts, particularly music, and social inclusion and intercultural social work. The choice to focus on music is based on research indicating that making music together provides a non-threatening environment to serve as a vehicle for working towards social justice, inclusion, and belonging (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). The relationship between the arts and social work is further discussed in the next section.

## **3.3 SOCIAL WORK**

As described in Chapter 1, the definition of social work identifies principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities as central to social work (IFSW, 2014). In this section, principles of respect for diversities, social inclusion, and social cohesion are unpacked as it relates to the focus of this study, followed by a discussion on social work with groups and social work and the arts.

### **3.3.1 Social Work Principles**

This study focused on the principle of social inclusion, which relates to social cohesion and the respect for diversities. These principles are further discussed below.

#### **3.3.1.1 Respect for diversities**

The Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles (IFSW, 2018) describes the principle of respect for diversity as social work that aims to strengthen communities by emphasising respect for differences at individual, family, group, and community levels. Working with diverse groups to enhance respect for diversity may require constructive confrontation and change through the development of a fundamental understanding of the ‘other’ (cf. IFSW, 2014). Through participation and engagement with different cultures, nationalities, ethnic groups, or religions in a development project, respect between participants and inclusive activities enable everyone to collaborate to find solutions for common challenges, thereby serving the greater good of society (Mabvurira, 2020).

Mabvurira (2020) asserts that the essence of *Ubuntu*, a “collection of values and practices that black people of Africa or of African origin view as making people authentic human beings” (p. 73), embodies a respect for diversity and for what it means to be human. The *Ubuntu* philosophy of ‘I am because we are’ recognises people’s humanity and interdependence as inherent in every aspect of human life, with human dignity as the paramount value (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). A respect for diversity is essential for people to feel that they belong and that they are valued, leading to a sense of inclusion.

#### **3.3.1.2 Social inclusion**

In terms of respect for the diversities described above, social work encourages the dignity and value of all humans and emphasises the need to promote collective responsibility. Collective responsibility requires an inclusive community where individuals and groups care for one another and their environment (IFSW, 2014). Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013) remark that, within the *Ubuntu* philosophy mentioned earlier, communities exist as a collective, as expressed in the ideals of personhood or humanity, rooted in the interconnectedness of each other. As such, the community assumes collective responsibility for all individuals and groups, as well as the environment, through collaboration, engagement, and partnerships to enhance the welfare of all people (IFSW, 2014).

Inclusive societies are characterised by movements towards greater social justice, equality, and collectivism in response to the oppression, discrimination, and marginalisation that exclusive societies embody and perpetuate (Allman, 2013). Lee (2021) explains that social work aims, among other things, to enhance well-being by supporting entire communities where practices of discrimination and oppression are addressed to encourage inclusivity. Similar to the focus of this study, the aforementioned author argues that social work practices aimed at fostering social change need to emphasise innovative ideas to support social inclusion, which will, in turn, reflect social justice and human rights.

Social inclusion considers social processes within different systems and groups, with various partners, and under differing conditions. The underlying characteristics of freedom, respect, and participation as equals require careful consideration when collaborating in social activities (Yanicki et al., 2015) so that the well-being of all members of society is recognised, acknowledged, and valued (Allman, 2013). In this way, a sense of belonging can be experienced by the members of a group or community, fostering social cohesion.

### **3.3.1.3 Social cohesion**

Social cohesion has to do with solidarity. The IFSW (2018) refers to solidarity as social work practices aimed at social change through social inclusion. Solidarity is developed through networks that support collaboration, which can lead to cohesion.

Social cohesion is, according to Meko and Busari (2018), based on five dimensions, namely:

- 1) Belonging,
- 2) Inclusion,
- 3) Participation,
- 4) Legitimacy, and
- 5) Recognition.

The concept of social cohesion emphasises a common identity and working towards a shared goal, which, in turn, creates a sense of belonging that promotes the worth and dignity of human beings within a community. Tolerance, respect, and mutual trust, evident in interactions with one another, enhance the commitment to create equal opportunities through these inclusive practices. As such, social cohesion fosters teamwork, participation, collaboration, and cohesiveness, creating a climate for change that benefits all parties

(Mekoa & Busari, 2018). Yanicki et al. (2015) state that participation in community activities needs to focus on engagement and partnerships through contact and cooperation, where all participants are valued as equals. Participatory practices and the legitimacy of participants will enhance the group's or community's ability to resolve conflict (Mekoa & Busari, 2018). Social cohesion is most achievable when people feel that they belong, feel included in processes, and have their contributions valued and respected, which restores and builds self-worth and human dignity (IFSW, 2014).

The principles mentioned above, for the purpose of this study, guide social workers when working with diverse groups.

### **3.3.2 Social Work with Groups**

Group work is described by Toseland and Rivas (2017) as a professional practice that is goal-directed and aimed at accomplishing a specific outcome in a systematic, planned, and orderly manner. The social worker has a dual focus within the group, ensuring that equal attention is paid to individual members and the group as a whole. These authors distinguish between treatment/therapeutic groups and task groups, with the latter being the focus of this study.

Similar to the description of group work above, the intervention activities in task groups are directed at individual members and the group as a whole, while also aimed at serving a larger community and society (Shulman, 2016). In support of this viewpoint, Toseland and Rivas (2017) assert that groups exist in relation to community and society, and therefore, the contexts of the group direct the purpose of the activities undertaken.

Task groups are often referred to as social action groups. In terms of the focus of this study, such groups are composed of members with a similar interest (in this case, using the arts for social inclusion), with the purpose of empowering members to engage in collective action and planned change efforts to achieve their common goal. As such, their collective efforts benefit the broader community and serve the common good (McKnight & Plummer, 2015; Pyles, 2013). To participate in the social action group, each member needs to feel that the cause is relevant and important, experience a sense of community and belonging, and feel that each group member has contributed to the attainment of the goal (Pyles, 2014).

This study utilised a task group to facilitate a digital activity focused on the collaborative production of a music video, requiring members to work toward a shared goal. Each member brought their unique musical interests and skills, contributing as individuals. To foster social inclusion within the group, every contribution needed to be valued, and participants were expected to interact respectfully while taking responsibility for their own learning and socialisation (Frykedal & Chiriak, 2018). This aligns with Social Interdependence Theory, developed by Johnson and Johnson (2013), which promotes cooperative learning as a means to support social inclusion. The theory identifies five key elements essential for maximising group potential.

- 1) **Positive interdependence:** *Members work toward a shared goal with a collective reward.*
- 2) **Individual accountability:** *Each member takes responsibility for their portion of the work while assisting others as needed.*
- 3) **Promotive interaction:** *Group members encourage and support one another, fostering positive relationships.*
- 4) **Interpersonal and group skills:** *Members develop conflict-resolution skills, building trust within the group.*
- 5) **Group processing:** *Reflective practices help to strengthen and maintain effective working relationships among all members.*

The core values related to social work with groups are presented next.

### **3.3.2.1 Core values of group work**

The International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG, 2015) identifies the core values that guide group work practices as

- 1) respect for persons and their autonomy, and
- 2) the creation of a socially just society.

In the practice of group work, every individual is treated with respect and dignity, irrespective of their roles within the group. Respecting and valuing the diversity of the group supports social justice, as it provides the group with an opportunity to live and practise the principles of equality and autonomy (IASWG, 2015).

Expanding on the importance of respecting diversity within groups, the IASWG (2015) refers to cultural sensitivity, where acknowledging identity and culture is key to fostering cultural

sensitivity in groups. Within the group, cultural identity is explored, and opportunities are provided for members to describe how they experience their own cultural backgrounds and identities and learn from one another. The sharing of cultural experiences aims to foster acceptance, change attitudes by recognising the value of diverse groups, and demystify prejudices, biases, and stereotypical assumptions (Toseland & Rivas, 2017). Juvonen et al. (2019) assert that socially just practices with diverse groups require that the social identities and attributes of group members are respected and included equally within group activities. When the various contributions of all group members are equally respected and included, diversity within the groups becomes a benefit.

A way to support social inclusion in diverse groups is described as cross-group contact, aiming to develop friendships, reduce prejudice, and foster higher levels of intergroup sympathy and inclusive intentions (Grütter et al., 2018). Groups aimed at cross-group interactions can, according to Rastogi and Juvonen (2019), result in social capital, access to different resources, a means to prevent social segregation, and friendships that may reduce prejudice over time. Group activities aimed at cross-group contact can further enhance experiences of connectedness and belonging, resulting from social inclusion (cf. Lessard et al., 2019).

Group work through digital social work practices requires a specific focus on the knowledge and skills needed to use the technologies effectively, as well as on ethics (IASWG, 2015). In South Africa, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP, 2020) developed interim ethical guidelines for technology-supported social work. These guidelines also refer to the knowledge and skills needed as competencies for effective technology use. Social workers are required to keep up to date with emerging technologies and base their technology-based services on evidence-based practices while being aware of potential risks and benefits. The guidelines further highlight the ethical responsibilities of social workers towards the individuals they serve. Potential participants in online groups need to be provided with information regarding how the technologies will be used (including guidelines on how to use them effectively), as well as the potential benefits and risks, before providing informed consent to participate. Confidentiality and the protection of privacy must receive particular attention.

This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work. With this aim in mind, the next section explores the use of the arts in social work practice.

### **3.4 SOCIAL WORK AND THE ARTS**

In Chapter 1, examples of social work practices that incorporate the arts were provided. In this section, the significance of the arts in social work is further explored in terms of 1) the potential of art-based and creative social work activities, 2) the importance of the arts for social work practice, social workers, and service users, and 3) implications for social work education and practice.

#### **3.4.1 The Potential of Art-Based and Creative Social Work Activities**

Huss and Sela-Amit (2018) claim that social work practice has included the arts since the start of the profession, but note that the rationale should further be explored and articulated for effective future use. These authors identified three fundamental gaps for further exploration, namely:

- 1) to articulate a rationale for the inclusion of the arts in social work practice,
- 2) to explore how the arts fits within the profession's mission, and
- 3) to find a theoretical foundation for the arts in social work practise.

Similarly, Pietiläinen (2017) argues that the potential of the arts in social work remains under recognised. Specifically regarding music, Greuel (2019) suggests that the value of joint music-making is often underestimated as a form of social work, while Navarrette-Campos (2016) calls for further exploration of how music can be integrated into developmental discourse to transform human relationships.

In response, Schininà and Ghiglione (2019) emphasise the potential of art-based and creative activities in community-based support interventions, highlighting their positive impact on social capital and the development of life skills. These interventions address specific social needs within a group or community by fostering inclusion and participation in arts-based activities. The authors outline the potential benefits of such activities as follows:

- Participation in cultural and artistic engagements stimulates empathy and attunement.

- Artistic productions with aesthetic, social, and cultural significance have the potential to transform the current context (i.e., social change).
- The arts connect individuals and groups to build on resilience to overcome challenges.
- Joint artistic activities assist individuals to connect with others, and to develop new narratives that represent both the promotion of collective identities and individual agency.
- Individual expressions through, for example, painting, singing, and dancing, are combined with group-building through informal group discussions to plan and implement productions.

Schininà and Ghiglione (2019) provide another description of art-based and creative activities, focusing on key elements involved when engaging in different art forms as a shared group activity:

- *Graduality*: Time is allowed for individual expression, relationship-building, creating safe spaces, trust-building, and exploration in order to achieve the final product.
- *Resource-based*: Using the available resources to complete the task; requiring explorations and discoveries of what to do with what is available.
- *Agency-based*: Participants actively contribute to the art-based activities, enhancing the value of the shared experience.
- *Diversity-focused*: Each participant is encouraged to express their cultural identity and learn from others, fostering inclusivity.
- *Group-building*: Through a variety of artistic activities and shared reflections, participants discover their differences, similarities, and commonalities.
- *Metaphor-based*: Personal feelings and experiences are conveyed through artistic expression of choice, offering a safe way to choose what and how to share.
- *Quality of processes and products*: The quality of products improves through diversity and continuous practice, while the process itself is enriched by activities that stimulate expression and open communication.
- *Multidisciplinary*: Various disciplines, such as social work and the arts, collaborate to facilitate the sessions, as was the case in this study.

The above description points to the relevance of transdisciplinary work, as well as the social work principles of respect for diversities, social inclusion, and social cohesion. The relevance of including the arts in social work practices is further discussed next.

### **3.4.2 The Relevance of Arts for Social Work Practice, Social Workers, and Service Users**

Huss and Sela-Amit (2018) explored two key questions: 1) how social workers can benefit from incorporating the arts, and 2) whether service users genuinely need the arts in their interactions with social workers. Focusing on the relevance of the arts for social workers, the authors argue that social workers constantly face evolving social realities and limited resources. In this context, the arts serve as intrinsic resources, offering innovative ways to connect micro- and macro-level knowledge. The arts, they note, also help bridge the gap between social workers and service users by linking experiences, emotions, and behaviours with cognition and meaning-making.

Importantly, the value of the arts extends beyond the work social workers perform with service users. According to Huss and Sela-Amit (2018), the arts also support social workers in managing secondary trauma and compassion fatigue. For instance, artistic expressions can be incorporated into social work supervision, providing a creative outlet to address the emotional toll of the profession and support the well-being of social workers.

Huss (2017) refers to the relevance of the arts for social work service users as providing an opportunity to explore and understand themselves in their own context, contributing to resilience and empowerment when skilfully employed by social workers. The benefits for service users are described by Huss and Sela-Amit (2018) as occurring on both individual and social levels. On an individual level, the arts are viewed as a form of expression. On a social level, they serve as a communication medium between service users and other individuals in their social contexts, as well as between the service user and the social worker.

In terms of the relevance of the arts for social work practice, Huss (2017) concludes that the arts serve as a medium through which social workers can support service users in exploring and understanding themselves in their own context, and through this exploration, build resilience when skilfully incorporated into social work practice. Importantly, Huss and Sela-Amit (2018) highlight that the arts in social work are relevant from a phenomenological perspective, referring to an emphasis on experiences, reflections, and meaning-making, rather than on diagnostic practices.

Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) explored the relevance of the arts as a form of social work, reporting findings from four different studies among student social workers focusing on intercultural social work through musical activities in diverse groups. The table below summarises these findings in terms of guidelines for a process to follow, facilitating skills and competencies that arise from participation in artistic activities.

**Table 1: Guidelines for joint artistic social work activities in diverse groups (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021)**

<p><b>The process</b></p>	<p><i>Stage 1:</i> Participants identify what and how to artistically present themselves to the group, fostering self-awareness and an understanding of their own context.</p> <p><i>Stage 2:</i> Participants present their artistic self-representations to the group, gaining awareness of others from diverse backgrounds. They reflect together on what was shared and the choices made in how they presented themselves.</p> <p><i>Stage 3:</i> The participants identify similarities and differences among the group members and explore how this can be integrated into a joint musical performance that showcases all the participants.</p> <p><i>Stage 4:</i> Following the joint performance, participants reflect on how the experience impacted their personal growth and how this process could be applied in social work practice.</p>
<p><b>Facilitating skills</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Artistic skills to use within the facilitation process,</li> <li>▪ Interpersonal and leadership skills,</li> <li>▪ Skills to support all the participants to be included in the activities, and</li> <li>▪ The ability to move from a central position during the first two stages giving direction, to a 'facilitating from the side' position during the last two stages so that the participants can take ownership of the artistic experience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Development of competencies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The client system experiences the <i>relevance</i> through music in a practical and effective manner.</li> <li>▪ Participants become <i>skilled</i> in an art form that may benefit themselves and others.</li> <li>▪ The process of <i>collaborating</i> and helping each other becomes a shared learning experience, where the social worker and the client system work and learn together.</li> <li>▪ Music-making and performance reinforce the concept of completion of a <i>product</i> and achieving their common goal.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Real-world and <i>academic</i> standards are integrated into a meaningful experience.</li> <li>▪ The participants are encouraged to <i>reflect</i> on and learn from their experiences.</li> <li>▪ Participants are encouraged to become <i>aware</i> of and learn from the experiences of others.</li> </ul>
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The process, skills, and competencies above can further create a platform where sustained changed relationships can evolve (cf. Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018).

### 3.4.3 Implications for Social Work Education and Training

Huss (2017) advocates for the integration of the arts into social work education and supervision as a means to challenge conventional perceptions and to investigate diverse perspectives through artistic expression. However, Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) call for a more in-depth exploration of the following aspects to be incorporated into the social work curriculum:

- A clear description of the key competencies needed to facilitate interventions through the use of music,
- An identification of the content of music education and training for students and practitioners that would contribute to developing the necessary knowledge and skills to support practice,
- An exploration of the core leadership qualities, roles, and tasks required to be implemented during the suggested process, and
- A description of musical activities that would stimulate the inclusion of the social dimensions of making music together during each phase of the suggested process, as indicated in Table 1.

The above reference to the social dimensions of making music together is further discussed in the next section.

### 3.5 THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF MAKING MUSIC TOGETHER

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the social dimensions of making music together, as described by Greuel (2019). This framework was discussed in Chapter 1. In this section, each of the dimensions will be further elaborated upon.

**1) Participation:** Greuel (2019) asserts that participation in shared music-making activities has the potential to ensure that all contributions are valued. Similarly, Gande and Kruse-Weber (2017) argue that participation results in co-creation and add that a participatory approach supports individuals in learning collaboratively while developing their potential.

**2) Contact:** Making music together involves bringing people together outside of their normal daily activities, creating opportunities for contact with one another in a manner that fosters connectedness (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021; Greuel, 2019). The social bonding that occurs through collective participation in a safe environment supports the achievement of common goals (Levstek et al., 2021). However, Onderdijk et al. (2021) found that contact when engaging in musical activities on online platforms can be challenging and argue that one should anticipate such challenges and consider how they can be managed. This is particularly relevant for the study's focus on a collaborative music video production project using online platforms and technology.

**3) Hearing:** During collaborative music-making, every participant must be heard. It requires a conscious effort to acknowledge each person's contribution to the performance, as well as different viewpoints. This creates an awareness of each individual within the group (Greuel, 2019), thus becoming a social activity (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). Hearing, as part of social engagements, leads to social cognition and meaning-making (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2021), creating opportunities for intercultural awareness (van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021) and developing interpersonal skills to enhance self-esteem, as well as emotional awareness, self-confidence, and control (Campayo-Munoz et al., 2022).

**4) Cooperation:** Lowe (2018) refers to cooperation as teamwork. Joint music-making necessitates activities that involve communication and coordination among participants (Greuel, 2019). Such activities should include an element of enjoyment, creating a positive form of contact that sets the tone for effective cooperation (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2015).

Both cooperation and coordination involve working together to achieve a shared goal (Sangiorgio, 2018). Effective cooperation, according to Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021), requires that every group member works at the same level, while coordination pertains to dividing labour and responsibilities with the common goal in mind (Sangiorgio, 2018).

**5) Synchronisation:** When following a common pulse or beat during a joint music activity, synchronisation of movements occurs. This synchronised movement within the group fosters the establishment of rapport among group members. Importantly, synchronicity is not synonymous with uniformity, meaning that individual contributions are included in the synchronisation (Greuel, 2019). Colley (2019) adds that visual cues and eye contact during ensemble playing enhance psychological processes and influence motor behaviours that assist and improve synchronisation. Synchronisation provides group members with immediate feedback that indicates successful cooperation within the group. The experience of synchronised movements further reinforces cooperative behaviours, which are critical for social interaction (Gordon et al., 2020).

**6) Affect attunement:** Ash and Gallacher (2015) refer to the term 'attunement' as the awareness of another person's behaviour and body language, and responding appropriately based on this awareness. The term 'affect attunement' stems from developmental psychology and describes the emotional synchronicity between infants and their mothers (Stern, 1985). Trondalen and Skårderud (2007) explain that the sharing of experiences may result in intersubjective behaviour, leading to shared emotional experiences. Greuel (2019) affirms that the emotions experienced in joint music-making are shared among all participants, resulting in affect attunement. The sharing of emotional states, or interpersonal emotional states, creates a feeling of mutual understanding that can promote social cohesion and support the decrease of conflict (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2015).

**7) Lack of competition:** When competition is eliminated, everyone is able to function on an equal level, supporting a social experience of equality (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). Greuel (2019) explains that joint music-making in a non-competitive environment focuses on enjoying the music and having a positive music learning and social experience. Lowe (2018) elucidates that when music-making does not involve competition, the shared experience can

foster learning and cooperative musical excellence, while also improving self-esteem, self-concept, social networks and skills, and confidence.

**8) Social cohesion:** Through the inclusion of the above dimensions, Greuel (2019) asserts that inclusivity and a sense of belonging can be developed for all members of the group. Supporting this viewpoint, Gordon et al. (2020) mention that ensembles require teamwork, and that synchronisation can encourage cohesion within the team making music together. Working as a team fosters continuous attention to a shared activity, awareness of what the other members are doing, and sensitivity among the performers to support each other in producing a good shared outcome. This, according to these authors, requires positive social interaction experiences on the one hand, and creates positive social interaction opportunities on the other, resulting in a sense of cohesion. Other experiences stemming from joint music-making that support the development of social cohesion include social bonding (Launay, 2015), a sense of belonging (Greuel, 2019), and relatedness (Boer & Abubakar, 2014). Launay (2015) further expresses that the shared experience of music-making can evoke shared emotions and foster understanding of the diversity among individuals in the group, which has the potential to enhance tolerance of different social groups. Boer (2014) concludes that social cohesion enhances social well-being.

The social dimensions of joint music-making, for the purpose of this study, were explored in terms of digital engagements.

### **3.6 DIGITAL ENGAGEMENTS**

Digitalisation involves the inclusion and integration of digital technologies in all areas of life. The adoption of these technologies results in a process of change because it impacts everyday life and shapes societal functioning. However, it should be noted that digitalisation could support positive social transformation on the one hand, and lead to further marginalisation and exclusion of already marginalised and vulnerable groups on the other hand. Therefore, digital initiatives aimed at social inclusion, referred to as digital inclusion, should focus on addressing gaps in skills, accessibility, and opportunities (Şerban et al., 2020).

As conceptualised in Chapter 1, digital engagements refer to interactions that take place in an online space as opposed to traditional face-to-face engagements (Yu & Ramaprasad, 2019). A variety of digital platforms exist for people to meet, share ideas, and participate in activities, becoming increasingly popular. This includes virtual rooms such as Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, as well as messaging applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, and Snapchat (Şerban et al., 2020). Parker et al. (2016) posit that these platforms create opportunities for individuals with a shared interest or goal to engage in for the benefit of all participants on the platform.

However, Vartanova and Gladkova (2019) refer to the digital divide as a form of digital inequality, meaning that people without access to devices, internet, or data are excluded from participation. This form of social exclusion can, according to these authors, be addressed through institutional access to technologies in, for example, schools and universities, and through opportunities to develop digital skills. This not only secures social inclusion but also fosters skill development. Similarly, Şerban et al. (2020) note that social inclusion in the digital era requires a concerted effort to ensure that every person has the right and opportunity to engage in online activities. The authors note that digital engagements are dependent on accessibility, which consists of five primary elements:

- 1) Affordable well-functioning internet services,
- 2) Devices that meet the requirements and needs of the user,
- 3) Access to digital literacy and skills development programmes,
- 4) Sufficient and effective technical support, and
- 5) Online guidelines that enhance participation and collaboration.

The focus of this study on social inclusion within a digital video production project ask for careful consideration of the future skills that participants 1) require and 2) could develop through their participation.

### **3.6.1 Future Skills**

Ehlers (2020) identified 17 future skills that should be incorporated into higher education settings to equip students to function successfully in the workforce. The author argues that these skills are necessary to respond to “today’s post-knowledge era in which a more comprehensive concept of individual and self-organised capacity to act, creativity, innovation and competence ... to act under new, unknown, and unprepared circumstances” (p. 17). The

table below lists these skills, provides a description of each skill, and relates their relevance to this study where applicable.

**Table 2: Future skills according to Ehlers (2020)**

<b>Future skills</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>	<b>Relevance to joint music-making on a digital platform</b>
Self-directed learning	The ability to focus on goals, create a plan, and use an appropriate learning style to achieve the desired goal.	Participants needed to focus on the common goal of the group as well as on their own artistic ability. They identified what they needed to learn, developed individual and collective plans, and practiced the necessary skills for their performances. This involved mastering digital platforms, monitoring progress, and evaluating their own and the group members' contributions and participation continuously.
Self-efficacy	The ability to execute a task using skills, make decisions, and take responsibility for the outcomes throughout the process through constant self-assessment.	The project enhanced self-efficacy through activities that required participating students to explore their individual skills within the group, develop new skills for effectively using online technologies, and collaboratively decide how to produce the music video. This approach necessitated individual responsibility for contributions that would benefit the project's outcome.
Self-determination	Each individual determines how they will contribute to the project.	Self-determination in this project first centred on voluntary participation – each student deciding whether to take part. Next, participants determined what they wanted to contribute and how they would make their contributions. The group also had to address challenges such as load shedding, software issues, and how to effectively collaborate with one another.

Self-competence	The ability to manage and organise oneself within one's own scope of competencies, relative to the boundaries of time and load management, while taking responsibility for what can be achieved to complete the task.	Self-motivation and goal-setting were crucial in managing time in relation to academic and personal commitments. Each participant followed the project structure but needed to manage, organise and regulate their workload and behaviour, ultimately taking individual responsibility for all actions.
Reflection	Reflection involves a critical assessment of oneself in order to analyse and, where necessary, question and change perspectives based on identified observations.	This project included various reflective activities. Prior to the project, individual reflections focused on expectations. During the project, collective reflections centred on outcomes and decisions regarding necessary changes. At the end of the project, both individual and collective reflections emphasised experiences and lessons learned throughout the course of the project.
Decision-making	The skill of making decisions involves providing a clear justification for the choice, effectively communicating the rationale behind it and the intended actions to achieve a specific outcome, and taking responsibility for the execution of the decisions made.	To develop the music video, the participating students needed to make decisions about what should happen, how it should happen and identify and assign responsibilities. They also had to decide on a timeline, how they would communicate and assist each other, and how they would provide feedback to one another.
Initiative and performance	The ability to self-motivate contributes to decision-making that informs actions (volition). These actions are self-determined. Combined with perseverance, goal-	The participants were tasked with focusing on their individual artistic abilities and potential contributions in preparation for the project. They were encouraged to be future-oriented (working towards the final production) and proactive (addressing problems as they arose) to cultivate

	orientation, performance orientation, and self-confidence, self-motivation can create opportunities for creative problem-solving and the development of assertiveness, resulting in a deeper understanding of the task.	perseverance and confidence, benefiting both the individuals and the group, as well as the final production (performance).
Ambiguity	The ability to recognise the value of different perspectives and interpretations is aimed at understanding that collaboration, which includes diverse roles and ideas, can contribute to a rich outcome.	In this project, ambiguity supported the principles of respect for diversity and social inclusion. The creative production process required constructive engagement among diverse nationalities, cultures, artistic preferences, socioeconomic contexts, and backgrounds.
Ethical practice	Ethical practice is based on evaluating values, interests, and consequences within a given context, and forming judgements based on logical consistency, conditions of use, and alternatives. This means that all individuals in the specific context should be respected and treated with dignity.	Ethical practice was embedded in the research process, and participants participated voluntarily with the agreement to value and respect privacy and confidentiality. The principles of respect and human dignity were emphasised in the project.
Design thinking	Design thinking refers to the ability to develop creative interdisciplinary opportunities using flexibility, open-	The project focused on creative activities that culminated in the final product. The diversity of the group, the transdisciplinary nature of the project, and the inclusion of every participant's contributions encouraged the students to share

	<p>mindedness, and versatility while considering everyone's needs and incorporating each contribution into the final product.</p>	<p>their ideas and skills and to appreciate the richness of diverse contributions.</p>
Innovation	<p>Innovation entails creativity and experimentation. When combined, these elements provide a broader understanding and openness that promote innovative cultures. Furthermore, they have the ability to translate innovative contributions into value creation for a project.</p>	<p>The nature of the project involved creative contributions and experimentation to find ways to include all contributions in the production of the video. The disciplines of social work and the arts worked together to consider and incorporate the diverse contexts and contributions of the participants, which required an openness to create an innovative final project where all contributions were valued.</p>
System competence	<p>System competence follows a holistic approach, focusing on the structure of the overall system and understanding how system boundaries and subsystems are networked, integrated, and connected to influence one another.</p>	<p>The music video production integrated the disciplines of social work and the arts, along with the use of technologies. The participants, through collaboration, reflection, and participation, had to find ways to link and integrate relevant components of both disciplines and technologies to develop the final product.</p>
Digital competence	<p>This includes knowledge of digital media, communication, and applications, as well as the skills to utilise a variety of platforms and applications effectively.</p>	<p>This project involved the use of various online platforms for communication and collaborative work, as well as applications to develop the music video.</p>

Sensemaking	Sensemaking is the ability to recognise streams of experiences from within, along with the meaning and values each action and decision holds (value-based), to productively and positively influence future interactions.	The music for this project was based on the song "Stand by Me" by Ben E. King. The lyrics and music aimed to create context and facilitate each participant's interpretation of the lyrics and music, demonstrating how the combination of interpretations results in a unique product.
Future shaping competence	A change-oriented perspective and future mindset are developed through creativity and the ability to continuously evolve, charting unknown territory and challenging oneself in various contexts.	The project included the development of digital competence and the integration of discipline-specific focus areas to create a new form of social work that may be applied in various contexts in the future.
Cooperation	Cooperative skills involve the ability to collaborate successfully in teams, whether online or in-person, by identifying, acknowledging, and managing differences to work together toward a common goal.	This study included an intercultural group of participants who collaborated on an online platform, using unfamiliar applications to create a music video. This process involved teamwork, consideration of differences, and problem-solving to achieve their common goal: the collaborative music video production.
Communication	The capacity for dialogue, communication readiness, consensus orientation, and openness are essential for successful collaborations.	In this study, the participants had to develop the ability to communicate their perspectives, ideas, and challenges across language barriers on an online platform to produce the music video.

Also focusing on future skills for the world of work, Dondi et al. (2021) refer to foundational skills that need to be developed. The primary outcomes of these foundational skills are described in terms of three areas of performance:

- 1) Employment through skills to synthesise messages, cope with uncertainty or changes, and adapt to different situations.
- 2) Income generation through self-confidence, awareness of organisational and industry dynamics, and the ability to plan and solve problems.
- 3) Job satisfaction through the ability to motivate oneself, take care of oneself, and create a balanced lifestyle, as well as the capacity to cope with changes, challenges, and uncertainties while being content in one's field of work.

These authors divided 56 foundational skills into four areas of knowledge, understanding, and skills development to consider for the future world of work, as summarised below.

**Table 2: Dondi et al.'s (2020) foundational skills for the future world of work**

Area of skills development	Descriptions
Cognitive	Cognitive skills are aimed at solving complex problems in an unbiased manner. Through critical thinking, communication, planning, execution of plans, and mental flexibility, all relevant aspects of a problem are identified and considered to develop an understanding of its nature and the merits of all arguments. Working in teams, critical thinking contributes to gathering sufficient evidence and finding solutions collaboratively. The ability to communicate encompasses cultural sensitivity, attentive listening, and an understanding of diverse perspectives. These communication competencies are employed to synthesise and contextualise information that can enhance understanding and knowledge of a situation. When problems are addressed, this understanding guides the development of plans, the assignment of roles and tasks, and how individuals engage with the execution of those plans. Cognitive skills also focus on assessing progress and outcomes while continuously seeking new understanding and solutions. Mental flexibility fosters a creative approach to developing new concepts, ideas, or processes, as well as the willingness to explore new knowledge and skills beyond a field of specialisation in order to respond to challenges.
Interpersonal	The development of interpersonal skills focuses on three aspects:  1) Mobilising systems: Skills include the ability to follow a win-win approach where collaborative work is modelled so that all stakeholders benefit from participating in

	<p>a project. Negotiation skills focus on creating opportunities for everyone, bringing together an idealised future and crafting an inspiring vision for all to realise. Having organisational awareness and understanding the organisation's procedures, processes, and roles provide the framework for accountability.</p> <p>2) Developing relationships: Mutually beneficial relationships require skills that demonstrate empathy and humility. Through empathy, the needs of others are considered as important as one's own needs. Behaving in a manner that considers everyone's needs results in humility, which inspires recognition and sharing of accomplishments, thereby contributing to the development of trust.</p> <p>3) Teamwork effectiveness: Appreciating diverse backgrounds, opinions, orientations, etc., fosters inclusiveness. The skill to contribute to the team's effectiveness also includes the ability to encourage collaboration, responsibility, and accountability, as well as to identify potential conflicts and resolve them in a respectful manner. The aim is to enhance the team's ability to achieve critical goals. Coaching and mentoring skills can also support the effective functioning of teams.</p>
Digital	<p>Digital skills development includes software development and usage, skills to utilise smart devices to improve products or processes, data analysis and statistics, as well as computational and algorithmic thinking. Data literacy is the ability to understand how data are created, collected, validated, and stored, while cybersecurity literacy relates to understanding threats posed by data hackers and the ability to take precautions to avoid them. As technology improves, technological transformation and enablement help identify opportunities to use new technologies, build business profiles, and explain the benefits to all users.</p> <p>Digital fluency and citizenship are influenced by digital literacy – the ability to make use of online resources and identify reliable sources. Through digital collaboration, various digital platforms are employed to work together. Digital collaboration requires ethical digital practices, including ways to avoid harm, ensure privacy and confidentiality, and manage data, as well as the ability to apply practices that ensure privacy and accountability.</p>
Self-leadership	<p>Self-leadership is viewed in terms of three components:</p> <p>1) Self-awareness and self-management: In this component, individuals develop skills to become aware of their own emotions and to respond to these emotions through self-control and regulation. With such skills, they can foresee situations that will affect their emotions and actions before they occur, and control their emotions and actions so that they do not disrupt their work performance. Self-awareness</p>

	<p>results in an understanding of one's own strengths and the ability to navigate challenges. Self-management includes integrity, self-motivation, and wellness that guide actions, provide motivation for engaging in activities, and foster long-term purpose and self-confidence.</p> <p>2) Entrepreneurship: This component focuses on the courage to take risks and to drive change and innovation through a continuous strive for improvement. Entrepreneurship requires energy to face obstacles, passion to drive processes, and optimism to challenge conventional thinking, contributing to the future.</p> <p>3) Goal achievement: To achieve goals, skills to take ownership and responsibility, along with persistence to manage obstacles and find solutions, are required. In this component, the focus is on developing an achievement orientation to assist in coping with uncertainty and self-development that involves openness to inviting external perspectives that can contribute to a richer understanding of a situation, concept, or process.</p>
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Reflecting on the functional skills presented in Table 2, the following skills are relevant to the purpose of this study.

- Cognitive skills: In this study, the participating students had to engage in intercultural communication skills and critically reflect on how diverse contributions could be integrated into the music video production. Teamwork required skills to assess progress and outcomes, as well as to search for solutions to address challenges and attain the project's goal. Mental flexibility was a particular skill that was essential, as the participants had to develop knowledge and skills beyond the social work discipline.
- Interpersonal skills: Collaboration was key to achieving the goal of the project. With a common objective, the participants had to negotiate how they would work together and ensure the inclusion of all members. Empathy was necessary to build intercultural relationships, and humility was demonstrated through the inclusive nature of the project.
- Digital skills: This study focused on data literacy regarding the use of digital platforms and software, as well as digital fluency and citizenship. The student participants were introduced to digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp to

encourage communication and collaboration. They were familiarised with applications and software to enable the production of the music video. Skills were developed to utilise FlipGrid (for sharing short videos and texts), Audacity (for audio editing and recording), and Shotcut (for video editing and creation). Digital collaboration and ethical digital practices were employed throughout the project.

- Self-leadership skills: Reflective activities, as part of data collection in this study, promoted self-awareness, the identification of strengths that could be valuable for the project, and ownership of contributions to the music video. The participants were encouraged to develop new insights and skills that fostered self-development and self-management. The nature of the project provided participants with a clear shared goal to promote achievement-oriented participation.

Considering the above discussion of future skills, the potential development of competencies that are valuable in the world of work through a transdisciplinary approach to producing digital products that promote social inclusion became apparent.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter builds on the preliminary literature review presented in Chapter 1, which provided a focus for this study. Firstly, transdisciplinary work was explored, with particular emphasis on the inclusion of the arts in transdisciplinary work and research. Secondly, social work was discussed in terms of the principles of respect for diversity and social inclusion, which were a specific focus of this study. Social work with groups and the core values employed in group work were examined in relation to working in task groups to achieve a common goal. Thirdly, the relevance of collaboration between social work and the arts disciplines was explored, considering how the arts could support social work practice, social workers, and social work service users. Additionally, the implications for social work education and training were examined. Fourthly, the theoretical framework of the social dimensions of making music together was unpacked. Lastly, the literature review concluded with a discussion of digital engagements, looking at future skills for the world of work and how these relate to this study.

This chapter provided an in-depth review of literature related to this study for the purpose of comparing and contrasting the research findings. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4 that follows next.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 1 introduced this study, offering a background discussion that unpacked key concepts related to the research topic. It outlined the rationale for the study through a preliminary literature review and described the theoretical framework within which this research is situated. This foundation led to the formulation of the research problem, question, aim, and objectives. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the study's significance and a description of the overall structure of the research document.

In Chapter 2, the research methodology was detailed, including the rationale behind the methodological choices and how the methods and techniques were implemented. This chapter focused on the research approach and design, as well as the sampling, data collection, analysis, and verification methods. Ethical considerations that guided the research were discussed, along with limitations encountered during the study, which should be considered when interpreting the findings.

The preliminary literature review in Chapter 1 laid the groundwork for Chapter 3, which presented an in-depth review of literature relevant to this study. It explored literature on transdisciplinary work, social work, the role of music in social work, the social dimensions of collaborative music-making, and digital engagements, all synthesised for comparison with the study's findings.

This chapter presents the findings from the student participants' written reflections at the beginning and end of the project, as well as the FGDs that took place after the music production project concluded. The chapter begins with an overview of the participants' biographical profiles, followed by a description of the three sets of data collected during the research.

#### **4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE**

The research question that guided this study was: How can transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work be integrated towards practices that support social inclusion? To

answer this question, participants were sampled from student social workers at UWC and EvH. It was envisaged that to develop an understanding of how transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work could lead to practices that support social inclusion, students from diverse backgrounds and contexts would engage in the music production project and report on their expectations and experiences.

The population consisted of student social workers from UWC and EvH. Non-probability purposive sampling was employed to select student social workers, using the following inclusion criteria: undergraduate student social workers from UWC and EvH who had the ability and willingness to make music together. They needed to demonstrate an interest in the research topic and be willing to participate in the study with the understanding that English would be the medium of communication. Voluntary participation was based on informed consent, which included an agreement that the final product may be used by the two universities for academic and research purposes. The exclusion criteria included student social workers who were not registered at UWC and EvH and who had no interest in music-making or participating in a joint online project that could be utilised by the two universities for academic and research purposes.

The biographical profile of the social work student participants is presented in Table 3 below and discussed further thereafter.

**Table 3: Biographical profile of the student participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>University</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>
1	EvH	Male	22
2	UWC	Female	19
3	UWC	Diverse	19
4	EvH	Female	22
5	UWC	Female	18
6	EvH	Female	24
7	EvH	Female	22
8	EvH	Female	26

9	UWC	Male	18
10	UWC	Female	19
11	UWC	Female	18
12	UWC	Female	19
13	UWC	Male	21
14	UWC	Female	26
15	EvH	Female	22
16	EvH	Male	25
17	EvH	Female	19
18	EvH	Female	20

This study involved 18 student social workers, nine from each university, aged between 18 and 26. The National Youth Policy (RSA, Department for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities [DWYPD], 2020) defines individuals aged 18 to 34 years as youth. For the purpose of this study, this age group was further divided into two categories: 18 to 21 and 22 to 26, to better understand how the characteristics differ between these two developmental stages as they transition to adulthood (Pottick et al., 2014). Saul (2014) describes the stage from 18 to 21 years as one in which individuals develop an understanding of their abilities and skills. Through further studies or gaining work experience, they are afforded opportunities to experiment, which leads to the development of knowledge that transforms into skills that support a movement towards independence. The age group 22 to 26 is referred to as adult youth, who are transitioning from education to the labour market and becoming contributing citizens with the potential to become change agents in society (DWYPD, 2020).

The gender distribution included four male, 13 female, and one individual with diverse gender identification. This distribution aligns with Lovelock and Lyons' (2017) reference to social work as a predominantly female profession.

The findings are presented in terms of the research process that was followed.

1. The first section describes the individual reflections that were done prior to participation in the project.

2. The second section presents the final individual reflections on their experiences.
3. The third section presents the FGDs of the participants' experiences and learning that took place after their joint product was completed.

### 4.3 PHASE 1: FINDINGS – INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

This phase of data collection took place prior to the project. The participating students were requested to write reflections on:

- What are your expectations regarding the use making music together in this project?
- What are your expectations regarding contact with students from another context on a digital platform?
- How do you think this experience can contribute to your own development?

Individual reflections took the form of journaling. The participants received the above open-ended questions and were asked to provide the researcher with their written reflections before they met on the online platform to participate in the project. These questions guided the initial identification of main themes. Through data analysis, following the framework proposed by Maguire and Delahunt (2017), sub-themes and categories were identified under each main theme. The table below summarises the themes, sub-themes, and categories of Phase 1.

**Table 4: Summary of the findings of Phase 1**

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Expectations regarding making music together in the online project	1.1 The opportunity to make music together	1.1.1. Creating a joint product
	1.2 Expecting a joyful experience	1.1.2. A sense of nervousness
	1.3 Expecting cooperation across contexts	
2. Expectations of contact on a digital platform with participants from diverse contexts	2.1 Diversity as part of the experience	
	2.2 Online communication	
	2.3 Relationship building	

3. Participation to contribute to own development	3.1 Skills development	3.1.1. Communication skills
		3.1.2. Musical skills
		3.1.3. Digital skills
	3.2 Personal development and professional growth	
	3.3 Cooperation and communication to create a product	

The themes are supported by verbatim quotations from the participants and are compared with existing literature.

Three themes, aligned with the guiding questions, are presented below:

- 1) Expectations regarding making music together in the online project.
- 2) Expectations regarding contact between students from different contexts on a digital platform.
- 3) Perceptions of how participation in the project could contribute to own development.

#### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Expectations Regarding Making Music Together in the Online Project**

This theme reveals that some student participants did not have specific expectations for the project. One participant expressed an openness to the experience without any clear expectations: *“My expectations are very free-flowing at the moment. Whatever happens, happens...”* (P9). Similarly, another participant, while indicating a lack of definite expectations, expressed curiosity and anticipation: *“I don’t have any real expectations. I’m curious to see how it goes and I’m looking forward to it”* (P1).

Other participants, however, hoped to gain experience in making music together in an online setting. They anticipated a joyful experience and an opportunity to learn how to collaborate across different contexts to create a music video. These aspects are explored in the sub-themes that follow.

#### **4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: The opportunity to make music together**

The participants highlighted joint music-making and building connections through their shared interest in music as key expectations.

*“Making music together is my main expectation” (P6).*

*“Since almost everyone is a fan of music, this can lead to a better and faster connection with people, be it professional or personal (P9)”.*

Greuel (2019) highlights the potential of making music together to bring people into contact and foster a sense of cohesion within a group, supporting this expectation. However, Kylmanen and Tysk (2021) note that the potential of making music together on online platforms has not been fully explored. They call for further investigation into how online social networking can lead to new forms of social relationships between individuals who share a common interest in music. The creation of a joint product was also identified as an expectation, which is further explored as a category under this sub-theme.

##### *Category 1.1.1: Creating a joint project*

The expectation of making music together as a group was further expanded upon by participants who anticipated that the final music product would reflect diverse ideas and forms of expression as a key outcome.

*“I hope for a joint project with a final result” (P16).*

*“I also hope for a wide variety of ideas and approaches to the topic of creative design, so that in this case people's own experiences and creativity can be expressed” (P17).*

*“I think the online platform will create a safe space for everyone to be able to express themselves without any judgement from anyone” (P2).*

The latter statement emphasises the participants' desire to express themselves musically without fear of judgment. In this study, the student participants were not professional musicians. Notably, Kim (2021) found that, although music-making has historically been recognised as a powerful form of self-expression, there has been limited focus on providing

non-professional musicians with a platform to express themselves without facing judgement. Aligned with this expectation of a judgment-free environment, participants also expressed an anticipation of experiencing joy throughout the project.

#### **4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Expecting a joyful experience**

The statements that follow indicate an expectation of having fun during the course of this project:

*“Having funs with this project”* (P12).

*“I would like to have a fun time”* (P7).

*“I hope that it will be fun!”* (P18).

Participant 10 expressed excitement before participating and anticipated a joyful experience in an international context: *“I am also excited. I expect it to be interesting and fun because I am meeting other international people”* (P10). Perdomo-Guevaro (2017) asserts that experiencing joy during a performance is closely related to the extent to which performers express meaning and purpose. When performance, interpersonal relationships, and shared experiences come together, joy is enhanced, and anxiety decreases. Price (2021) expands on this by linking joyful musical experiences to playfulness and flow. According to Price (2021), connection in joint music-making facilitates playfulness and flow, which invigorates and nourishes performers. Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) add that such shared experiences can lead to affect attunement. In line with these perspectives, Participant 1 voiced a specific expectation that all participants would experience this sense of joy.

*“I hope that everyone enjoys it”* (P1).

The category below, however, describes that participants were also nervous prior to the project.

#### **Category 1.2.1: A sense of nervousness**

Although the general sense was excitement and an expectation of enjoyment, some participants anticipated nervousness as it was something new and not tried before:

*“I do expect it to be a little nerve wrecking as it is something new that I haven’t tried before” (P10).*

*“I am very nervous, but excited at the same time. Because I do not know what to expect” (P13).*

Both Altun (2023) and Brooks (2014) address pre-performance anxiety, which is often seen as nervousness requiring the individual to calm down (Brooks, 2014). However, these authors argue that nervousness before a performance or new experience can also be interpreted as excitement (Brooks, 2014) and can serve as a motivator for success (Altun, 2023). While Altun (2023) acknowledges that anxiety and nervousness can negatively affect motivation, the author emphasises that good preparation, support, and gradual exposure can be effective strategies for managing nervousness.

#### **4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Expecting cooperation across contexts**

The participating students expressed an expectation to cooperate with one another despite the physical distance. They associated this with sharing experiences and ideas, anticipating that it would foster creativity, with all contributions being included in the final product. Additionally, they expected that regular contact would help them feel connected and support their collaborative efforts.

*“I expect from the project that we will be able to complete a final product together, despite the physical distance” (P15).*

*“I expect that as a group we can be creative together” (P4).*

*“In general, I hope for a good cooperation in the team and also that the different experiences and points of contact through music and creative expression are represented” (P17).*

*“I hope to build connections with others and become more open-minded” (P3).*

*“I expect it to be a success as we will help each other and eventually become close because we will be with each other every week” (P2).*

The latter statement highlights the expectation that cooperation would not only be supportive in nature but also foster a sense of cohesion. Meko and Busari (2018) associate cohesion with participation and recognition, where all efforts and contributions are equally acknowledged and included (cf. Greuel, 2019). The reference to regular contact as a means of enhancing cooperation is further supported by Yanicki et al. (2015). In this study, the participants shared a common goal – developing a music video – which required strong cooperation (Tarr et al., 2014).

The expectations regarding making music together were further examined within the context of the digital platform on which the project was conducted.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Expectations of Contact on a Digital Platform with Participants From Diverse Contexts**

The statements below indicate that the participants looked forward to the contact with and to work in an international group, and that they believed this would lead to expanding their network with people:

*“I would like to work with students internationally” (P10).*

*“I am looking forward to the contact with other students” (P15).*

*“I’m looking forward to working together and making new contacts” (P7).*

This theme highlights the participants' expectations that the diversity within the group could enrich their experience of working on a digital platform while fostering relationships as the project progressed. In the sub-themes below, the participants express their belief that diversity in online communication could play a key role in building relationships.

##### **4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Diversity as part of the experience**

Some concerns were raised regarding the different languages being spoken by the participants.

*“Communication difficulties due to foreign languages could be a challenge” (P16).*

*“I can imagine that communication will be difficult in this case, as we will be many people with different languages” (P17).*

A participant referred to being excited to work in a diverse group, and expressed the expectation that this could be a learning opportunity.

*“I am excited about the diversity the programme has to offer and learning to work in groups with different people ... learning from different people in an online world” (P11).*

Mabvurira (2020) also links the potential for learning within a diverse context, explaining that participation and engagement with different cultures and nationalities in a developmental project can foster mutual respect among participants. The author emphasises that inclusive activities allow everyone to work together toward achieving shared objectives (cf. Tarr et al., 2014).

Reflecting on the planned project, some participants anticipated that their involvement would result in a pooling of diverse resources, where they could combine talents, abilities, genres, styles, and cultural differences to create something together.

*“I would like to work on my ability to play together as a group. I wish to learn how to develop something together and how to put together different abilities and ideas to make up a mixture of various styles” (P18).*

*“I look forward to perceive[ing] other participants with their talents” (P6).*

*“I hope that music from different genres and different cultures, as well as countries, will be brought in” (P17).*

*“To discover possible differences and similarities in musical culture” (P8).*

*“I’m looking forward to mak[ing] new contacts and to interact[ing] with people who live in another country and thus bring their own story, preferences, and experiences with them” (P18).*

*“I want to engage more with them [students from another context], knowing different views of students” (P14).*

Levy (2018) and Vipond (2012) affirm that joint musical opportunities provide diverse individuals with a platform to express themselves through their acquired skills, enabling participation. Through socially inclusive practices, shared experiences contribute to individuals being bound together by shared attitudes and behaviours (Silver, 2015; Green & Janmaat, 2011). This positive contact fosters effective cooperation (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2015) and equal-level collaboration (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). Greuel (2019) further suggests that shared experiences during joint music-making can lead to shared emotions, or affect attunement. In this study, the joint music-making took place online, which was also a key focus of the participants' expectations.

#### **4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Online communication**

The participants' description of their expectations regarding online communication within the project highlighted some concerns. One participant anticipated that communication might lack depth and that misunderstandings could occur, while another shared this concern but expressed the expectation that communication would improve over time:

*“I expect very factual communication because on a relationship level, communication through digital media can often lead to misunderstandings” (P8).*

*“My expectations are that it is going to be a bit tricky in the beginning but it will get better. Speaking on a digital platform will be tricky and can cause communication problems but it will get better over time” (P9).*

In support of the raised concern, Amelia and Balqis (2023) found that while online contact increases global connectivity, it also presents challenges regarding communication norms and forms of expression. To address this concern, Albawali and Nadeem (2020) advise that lecturers or facilitators of online activities need to be creative to ensure active engagement and participation from all participants. Additionally, Dondi et al. (2020) refer to future skills that will require innovative approaches to develop the ability to build empathic and trustful mutually beneficial relationships. A participating student also offered the following option to

address the raised concern and confirmed the earlier expectation that communication would become easier as the project progressed:

*“I also think that in this case, communication via message forums will be helpful and more successful, and after a settling-in phase in the group, there will also be easier communication and a generally relaxed atmosphere” (P17).*

A variety of online platforms allow people to meet, share ideas, and participate in activities. These include virtual meeting rooms such as Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, as well as messaging applications like WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, and Snapchat (Şerban et al., 2020). In relation to the collaborative project in this study, Parker et al. (2016) suggest that these platforms offer opportunities for individuals with shared interests or goals to engage, benefiting all participants.

However, participants also expressed concerns about using technology to create the music video, particularly regarding poor internet connections.

*“But I have doubts about how making music via the digital route will work” (P4).*

*“Much remote work via audio and video recordings will happen, and I am worried that I have no recording possibilities. I think poor internet connection and dealing with communication difficulties will be challenging... and the different technical requirements” (P16).*

*“I also hope that all the technology works out and that there aren’t any problems” (P10).*

*“I hope that the internet connection is okay so that we can understand each other reasonably” (P7).*

With the underlying concerns of load shedding in South Africa, a student commented as follows:

*“To be able to work with them [German students] without having any problems with electricity” (P2).*

Vartanova and Gladkova (2019) describe the digital divide as a form of digital inequality, where individuals without access to devices, internet, or data are excluded from participation. This also includes access to electricity. The authors agree that this challenge can be mitigated through institutional resources that provide access to technology, technical support, and the development of new skills, as well as guidelines that promote the participation and inclusion of all participants.

In conclusion of this sub-theme, one participant expressed a desire for physical contact after completing the project online: *“I think this project may have a really positive impact on my life. Maybe one day I can even meet the German students face to face”* (P12). This reflects an expectation to build long-term relationships with participants from different contexts.

#### **4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Relationship building**

Acknowledging that the group would be diverse, the utterances below describe expectations that relationships would be built during the course of the project.

*“An aim is to develop relationships with those in different countries”* (P3).

*“I hope and expect to make great relationships with more diverse people”* (P9).

*“I wish to build a bond with everyone even though we are working together on a digital platform”* (P2).

The anticipated relationships formed during this project are supported by Lessard et al. (2019), who note that cross-group contact during group activities has the potential to foster a sense of connectedness and belonging, leading to social inclusion and ultimately social cohesion. Additional comments from participants further highlight expectations to create friendships, form bonds within the group, learn from one another, share and exchange ideas, and build personal connections.

*“To build a bond with them [other students] even though we are working together on a digital platform”* (P2).

*“I do hope to create new friendships”* (P3).

*“I am expecting to learn more about the international group and also my group. I will also learn different personalities within the group” (P5).*

*“To get to know the German students and learn a lot from them” (P12).*

*“I hope to have a good exchange of ideas and also get to know some of them on a more personal level, not just as a group in the Zoom meetings” (P18).*

The connectedness that emerges through joint music-making is a result of inclusion, social bonding, and a sense of belonging (Greuel, 2019), fostered by teamwork that promotes cohesion among those making music together (Gordon et al., 2020).

While the previous themes focused on expectations related to the project, the final theme in this section addresses the participating students’ expectations regarding their own personal development within the project.

### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Participation to Contribute to Own Development**

The student participants expected to acquire skills that would contribute to their personal development and professional growth, while also recognising the importance of effective communication and cooperation in successfully completing a music video project.

#### **4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Skills development**

When reflecting on expectations, Participant 3 identified “...*improving our skills*” as a key expectation. In the first two themes above, the participants referred to skills such as communication, cooperation, and digital competence. Ehlers (2020) refers to these skills as future skills that are essential for the workforce. Related to this study, Levy (2018) and Vipond (2012) emphasise the importance of knowledge and skills for effectively incorporating the arts into social work.

In this study, the participants identified communication, musical, and digital skills as the types of skills they wanted to acquire through working together based on their shared interest in music during the project (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018).

### *Category 3.1.1: Communication skills*

Despite the project being a music-making activity, Participant 8 expected “*a high demand on communication skills*”. The inclusion criteria for participation in this study required English as the medium of communication. This was a second language for the German students and for some of the South African students as well. Consequently, some participants anticipated that language could pose a challenge for effective communication but also expressed hope of becoming more proficient during the course of the project.

*“...learning a new language” (P3).*

*“Deepening my ability to use the English language” (P6).*

*“Also, my English has fallen asleep a bit and it would be nice to improve it again” (P8).*

*“I’m hoping to improve my English and intercultural [communication] skills” (P18).*

Ehlers (2020) regards communication as not only language proficiency but also the ability to engage in dialogue that supports strategic planning and cooperation. In this study, the student participants were aware that they needed to develop communication skills that would enable them to work effectively as a group when planning the production of the music video.

### *Category 3.1.2: Musical skills*

The participating students expressed a desire to develop their musical skills, as well as the ability to apply these skills in social work.

*“I expect to improve my personal musical skills” (P18).*

*“I expect to improve my skills immensely, which can be very helpful in working with music projects” (P8).*

They also expressed a desire to develop practical skills, improve their sense of rhythm, learn to play new instruments, and explore different areas of music.

*“Deepening a sense of rhythm and getting to know new instruments” (P6).*

*“My expectations regarding this music project is that I want to learn more about music... how to use different instruments and other fields of music in a practical way”* (P14).

*“...and learn new interpretations and styles”* (P7).

Other participants emphasised the expectation of developing creative skills while working in an online group setting.

*“Learning more about making music online and in a group”* (P11).

*“I am expecting my creativity side to be stimulated and explored more with this music-making project”* (P13)

Joint artistic activities offer participants the opportunity to connect with others, fostering new narratives that promote both collective and individual identities and agency (Schininà & Ghiglione, 2019). Ehlers (2020) further emphasises that creativity within teams involves the use of complementary skills – such as musical skills – as a form of "shared expertise" (p. 20). In the evolving world of work, this shared expertise can now be accessed digitally across the globe, supporting the participants' expectation of developing digital skills.

### *Category 3.1.3: Digital skills*

Digital platforms bring individuals or groups together in an online space (Yu & Ramaprasad, 2019), where people with shared interests create value for all participants (Parker et al., 2016). Linking musical and digital skills, Lázaro Cantabrana et al. (2015) suggest that making music together on a digital platform can provide opportunities for social workers to develop both music and digital skills, as well as to gain knowledge across cultural and geographical boundaries. In line with this, Walze (2021) adds that combining technology with social and artistic capital can foster innovation and creativity. With the music video as the final project outcome, the participating students identified digital skills in video and audio editing and production as essential skills they expected to develop during their participation.

*“I expect to learn new skills about creating a music video”* (P4).

*“I expect to learn new skills in video and audio editing from this project” (P15).*

In addition to developing skills, the participating students described expectations to develop and grow personally and professionally.

#### **4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Personal development and professional growth**

Van der Westhuizen and Greuel's (2021) findings demonstrate that transdisciplinary collaboration between social work and the arts introduces a new dimension to social work interventions. This approach benefits both social workers and their service users, fostering personal and professional growth, as reflected by one participant:

*“My expectations are to build up self-confidence when making music and creating digital pieces, which will be useful on a personal as well as a professional level” (P18).*

In terms of personal development, Loubser (2015) proposes that the inclusion of the arts in transdisciplinary work has the potential to reframe and reinterpret one's view of the world through self-awareness and self-reflection, which influence personal development in terms of value judgements and self-conceptions. A participant acknowledged that personal development would be required for effective participation in this project.

*“I am going to have to learn working on something together with strangers. Personally, I will have to overcome myself and come out of myself” (P4).*

The above statement is supported by Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021), who noted that a joint music-making activity can empower individuals and foster respect for diversity when intercultural experiences influence perceptions of oneself and others. Krznaric (2014) explains that shared music-making may promote openness to different viewpoints through the arts, which could lead to personal development. Despite the earlier mention of concerns about language difficulties, the statements below indicate the participants' expectations that they will develop the ability to express themselves, overcome shyness, and enhance their socialisation skills.

*“I think that I can gain experience from this international project in terms of working together with students from another country. I will also be able to experience coming out of myself” (P15).*

*“It may also make me more open and social, as I am quite introverted and shy” (P10).*

*“I think it will improve my socialising skills because I will be interacting with different people” (P13).*

*“It can contribute to me becoming more social” (P3).*

The development of their personal artistic abilities was accentuated as an expectation through the following utterances.

*“I am expecting to grow as a singer and also to explore other kinds of art” (P5).*

*“I hope the journey allows me to grow as an artist and expand my horizons” (P9).*

*“I expect that it will be interesting and nice to expand on my artistic abilities” (P10).*

*“I think that this experience can offer me new musical skills and I am happy to be able to pursue one of my hobbies during my studies” (P7).*

In terms of professional growth, some participants described how they hope that the project will contribute to their professional growth so that they could use what they learn in social work practice.

*“I think it will help me in the field of social work as I can use something like this project in my work” (P13).*

*“I hope that I can project my new skills onto the young people in my work” (P6).*

*“This experience will make me able to comfort people through art” (P5).*

*“It is also good to learn and master the method to pass on in work settings” (P17).*

*“Also, I wish to learn how to create music pieces and professional videos because I might want to use these skills in my further professional development. I can imagine to use music and digital creation as a part of my work with the youth” (P18).*

The above statements highlight the participants' expectations of being able to use what they learned during this project in social work practice. Considering that such projects require collaboration and cooperation, Dondi et al. (2020) describe teamwork effectiveness as the appreciation of diverse backgrounds and opinions to foster inclusiveness, which will contribute to the group's ability to achieve the desired objectives and prepare participants for the workforce. In this study, the participants acknowledged that international and intercultural collaborations could enhance their professional development to work in diverse contexts.

*“It can cause great impact on how I perceive diverse individuals. This project will allow me to also grow and be able to form intercultural connections which will help me professionally” (P9).*

*“It will teach me to be able to work with people with different skills and how to interact with different personalities and the importance of teamwork and patience” (P2).*

The arts can provide social workers with innovative ways to connect with their service users (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018) and offer opportunities for self-exploration and understanding within their own contexts (Huss, 2017), benefiting service users both individually and socially (Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018). Supporting this statement, Krznaric (2014) claims that self-awareness guides thoughts, actions, value judgments, and self-conceptions, creating openness to different viewpoints that lead to new insights. The participating students also indicated that skills in using music in social work could enhance service users' abilities to reflect and express themselves.

*“It would help me become a social worker that can help clients that might not understand or find it difficult to explain what they think and feel using words. I hope I can make use of the skills this programme has to offer” (P11).*

*“We also learn a method here, a new point of contact with music, how we can later reach our clients” (P17).*

Descriptions of the creation of a musical project as an outcome of their development during the project concludes this section.

#### **4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Communication and cooperation to create a project**

Communication is essential for successful collaboration, while cooperation refers to the ability to effectively work together in teams where differences are identified, acknowledged, and managed to achieve a common goal (Ehlers, 2020). In this study, making music together required participants to communicate and coordinate their actions to collaborate effectively in creating a joint music-making video (Greuel, 2019; Tarr et al., 2014; Koelsch, 2012). One participant expressed that making music together on an online platform would offer a different mode of communication in a professional environment.

*“This experience will help me in different ways of communicating in field work. It will show me how to communicate with clients without writing or speaking, because people have differences. It’s not easy to just speak with someone you meet with for the first time. It will help me a lot” (P14).*

Greuel (2019) and Meko and Busari (2018) concur that joint music-making requires cooperation as well as tolerance and respect for each individual’s unique abilities and contributions which can lead to an experience of being included in a particular context. A participant specifically referred to collaboration that requires respect for different roles and contributions.

*“In my opinion, respectful and collaborative interaction with other people is important, which we can learn in this teamwork project. Like dealing with a diverse group, with an expectation and understanding of each one’s roles and responsibilities” (P17).*

Ehlers (2020) describes cooperation as the ability to work successfully toward a common goal, while Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) emphasise that inclusive cooperation involves valuing all contributions, with all participants in the group working together on equal

footing. This perspective was also underscored by the reflections of the participants prior to their involvement in the project.

*“Learning from each other and making a really good programme together” (P12).*

*“...you create something together that we all can proudly present” (P1).*

The next section presents the reflections after participation in the project – Phase 2.

#### 4.4 PHASE 2: FINDINGS – INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

The previous findings, along with those presented below, offer a "before and after" portrayal of the participants' experiences. After the project concluded, the participating students provided reflections that focused on the following questions:

- How did you experience making music together in the project?
- How did you experience contact with students from another context on a digital platform?
- How did this experience contribute to your own development?

These reflections captured the participants' verbatim contributions after their participation on the online platform. The questions served as a guide for the initial identification of the main themes. Following the data analysis, using the framework proposed by Maguire and Delahunt (2017), sub-themes and categories were identified under each theme. The table below summarises the themes, sub-themes, and categories.

**Table 5: Summary of the findings of Phase 2**

Themes	Sub-themes	Categories
1. Experiences gained through making music together in the online project	1.1. The value of working together	1.1.1. Participation and cooperation
		1.1.2. Diverse contributions
2. Experiences of contact with participants from another context on a digital platform	1.2. Learning to use technology	1.2.1. Developing a joint product
	2.1. Online communication across contexts	2.1.1. Challenges experienced
2.2. Building relationships		2.1.2. Positive experiences
		3.1. Personal development

3. Perceptions of development that occurred through participation	3.2. Technical skills development	
	3.3. Skills to work in diverse teams	

The themes are supported by verbatim quotations from the participants and are compared with both the expectations outlined earlier and existing literature. Three themes, aligned with the guiding questions, are presented below.

#### **4.4.1 Theme 1: Experiences Gained Through Making Music Together in the Online Project**

Before the project, the students expected to make music together online and create a joint product – a music video showcasing their diverse skills. While some expressed nervousness, most participants anticipated joyful and fun experiences. They also expected to learn how to cooperate across different contexts. In this first theme, reflecting on their participation, the students recognised the value of working together through diverse contributions and collaboration. They also noted how the use of technology contributed to the successful development of the final product, confirming that their expectations for joint online music-making were fulfilled.

##### **4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: The value of working together**

The statements below describe a mix of fun and excitement while working together, alongside stressful and exhausting experiences that the participants were ultimately able to overcome.

*“Working together with strangers was exciting yet nerve-racking at the same time” (P3).*

*“It was fun. It somehow welded us together to work together, even if it took a long time or when it was hard. It was sometimes very exhausting because we put a lot of effort into it, and therefore it took a long time, but it was also fun” (P18).*

*“Working together in the large international group worked really well, despite some problems with the internet connection and the software. It was a lot of fun” (P17).*

The latter comment highlights how the participants had to work together to deal with internet connection and software problems, which eventually led to them having fun together. Other descriptions also emphasised the positive and interesting experience when working together online.

*“I found it to be a very beautiful experience” (P15).*

*“It was truly an interesting experience” (P3).*

*“It was a new experience definitely, and it was interesting and fun” (P10).*

*“The actual creation of the video was also a lot of fun and worked well with the programme” (P17).*

The descriptions above point to the joy experienced through the collaborative process and flow of creating a music production together (Price, 2021). These comments also reflect Perdomo-Guevaro’s (2017) view that the joy experienced during a performance is related to the extent performers express meaning and purpose in the performance.

According to the participants, working together required active participation, which fostered cooperation and the inclusion of diverse ideas and talents. These aspects are explored further in the categories below.

#### *Category 1.1.1: Participation and cooperation*

A participant expressed mixed feelings, noting the time-consuming nature of the project and the challenges posed by language barriers. However, they also found the diverse forms of expression among the participants to be interesting.

*“The experience was mixed. On the one hand, I found it very nice to see how other people express themselves musically and also to hear their interpretation of the song. On the other hand, I also found the collaboration on the music video very tedious. Things like everyone’s creative ideas, the time it takes, but also the language barrier, just took a lot of nerves” (P19).*

The participants acknowledged the language barriers that caused some nervousness and anxiety. Altun (2023) and Brooks (2014) recommend that in these situations, participants should be guided to remain calm, allowing the new experience to create excitement and motivate them to succeed. In addition to preparation, support and gradual exposure may serve as strategies to overcome nervousness. Similarly, the participants, once again referring to the effort required for participation, explained that the project necessitated contributions from all participants, which contributed to a positive end result.

*“Even though it took a lot of effort in the beginning to film yourself performing, it was worth it and I think that it turned out to be a great end product in which we all participated” (P17).*

*“A lot of personal contribution was required, but at the same time it was not possible without the group and the joint development and the joint results” (P18).*

In this study, the researcher was interested in discovering how, or if, social inclusion could be experienced in such a project. The comments above highlighted the importance of contributions from all participants. Additionally, a participant explained that cooperation developed over time, particularly when they were working in smaller groups, which led to the inclusion of all contributions made by the participants.

*“Especially towards the end, the cooperation in the respective groups became clear. There were many pieces of the puzzle that we tried to complete as best we could. Each participant was able to contribute his or her own ideas and together we decided on the editing of the audio track, for example” (P15).*

Related to the social work profession, the above reflection shows that the project helped participants take collective responsibility for including everyone in the group and caring for each other in the online environment (IFSW, 2014). Yanicki et al. (2015) articulate that social inclusion is a key focus of social work practices, contributing to the holistic well-being of all members, where their well-being is recognised, acknowledged, and valued (Allman, 2013).

### *Category 1.1.2: Diverse contributions*

The participants expressed positive experiences when discovering the different talents of all the participants at the beginning of the project.

*“At the beginning you didn't know what talents we had until we saw each one's individual contribution” (P15).*

*“Everyone had different ideas and talents” (P3).*

*“It was very exciting to see different talents” (P6).*

Working within a diverse group created a learning opportunity through participation and engagement, resulting in respect for individual contributions (cf. Mabvurira, 2020). The above description indicates that the inclusive activities enable everyone to participate and work together on the same level (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021) to meet the desired objectives (cf. Tarr et al., 2014). This project thus served as an innovative group activity that provided an opportunity for social inclusion (Lee, 2021).

The first sub-theme describes how the participants experienced working together. The next sub-theme shifts the focus to the online platform, specifically addressing how the use of technology was perceived.

#### **4.4.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Learning to use technology**

Similar to descriptions in the previous sub-theme, the participants indicated that the project took time and effort, while also concluding that it was a positive experience.

*“But when we finally edited the videos together via Zoom, everything worked out well. It was just a lot of time that we had to invest in the videos every week because there were always new tasks coming in” (P4).*

*“And sometimes it was tough to learn how we were going to complete the video and all the elements we got to familiarise ourselves with. For example, the software that helped to make our videos and put them all together first took time to learn, but then it helped us a lot in the end” (P10).*

The above descriptions illustrate how both the use of the Zoom platform and the software that the participants learned contributed to their learning and skills development, which required time and effort. Ehlers (2020) refers to innovation as a future skill, highlighting the importance of the ability to experiment, be creative, and remain open to finding solutions when faced with challenges. The statement below, however, emphasises that creating their own videos and seeing the contributions of others became a positive experience.

*“It was a cool experience to make our own videos and to see what the other members could contribute and what they were good at” (P10).*

As mentioned in the findings of the first reflections (Sub-theme 2.2), the Zoom online platform for meetings and the WhatsApp messaging application were utilised in this study. Furthermore, as suggested by Parker et al. (2016), the Audacity audio and Shotcut video recording platforms were used to effectively engage with the project and attain a shared goal. Importantly, in line with the focus on social inclusion, the participating students continuously expressed how they valued the contributions, talents, and ideas of their peers, as also indicated by the above statement and also under Category 1.1.2. They further explained how these contributions supported their development of the joint product.

#### *Category 1.2.1: Developing a joint product*

This category describes how the total experience, resulting in a joint product, contributed to a positive experience that valued and included all contributions.

*“Everyone was so talented and it was heart-warming to watch the project at the end while reflecting on how it was put together, because I was a part of the process” (P10).*

*“All in all, I think our project was very successful with a great end product. Thanks to all the help and networking it worked out great” (P17).*

Considering that none of the participants were professional musicians, the reflections highlight how everyone was able to contribute to the final product without experiencing any judgement (cf. Kim, 2021).

The next theme focuses on the interaction between students from different contexts, namely South Africa and Germany.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: Experiences of Contact With Participants From Another Context on a Digital Platform**

In the reflections prior to the onset of this project, the participants anticipated that diversity would be a significant aspect of the experience. They recognised that online communication could present challenges, particularly with language barriers, and expressed a desire to build relationships across different contexts. After the project concluded, their reflections revealed both challenges and positive experiences associated with online communication, as well as their success in building relationships throughout the project. The findings in this theme again draw a connection between their expectations and their actual experiences.

##### **4.4.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Online communication across two contexts**

This sub-theme is divided into two categories, highlighting both the challenges and positive experiences of the student participants when communicating online across the two contexts.

###### *Category 2.1.1: Challenges experienced*

The participants reported that digital contact was not easy, and that this affected their ability to get to know students from another context. They also noted that the German and South African students connected on their respective campuses, while the international contact took place online, impacting the overall depth of communication.

*“It wasn’t always easy to establish contact with the other students. I think the fact that it was digital meant that the exchange wasn’t super easy. We managed it well, but I don’t feel like I got to know the South African students as well as I wanted to” (P19).*

*“Unfortunately, relations have not been deepened much. Via Zoom it is sometimes difficult, and especially in a larger group. Sometimes you miss the beginning of the conversation, that one common denominator. Overall, I found it very nice to work internationally, but experienced the international component relatively little, because we [German students] could meet on site” (P18).*

The challenges experienced by the participants were similar to the findings of Amelia and Balqis (2023). While online contact increases global connectivity, it also poses challenges regarding communication norms and forms of expression. One participant specifically mentioned the one-hour time difference and language barriers that affected communication between the South African and German students.

*“Time zones are often difficult when working with international students and there is also a language barrier. However, we made time and used Zoom as our form of communication, and we tried to help each other [when working on the project]” (P3).*

Albawali and Nadeem (2020) address concerns raised by the participants by advising lecturers or facilitators engaged in online activities to be creative in order to ensure active engagement and participation from all participants. Dondi et al. (2020), when referring to future skills, state that the process requires facilitators to provide innovative methods for developing skills that will foster empathic and trustful mutually beneficial relationships. For this project, the facilitators systematically engaged with the participants weekly across various digital platforms, each week building on the previous weeks' work and experiences. This highlights how efforts to support one another helped manage challenges. Considering these challenges, the next category presents positive experiences related to online communication.

#### *Category 2.1.1: Positive experiences*

The participants described how the initial communication was strained and how this improved over time.

*“It was really exciting to get to communicate with them because we are in different parts of the world. But because of Zoom and WhatsApp we were able to talk to them and share some insights to what happens here in South Africa” (P10).*

*“Where communication was reserved in the first session, it can now be said that this also improved through the continuity of the Zoom sessions. It was very important for us to understand the circumstances under which the UWC students were participating in the project. Many thanks to them for being so open and sharing with us” (P15).*

*“I was overwhelmed at first and didn’t really dare to ask much, but bit by bit we all became closer to each other. Above all, the Zoom meetings outside of seminar time, in which we worked on the video, worked well. “The project helped to get to know the situation of the South African students and also to gain insights into the often challenging everyday life. In addition, our WhatsApp group helped to talk about topics that were not directly related to the project” (P4).*

The above statements firstly point out that continuous, informal, and regular contact on the Zoom platform, as well as a WhatsApp group among the participating students (initiated by them), helped them become comfortable in their communications with each other. Secondly, an openness about context-related realities indicates a level of trust from the participants who shared such information and a level of respect from those who received it. The project provided participants with weekly formal online sessions where they learned to use the relevant software, and discussed and planned the upcoming tasks to be completed over the course of the following week. This was facilitated by the researcher and her collaboration partner. The participants further arranged contact sessions among themselves to complete the tasks. The statement below highlights how these informal sessions led to a positive experience.

*“It was very nice to meet the students from South Africa. Through breakout sessions and a WhatsApp group, we were also able to get to know each other a little better and more personally, as well as learn about the current situation in South Africa and see how the South African students are dealing with it. University life and art have always been a positive conversation starters” (P18).*

Vartanova and Gladkova (2019) comment on the digital divide, noting that people without access to devices, the internet, or data are excluded from participation. During the study, the South African participants faced electricity outages due to load shedding, which resulted in connectivity issues. The understanding developed within the group led to the students initiating their own means of communication in order to “deal with it” (P18).

The last part of the above statement highlights a shared interest in the arts, as well as all participants being students at a university, as aspects that further contributed to online

conversations. This then set the tone for a level of relationship building, which is presented in the sub-theme below.

#### **4.4.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Building relationships**

As also mentioned in the previous sub-themes and categories, a participant described how participating in the project was initially difficult, but that the introduction videos each person presented helped them to get to know one another:

*“In the beginning it was difficult and we needed time to get to know each other. Once we could see how each one presented themselves through music, it became easier to understand each other” (P4).*

This comment highlights how music served as a non-verbal means for the intercultural group to express themselves, resulting in a better understanding of each other. Levy (2018) and Vipond (2012) affirm that collaborative musical opportunities provide diverse individuals with the chance to express themselves using skills acquired through participation in such projects. The shared experiences contribute to individuals being bonded together by specific shared interests and behaviours (Silver, 2015). Other sentiments expressed how the participants supported one another and how they were able to start building their relationships by sharing ideas outside of the project’s framework.

*“Everyone was helpful and friendly, and also understanding” (P6).*

*“I especially liked the fact that we were able to network with each other and exchange ideas about other topics” (P17).*

This positive form of contact leads to effective cooperation (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2015) and collaboration on an equal level (Greuel, 2021). Participant 10 emphasised that the weekly (i.e., regular) contact further contributed to a positive experience: *“We were able to meet some new cool people. It was really nice to meet up with them throughout the weeks because it was something to look forward to as it was nice to get together with everyone”*. As indicated as an expectation in category 2.3 of the first set of findings, relationships developed over the

course of the project through regular contact. This was further emphasised through the following excerpts:

*“The initial shyness subsided from everyone after the first meeting. Through the individual tasks and exchanges, we began to get to know each other better every week and, above all, to understand each other”* (P15).

*“I found this to be very interesting and with a high level of positive experience. Where at the beginning language barriers and shyness stood in my way, we have now been able to understand each other very well. And we also exchanged a lot, not about the project only but about all the different circumstances and our environments. In general, I thought it was great how open-minded we became and thing that the existing contacts will continue”* (P17).

The anticipated relationships formed during the course of this project were affirmed by the cross-group contact during group activities, which fostered a sense of connectedness and belonging (Lessard et al., 2019). This resulted in a form of social cohesion, as bonds within the group were created through learning from one another, exchanging ideas, and ultimately becoming personally connected.

In the final theme of this phase of data collection, the participants shared their perceptions of development through participating in this project.

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3: Perceptions of Development That Occurred Through Participation**

Before they began participating in the online project, the students expressed their expectations regarding the development of communication skills, musical and digital skills, personal and professional growth, and the ability to collaborate effectively to create a project. Reflecting on their own development during this project, the participants emphasised that it provided them with an opportunity for personal growth, particularly in terms of their artistic abilities. They also noted the enhancement of technical skills and the ability to work in diverse teams, while recognising the intercultural communication skills that were developed through their participation in the project.

#### **4.4.3.1 Sub-theme 3.1: An opportunity for personal development**

*“The experience has definitely boosted my personal development a lot” (P18).*

The reflections presented in this sub-theme indicated that the participants experienced personal development, specifically in becoming aware of the diverse contexts in which people live and valuing what one has. Additionally, with regard to professional development, the role of art and culture in building relationships and creating awareness was emphasised.

*“I have learnt a lot throughout this project. I know more about different cultures now, and because of it I have grown more as a person” (P3).*

*“I would say that this project has shown me how art and culture can work even with many kilometres of distance. It has also shown me that no matter under which beautiful and not so beautiful circumstances we live that culture, music and art can bring people together and spread joy of life. This project showed me once again what privileged circumstances we live in Europe and that we should be more grateful for every little thing. I will definitely not forget this experience and I am very grateful to all the participants for the wonderful time we spent together” (P15).*

Both Holter (2018) and Webb (2015) concur that a professional identity is based on personal beliefs, interests and attributes, motives, and prior personal and professional experiences. Given that the participating students all shared an interest in intercultural/international contact, music, and a willingness to participate in an online project, the above statements suggest that professional development occurred based on personal experiences within this project.

As highlighted in the latter statement, the artistic skills that were developed and/or enhanced during their participation were indicated as a form of personal development that was experienced.

##### *Category 3.1.1: Artistic development*

The participants had access to a variety of instruments at their respective universities, as well as professional input from lecturers, who were the facilitators of the project. Some participants

explained how they learned to play new instruments while experimenting during the development of their own videos for inclusion in the project.

*“I have learnt a lot throughout this project. I can now play two instruments” (P3).*

*“I was able to get a start at doing something that I’ve always wanted to do, which is to play a musical instrument and it’s really nice to have had the opportunity to learn something new. I only learned a bit now, but I have experience now and can pick up where I left off” (P10).*

The latter statement emphasises that this development is seen as the beginning of a long-term process of honing artistic skills beyond the project. One participant, while not specifically mentioning the development of musical or technical skills, highlighted that participation increased their self-confidence and contributed to professional growth, particularly in the context of producing music collaboratively online.

*I’ve noticed how much I’m already capable of musically and technically. It has strengthened my musical self-confidence to realise that I can make a good contribution to the group, which fits harmoniously into the overall picture, or that I could spontaneously write a small piece in the introduction video” (P18).*

This reflective statement is supported by the literature. Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) acknowledge that joint music-making activities have the ability to empower individuals and encourage respect for diversity as intercultural experiences unfold and influence perceptions of oneself and others. Creativity involves the use of complementary skills, in this case, musical skills. These complementary skills and shared expertise are relevant in the new world of work, making digital artistic experiences accessible worldwide and supporting participants’ development of digital skills (Ehlers, 2020). Continuing from the above statement, the next sub-theme describes the participants’ experiences in terms of technical skills development.

#### **4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Technical skills development**

Considering the descriptions of technical challenges that they experienced in the previous themes, a participant valued the development of computer and software skills during the course of the project.

*“I was also able to improve my computer and software skills significantly, which I could never have imagined before. In the end, all I can say is thank you to all those who contributed here, it was a great time” (P17).*

Bearing in mind that this online project focused on the inclusion of both musical and technical skills, Lázaro Cantabrana et al. (2015) link the musical and digital skills used in online projects and concur that these skills have the potential to support development across cultural and geographical boundaries. Walze (2021) adds that combining technology with social and artistic capital can stimulate innovation and creativity. Additional comments regarding the development of technical skills centred on the use of a guide track and audio and video editing, further indicating the perception that participants would be able to use these skills in the future.

*“It has also helped me on a musical level, as I have learned to work with a guide track and to record a good musical video” (P4).*

*“I also learned a lot of new things about audio and video editing that will help me later” (P4).*

*“I now also have learnt some more things about editing and if ever I needed to do something relating to it, I’d have some experience and that’s one of the advantages that came out of participating in this project” (P10).*

*“I learned a lot about audio editing. I had never improved an audio track before and it motivated me to record more when I realised that you can improve the quality significantly with a simple audio programme. I was already able to do a lot in video editing, but I also tried out and learned new things there. So, I learned to work more professionally in music video productions” (P18).*

The above statements show that the expectations shared prior to the project regarding digital skills in video and audio editing and production – skills that were anticipated to be needed and developed during their participation – were achieved.

As a final sub-theme, the participating students reflected on the development of skills for working in diverse teams, acknowledging the value of intercultural communication skills.

#### **4.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Skills to work in diverse teams**

In sub-theme 1.1 above, the participants described their experiences of working together and incorporating the diverse contributions of all members. In this final sub-theme, they reflected on their own development throughout the project, revisiting these experiences and noting how they contributed to their skills development in working within diverse teams. The reflection below describes how online joint music-making can foster an appreciation for diverse inputs in creating a quality product, as well as an acknowledgment of the value of having a shared goal within a diverse team to overcome challenges.

*“The project has shown me that a lot of things simply work better when you work on them together and that no matter how different the circumstances and people may be, we can still achieve something as a team that we would not have imagined before. The project has also shown me how much diversity there is, whether in the voices or in general, and that this is something really great” (P17).*

Krznaric (2014) explains that shared music-making contributes to personal development, as the arts promote an openness to different viewpoints. Despite the challenges mentioned previously, this statement indicates that by working collaboratively, while respecting and acknowledging diversity, participants could achieve more than expected. As respect for diversity is a core principle in social work (IFSW, 2014), the reported experiences of creating a product that required participation and cooperation, along with respect for all contributions, led to an ability to manage and overcome challenges (Mabvurira, 2020) and to feel valued as part of a diverse group (Mekoa & Busari, 2019), fostering social inclusion.

Focusing on intercultural communication within diverse teams, the emphasis on music created a platform where language barriers could be overcome.

*“The experience has brought me a lot. I have lost the fear of communicating with other people in English” (P4).*

*“With our shared goal to make music, it deepened my English language skills. In this project, communication was fun and exciting” (P6).*

Communication is essential for successful collaborations to achieve a common goal (Ehlers, 2020). In this study, making music together required participants to communicate and coordinate their musical activities effectively in order to create the joint music-making video (Greuel, 2019; Tarr et al., 2014; Koelsch, 2012). However, a participant acknowledged that intercultural communication skills were developed but explained that the online platform affected the depth to which these skills were developed.

*“I was able to develop my intercultural communication skills a bit as I had hoped, but it was difficult to interact online” (P18).*

In the final phase of this study, the participants took part in online FGDs to reflect on what they had learned and to share their experiences. The findings from this concluding phase are presented below.

#### **4.5 FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUP 1**

As described in Chapter 2, two FGDs took place at the end of the project. The aim was to further explore the participants’ shared experiences related to the social dimensions of making music together (Greuel, 2019) on an online platform aimed at social inclusion, as well as the knowledge and skills social workers require to facilitate shared music-making to promote social inclusion. The FGDs were conducted online, and permission to record these discussions was obtained. The recordings were transcribed immediately after each FGD, and field notes made by the researcher during the FGDs were added to the transcripts (Creswell, 2014).

As with the reflections, the framework by Maguire and Delahunt (2017) was used to analyse the data by both the researcher and the independent coder. The findings, together with

verbatim quotes, are presented together with a comparison of existing literature. In addition, some links between the individual and FGD findings are highlighted.

The first FGD focused on the experiences of the social dimensions of making music together during the project and took place at the end of the project before the final product was presented. A summary of the findings is presented in the table below.

**Table 6: Summary of the findings – Focus Group 1**

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Experiencing contact between the participants on the online platform	1.1. Formal and informal contact and participation
	1.2. Contact leading to building relationships
2. Descriptions of cooperation that took place	2.1. Sharing a vision
	2.2. Managing challenges
3. Experiences of hearing each other's input, needs, and experiences	
4. Descriptions of synchronisation of activities	
5. Experiences of shared emotions while working on the project	
6. Perceptions of a sense of belonging to the group	
7. Experiences of competition between the participants	7.1. Having a common goal
	7.2. Appreciation of diverse talents

The seven themes discussed below reflect the theoretical framework of this study, focusing on Greuel's (2019) description of the social dimensions of making music together.

#### **4.5.1 Theme 1: Experiencing Contact Between the Participants on the Online Platform**

With a focus on social inclusion, the literature indicates that contact occurring during joint music-making may foster a sense of connectedness, creating opportunities for social bonding (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021; Greuel, 2019). Schininà and Ghiglione (2019) suggest that connections formed through contact during joint artistic activities can lead participants to develop new narratives that promote both collective identities and individual agency. Furthermore, contact can be enhanced through participation, where all contributions from

participants are valued (Greuel, 2019), and the co-creation of a musical product provides opportunities for collaborative learning (Gande & Kruse-Weber, 2017). However, other authors advise that facilitators of online activities must be aware of potential challenges that need to be identified and managed to ensure that contact and participation lead to the inclusion of all participants (Levstek et al., 2021; Onderdijk et al., 2021). This theme focuses on how formal and informal online contact and participation have resulted in relationships forming among the participants.

#### **4.5.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Formal and informal contact and participation**

Every week, for the duration of the project, the participants attended online sessions on the Zoom platform, where they were taught how to use the relevant software for audio and video recordings. The processes were explained and experimented with during each session, after which planning and preparation began for the new tasks to be completed in the following session a week later. Working in smaller groups, the participants arranged and scheduled their meeting times themselves to complete the tasks assigned for the next week.

Referring to Zoom for formal and informal meetings, and WhatsApp for informal contact, the statements that follow highlight how formal contact in larger groups was supported by informal contact in smaller groups.

*“Zoom was nice for all the group contact, but it is much harder to talk live in English, so that was like a new experience. When we had our Zoom meetings, when we worked with the video cutting in the afternoons after the seminar, it was much easier because it was not so formal. That was a great experience. Also, with the WhatsApp groups, we discussed topics that are not only about the video production but also our personal life a little bit” (P4).*

*“I think that the Zoom calling did work really well because we got to see people’s faces. When we got split up into the breakout rooms it was very nice because we got to learn more about the other members. And when we met up for meetings further into the project, we sort of knew some of them, and it was nice. It wasn’t as nerve-wracking because we spoke with them before in the breakout rooms, and like she [previous comment by Participant 4] said, in the WhatsApp group, it was really nice contact. We even shared some music together because we made a playlist together. So that was*

*a very nice because we had South African music and German music that we listen[ed] to in the list. It was really nice” (P10).*

The above descriptions highlight some of the challenges identified, such as language barriers and the frequent turning off of cameras during formal Zoom sessions. These issues were managed through informal, smaller group interactions in Zoom breakout rooms or via WhatsApp (cf. Levstek et al., 2021; Onderdijk et al., 2021). The issue of cameras being turned off was primarily due to poor internet connectivity, particularly during periods of load shedding in South Africa, as also noted in the findings from the initial written reflections (see Section 4.3.1, sub-theme 2.2). One participant indicated that this ultimately had some impact on their experience.

*“I was maybe just a bit embarrassing because we always had load shedding and we had to end the meeting early” (P10).*

Despite the above-mentioned challenges, and considering the descriptions of how it was managed, the participants discussed how they were able to build relationships through the online contact.

#### **4.5.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Contact leading to building relationships**

Making music together can be seen as a cross-group activity that fosters connectivity and the development of new relationships (cf. Lessard et al., 2019), as it brings people into contact in ways that connect them to others beyond their daily lives (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021; Greuel, 2019). In line with this perspective, participants expressed in their initial reflections (see Section 4.3.1, sub-theme 2.3) that they anticipated building relationships, despite expecting the group to be diverse. During the FGDs, they emphasised that contact in smaller groups, in particular, played a key role in relationship-building.

*“I think it was also very nice that in our very first Zoom meeting we could go into the breakout sessions. It was a bit of an icebreaker. During the months we came together, it was always a little bit easier to communicate, to get started with all the tasks, and to get to know each other better” (P15).*

Initiated by the participants themselves, they used other informal online applications, such as Spotify and Moodle, for voluntary informal social interactions that led to the development of more personal relationships.

*“Yes, but I do think that not everybody is in the Spotify group. We have this playlist together, and I think not everybody is in there, but that is okay because we do have this contact within the WhatsApp group, and this worked pretty well” (P17).*

*“It was the option for everybody as we put the link on Moodle, WhatsApp, and so on. So, it was open to everybody” (P18).*

A participant further commented that the regular contact over the course of the project contributed to forming relationships within the group.

*“I guess it went really well, and we got to know each other better. I did expect it, but in the very first session, it was so confusing. Everyone wanted to say something, but at the end, there was more understanding and a feeling that we have some connection” (P15).*

#### **4.5.2 Theme 2: Descriptions of Cooperation that Took Place**

Cooperation is often seen as synonymous with teamwork (Lowe, 2018). Greuel (2019) suggests that joint music-making inherently involves cooperation within the team, which fosters communication and coordination among participants. Sangiorgio (2018) highlights the connection between cooperation and coordination, noting that both are essential for working together to achieve a shared goal or common purpose. In this study, participants also spoke of sharing a common vision, which enhanced cooperation and helped them manage challenges, as discussed in the sub-themes that follow.

##### **4.5.2.1 Sub-Theme 2.1: Sharing a vision**

Effective cooperation requires collective participation in a safe environment where social bonds can be established, supporting the achievement of common goals (Levstek et al., 2021). In this study, the common goal was the production of a music video on an online platform to promote social inclusion. Participant 18 explained that cooperation was driven by a shared desire to collectively and creatively produce the best possible product.

*“We all wanted to make it perfect. Like different vocals one after the other, but also layers of more work fitted in” (P18).*

Other participants elaborated, acknowledging that a shared vision and common project goal contributed to the inclusion of all members and helped them find ways to manage challenges effectively.

*“So, when we worked in the Zoom meetings while editing the videos, it was sometimes challenging because we had to share the screen and one had to cut the video and the others could talk about it maybe and explain some ideas. We wanted to make sure that everyone is included. So, I think this was the best solution because then everyone was included, even to just share ideas” (P19).*

*“I think we quite quickly got this idea of working together because we knew what we wanted to achieve. And I think that this is quite an important step so that we could work together as a team. And to do the final product, we had to figure out who will do what, but this actually worked pretty well. So, I think the turnout is a great end product (P17).*

As mentioned above, the original contributions of each participant were seen as a way to ensure that everyone was involved in the project and that every contribution was valued. However, as the project progressed toward completion, some members took on additional responsibilities.

*“At the start of the project, everybody had to create their own videos and to contribute. So, that was where everybody had something that they had to do. But towards the end of the project, where we had to put everything together, some students did more work. Although we gave advice, it was more effort for the ones who were working on the computer” (P10).*

The statement above underscores the importance of careful planning when working on an online platform to ensure that all participants are included in every activity (cf. Levstek et al., 2021; Onderdijk et al., 2021). The challenges mentioned in this sub-theme are further explored in the following sub-theme.

#### **4.5.2.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Managing challenges**

Onderdijk et al. (2021) found that maintaining effective contact during musical activities on an online platform can be challenging. They suggest that potential obstacles should be anticipated, and solutions identified in advance. In this study, it was observed that participants needed more time to learn the skills required for the project. As a result, some participants assumed larger roles to ensure the completion of the final product.

*“For the instrumental group, we had X [a participant] cutting the video. He was very experienced with this, and so we only worked on this [for] about three hours. I think that one needs more time when editing has to be done, as some of us needed more time to become skilled” (P4).*

*“I guess, at least [for] me, I underestimated a little bit the effort that was needed for the audio track. Let’s say to get[to] work on it and to listen to all the different parts of the singing and figuring out which can be mixed with which other singer. It was nice to see how the contributions could be mixed, but I was also a little bit frustrated because of how long it took. I guess at the end it was also nice to go through it” (P15).*

A participant explained how cooperation led the group to effectively coordinate tasks and collaboratively find solutions.

*“So, it worked, but it is difficult to create a video together when everyone is online. There is this problem with sharing the screen and one person working, and the rest assisting. We ended up dividing tasks and then work[ed] on it at home before we all met up together again (P17).*

#### **4.5.3 Theme 3: Experiences of Hearing Each Other’s Input, Needs and Experiences**

Campayo-Munoz et al. (2022) suggest that hearing each other's contributions during joint music-making enhances interpersonal skills, builds self-esteem, and fosters emotional awareness. This is in line with Greuel’s (2019) comment that a conscious effort is required to hear each person’s contribution when participating in collaborative music making, which creates an awareness of each participant within the group (Greuel, 2019), and becomes a social activity (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). Although the participants in this project did not perform simultaneously, one participant noted that everyone had to follow the same

guide track during their individual contributions. This required them to listen to the music more attentively to maintain proper timing and ensure they were all aligned to the same beat.

*“We all had to listen with earphones to the same guide track to get the timing right to make sure that we all had the same timing and beat” (P15).*

Other participants observed that the most active "hearing" occurred when they watched their own and others' introduction videos on the Flip Grid application. This process helped them in listening, selecting, and editing the music videos as the project progressed.

*“Also, in the beginning, we went on Flip Grid since everyone was posting their videos there, and we could see this person was singing or drawing or playing a musical instrument. And that was also a way of hearing what the others were doing” (P10).*

*“Yes, it was already easier when you knew what the others were doing. When the singers were recording their stuff, we were able to listen to the result of what they were doing and then figure out how it fits to each other. Later, when we edited the vocals, then we heard what was missing, and then we were adding to the vocals when we already know what the others were doing” (P18).*

#### **4.5.4 Theme 4: Descriptions of Synchronisation of Activities**

During live joint music-making activities, all participants follow a common pulse or beat, which unconsciously synchronises their movements. This synchronised movement fosters rapport and cooperative behaviour within the group while still allowing for individual contributions (Gordon et al., 2020; Colley, 2019; Greuel, 2019). In this online project, where music-making did not occur in the same space or time, participants generally reported limited synchronisation. However, they noted that they were able to align their activities by watching each other's videos, again emphasising the benefit of using the same guide track.

*“For the synchronising, it was actually very hard. But as an example, I asked X [a participant] for help. So, with her help and the guide track, it started coming together, and it became easier after some time to be in the same rhythm [as] everyone else” (P4).*

*“As time went by, I got the hang of it and could see how the guide track helped us to do our activities in the same rhythm. I’m so grateful for the experience” (P5).*

One contribution pointed that cooperation assisted in synchronising the end product.

*“We made it a bit more creatively because we did not just like put all the things together; we had to carefully look [at] what fits. So, it was nice like that. With the combined vocals, it was nice because it made up the harmony, so two interpretations fitted together perfectly” (P18).*

#### **4.5.5 Theme 5: Experiences of Shared Emotions While Working on the Project**

Trondalen and Skårderud (2007) explain that shared emotional experiences arise from the exchange of experiences, influencing intersubjective behaviour. The ability to recognise and respond appropriately to another person’s behaviour and body language is referred to as 'attunement' (Ash & Gallacher, 2015). In the context of live joint music-making, Greuel (2019) affirms that the emotions experienced by participants lead to affect attunement. The sharing of emotional states fosters a sense of mutual understanding, which can promote social cohesion (Van der Westhuizen et al., 2015). However, in this study, the FGDs revealed that participants did not experience affect attunement through the music-making process. Instead, they shared feelings of frustration when working with certain applications and excitement when successfully completing a task.

*“This project was exciting but also stressful with all the apps that we had to use. Although it was fun to play around with, it was, very, very frustrating for us. Sometimes, it was fun when we got something right, and then we were all very excited. That was nice” (P3).*

*“I just wanted to add that there were a lot of feelings that we shared. Like the first frustration, I felt the same. Also, with cutting the video, at the end I cut the in and out, and it didn’t work, and I had to redo [it]. But then also, when we cut the video together, there were also some great moments together when things were fitting together” (P4).*

However, one student noted that while similar emotions were experienced, there was no time to discuss these feelings in depth due to the focus on meeting the project’s deadlines. Another

participant suggested that face-to-face interaction would have facilitated better emotional attunement or the sharing of emotions more effectively.

*“I could pick up that we were feeling the same way, but we did not necessarily express our feelings. We mainly spoke about how we will go about to find solutions when we were frustrated, or we would all laugh together when things worked well, but not really say how we were feeling” (P10).*

*“I guess yes, but to come to that point [of affect attunement] it would be necessary, in my opinion, to have real physical contact. But since the project was online, I guess for getting even more connected and feel the same emotions, it would be helpful for more personal time between the students” (P15).*

#### **4.5.6 Theme 6: Perceptions of a Sense of Belonging to the Group**

This study aimed to explore how the social dimensions of making music together could contribute to social inclusion, which entails a sense of belonging. Gordon et al. (2020) and Greuel (2019) refer to collaboration and teamwork during joint music-making, such as in ensembles, where all participants should feel a sense of belonging because their contributions are included and viewed as valuable. Similarly, Launay (2015) posits that joint music-making could result in positive social interaction experiences, leading to a sense of cohesion and social bonding. Boer and Abubakar (2014) refer to this experience of social bonding as a sense of relatedness and cohesion that enhances social wellbeing. The participants also described the Zoom breakout rooms as a space where a sense of belonging, inclusion, and value was experienced through a shared interest in working together on the project.

*“I felt the whole time that people were interested in what I said and that they appreciated my ideas. For me, that was really special” (P14).*

*“I agree. Nobody feels left out because everyone tried to include people in conversations, especially in the breakout rooms when we were speaking. I am just really shy, so it was really nice to speak to everyone in the breakout rooms (P3).*

*“I can actually agree because I never felt like I did not belong” (P7).*

*“It wasn’t like I was feeling left out or scared but maybe just nervous to talk or speak up in the beginning. Everyone was very nice from the very first breakout room session, and that helped me to relax. I never ever felt like I was left out or anything during this whole time. And also, for me, it was important to make sure that everyone said something or answered questions and stuff like that” (P10).*

Notably, the latter participant highlighted the desire to encourage the inclusion of everyone in conversations.

#### **4.5.7 Theme 7: Experiences of Competition Between the Participants**

When people make music together in a non-competitive environment, it allows everyone to function on an equal level, supporting the social experience of everyone being equal (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021), and resulting in a positive music learning and social experience (Greuel, 2019). Further advantages are listed by Lowe (2018) as promoting self-esteem, self-concept, social networks and skills, and self-confidence. In this study, the lack of competition was described in terms of a common goal and the acknowledgment of diverse talents as the driving force behind completing a music video production together.

##### **4.5.7.1 Sub-theme 7.1: Having a common goal**

When discussing their experiences of cooperation in Theme 2, the participants referred to a shared vision that facilitated collaboration. Reflecting on their experiences of competition throughout the project, they provided clear and emphatic responses indicating that no competition was encountered, attributing this to the presence of a common goal.

*“It’s not about competition here” (P4).*

*“I think it was very clear that we had one goal and that was to have a shared video. And we appreciated everyone’s efforts, and because of that we worked together and appreciated everything we all contributed” (P19).*

*“There was no competition. There was just really fun and nice to see how everything came together, and we were trying to take the best out of everyone” (P15).*

Linking cooperation with the absence of competition and the presence of a common goal, Van der Westhuizen et al. (2015) emphasise positive forms of contact. They suggest that shared music-making activities should incorporate an element of enjoyment, where participants feel no pressure because they are included. The final sub-theme of the findings from the first focus group also highlights how the appreciation of diverse talents contributed to the absence of competition during the project.

#### **4.5.7.2 Sub-theme 7.2: Appreciation of diverse talents**

Working within a diverse group creates learning opportunities through participation and engagement, which result in respect for individual contributions (cf. Mabvurira, 2020) and the opportunity for social inclusion (Lee, 2021). The utterances below confirm that the participating students did not experience competition in the project, but rather experiences of appreciation for the different contributions every participant made.

*“I never felt threatened. If anything, I just thought, these people can play piano and they do it really nicely; it’s so cool. It was nice to see everyone’s different contributions, and I did not feel threatened or anything like that” (P15).*

*“I will also deny that question that I sense competition. It was even more like nice and wonderful to see how much talented people and participants we have. So much different talents, that effort we all put into the project. Our project depended on everyone. No competition at all” (P15).*

The latter comment highlights how social inclusion was experienced within the online group.

## **4.6 FINDINGS – FOCUS GROUP 2**

The final FGD focussed on exploring the knowledge and skills social workers would need in order to facilitate digital musical productions aimed at social inclusion. The participants were invited to a final session where they watched their product together, after which the FGD took place. Table 7 summarises the final set of findings.

**Table 7: Summary of the findings – Focus Group 2**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>
1. Descriptions of new knowledge gained during the project	1.1. Knowledge needed by social workers to facilitate digital music productions towards social inclusion
2. Descriptions of new skills gained during the project	2.1. Skills needed by social workers to facilitate digital music productions towards social inclusion
3. Perceptions of where and when social workers could utilise this knowledge and these skills in practice	
4. Perceptions of how such knowledge and skills could be included in social work education	

The four themes below conclude this study, focusing on the knowledge and skills required by social workers to facilitate such a project, how these can be incorporated into social work practice, and how social work education could include the development of relevant knowledge and skills.

#### **4.6.1 Theme 1: Descriptions of New Knowledge Gained During the Project**

This project focused on a shared online learning experience on an online platform, emphasising the development of competencies for collaboration and cooperation within the group, as well as the collective video production process (Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). When asked about their perceptions of the new knowledge gained, a participant indicated a newfound understanding of how a lack of competition and a shared goal can contribute to effective cooperation.

*“There was no competition, but we are different people from different countries working together to get the same thing” (P5).*

Another participant commented on the knowledge they had acquired about the different options available in a joint musical project.

*“I learned that you could also have a combination, or you could have only the instrumental part or only the vocal part. I think you can change it in the way you want*

*and have the same effect. So, in this project everyone had options to choose from to find what worked for them best” (P17).*

The participants were asked what type of knowledge they think social workers need to facilitate such a project. Their descriptions are provided in the sub-theme below.

#### ***4.6.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Knowledge needed by social workers to facilitate digital music productions towards social inclusion***

A participant emphasised that social workers need knowledge in planning and organising online activities, as well as proficiency in using online platforms.

*“It’s all about the organisation. Like to do Zoom meetings, breakout rooms and such tasks” (P15).*

This viewpoint aligns with Toseland and Rivas' (2017) description of group work as a structured and planned process. In relation to online group activities, the IASWG (2015) advises that digital social work requires technological knowledge. Additionally, the IFSW (2014) emphasises the importance of knowledge and capabilities for working with diverse populations. The student participants noted how diversity in this project contributed to valuing it as an asset. They recommended that social workers acquire specific knowledge on fostering teamwork within diverse groups to effectively facilitate such projects.

*“The project is about working together. It would be great if social workers can bring different clients together, and then allow them to be different and create something together” (P5).*

*“Yes, and I also think that it could be quite helpful to learn about teamwork and about diversity, and what you could achieve if you will have all these different talents put together” (P17).*

In support of the above descriptions, Ehlers (2020) identifies cooperative skills and the ability to collaborate in teams, including online, as essential for recognising differences as a skill for the future world of work. Similarly, Dondi et al. (2021) suggest that understanding how

teamwork can contribute to collaborative outcomes is valuable for solution-based interventions. A participant added that social workers must develop an understanding of how to identify potential participants and how to encourage and enable them to engage in such projects.

*“It is just important to get some understanding where people are having the same interests or nearly the same. And how to help them to do something and to create something together” (P15).*

Apart from knowledge, the participants also explored the skills they had learned, as well as the skills they believed were needed for social workers to facilitate online groups through musical activities.

#### **4.6.2 Theme 2: Descriptions of New Skills Gained During the Project**

To facilitate an online music-making project, the participants are required to develop musical, digital, online, and communication skills (Ehlers, 2020). The findings described next indicate how a joyful experience contributed to the development of musical skills (cf. Greuel, 2019).

*“It was my first time learning any instrument. So, it was really nice. It was much fun to learn” (P3).*

*“For me, it was my first time playing the marimba. I did not even know marimba exists. It was a great experience” (P5).*

Ehlers (2020) accentuates the importance of skills that enhance dialogue, communication readiness, goal orientation, and openness, which are essential for successful collaborations. These interpersonal skills are required to ensure the inclusion of all participants (Dondi et al., 2021). Within this intercultural and international group, language proficiency was identified as something that was learned.

*“I learnt how to do a project in English and work in an international group. At first, I was very afraid, but I think now I gained this skill through talking English without being judged. I can really work on a project in English” (P4).*

*“I learnt how to start communicating and talking to people that are not even in Africa. That was amazing for me” (P11).*

As previously mentioned, the participants were exposed to a variety of online platforms, as well as software to develop the video. Below, they further explained how digital skills were developed through their participation in the project.

*“I learnt how to use apps that I did not even know they existed” (P11).*

*“I learnt the basics about video cutting and audio editing. I did cut videos before this project, but personally I think Shotcut is a good programme to get good effects. It’s really great” (P4).*

Both Dondi et al. (2021) and Ehlers (2020) emphasise the importance of digital skills for the future world of work, defining these skills as the ability to use software, smart devices, and applications, as well as to utilise a variety of platforms effectively. Next, the participants' descriptions of the skills needed by social workers are discussed.

#### ***4.6.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Skills needed by social workers to facilitate digital music productions towards social inclusion***

Cremata and Powell (2015) report on online music projects among non-professional musicians and propose that facilitators need to create spaces where participants can explore and experiment with a variety of activities. These authors further conclude that facilitators should be skilled in person-centred approaches that encourage creativity. Hung et al. (2021) additionally suggest that social workers need to develop skills to provide service users with the technical abilities required for full participation and advise that social workers should be aware of service users who might face challenges. In this study, the participants also indicated that social workers require skills to guide them in exploring different musical activities that they could utilise in the project and to assist them in using digital tools.

*“We learned to play some instruments. I think social workers must be able to help participants to start with something small, like a small song on the piano, so that they have experience in playing different instruments” (P10).*

*“I agree, but they must be able to teach the participants how to use apps and software, and they must give them enough time to learn these skills” (P15).*

The participants emphasised that intercultural communication in group work is a key skill that enhances collaboration.

*“Something that such a project can help with is communicating with different people. The social worker must have skills to help people that they can communicate freely and that they can ask for help, or help each other” (P11).*

Dondi et al. (2021) support this view, highlighting collaboration skills as essential for assessing progress, identifying challenges, and finding solutions. Ehlers (2020) also emphasises communication skills as critical to fostering collaboration, a point echoed by a participant in this study.

*“I liked how this type of group work was different. Like the lecturer explained what must happen, but then we had to organise how we would do it. And this helped us to communicate where we learned better” (P17).*

Building on the descriptions of the knowledge and skills social workers need to facilitate online music-making groups, the next theme explores the participants' perspectives on where and when these skills could be applied.

#### **4.6.3 Theme 3: Perceptions of Where and When Social Workers Could Utilise This Knowledge and These Skills in Practice**

Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) highlight skills that help service users understand the relevance of their experiences, thereby stimulating learning and development. In this study, the participating students noted that both youth and older adults could benefit from such experiences in terms of finding personal relevance.

*“I can imagine that for the youth it would be a nice thing. And I guess, like that with older people that they can tell their stories in such a project. I think it is really interesting how older people can tell their stories and share their music and culture. It just popped up in my mind now that you could also bring young and older people together” (P15).*

These populations have also been highlighted in the literature as benefiting from such projects, with intergenerational contact being a key advantage (cf. Navarrete-Campos, 2016; Ter Bogt et al., 2011; Lubet, 2011). The student participants, all social work students with some fieldwork experience, further suggested that social workers themselves could benefit from engaging in such online music-making activities.

*“Social workers themselves. If we were now professionals, it would have been nice for us to get away from work to meet up with people with similar interests and then all work together to maybe let off some steam or something like that. So maybe for social workers themselves, you can do this” (P10).*

Confirming this shared perspective, Huss and Sela-Amit (2018) note that the arts not only help connect social workers with their service users but also support social workers in managing work-related secondary trauma. This suggests a clear purpose and context for implementing such projects. A participant further elaborated, explaining how participation in such a project could serve as a platform for helping individuals develop communication skills.

*“And it can help with communication because when you are participating, you are learning how to communicate with others using different platforms. I think it can help with getting different people to come together and learn how to communicate through doing something together. It does not matter where they come from; they just have a place where they can do something and learn something without being judged” (P10).*

This statement further highlights the potential for social inclusion as an outcome of such projects. The final theme presents the participants' perceptions on how social work education can equip social workers with the relevant knowledge and skills.

#### **4.6.4 Theme 4: Perceptions on How Such Knowledge and Skills Could be Included in Social Work Education**

Gorbunova and Spiridonov (2020) examine online music projects aimed at social inclusion, referred to as ‘music for everybody,’ and conclude that such projects can foster positive intercultural experiences. The authors emphasise that facilitators – in this case, social

workers – require knowledge and skills in working with both the arts and information technology, highlighting the importance of transdisciplinary work. The participants in this study confirmed this perspective by describing the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate artistic opportunities.

*“For me, it was very good to learn how to play instruments, like the piano is a very good instrument for me for social work because you can do so much with it” (P4).*

*“I would want to learn to play more instruments. If we could have times where we can try and learn more how to play different instruments to be able to include it in our work one day” (P11).*

Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021), advocating for collaboration between the arts and social work professions, identified several key competencies necessary for effective education in using the arts. These include: Ensuring relevance for the participants, expertise to successfully facilitate musical activities, encouragement of collaboration with and among participants, ability to develop products as a shared experience, following processes to promote meaningful experiences, encouraging reflections among participants, and evaluating of what is happening during participation. Supporting Gorbunova and Spiridonov's (2020) emphasis on transdisciplinary work, participants in this study also highlighted the need for digital skills training to be integrated into social work education.

*“If I consider to do such a project in the future, I think skills like editing and working with audio is something I would like to learn more about. I think that’s a great skill to have for the future” (P4).*

*“How to work with music in groups, and especially online. How can I incorporate it into my work as a social worker when working with groups?” (P19).*

Hung et al. (2021) agree that social work education should emphasise online group work knowledge and skills, particularly to ensure effective group formation and cohesion. Kusenin et al. (2022) add that developing online group work skills in social work education should focus on building rapport with and among group members and creating opportunities to foster

social cohesion. The findings of this study suggest that online shared music-making could serve as a valuable approach to facilitating social inclusion.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER**

This chapter reported on the findings from four separate but interconnected data collection activities. First, data were collected through written reflections on expectations prior to the project. Second, written reflections were again used to capture findings related to experiences during participation, allowing for a 'before and after' comparison. Third, a FGD was conducted to explore if and how the social dimensions of making music together were experienced during the project. Finally, a second FGD was held to examine the knowledge and skills acquired during participation, as well as the viewpoints on the knowledge and skills social workers need to facilitate online music-making groups and create opportunities for social inclusion.

The findings discussed in this chapter allowed the researcher to identify which expectations materialised during the project, as well as the challenges that were encountered. While all the social dimensions of making music together were described as being experienced, the researcher noted some differences between live and online joint music-making projects. Importantly, the participants indicated how they experienced a sense of social inclusion. The description of what was learned during the project aligned with participants' insights on where and when such projects can be implemented in social work. It also underscored the importance of integrating musical (or artistic) and digital knowledge and skills into social work education programmes, so that social workers can effectively facilitate music projects aimed at promoting social inclusion. The final chapter will present the conclusions drawn from this study, along with recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study was guided by the problem statement presented in Chapter 1, which highlighted the need to explore the full potential of music in social work, particularly its role in promoting social inclusion and positive social change (Navarrete-Campos, 2016). In light of the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an additional need to examine how the social dimensions of making music together could be facilitated in an online environment to support social inclusion. Consequently, this study sought to answer the question: How can transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work be integrated towards practices that support social inclusion? This chapter concludes the study by summarising the research, drawing conclusions from the findings, and offering recommendations for social work education, practice, and future research.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

This section summarises the main points of the preceding chapters.

##### **5.2.1 Chapter 1**

Chapter 1 introduced the topic of this study, providing a brief background, outlining the rationale for the research, and describing the key concepts related to the topic. The preliminary literature review presented the theoretical framework, explored the key concepts in greater depth, and informed the formulation of the research problem, question, aim, and objectives. The chapter concluded by outlining the significance of the study and outlining the chapters of the thesis.

##### **5.2.2 Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 presented the research methodology of this study, discussing the research approach and design, sampling techniques, data collection and analysis methods, trustworthiness measures, and the ethical protocols followed. The qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how the social dimensions of making music together on an online platform could contribute to social work

aimed at fostering social inclusion. This approach enabled the collection of data that reflected participants' experiences and perceptions in an online music production project through close and continuous interactive contact (Moriarty, 2011).

The exploratory research design supported the discovery of new information on the research topic (Swedberg, 2018), while the descriptive research design ensured a detailed account of the participants' experiences and perspectives (Fitzpatrick, 2018). These designs guided the researcher in selecting methods for sampling, data collection, and analysis. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants were well-suited to answer the research questions (Devlin, 2018).

The inclusion criteria for the study involved undergraduate social work students from UWC and EvH who were able and willing to communicate in English, participate in an international and intercultural online group, and engage in joint music-making. Voluntary participation and consent to use the final music video for educational and research purposes were also required. A total of 18 students from UWC and EvH took part in the project, which involved the joint online production of a music video, facilitated through transdisciplinary collaboration between a social work educator at UWC and a music educator from EvH.

Data were collected before and after the project using two methods: written individual reflections and FGDs. Semi-structured questions were employed to explore the overarching research question: how can transdisciplinary work between the arts and social work can be integrated into social work practices that support social inclusion? These questions, along with the participants' responses, provided the researcher with valuable insights into how online musical activities could support knowledge and skills development, and how the social dimensions of making music together could foster experiences of inclusion.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, the researcher adhered to the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ethical considerations included voluntary participation through informed consent, with careful attention to privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. The latter was especially important due to the online nature of the study, as well as the fact that the participants were developing a video. Therefore, the management of data, confidentiality-binding forms, and the agreement that the video could only be used for teaching and research purposes were important aspects to consider.

The chapter concluded by outlining limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Load shedding, internet connectivity issues, and student protests disrupted the scheduled online meetings. While these challenges required finding solutions to avoid excluding students and ensure participation, they also created opportunities for discussions around contextual challenges, leading to a deeper understanding of diverse circumstances among the participants.

### **5.2.3 Chapter 3**

Expanding on the preliminary literature review, Chapter 3 provided an in-depth examination of existing, recent, and relevant literature pertaining to this study. Firstly, transdisciplinary work was explored, focusing on the inclusion of the arts in transdisciplinary research. Secondly, the social work discipline was discussed with particular reference to the principles of respect for diversity and social inclusion. This discussion also included an emphasis on social work with groups and the core values employed in group work. In terms of this study, the researcher concentrated on task groups aimed at achieving a common goal – a joint music video production. Thirdly, the relevance of the social work and arts disciplines working together was examined through a discussion of the potential of art-based and creative social work activities, acknowledging the importance of the arts in supporting social work practice, social workers, and social work service users. The connection between social work and the arts was further explored by considering the implications for social work education and training. Fourthly, a synthesis was presented regarding the theoretical framework of the social dimensions of making music together. The chapter concluded with a discussion relating to digital engagement and the future skills required for the world of work and how these relate to this study.

### **5.2.4 Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 presents the findings from four interconnected data collection activities, using two methods: written reflections and FGDs. The findings from the written reflections were presented first. These began with reflections on participants' expectations before the project, followed by reflections on their experiences after completing the project, offering a comparative 'before and after' exploration. Similarly, the FGDs involved two activities. The first FGD explored whether and how the social dimensions of making music together were experienced in this online project. The final FGD examined the students' reflections on the knowledge and skills they acquired during participation, as well as their perspectives on the

knowledge and skills social workers need to facilitate online music-making projects that foster social inclusion.

The findings presented in Chapter 4 assisted the researcher in identifying the expectations, experiences, advantages, and challenges encountered by the participants during the project. A particular value in supporting the exploration of social inclusion in such projects was that the researcher was able to develop an understanding of how the social dimensions of making music together were experienced. Through a literature review, the researcher identified some differences between face-to-face and online joint music-making projects. What was significant in terms of this study's focus and aim was that a sense of social inclusion was experienced. Derived from the descriptions provided by the participants and what they learned during the project, the findings further indicate where and when transdisciplinary work between social work and the arts could be implemented in social work. The participants also highlighted the importance of integrating musical (or artistic) and digital knowledge and skills, which should be considered for inclusion in social work education and training, enabling social workers to facilitate music projects, including online, towards effective social inclusion.

Considering the summary of the previous chapters, the next section presents the conclusions drawn from the findings in line with the research question, aim, and objectives.

### **5.3 CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how transdisciplinary collaboration between the arts and social work could lead to practices that support social inclusion. To achieve this aim, two objectives guided the research process: 1) to explore and describe the experiences of student social workers in relation to the social dimensions of making music together on a digital platform, through reflective journals and FGDs; and 2) to explore and describe the perceptions of student social workers regarding the knowledge and skills that could facilitate joint musical activities on a digital platform, contributing to social inclusion, through FGDs.

Reflecting on the methods of data collection, the researcher found that journaling for individual written reflections was effective, as it allowed participants time to reflect on their

expectations and experiences and to thoughtfully consider their responses (Wallin & Adawi, 2017; Hayman et al., 2012). The open-ended questions provided guidance without limiting participants' answers (Kumar, 2014). During the online FGDs at the end of the project, semi-structured questions proved useful in ensuring the research question was addressed while stimulating discussion among the students (Bulpitt & Martin, 2010). The researcher concludes that the semi-structured format encouraged participants to share both personal and professional perceptions and experiences in a stimulating and interactive environment (Moriarty, 2011; Monette et al., 2010).

The findings from the various data collection activities were synthesised to develop an in-depth understanding of the research topic. In line with the objectives of this study, the following sub-sections present summative conclusions for each.

### **5.3.1 Online Experiences of The Social Dimensions of Making Music Together**

The conclusions in this section relate to Objective 1 and are framed within the theoretical framework of this study. Each social dimension is addressed individually, with supporting or contrasting literature indicated.

#### **a) *Contact:***

When sharing expectations prior to the project, some participants reported feeling nervous due to the unknown nature of the project, while others anticipated that engaging with a group of people from diverse contexts would be fun, exciting, and joyful (cf. Perdomo-Guevaro, 2017).

The participants confirmed that making music together online led to positive contact among the group (cf. Greuel, 2019; Price, 2021). However, they also noted that the experience was at times stressful and tiring, particularly when developing digital skills.

Participants indicated that contact with students from another country and context resulted in a blend of diverse ideas and contributions (cf. Kim, 2021). This aligns with Schininà and Ghiglione's (2019) view that contact during joint artistic activities culminates in a unique product that reflects both collective identities and individual agency (cf. Kim, 2021).

One challenge that the participants faced was connectivity issues, including load shedding experienced by the South African students (cf. Vartanova & Gladkova, 2019). Despite these difficulties, the South African students reported that they did not feel excluded, and the German students gained a new understanding of challenges faced in other contexts. Additionally, the participants noted that there was genuine interest and appreciation for what was shared. Thus, these challenges, rather than causing exclusion, fostered inclusion and recognition despite the contextual difficulties.

Initially, some participants were concerned that online communication would lack depth and lead to misunderstandings. Amelia and Balqis (2023) similarly note that while online contact offers connectivity, it can challenge communication norms and forms of expression. Other participants expected that online communication would improve over time, which was confirmed by their reports at the end of the project. They observed that continuous, informal, and regular contact through Zoom, WhatsApp groups, and Zoom breakout sessions improved communication (cf. Levstek et al., 2021; Onderdijk et al., 2021).

The participants further noted that focusing on music during their interactions provided a foundation for effective cooperation in producing the final video (cf. Van der Westhuizen et al., 2015). They explained that collaboration occurred on an equal footing, ensuring that all participants felt valued within the project (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). Although they reported positive contact experiences, participants also expressed a desire for future physical contact. It is concluded that a variety of forms of contact (both formal and informal) and platforms (Zoom and WhatsApp) contributed to positive interactions, resulting in personal sharing and inclusivity.

A clear link was identified between contact and cooperation on an equal footing. When planning such projects, it is important to note that online contact in a task group can be taxing due to the digital skills required. Therefore, a focus on both working toward a final product and preparing to manage connectivity challenges is essential.

b) *Participation:*

The researcher acknowledges that participation in this project was voluntary and that the participants had a genuine interest in the project. This likely contributed to their full engagement throughout the project. It can be concluded that participation in such projects should be voluntary and driven by an interest in making music together and collaboratively developing a final product with other participants.

Prior to the project, participants expressed the hope that their involvement would lead to a valuable learning experience, as they would be combining their diverse talents, genres, styles, and cultural backgrounds in the final product (cf. Levy, 2018). Although not explicitly stated by the participants, Mabvurira (2020) highlights that participation in intercultural or international contexts can foster feelings of respect and mutual recognition.

Reflecting on their participation at the end of the project, the participants emphasised that introducing themselves via the FlipGrid application helped them get to know one another. It also gave them a sense of what each participant could contribute to the final music video. Thus, it can be concluded that emphasising individual contributions supports overall participation and fosters awareness of one another.

In this study, participants reported that everyone participated and that all contributions were included. This suggests that innovative group activities like this can promote social inclusion (cf. Lee, 2021).

c) *Hearing:*

Similar to the findings related to participation, the individual videos introducing themselves were identified as an aspect that facilitated 'hearing' the various contributions, leading to a better understanding of the individual participants and what they could bring to the project. In support of this finding, Campayo-Munoz et al. (2020) argue that hearing each other's contributions in joint music-making aids interpersonal skills that build self-esteem. In this study, the participants verbalised their appreciation of the different contributions made by all the participants.

The use of the same guide track when developing their individual contributions allowed the participants to hear the same rhythm and beat, which enabled everyone to maintain the same tempo and pulse. It is concluded that the findings support Greuel's (2019) observation that a conscious effort is required to acknowledge each person's contribution when participating in collaborative music-making, which fosters an awareness of each participant within the group, transforming the activity into a social experience (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021). Through the online project, participants were given the opportunity to share their individual talents and interests through their introduction videos, allowing everyone to take their time to view these contributions and providing a platform for becoming aware of one another.

d) *Cooperation:*

In this study, prior to the project, the participants expected that cooperation would be possible despite the physical distance and that this would lead to the ability to produce a video in which everyone was included in the final product (cf. Tarr et al., 2014). While the participants did not refer to teamwork, Lowe (2018) posits that cooperation can be viewed as synonymous with teamwork. Greuel (2019) adds that successful joint music-making requires cooperation within the team of musicians, which promotes communication and coordination among all participants to achieve a shared goal or common purpose (cf. Sangiorgio, 2018).

Reflecting on cooperation during this joint music-making activity, the participants expressed the view that they learned how to cooperate across contexts, valued the support provided by fellow participants, and appreciated that cooperation requires valuing diverse contributions. Therefore, the acknowledgement of unique abilities and the inclusion of all contributions points to social inclusion within the project (cf. Mekoa & Bosari, 2018; Greuel, 2019). The researcher concludes that the supportive nature of the project, where the facilitators provided guidance and the participants supported one another, contributed to social inclusion.

The participants explained that cooperation developed over time, especially while working in smaller groups through respectful and collaborative interactions in a non-threatening environment, which enhanced the opportunity for everyone to be included and to

participate fully. It is concluded that effective cooperation was supported by opportunities for active participation in an environment where all contributions were respected, valued, and included (cf. Greuel, 2019).

e) *Synchronisation:*

Music-making on an online platform occurred at different times and in various spaces. Thus, it is concluded that synchronisation in an online project is difficult to achieve. However, the participating students explained that they could synchronise their contributions by using the guide track and by observing the contributions of other participants. In this way, they were able to follow a common pulse or beat, which established rapport and encouraged cooperative behaviours while allowing for individual contributions (cf. Gordon et al., 2020; Colley, 2019; Greuel, 2019). Therefore, it is concluded that synchronisation on an online platform takes on a different form compared to face-to-face joint music-making.

f) *Affect attunement:*

Considering Ash and Gallacher's (2015) description of this dimension as an awareness of another person's behaviour, and Greuel's (2019) position that the synchronisation of movements leads to shared emotional experiences, the researcher noted the conclusion related to synchronisation. In this study, the online nature of making music together hindered the synchronisation of movements, and it is concluded that this would also impact experiences of affect attunement.

However, the participants did report on experiences of feeling connected (cf. Prince, 2021) and described how similar emotions of frustration and excitement were shared among them while participating and cooperating with each other. Notably, the findings suggest that when these similar emotions were experienced, the participants were aware that they felt the same way but did not discuss it due to time constraints. One participant explained that face-to-face contact would have enhanced the experience of shared emotions. It is therefore concluded that time for collective reflection on emotions experienced should be included in such online projects.

g) *Lack of competition:*

In the FGDs, all the participants stated that no competition was experienced throughout the project, which was attributed to everyone working collaboratively at the same level to achieve the shared goal of producing a music video. The absence of competition was described in terms of working towards a common goal, without judgement, and appreciating the diverse talents that contributed to the completion of the music video production together.

A participant indicated how she was able to learn to play new instruments and how she was supported by other participants, highlighting a social context that enhanced self-confidence (cf. Lowe, 2018). It is concluded that the non-competitive online environment resulted in a positive learning and social experience (cf. Greuel, 2019). This, in turn, led to feelings of being respected and valued and being socially included (cf. Lee, 2021).

h) *Social cohesion:*

This dimension was a particular focus of the study. The EC (2019) highlights that diversity can lead to challenges for social cohesion and specifically refers to the importance of inclusion and participation in cultural activities to support social cohesion. The expectations of the participants prior to this project indicated that they hoped for connections and relationships that would result in a sense of cohesion (cf. Lessard et al., 2019). Greuel (2019) describes this as social bonding through the joint music-making experience that fosters a sense of belonging to the group. Positive experiences of working and cooperating in a team can contribute to feelings of inclusion that support social cohesion (cf. Gordon et al., 2020).

Another reference is made by Meko and Busari (2018), who discuss the dimensions of participation and eye-level interaction through the recognition of all efforts and contributions that enhance social cohesion. It is concluded that the findings support these viewpoints. Prior to the project, the participants expressed an expectation of building intercultural relationships through their participation. At the end of the project, they confirmed that they experienced a sense of cohesion, particularly through informal contact and participation in smaller group activities. It was noted that all contributions were valued, resulting in experiences of social inclusion.

The participants further emphasised that regular contact throughout the project contributed to forming relationships within the group and among its members. This regular contact and social inclusion extended beyond the boundaries of the project when students created a music playlist of South African and German music on the Spotify application to maintain connectedness that supported social cohesion. Thus, the researcher concludes that social inclusion resulted in the social cohesion experienced within the group.

The next section presents conclusions related to knowledge and skills that should be considered for the facilitation of online music social work projects.

### **5.3.2 Knowledge and Skills Required for Online Music Social Work Projects**

This section presents the conclusion related to Objective 2. Before the project began, participants highlighted communication, cooperation, and digital competence as skills they hoped to acquire through their participation. While Ehlers (2020) refers to these as "future skills" essential for the evolving world of work, Dondi et al. (2020) emphasise their importance in building empathetic, trust-based, mutually beneficial relationships. In the researcher's view, this aligns with the study's aim to support experiences of social inclusion.

In terms of what participants learned during the project, the following key aspects were highlighted:

- **Firstly**, some participants explained how they learned to play new instruments through experimentation while developing their individual contributions, which were included in the project.
- **Secondly**, participants reported gaining new knowledge and skills in effectively using platforms like Zoom, applications such as FlipGrid, and the software required to record, edit, and communicate throughout the project. They noted that this process took significant time and effort, both individually and collectively. Participants described how they became innovative in using different platforms to communicate and collaborate, and how they leveraged each other's contributions to further support their own development. This finding aligns with Ehlers' (2020) description of innovation as a future skill, encompassing the ability to experiment, be creative, adapt, and find solutions in the face of challenges.

- **Thirdly**, participants indicated that prior knowledge and existing skills related to digital tools led some participants to take on larger roles during the finalisation of the project. However, this did not result in excluding others. The researcher concludes that the absence of competition and the emphasis on cooperation on equal footing allowed participants to assign roles based on their strengths, thus supporting social inclusion.
- **Fourthly**, the findings suggest that participants gained new insights into how, without competition, a shared goal can foster effective cooperation (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021).

In discussing the knowledge social workers need to effectively facilitate online music-making groups to create opportunities for social inclusion, the findings of this study highlighted the following:

- Social workers need knowledge in planning and organising online activities, as well as in using online platforms (cf. IASWG, 2015). Additionally, they require skills to transfer this knowledge to participants, enabling them to actively engage in such projects.
- Although the participants did not specifically mention knowledge and skills for working in diverse contexts, the findings underscored the value of diversity in terms of contributions and cultural backgrounds, which led to a unique final product. There was reference, however, to the importance of fostering teamwork in a diverse group. Therefore, the researcher concludes that knowledge and skills not only for managing diversity but also for utilising it as an asset would be valuable. This aligns with literature emphasising cultural competence when social workers facilitate projects that promote positive intercultural experiences, with the arts serving as an effective platform for this (cf. Gorbunova & Spiridonov, 2020).
- In terms of integrating the arts and social work, the findings point to the need for social workers to possess knowledge and skills in the arts to effectively facilitate such projects. The researcher concludes that transdisciplinary work, along with the inclusion of elective modules in education and training to develop arts-related knowledge and skills, could enhance social workers' ability to facilitate artistic projects that promote social inclusion.

When facilitating a project to promote social inclusion, participants identified the development of communication, musical, and digital skills as key outcomes of the project. The findings indicate that the development of these skills within an interactive setting led to both personal

and professional growth. It is concluded that online music projects facilitated by social workers to promote social inclusion should emphasise the following skills, which are essential for social workers and should be developed among participants.

- 1) **Communication skills:** In an intercultural or international project, language barriers can pose a challenge to achieving social inclusion. Therefore, it is important to ensure that all participants can communicate in a shared language, such as English, even if it is not their first language. In this project, the shared interest in music and the common goal of producing a music video helped participants focus less on language and more on the activity, allowing them to overcome language barriers. While participants initially anticipated language challenges, they reported by the end of the project that they were able to communicate and collaborate effectively through joint music-making activities. The findings also indicated that participants became more comfortable communicating in a second language, likely due to the lack of competition and the absence of judgement. It is concluded that communication skills go beyond language proficiency and include the ability to cooperate and find solutions (cf. Ehlers, 2020). The reference to a lack of depth in communication within the findings highlights the importance of creating various online spaces for communication, both through formal and informal activities.
  
- 2) **Musical skills:** The findings indicate that while the participants all had an interest in music, they were also provided with opportunities to develop musical skills, resulting in a positive learning experience. The value of transdisciplinary work between social work and the arts is emphasised here. Through such work, facilitators can create spaces where social inclusion can be experienced, while a variety of musical activities can promote social connections as well as the development of musical skills (cf. Cremata & Powell, 2015). The researcher concludes that social workers and art educators or community musicians could collaborate to ensure the effective facilitation of online musical or artistic projects, where social connections and musical activities receive equal attention. The participants described the development of musical skills as a form of personal growth and, on the other hand, expressed a desire to use these skills in social work practice (i.e., implied professional development). In this way, complementary musical skills have the potential to enhance creative social work practices (cf. Ehlers, 2020). Notably, the findings indicate that some participants planned to further develop their musical skills after the

project. Considering this musical project took place online, a link was drawn between musical and digital skills (cf. Lázaro Cantabrana et al., 2015).

- 3) **Digital skills:** Considering that the joint production of a music video was the final outcome of the project, the participants identified video and audio editing and production as valuable digital skills they required and learned through their participation. The participants were exposed to a variety of online platforms and software to develop the video. The findings indicate that digital skills were developed through their involvement in the project. It is concluded that digital skills and the use of different online platforms can bring diverse individuals together in an online space (cf. Yu & Ramaprasad, 2019) where they can share interests and create products in which all contributions can add value to the final outcome (cf. Parker et al., 2016). In this way, social inclusion in an online project appears to be achievable. Regarding the challenge of digital skills development being time-consuming, it is concluded that adequate time and space, as well as support and guidance, must be provided. This, in turn, highlights the fact that social workers facilitating such projects require these skills and the ability to support their development among participants. In support of this conclusion, Hung et al. (2021) propose that social workers need to develop skills in providing service users with technical knowledge to enable full participation and advise that social workers should be cognisant of service users who may experience challenges. Dondi et al. (2021) support this position and refer to collaborative skills to assess progress, identify challenges, and find solutions.

In support of the above conclusions, and drawing a connection between musical and digital skills, Lázaro Cantabrana et al. (2015) note that making music together on a digital platform could provide opportunities for social workers to develop both musical and digital skills, as well as to enhance knowledge and skills among participants across cultural and geographical boundaries. Walze (2021) further observes that combining technology with social and artistic capital can stimulate innovation and creativity. Therefore, it is concluded that the integration of communication (social), musical, and digital skills benefits online musical social work projects.

The participants indicated that shared music-making could be utilised when working with youth and older people, and added that music-making among social workers could be a

valuable means of expression and team building. Van der Westhuizen and Greuel (2021) advise that facilitators need training to 1) successfully facilitate musical activities, 2) encourage collaboration with and among participants, 3) develop outcomes as a shared experience, 4) allow processes that promote meaningful experiences, 5) encourage reflection among participants, and 6) continuously evaluate participants' experiences throughout the project. Kusenin et al. (2020) add that online group work skills must be developed in social work education, with a focus on building rapport with and among group members to create opportunities that stimulate social cohesion within the group. The role of the social worker as facilitator thus utilises communication, musical (through transdisciplinary work), and digital skills, while also fostering the development of these skills among participants. This could serve as an innovative service that connects the social worker with the participants, as well as connecting the participants through joint activities that promote social inclusion (cf. Huss & Sela-Amit, 2018). Gorbunova and Spiridonov (2020) refer to online music projects aimed at social inclusion as 'music for everybody' and conclude that such projects can promote positive intercultural experiences. Importantly, knowledge and skills are needed to effectively combine social work, the arts, and digital communication and collaboration. Reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic, such projects have the potential to address social isolation through innovative inclusive social work initiatives.

Although not specifically highlighted by the participants in this study, literature points to several areas where music can be integrated into social work practice. These include: 1) promoting social awareness and the construction of collective identities and social cohesion (cf. Van der Westhuizen et al., 2015; Pienaar, 2012; Dankoff, 2011), 2) fostering social connectivity and inclusion through the shared goal of making music together (cf. Van der Westhuizen & Greuel, 2021), 3) offering socially inclusive opportunities for persons with disabilities and the elderly, while promoting intergenerational continuity (cf. Navarrete-Campos, 2016; Ter Bogt et al., 2011; Lubet, 2011), and 4) enhancing intercultural awareness through shared experiences (cf. Van der Westhuizen et al., 2018; Tarr et al., 2014).

The conclusions presented above guided the researcher in making recommendations for social work education and training, social work practice, and future research.

## 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.4.1 Recommendations for student social workers

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for equipping student social workers to facilitate online groups and shared musical activities to promote social inclusion:

- Social work education and training programs should integrate knowledge and skills related to facilitating creative and innovative projects aimed at promoting social inclusion. It is recommended that partnerships with performing arts educational programs be explored to include relevant elective modules for skill development in the curriculum.
- The development of communication skills should include online communication strategies, with a focus on online ethics, activities that ensure the inclusion of all participants, and methods for working across language barriers.
- Modules addressing meso-level interventions should emphasise knowledge and skills for conducting online groups, including the ethical considerations involved in online facilitation.
- Training should include competencies for identifying, engaging, and collaborating with community stakeholders such as local musicians and performing arts educators. This will enhance social workers' ability to engage in transdisciplinary work.
- Greater attention should be given to fostering culturally sensitive engagements. It is recommended that the use of the arts as a non-verbal communication tool be included in the curriculum to support competency development in cross-cultural contexts.
- Students with a background or interest in the arts should have access to elective modules that enhance their artistic skills. These modules should also focus on how the arts can be used to facilitate social inclusion projects.
- Digital skills development should be included as a core part of the curriculum to prepare students for the future world of work and equip them to engage in online group activities.
- Knowledge and understanding of the social dimensions of making music together and the skills to facilitate these processes should be incorporated into the curriculum. This will enable social workers to use musical projects not only for social inclusion but also to support transdisciplinary collaboration with professionals in the arts and digital fields.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for social work practice**

In terms of social work practice, the following recommendations are made:

- Social work projects aimed at promoting social inclusion should place less emphasis on differences between service beneficiaries and more on shared experiences, such as making music together. This approach can foster social inclusion based on mutual awareness and positive interactions.
- The use of online social work projects requires further professional development. It is recommended that institutions of higher education offer opportunities for social workers to develop both digital and musical (or artistic) skills. This could be facilitated through short courses or continuous professional development workshops.
- For online social inclusion projects, it is essential to carefully consider how participants can be supported with access to the necessary platforms, devices, and training in using the required software.
- Transdisciplinary work between social workers and community musicians should involve focused collaboration on joint artistic projects aimed at promoting social inclusion, which can contribute to social cohesion.
- Online social inclusion projects should ensure that there is sufficient and prolonged contact among participants. Additionally, time should be allocated for participants to learn digital skills through interactive activities that encourage collaboration and cooperation.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendations for future research**

In conclusion, the following recommendations are made for further research on the topic:

- This study focused on the social dimensions of making music together. It is recommended that further research explore the social dimensions that arise during transdisciplinary work with other art forms, such as photography, dance, and storytelling.
- To deepen the understanding of this research topic, it is suggested that future studies compare the experiences of making music together in face-to-face and online contexts to identify the specific skills and knowledge needed to facilitate projects in both settings.
- Additional research on facilitation techniques for online socially inclusive musical projects could provide further insights to inform social work practice.

- Research should also include the viewpoints and experiences of community music practitioners and artists regarding how social workers can collaborate with them in projects that integrate social work and the arts to promote social inclusion.
- Further studies on how such projects can bring individuals into contact across provincial, national, and continental contexts could contribute to promoting social awareness through inclusive online activities.

## **5.5 FINAL CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the social dimensions of making music together and how this could be implemented as a form of social work practice to promote social inclusion. The study introduced an online musical project designed to foster social inclusion and explored the expectations and experiences of the participating student social workers.

The findings offered a clear overview of participants' expectations prior to the project and their reflections afterward. Additionally, the study provided valuable insights into the knowledge and skills required for social workers to facilitate such processes, the importance of transdisciplinary work, and the knowledge and skills participants can develop through their involvement. Notably, the participants' input highlighted both personal and professional development that occurred during their participation.

In terms of the social dimensions of making music together, this study confirmed that these dimensions are present in online projects, although they are experienced differently compared to face-to-face settings. The findings indicate that participants in online musical projects can experience social inclusion through these social dimensions, which can, in turn, lead to social cohesion.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the necessity of using technology and online communication to maintain social connectivity and combat social isolation. This study offers a method for bringing people into contact, fostering cooperation and participation, developing awareness of others, and encouraging a sense of belonging and social cohesion. By incorporating group activities and individual contributions into a final product, the diverse

talents, backgrounds, and experiences of all participants can be acknowledged. The findings also demonstrated how shared experiences can lead to shared or similar emotions, which can be explored and acknowledged to further enhance social cohesion. However, this requires social workers to possess specific communication, musical, and digital skills.

This study holds particular relevance for the South African context, as well as for national, intercontinental, and international collaboration and connectivity. Making music together addresses the challenges of cultural, socioeconomic, and intergenerational diversity, providing a space where language barriers can be overcome.

As a final reflection, the researcher learned that 'everything that divides has the ability to unite through transdisciplinary work between social work and the arts – geographically, culturally and across language barriers, to name a few'.

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# ANNEXURES

## ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNIVERSITY of the  
WESTERN CAPE



12 August 2022

Ms H Weber  
Social Work  
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

**HSSREC Reference Number:** HS22/5/35

**Project Title:** The social dimensions of making music together:  
Towards social inclusion.

**Approval Period:** 11 August 2022 – 11 August 2025

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology, and amendments to the ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

**Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.**

For permission to conduct research using student and/or staff data or to distribute research surveys/questionnaires please apply via:

<https://sites.google.com/uwc.ac.za/permissionresearch/home>

*The permission letter must then be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.*

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse events and/or termination of the study.

*Ms Patricia Josias*  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape

NPOBIC Registration Number: HSSBIC-130416-049

Director: Research Development  
University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X 17  
Bellville 7535  
Republic of South Africa  
Tel: +27 21 959 4111  
Email: [research-ethics@uwc.ac.za](mailto:research-ethics@uwc.ac.za)

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

## ANNEXURE B: PERMISSION TO RECRUIT STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Department of Social Work  
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences  
University of the Western Cape

**Title of Research Project:** The social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion

Dear Sir/madam

This research project will be conducted by Henriette Weber for a Master's of Social Work degree at the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. For the purpose of this degree, I am conducting a research study that has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The research aim is to explore how the social dimensions of joint music-making can be included in social work education, while also including a digital platform to further contribute to social inclusion.

I am requesting permission to access student social workers at your university/department. With your permission, I will introduce the study by means of an invitation and information letter that will describe the nature of the study and participation. Those students who are interested to participate will be invited to a discussion where they can clarify any uncertainties and ask questions. Those who agree to participate will then be requested to sign informed consent and focus group confidentiality forms. Please note that participation is voluntary and that ethical practice of limitation of harm, availability of debriefing opportunities, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, as well as data management will be implemented.

Your willingness to support me will be much appreciated. I am also providing you with the research proposal, the information letter to the participants, as well as proof of ethical clearance for you to be able to make an informed decision to support me.

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen

Social Work Department, University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17

Bellville

7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2851

E-mail: [mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za](mailto:mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za)

Should you have any further questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen Department of Social Work: Head of Department Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Tel: 021 9592851 Email: <a href="mailto:mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za">mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za</a>	Prof Anthea Rhoda Dean: Faculty of Community and Health Sciences University of the Western Cape Private Bag X17 Bellville 7535 <a href="mailto:chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za">chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za</a>
--	--

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee  
University of the Western Cape  
Private Bag X17  
Bellville 7535  
Tel: 021 959 4111  
E-mail: [research-ethics@uwc.ac.za](mailto:research-ethics@uwc.ac.za)

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** HS22/5/35

Thank you.

---

Kind regards.  
Miss H. Weber  
E-mail: [hweber@myuwc.ac.za](mailto:hweber@myuwc.ac.za)

## ANNEXURE C: INFORMATION LETTER

### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Department of Social Work  
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences  
University of the Western Cape

**Title of Research Project:** The social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion

#### **What is this study about?**

This research project will be conducted by Henriette Weber for a Master's of Social Work degree at the Department of Social Work at the University of Western Cape. The research aim is to explore how the social dimensions of joint music-making can be included in social work education, while also including a digital platform to further contribute to social inclusion. You are invited to participate in this study because you will participate in the International Music Video Production Project as part of your studies in social work. Therefore, you will be able to assist in answering the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions and experiences of student social workers regarding the social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion on a digital platform?
2. What are the skills needed by social workers to be able to facilitate joint music-making activities on a digital platform?

#### **What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?**

You will be requested to sign a consent form which confirms your decision to participate voluntarily. At the beginning of the project, you will be asked to reflect on your own musical background, your expectations of the project, and your expectations regarding working on this project with students from a different country. At the end of the project, you will be requested to make a statement that describes your individual experiences during your participation, and to participate in a focus group where you will explore your joint experiences, the possible way in which such a project could be used in social work practice, and what knowledge and skills social workers need to facilitate such a project.

#### **Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

You will be asked permission that the researcher can use your reflections, statements and comments during the focus group discussion. You will also be asked for permission that the focus group discussion can be audio-recorded. Should you choose not to give permission for this, it will not influence your participation in this study. The recording will be transcribed immediately after the focus group discussion. Your reflection sheets, statements and the audio recording will be saved on a password protected computer, and only the researcher, supervisor and project leader will have access. The researcher undertakes to protect your

identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, your name will not appear on the transcript and reflection sheets. A number will be assigned to your name, for example 'Participant 1', and a list will be made that links the numbers to the identity of the participants. This list will also be stored on a password computer to which only the researcher will have access. All documents will be destroyed five years after that study was completed. If I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, any disclosure of abuse or harm made during the research process by you or any other participant, has to be reported. In this event, I will inform you that I have to break confidentiality to fulfil my legal responsibility to report to the designated authorities.

### **What are the risks of this research?**

Discussing personal experiences and perceptions carry some amount of risks. The researcher will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study.

### **What are the benefits of this research?**

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher to make recommendations for social work education and training. In this way, the social work profession could benefit from your participation.

### **Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?**

Even though your experience and insight are valuable to this research, the researcher will respect your decision not to participate, or to terminate your participation. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may indicate at any time that your contributions may not be used. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised in any way.

### **Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?**

Where necessary, needed and/or requested, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

### **What if I have questions?**

This research is being conducted by Henriette Weber under the auspices of the Department of Social Work Department at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research itself, please contact the researcher at: 076 4011 667 or at [hweber@uwc.ac.za](mailto:hweber@uwc.ac.za).

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study supervisor and project coordinator:

Prof M. Van der Westhuizen

Social Work Department, University of the Western Cape

Private Bag x17, Bellville, 7535

Telephone: (021) 959 2851

E-mail: [mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za](mailto:mvanderwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za)

I am looking forward to learning from you. Thank you.

Henriette Weber

\*A German translation of this letter was provided to the German participants.

## ANNEXURE D: CONSENT FORM

### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Department of Social Work  
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences  
University of the Western Cape

Participant (interview)

**Consent Form**

University of the Western Cape

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**Project Title:** The social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion

**Researcher:** Henriette Weber

Please initial the boxes to show your agreement and understanding of what is expected for this study.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition,   
should I wish to withdraw, I may contact the lead researcher at any time to do so.
3. I understand my responses and personal data will be kept strictly confidential.
4. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my responses without revealing any part of my identity.
5. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and that I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports or publications that result for the research. 
  -
6. I agree for the **anonymised** data collected to be used in future research. (*Circle the appropriate answer*). Yes / No
7. I hereby agree to be audio recorded. (*Circle the appropriate answer*). Yes / No



# ANNEXURE E: FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING FORM

## DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

Department of Social Work  
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences  
University of the Western Cape

**PROJECT TITLE:** The social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion

Please initial each box to show agreement with the following statements:

1. The study has been described to me in a language that I understand.
2. Any questions I may have about the study have been answered.
3. I understand what my participation entails and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will.
4. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone by the researchers and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.
5. I also understand that confidentiality is dependent on participants in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.
6. **I hereby agree to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions in the focus group by not disclosing the identity of other participants or any aspects of their contributions to members outside of the group.**
7. I agree to be audio-recorded. (*Circle your answer*). Yes / No

**In terms of the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act (Act 4 of 2013), personal information will be collected and processed:**

- I hereby give consent for my personal information to be collected, stored, processed and shared as described in the information sheet.
- I do not give consent for my personal information to be collected, stored, processed and shared as described in the information sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant  
(or legal representative)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent  
(If different from lead researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

*Copies: All participants will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet for themselves. A copy of this will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.*

**Researcher:**

Henriette Weber  
Cell phone: 0828281587  
E-mail:  
[hweber@uwc.ac.za](mailto:hweber@uwc.ac.za)

**Supervisor:**

Prof Marichen van der Westhuizen  
Department of Social Work; Faculty  
of Community and Health Sciences,  
UWC  
Tel: 021 9592851  
Email: [mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za](mailto:mvdwesthuizen@uwc.ac.za)

**Dean:**

Prof Anthea Rhoda  
Dean: Faculty of Community and  
Health Sciences, UWC  
Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535  
Email: [chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za](mailto:chs-deansoffice@uwc.ac.za)

\*A German translation of this confidentiality binding form was provided to the German participants.

## **ANNEXURE F: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Title of Research Project:** The social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion

### **Reflection sheet at the beginning of the project**

- What are your expectations regarding making music together in this project?
- What are your expectations regarding contact with students from another context on a digital platform?
- How do you think this experience can contribute to your own development?

### **Reflection sheet at the end of the project**

- How did you experience making music together in the project?
- How did you experience contact with students from another context on a digital platform?
- How do you think this experience contributed to your own development?

### **Focus group discussion 1**


- How do/did you experience the contact between the participating students on the online platform?
- Describe the level of cooperation with one another. What were the challenges relating to cooperation? What prevented cooperation, if any?
- What are your perceptions regarding participants hearing each other's' input, needs and experiences?
- How did you experience a sense of synchronising activities during this project?
- What was your experience regarding a sharing of similar emotions while working on this project?
- What are your perceptions regarding your own sense of belonging in this group?
- Explain your experiences of a sense of competition between the participants.

### **Focus group discussion 2**

- Reflecting on your participation and experiences, do you think that student social workers should be equipped with knowledge and skills to facilitate joint music-making experiences? Why/Why not?
- What new knowledge did you gain during your participation?
- What knowledge do you think student social workers need to become able to facilitate the inclusion of the social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion?
- What skills did you gain during your participation?
- What skills do you think student social workers need to become able to facilitate the inclusion of the social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion?
- Where and when do you think social workers can use these knowledge and skills in practice?
- How do you think music education could be incorporated in social work education and training?

\*A German translation of interview guide was provided to the German participants.

## ANNEXURE G: EDITOR'S LETTER



**PROOF-READING**

PROFESSIONAL EDITING SERVICES

PHD PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (SU) • MTH PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (SU) • BA (HONS) PSYCHOLOGY (UNISA)  
BTH (HONS) PRACTICAL THEOLOGY (UNISA) • BTH PASTORAL COUNSELLING (UNISA)

**DR LEE-ANNE ROUX**  
EDITOR | PROOFREADER

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leeanne@proof-reading.co.za  
www.proof-reading.co.za

24 September 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: LANGUAGE EDITING

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

**The social dimensions of making music together towards social inclusion**

By

**Henriette Winifred Weber**

This certificate does not cover any alterations made subsequent to the editing process.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux